Lexical And Discourse-Based Communication Strategies Of Malaysian ESL Learners

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Abstract

This study examines the use of communication strategies among Malaysian learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) in simulated telephone conversations involving enquiries about products or services. The analysis of the interactions of 28 ESL learners, aged 20 to 40, showed frequent restructuring of the message as the learners groped to find words to express their intended meanings with little success in bridging the communication gap in cases of learners with low English proficiency. It was found that the learners used negotiation/interaction strategies in the form of explicit clarification requests and comprehension checks. These communicative functions were also realised through tonicity and lexical repetition. Discourse strategies, specifically collaboration/planning strategies were relied upon to facilitate the transfer of key information to alleviate potential communication problems.

Introduction

This study examines the use of communication strategies among Malaysian learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) in simulated telephone conversations involving enquiries about products and services. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. compare types of communication strategies in terms of frequency of usage;
2. identify the functions of lexical and discourse-based communication strategies; and
3. find out the extent of communication strategy use for problem-solving and message enhancement.

The strategies were analysed using a typology integrating Faérch and Kasper's (1980) psycholinguistic, Tarone's (1980) interactional and Clennell's (1995) discourse perspectives of communication strategy use.

Theoretical Background

The use of communication strategies has been investigated using Faérch and Kasper's (1980) psycholinguistic perspective and Tarone's (1980) interactional view. In Faérch and Kasper's (1980; 1983; 1984) psychological problem-solving framework, communication strategies are used by the speakers to solve their communicative problems when there are insufficient linguistic resources. For example, speakers may describe the characteristics of an object when they do not know or cannot remember the name of the object or they may restructure the utterances when they cannot continue with the initial syntactical structure. The strategies in Faérch and Kasper's framework are divided into reduction strategies which renounce part of the original communication goal (e.g. topic avoidance, message abandonment, meaning replacement) and achievement strategies which preserve the language user's original goal (e.g. code-switching, literal translation, paraphrasing, word coinage, restructuring, nonlinguistic strategies, appeal). The focus is on the speaker's use of the communication strategies to address a gap in communication.

On the other hand, Tarone's (1980; 1981) interactional view focuses more on the joint negotiation of meaning between the interactants, suggesting that speakers are making conscious decisions based on their communicative intent, and communication strategies come into play when expressions are not available to one or both speakers in a conversation. For instance, when the speakers have difficulty expressing the intended meaning, they may appeal for assistance or when listeners sense that their interlocutors have problems continuing with the discourse, they may offer help by filling in the gap. Tarone's typology of communication strategies comprises lexical strategies such as paraphrase (i.e. approximation, word coinage and circumlocution), transfer (i.e. literal translation and language switch), appeal for assistance, mime, avoidance (i.e. topic avoidance and message abandonment). The strategies in Tarone's typology bear a resemblance to Faérch and Kasper's framework but Tarone's emphasis is that both the

speaker and listener are actively involved in using communication strategies to negotiate bumps in the communication.

Both frameworks have been extensively used in research on communication strategies. Tarone's social interaction framework underpins the work of Labarca and Khanji (1986) and Paribakht (1985), whereas Faérch and Kasper's psycholinguistic framework has been used in numerous studies (e.g. Bialystok, 1983; Bialystok & Frohlich, 1980; Haastrup & Phillipson, 1983; Lafford, 2004; Kellerman, Ammerlaan, Bongaerts & Poulisse, 1990; Poulisse & Schils, 1989). To add to these two established frameworks on communication strategies, Clennell (1995) has proposed a discourse view of communication strategies. In fact, Clennell's notion of discourse-based strategies sprung from Faérch and Kasper's (1984) notion of advance planning. Although Faérch and Kasper are known for their psychological problem-solving view of communication strategies, these researchers in fact recognise that advanced learners are capable of predicting a communication problem well in advance and attempt to solve it beforehand to bring about a higher degree of transitional smoothness and overall fluency in the speech. The idea of advance planning was taken up by Clennell (1995) who proposed a pragmatic discourse perspective of communication strategies. Clennell's (1995) notion of discourse-based communication strategies differs from the two well-known typologies of communication strategies which focus on the use of L1- and L2-based strategies and non-verbal strategies such as mime to overcome specific lexical difficulty or to negotiate communication breakdown. Clennell advocates that communication strategies should not be viewed as being relevant only when the need for conversational repair arises, but that communication strategies can be used to facilitate transfer of key information to alleviate breakdowns in communication. In this respect, Clennell's message-enhancing communication strategies complies with an influential definition of communication strategies by Canale (1983). Strategic competence is seen as a component of overall communicative competence, and consists of:

> *… mastery of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action for two main reasons: a) to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to limiting conditions in actual communication or to insufficient competence in one or more areas of communicative competence; and b) to enhance the effectiveness of communication. (Canale, 1983, p. 12)*

Clennell (1995) views the strategies in Faérch and Kasper's (1984) and Tarone's (1980) typologies as "'local' lexically based compensatory devices that learners operate to overcome specific obstacles in the process of communication" (p. 6) and classifies them as Category 1 improvisation/avoidance strategies in his reclassification of communication strategy usage. In addition to lexical strategies, Clennell has identified two categories of discourse-based strategies that aid conversational maintenance. Category 2 strategies are negotiation/interaction strategies where interlocutors negotiate communication breakdown through the use of clarification requests and comprehension checks. These discourse strategies play a compensatory role in communication. However, Category 3 strategies enhance the effectiveness of communication. These collaboration/planning

strategies facilitate transfer of key information through the use of topic fronting, tonicity and lexical repetition. (See Appendix 1 for definition of strategies.)

To our knowledge, discourse-based communication strategies have not been considered in recently published work in the area (e.g. Dobao & Martinez, 2007; Johnson, 2008; Lafford, 2004; Lam, 2007; Wannaruk, 2003; Wongsawang, 2001). In this paper, we show how an expanded typology encompassing not only problem-solving strategies but also message-enhancing strategies can serve to enhance current understanding of the strategic competence of language learners in their interlanguage (Selinker, 1972).

The Study

In this study 14 pairs of adult Malaysian learners of English as a Second Language, with various levels of language proficiency, participated in role-plays of telephone enquiries about tour packages and restaurant reservations as part of an English for Professional Purposes course in a public university. (See Appendix 2 for role-play situations.) The participants had been learning English for the past 20 to 30 years, and regard English as either their second or third language. In general, they spoke English sporadically or when the need arose. The participants were from different ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese, Iban, Bidayuh, Kenyah, Kayan and Kelabit.

The role-plays were simulated interactions between a customer and the proprietor of a company. The role-play situations were chosen by lot. Participants were given 3 minutes to prepare for the role-play and they could make notes. Before the discussion began, participants were reminded of the principles of turn-taking to minimise monopoly of conversation. Participants were told that a hand signal would be given when it was close to 10 minutes but they could continue talking. The participants were informed that the role-plays would be audio-taped for research purposes. The role-plays took place in the quietness of the instructor's office and the audiotape recorder was placed on the table in front of the participants. Due to the lack of suitable video-taping equipment, contextual information such as body language, facial expressions and hand gestures were not recorded for analysis.

Out of the 14 interactions, eight were enquiries on travel and six were bookings for a restaurant. The audio data were transcribed based on an adaptation of Clennell's (1995) transcription notations. Clennell distinguished between short and long pauses but for this study, only long pauses were indicated in the transcript as "…" due to the high frequency of short pauses in the interactions. Unlike Clennell, overlappings and backchannelling were not included in the transcripts as these were not necessary for the identification of communication strategies. Clennell's notation for rising (/) and falling (\) tones were coded as "rising tone" and "falling tone" in the transcript (e.g. [tonicity-rising tone: enquiry]). The codes used to identify the communication strategies were put in square brackets (e.g. [comprehension check]) with the exception of approximation which was indicated by bolding of the words and topic fronting by underscoring, e.g. The offer, it's valid until the end of the month.

Results and Discussion

In this section, the description of the types and frequency of communication strategies is illustrated by extracts of transcripts for significant points of discussion. Participant 1 is denoted by P1 and so on.

Types of Communication Strategies

The analysis of the interactional data from 14 pairs of ESL learners using a framework adapted from Faérch and Kasper (1984), Tarone (1980) and Clennell (1995) showed that out of the total of 224 instances of communication strategy use, the most frequently used strategy was restructuring (see Table 1). Apart from restructuring, the only other L2-based strategy used was approximation (n=9). No instances of word coinage and circumlocution were found, showing that the participants could still manage with their linguistic resources. There was minimal use of L1-based strategies as they were required to use English for the role-plays. Instead, they put discourse-based strategies to good use to help them facilitate transfer of key information, particularly lexical repetition. The frequently used communication strategies will now be described in detail.

Table 1: Types of Communication Strategies Used

Category of Communication Strategies		Communication Strategies	Frequency
Category 1 Improvisation/ Avoidance	L1-based	Literal translation	2
		Language switch	1
	L2-based	Restructuring	93
		Approximation	9
		Circumlocution	0
		Word coinage	0
	Avoidance	Message abandonment	24
		Topic abandonment	0
Category 2 Negotiation/ Interaction		Comprehension check	13
		Clarification request	14
Category 3 Collaboration/ Planning		Tonicity	20
		Topic fronting	8
		Lexical repetition	40
Total			224

The ESL learners often restructured their utterances, and this strategy accounted for 41.5% of the total number of strategies identified. Restructuring is an L2-based strategy as the syntax of the sentence is reformulated in the second language (Extract 1).

Extract 1

P17:   Our agency has offered a package to Niah Caves from Kuching which ah **… [restructure]** the package is … ah **… [restructure]** the flight ah … the flight from Kuching to Miri. Ah … it cost RM700 excluding food but, 800 ah **… [restructure]** if you need … ah **… [restructure]** we to provide food …ah **[restructure]** it cost you RM850. Do you need **… [restructure]** do you have any question?

P18:   Ah … about the cost of the flight, RM700 is for two ways or one way only?

P17:   700 is for two ways.

P18:   For two ways only. I hope, I … I …. I take the flight to Miri, So you can jot down my … **[restructure]** do you really book my flight number?

As an example, P17 began by saying "our agency has offered a package to Niah Caves from Kuching which …" and paused to find another way to bring in the cost of the package. P17 changed her mind and said, "the package is …" and reformulated it to "the flight … the flight from Kuching to Miri, it cost RM700 excluding food …". P17 finally managed to tell the customer the price of the package. From Extract 1, it is evident that P17 had to repeatedly restructure her utterances due to her poor command of the language. In this study, P17 showed the highest use of restructuring (n=14) whereas there were other participants who restructured their utterances only once (P8, P12, P18). The average was three instances of restructuring per participant.

When attempts at restructuring the message failed, the participants resorted to message abandonment (n=24). Out of 28 participants, 13 of them had one to two instances of abandoning the message but P21 and P22 had to abort their meaning-making attempts more frequently than the rest of the participants due to their lack of proficiency in English, as shown in Extract 2:

Extract 2

P21:   Ok… we have serviced already for the menu, example, steam crab, mixed fried prawn with Thai sauce, Pandan chicken and **… [abandon]** We also have special order for**. [abandon]**

P22:   We have special order for .**.. [abandon]** (helping along …).

P21:   Ok. Never mind … ah **… [abandon]**

P22:   ah … I **… [restructure]** so … I don't want any entertainment **… [restructure]** so, how many I get from your restaurant for the dinner?

In this part of the interaction, P21 and P22 were trying to finalise the dinner menu but they did not seem to understand what was said and merely provided information which had to be given. In the process of doing so, both participants abandoned the message several times and P21 finally said "never mind" in frustration and did not describe the special order that she had in mind. There was a definite breakdown in communication at this point, and P22 moved on to talking about entertainment during the dinner. Linguistic inadequacies clearly stood in the way of meaning-making. However, there was no topic abandonment in the data as the participants were required to stay with the given topic and maintain a conversation as best they could.

So far the two communication strategies focused on are Category 1 improvisation/avoidance strategies which come into play when participants face lexical difficulties. From Category 1 strategies, we proceed to Category 2 negotiation/interaction strategies. Table 1 shows that the frequency of use was about the same for comprehension checks (n=13) and clarification requests (n=14). Comprehension check is particularly pertinent in certain enquiries such as booking of travel packages and hotel accommodation, an example of which is shown in Extract 3:

Extract 3
P7:   Ok. Miss. May I know what is the date you would like to book for this Sunway Holiday package?
P8:   Should be from 25 to 28th of December.
P7:   So, Miss, I will repeat the information again. **[comprehension check]** You are Ms. Liew from Kuching. Your phone number is 082-612226. and your address is 345, Jln Chawan, Kuching.   Your reservation for the Sunway Holiday package will be on the 25-28th of December 2002 and your check-in will be at 2.o'clock pm so that means we will prepare the bus to pick you up at the terminal bus station Kuching and drive you up here.
P8:   12 pm. **[Comprehension check]**
P7:   12 pm ya… **[lexical repetition: agreement]**
P8:   12 pm **[lexical repetition: comprehension check]**
P7:   Ya 12 noon**. [lexical repetition: agreement]** …

In this interaction, P7 was playing the role of the travel agent and P8, the customer. P7 did a comprehension check of the customer's contact details using a sentence structure that is typical of such interactions, "I will repeat the information again [sic]". However, when P8 wanted to check that she had heard the bus pick-up time correctly, she merely said "12 p.m." with a rising tone and P7 confirmed the time by repeating "12 p.m." with a falling tone. At other times, a declarative sentence is said with a rising tone to ask for clarification. Sometimes, the message is repeated to seek confirmation. The ESL participants in this study used clarification requests and comprehension checks for conversational maintenance to some extent but they were more inclined towards discourse-based collaboration/planning strategies (Category 3).

Table 1 shows that 30.3% of 224 instances of communication strategy use were collaborative/planning strategies. Of the three strategies, the more commonly used were lexical repetition (n=40) and tonicity (n=20), with topic fronting being less common (n=8). Extract 4 shows how these discourse strategies are used to facilitate transfer of key information:

Extract 4
P7:   The check-in time is at two o'clock pm and the check out is at twelve pm.
P8:   **So we have to leave before twelve. [syntactic structure: rising tone: comprehension check]**
P7:   Ya, you have to leave before twelve.
P8:   Alright.

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P7:   It's just three days.
P8:   Is there any special offer or discount for this package?
P7:   For the Delima holiday, we are offering RM3000 per package. For the Sunway holiday, we are offering RM700 for both adults and children.
P8:   Alright. ya, adult …
P7:   Two adults and children **[lexical repetition: confirmation]**
P8:   Do you mean that we will all stay in one room? **[clarification request]**
P7:   Ya.. we will provide you a big room, with one master bedroom and two single beds.
P8:   Oh … then, you will split … **[syntactic structure: rising tone: clarification request]**
P7:   Then you will split … **[syntactic structure: falling tone: agreement]**

In this enquiry on a travel package, P8 used a rising tone to clarify whether she had to leave before 12 in "So we have to leave before 12". In response to P8's query, P7 said "ya, you have to leave before 12", more or less repeating the same words with a falling tone to affirm and agree with the message. Following this there were adjacent turns of clarification checks and confirmation on the number of guests in the hotel room, with the rising and falling tone playing a crucial role in the exchange. Even though the clarification requests and comprehension checks took place using almost the same words, the systematic use of tone compensated for the lack of vocabulary and syntactic range and allowed the conversation to continue.

Topic fronting has the topic + comment structure, where the subject is announced and details are subsequently provided, for example, "my boss, he likes oldies song and some Elvis song" (P5). The use of topic fronting enables the topic to be emphasized making it more salient and links two related pieces of information together making it easier to process (Clennell, 1995). According to Clennell, the simplicity of the syntactic structure for linking information makes it a useful strategy for language learners who have a limited range of syntactic structures.

To sum up, the participants in this study relied heavily on restructuring to help them overcome specific lexical difficulties and there was evidence of the meaning being negotiated through comprehension checks and clarification requests. More importantly, the ability to plan ahead to alleviate potential communication breakdowns was shown through the use of lexical repetition and tonicity to facilitate transfer of key information. The functions of these discourse strategies (Categories 2 and 3) will be examined next.

Table 2: Functions of Discourse-based Communication Strategies

Functions	Category 2	Category 3		Frequency(n)
Clarification request	14	Tonicity	14	35
		Lexical repetition	7	
Comprehension check	13	Tonicity	3	27
		Lexical repetition	11	
Appeal for help		Tonicity	3	3
Topic salience		Topic fronting	8	8
Topic maintenance		Lexical repetition	8	8
Emphasis		Lexical repetition	7	7
Agreement		Lexical repetition	7	7
Total				95

Functions of discourse-based communication strategies

The results show 95 instances of discourse-based communication strategies used for a range of communicative functions. High on the list are clarification request (n=35) and comprehension check (n=27), contributed by both Category 2 negotiation strategies and Category 3 collaborative/planning strategies.
Clarification request and comprehension check in Clennell's (1995) Category 2 negotiation/interaction strategies are explicit and evident in the sentence structure. For example, P8 asked "Do you mean that we will all stay in one room?" in order to check that she had heard the information correctly. However, the same functions could be performed by tonicity and lexical repetition. In Extract 5, P14 said "from Kuching to Miri" with a rising tone to check the mode of transportation for the tour.

Extract 5
P14:   How are we going to Niah Caves?
P13:   Oh, I see. We will provide bus … tour bus to you
P14:   From Kuching to Miri? **[tonicity-rising tone: clarification request]**
P13:   No, it's flight, on a plane
P14:   From Miri, you provide bus to ah … the Niah Caves **[tonicity-rising tone: clarification request]**
P13:   Ya, sure.

The intention to seek clarification was obvious to P13 who was playing the role of a tour operator. P13 replied "no, it's a flight, on a plane" to correct the misunderstanding. In the next turn, P14 sought clarification again on the mode of transportation to Niah Caves after she had reached Miri, also using a rising tone when she stated "From Miri, you provide bus to Niah Caves."

Instead of using tonicity, the clarification request could also be just as effectively conveyed by repeating a single word, and there were four instances of lexical repetition

used for this purpose in the data set. Refer to Extract 3 where P8 was seeking information from P7 (tour operator) about a tour package. At the closing part of the conversation, when P7 heard two o'clock being mentioned as the check-in time, she repeated "12 p.m." to confirm whether she had got it right. P8 did not realise that her customer was confused, and repeated "12 p.m." to agree, upon which P7 repeated "12 p.m." again as she was still uncertain. Without knowing that there was a miscommunication, P8 agreed with P7. The miscommunication was not resolved, and in real life, this would have led to some disagreement later.

Other than the shared functions of clarification request and comprehension check for Category 2 and Category 3 discourse strategies, tonicity and lexical repetition were used for other purposes such as appealing for help (n=3), emphasising information (n=7) and showing agreement with what is said by the interlocutor (n=7), which we differentiated from merely repeating for topic maintenance (n=8). The difference between lexical repetition for topic maintenance and to show agreement is illustrated in Extract 6.

Extract 6
Part 1
P27:   For activities at the resort, right, so we have jungle-trekking **[tonicity-rising tone: clarification request]**
P28:   yes, jungle-trekking **[lexical repetition: topic maintenance]**
P27:   treasure hunting, snorkeling, and jet-skiing, depend on your suitable activity suit your children.

Part 2
P27:   What type of payment will you be paying, cash or credit card?
P28:   Ok, ah, credit card, maybe two days before?
P27:   Two days before **[Lexical repetition: agreement]**

In Part 1 of the telephone conversation on a holiday package, P28 as the customer merely repeated "jungle-trekking" to indicate that he was listening, and it is a form of back-channelling. The repetition did not contribute much to the meanings being exchanged but served to maintain the conversation. In Part 2 of the extract, the topic was on advance payment for the holiday package. In response to P28's tentative proposal to pay by credit card two days before, P27 repeated "two days before" to show that she agreed with the customer's choice of mode of payment. In the context of meaning-making, lexical repetition to show agreement is a more meaningful contribution to the exchange than back-chanelling.

In general, the range of communicative functions for the use of discourse-based communicative strategies in this study is similar to those identified by Clennell (1994) which are discourse and topic maintenance, topic salience marker, appeal for assistance and request for clarification. More specifically, the findings revealed that tonicity was used mainly for clarification requests and topic fronting for marking key information, but lexical repetition was employed with greater versatility for comprehension checks, topic maintenance, agreement, emphasis and clarification requests.

Table 3: Proportion of Problem-solving and Message-enhancing Strategies

Role of communication strategies	Frequencies (n)	Percentage (%)
Category 1, Improvisation/Avoidance -lexical strategies	129	57.6
Category 2, Negotiation/Interaction - discourse strategies	27	12.1
Category 3, Collaboration/Planning - discourse strategies	68	30.3
Total	224	100

Extent of communication strategy use for problem-solving and message enhancement

Based on Clennell's (1995) definitions, both Category 1 and Category 2 strategies were for solving communication problems but Category 3 strategies had a message-enhancing role. Table 3 shows that 30.3% of the total 224 strategies identified in the data set were for message enhancement compared to 69.7% for problem solving. In order to bridge communication gaps, the participants depended more on lexical strategies (57.6%) than discourse strategies (12.1%), indicating that the communication maintenance potential of discourse-based communication strategies was not exploited.

The examination of specific effects of English language proficiency on the use of communication strategies was not planned at the outset of the study as there was only a handful with a satisfactory mastery of English in the group. However, the communication strategy use of individual participants pointed to language proficiency being an influential factor. Because of that, further analysis was carried out. The participants were grouped as proficient and less proficient ESL learners. The grouping was based on the formal and informal assessment of their performance in the English course, and not standard measures of English proficiency such as SPM English and MUET. Out of the 28 participants, there were six with a satisfactory mastery of English, namely, P7, P8, P15, P16, P19 and P20.

Table 4 shows that the less proficient learners spent more time overcoming specific lexical difficulties, as indicated by the high proportion of Category 1 improvisation or avoidance strategies (63.2%) as compared to 42.6% for the proficient group. On the other hand, the more proficient participants used more Category 3 collaborative or planning discourse strategies (42.6%) compared to 25.8% of the less proficient group. The participants with better mastery of English understandably did not encounter as many obstacles during the conversation and were able to use collaborative strategies to prevent potential misunderstanding and breakdown of communication.

Table 4: Proportion of Categories of Communication Strategies Used by Proficient and Less Proficient ESL Learners

Role of communication strategies	Less Proficient (n=22)	Proficient (n=6)	Total
Category 1, Improvisation/Avoidance - lexical strategies	103 (63.2%)	26 (42.6%)	129
Category 2, Negotiation/Interaction - discourse strategies	18 (11.0%)	9 (14.8%)	27
Category 3, Collaboration/Planning - discourse strategies	42 (25.8%)	26 (42.6%)	68
Total	163 (100%)	61 (100%)	224

We raised the question of whether the less proficient ESL learners could learn to take advantage of the meaning-enhancing potential of collaborative discourse strategies to reduce some communication problems since lexical repetition, tonicity and topic fronting are not lexical strategies and hence would not be constrained by linguistic competency. However, given the small number of proficient ESL learners among the participants, the patterns observed in this study could not be generalised to address this question. Further research is needed to investigate the threshold level in English language proficiency which allows ESL learners to optimally use discourse-based collaborative strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of the communication.

Conclusion

This study was designed to examine the use of lexical and discourse-based communication strategies by Malaysian ESL learners to find out their inclination towards problem-solving and message enhancement. Analysis of the strategies using a typology from Faérch and Kasper (1980; 1983; 1984), Tarone (1980; 1981) and Clennell (1995) revealed some interesting patterns. It was found that instances of strategy use for message enhancement was half that of problem-solving. Gaps in communication were mostly bridged by frequent restructuring of utterances and there was minimal use of discourse-based strategies, namely, comprehension checks and clarification requests. Instead two discourse strategies, tonicity and lexical repetition, were used with versatility for message enhancement, particularly by the more proficient learners. These findings are similar to previous studies by Ting (2005) and Ting and Phan (2008) that observed heavy reliance on restructuring in general and the greater use of discourse strategies by learners with higher proficiency in English. As has been predicted by Clennell (1994), the nature of tonicity was inclined towards a use of binary tones, falling and rising tones, rather than stress for these non-native speakers of English. Like the non-native speakers in Clennell's study, the Malaysian ESL learners also used topic fronting instead of syllable stress to mark salience of information. Considering that discourse strategies do not require an extensive vocabulary and use of complex syntactic structures, less proficient learners can

be taught to repeat words or phrases with a rising tone to seek clarification or a falling tone to confirm correct interpretation of the message or even to aid conversational maintenance. Moreover since topic fronting is a feature of the Malaysian variety of English (Platt, 1980), the learners can maximize the message-enhancing potential of this communication strategy. Nevertheless, as research into the use of discourse-based communication strategies is preliminary, further research on the use of these discourse-based strategies by learners with varying levels of language proficiency would be needed to verify the applicability of the findings of this study.

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