

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter involves the background of the study, the research questions, the scope of the study, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, and the definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

Communication is one of the essential skills which challenge learners to different degrees. The main reason why communication has attracted attention across disciplines is that communication permeates virtually all human interaction activities. What makes human beings unique is that human communication is cognitively, emotionally, and socially complex. For ease of communication, the learners must find efficient means to convey their ideas. This study may be due to the absence of a language's strategic, linguistic, or sociolinguistic competence. These efforts to eliminate the gaps are known as communication strategies. Moreover, the term "communication strategies" (CSs) is becoming more popular in education when it is often taken for granted that students' communication strategies can be a tool for identifying students' language proficiency levels (Ugla, Abidin, & Abdullah, 2019).

Communication problems are frequently a concern for students who have chosen language learning as a primary, mainly EFL students. Numerous studies of language learners focus on communication issues they have recently encountered over the last several decades (Si-Qing, 1990; Nakatani, 2010; Su, 2021). One of

the starting points can be seen in Peng's (2012) study, which examined the willingness to communicate in English and signified that important factors influence people or students in conveying their thoughts by using English. Some evidence regarding communication issues has emerged, such as communication anxiety (Wu & Lin, 2014), students' motivation (Yashima, 2002), and the relationship between speaking anxiety and students' communication strategies use (Chou, 2018).

Communication strategies have become one of the most often utilized strategies for resolving communication problems, particularly in the context of foreign language learners (Hung & Higgins, 2016). In the previous two decades, academics have started to look at and create CSs in the educational space since the term was coined by Selinker (1972) in his seminar paper on "interlanguage," discussing the "strategy of second language communication" as one of five central processes involved in L2 learning. As a result, along with the advancement of research, the word communication strategy has evolved into more than just a term, with many meanings and taxonomies being presented. (Savignon, 1972; Tarone, 1977; Varadi, 1980). Furthermore, since 1980, when numerous academics recognized and classified CSs, CSs have grown in popularity (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980).

Some of the definitions of CSs can be found in Tarone's (1977) concepts which mentioned that an individual uses communication strategies to overcome the crisis which occurs when language structures are inadequate to convey the individual's thoughts. Moreover, the broader principles are given by Canale (1983), which states that CSs involve any endeavor to "improve the effectiveness

of communication." Because the definitions are essentially the same, academics believe that the primary goal of CSs is to manage communication difficulties. Furthermore, a communication strategy was added to the model in the early 1980s to influence communicative competence from one sub-competency, specifically competency strategies (Canale & Swain, 1983).

On the other hand, knowing students 'communication strategies are also beneficial for analyzing their communicative competence (e.g., Si-Qing, 1990; Ugla, Abidin, & Abdullah, 2019). It plays an essential role because having good communicative competence (CC) becomes one of the indicators that can indicate students' proficiency level. Therefore, the uses of communication strategies by EFL learners need to be investigated. In addition, upon entering the development of the technological era, many investigations are not only limited to the direct or face-to-face context but widely looking to the virtual context as well.

Line with the research finding by Rabab'ah (2016) revealed that the training they carried out on the communication strategies of EFL learners significantly outperformed as indicated by their high IELTS speaking test scores. In other words, this study examines the effect of communication strategy instruction on EFL students' verbal communicative ability and strategic competence. Thus, indirectly, this study answers the implications of previous findings by Si-Qing (1990), which said that strategic competence could be carried out both by demonstrating the use of particular CSs for the solution of particular problems and by engaging learners in meaningful and lifelike communicative activities, in which teachers can purposefully set some communicative tasks that

are a little beyond the learners' language proficiency, thereby encouraging them to use CSs.

The previous research also found that language learners can significantly improve their communicative competence by developing their ability to use CSs or strategies for coping with face-to-face oral communication problems (Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011). However, Lynch (1996) divided three factors involved in a communication situation, and they are (1) a speaker or a message sender, (2) a message, and (3) a listener or a message receiver. This case subsequently aligns with the follow-up findings reported by Somsai and Intaraprasert (2011) that there are different emergent strategies when handling communication problems due to the students' limited linguistic knowledge. This study is in line with Lynch (1996) that achieving communicative goals is rarely straightforward, especially when the sender and recipient speak different mother tongues. As a result, English, which may be used as a communication medium for conversation partners, does not have linguistic gaps, whereas language learners have. Because of that, attempts must be made by the message sender with a linguistic gap when the message is being transmitted and when the message is being received, as the message receiver, so the communicative goal will be achieved.

Research on EFL learners' communication methods has recently expanded beyond the face-to-face context and into the virtual world (VW). This can be shown in past studies on the usage of CSs in computer-mediated communication. Smith (2003) the use of CSs by learners of English and Chinese in text-based and video-based synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC), Hung, (2012) CSs in a multimodal virtual communication context, and the newest

research of Cirit-Isıklıgil, Sadler, and Arıca-Akkok (2022) which investigates the use of three environments at once, namely in video conferencing, VW, and F2F. At this time, they suggest that several new types of strategies have been discovered.

In the Asian context, Nakatani (2012) has also explored using specific communication strategies to improve learners' English proficiency in communicative tasks. In this study, Japanese college students ($n = 62$) participated in a 12-week course of English lessons using a communicative approach with strategy training. Moreover, multiple data collection procedures analyzed the influence of specific strategy use students' performance on a post-training conversation test. Then, the data were transcribed and analyzed regarding production rate, the number of errors, and actual strategy use. An Oral Communication Strategy Inventory was introduced to elicit participants' communication strategy use for a self-report questionnaire procedure. The results of this study were compared with participants' retrospective protocol data regarding their oral test performance. The findings confirmed that strategies for maintaining discourse and negotiation of meaning could enhance learners' communicative ability. Yet the students used a relatively small number of examples of modified output, which indicated that they might not have enough opportunities to improve the form of their utterances

Huang (2010) focuses on several factors that influence CSs used by technological university students in Taiwan, including students' self-perceived oral proficiency, motivation, and gender. This study revealed that self-perceived oral proficiency, the frequency of and motivation in speaking English were

significantly correlated with using oral communication strategies. However, gender and English proficiency did not affect oral communication strategies. Finally, the frequency of speaking English outside the classroom and motivation to speak English were powerful predictors of using oral communication strategies among this group of learners. Thus, the inquiry highlights the importance of functional practice and intrinsic motivation in developing communication strategies and oral competence.

The communication issues might not be limited to a global context but also happen locally. Dewi, Batan, and Myartawan (2018) have researched students' strategies to overcome communication problems. This study also focuses on learners' proficiency level in communication using English as a foreign language. This is indicated by their capability to use strategies to communicate both in written and spoken forms. However, this study had been tried to investigate the communication strategies used in two areas, 'oral and written.' This paper relies on qualitative research tools that focus on (i) the types of communication strategies used by the students in EFL classrooms at SMP Negeri 4 Singaraja and (ii) the student's reasons for the use of their communication strategies. The data were obtained from observation and focus group discussion. All data were analysed descriptively. The study results indicated that numerous types of strategies were used by the students when communicating in the classroom. They are the use of fillers, self-repetition, code-switching, appeal for help, self-repair, asking for confirmation, message abandonment, omission, approximation, and literal translation. The students expressed various reasons for

using communication strategies, such as thinking time, anxiety, and proficiency level.

Therefore, even though many CSs studies have been conducted using many approaches both in the virtual world and in the face-to-face environment, as of yet (to the best of the researcher's searching and investigating), no other study has been conducted in a VW or F2F environment investigating the oral CSs use of EFL learners using the narrative review approach (NRA). This is a critical gap because, according to the narrative review approach, investigating the use of CSs through previous research is crucial to identify them accurately. Furthermore, by applying the NRA, the use of CSs by EFL learners can be covered by previous CSs studies.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background information provided, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What types of CSs were used by the EFL students in F2F and online environments?
2. What are the most frequent CSs used by EFL students in F2F and online environments?

1.3 Scope of the Study

To provide clear boundaries on the scope of this study, the researcher focuses on foreign language learners, or EFL students, and how they use communication strategies to minimize their oral communication problems. Using a narrative review approach summarizes, maps, and investigates previous articles

on EFL learners' communication strategies in online and face-to-face contexts. Thus, this study analyzed 43 articles with two common areas: Face-to-face and online contexts.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to review the empirical research on how EFL learners overcome and minimize their communication problems by using communication strategies in direct and virtual contexts. Besides that, the researcher also mapped out what communication strategies were most often used by the students.

1.5 Significance of the Study

- a. Filling the gap of the studies which have been done in the field of foreign language teaching, particularly the use of communication strategies for EFL context.
- b. Helping to map the strategies of communication used by the EFL students when they face the communication problems in both two areas: face-to-face and online environment.
- c. Providing some insights information of various communication strategies used by EFL students in overcoming their communication issues.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Communication Strategies: The communication strategies in this study refer to the strategies or ways that can be used to overcome or minimize EFL students' communication problems when they communicate with interlocutors. For example, CSs by Dornyei and Scott' (1995) typology such as the use of the *Message Abandonment* strategy as a way to avoid a message or material because of the speaker's lack of knowledge or topic; then, *the Fillers* strategy, such as using gambits like "umm" and sometimes use "you know?" to gain time to think the material; next the utilize of *Mime* strategy that can be identified by using gesture to help message receiver understand the topic. Therefore, CSs also utilized to achieve EFL students' communication goals.

EFL Students: The foreign language learners referred to here are those currently studying at tertiary institutions and regional, national, and international students involved in F2F (Ugla, Abidin & Abdullah, 2019) or virtual classroom situations (Chen, 2018).

Face-to-face Environment: Referring to the state of the actual face-to-face class. For instance, Ugla, Abidin and Abdullah (2019) mentions that the area as a process of communication and interaction is established between EFL learners and interlocutors without involving communication intermediaries.

Online or Virtual Classroom: Refers to the interaction by EFL learners in virtual meetings, Shih (2013). Technology-based interaction media facilities such as zoom meetings or other multimodal virtual media have a video conferencing platform that can be used to communicate virtually.