

# THE USE OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE CONTEXT OF ENGLISH TEACHING

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## Abstract

In the context of English teaching and learning, teachers can employ communication strategies to facilitate students' comprehension of the study material. The aim of this study is to outline the categories of communication strategies used by an English teacher at SDN 2 Jatiluwih. This investigation takes a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on an English teacher within the SDN 2 Jatiluwih setting. During the observations in the 6th grade English class in SDN 2 Jatiluwih, the teacher not only use simple English but also employed body language. Moreover, the students there were quite unique because they tended to use the Indonesian language. Therefore, the teacher, in this case, it was required to use various communication strategies in teaching. The theoretical framework for this study relies on Dornyei's communication strategies theory. The research outcomes reveal that the teacher employed five distinct communication strategies in the classroom to support student learning, namely stalling or time-gaining strategies (1.724%), literal translation (1.724%), prefabricated patterns (5.17%), non-linguistic signals (12.07%), and code-switching (79.31%).

**Keywords:** *CS, teaching and learning process, English teacher*

## I INTRODUCTION

Effective communication holds significant importance in human life. Being inherently social beings, humans naturally form groups and engage in social interactions (Utami & Putra, 2023). While there are numerous means of communication, the most prevalent one is language-based communication. Across the globe, there exists a multitude of languages, yet English stands out as the international language due to its widespread use as a common second language or lingua franca worldwide. Consequently, acquiring proficiency in English holds great significance.

In Bali, a similar recognition of English's importance exists among the populace (Marantika, 2019). Numerous Balinese individuals aspire to acquire proficiency in English; however, it is regarded as a foreign language in Bali and is rarely employed in everyday interactions. More effort is made by learning a second language than by learning a native language because exposure to the former is limited (Bose cited in Ismeti, E., 2022). In contrast, children easily acquire their native language due to the favorable environment and extensive exposure.

In an educational setting, English teachers are required to teach in English, but as it is a foreign language, they often encounter communication challenges while delivering content (Rofiatun, 2018). Students often fail to understand the teacher (Diobi & Nashruddin, 2023). One common issue faced by teachers during English instruction is students struggling to grasp the main message in conversations (Fahrinawati, 2020). To minimize this problem, teachers employ communication strategies, which serve as tools to bridge the linguistic gap between themselves and their students in social situations (Tarone, 1918). Communication strategies can play a significant role in assisting English as a foreign language learner in overcoming their speaking difficulties and deficiencies, ultimately enabling them to achieve effective communication (Prasetyowati, 2023). During the learning process, particularly when teaching speaking, effective communication strategies are crucial for instructors when delivering course materials to students.

Effective communication within the classroom setting is pivotal, influencing the teaching and learning process. Proficient communication can enhance students' understanding and reduce confusion (N. M. Utami, 2018). The communication process will be effective when the sender and receiver have a mutual understanding of the message (Nurhidayat, Ningsi & Irawati). Communication strategies play a substantial role in promoting effective classroom communication. The purpose of employing communication strategies is to attain clear and effective language that can be understood by both the speaker and the listeners (Rahman & Isroyana, 2021). The use of communication strategies helps students become more engaged with the course material and enables them to better understand the instructions in class activities (Oktaviani & Misgiyati, 2018).

The primary aim of this study is to identify the communication strategies employed by a 6th-grade English teacher at SD N 2 Jatiluwih. At this school, the students only start to get English subject in 5th grade. Therefore, the students' English proficiency is very low, and it will be expected the teacher would speak Indonesian more than English when teaching English to the 5th graders less than to the 6th graders. This is the reason why the 6th grade teaching and learning English process was chosen to be the subject of this study because there will be more data for this study.

## II METHODS

A descriptive qualitative approach was employed in this study to elaborate the data. The goal of descriptive research is to portray a specific phenomenon or situation along with its defining features (Nassaji, 2015). The subject of investigation in this study was an English teacher at SD N 2 Jatiluwih. The data analysis process followed three key stages as outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014): data condensation, data display, and the validation of conclusions. Data condensation encompasses the selection, concentration, streamlining, abstraction, and transformation of data culled from various sources such as field notes, note interviews, transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials. Data display involves the organized presentation of condensed information in various formats, including matrices, graphs, charts, and networks, facilitating the drawing of conclusions and actions. Finally, the formulation and validation of conclusions entail drawing insights from the data and making informed decisions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). To categorize the types of communication strategies, this study utilized Dornyei's taxonomy (cited in Brown, 2000:128). Dornyei's taxonomy categorizes communication strategies into two main groups: avoidance strategies, which include message abandonment and topic avoidance, and compensatory strategies, which include circumlocution, approximation, the use of all-purpose words, word coinage, prefabricated patterns, nonlinguistic signals, literal translation, foreignizing, code-switching, appeal for help, and stalling time or time-gaining strategies (Brown, 2000:128). The English teacher's performance was video recorded and to be analyzed in order to identify any use of communication strategies during English teaching and learning process by the teacher. Subsequently, her utterances were transcribed and categorized based on Dornyei's proposed communication strategies.

## III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study is to identify the types of communication strategies employed by the English teacher at SD N 2 Jatiluwih. This school has a single English teacher and comprises 13 students in the 6th grade. During the data collection visit, the teacher was instructing the students on demonstrative determiners, items typically found in a school bag, and objects in the classroom. Prior to commencing the teaching and learning process, the teacher distributed papers to the students' containing notes related to the lesson.

Upon reviewing and analyzing the video footage, it was determined that the teacher made a total of 186 utterances. To facilitate the students' comprehension of the subject matter, the teacher employed various communication strategies. Of these 186 utterances the teacher used communication strategies in 58 instances. Here are the specific details:

Table 1. Data result

No.	Communication Strategies	The Frequency	Percentage
1	Prefabricated Patterns	3	5.17%
2	Non-linguistic Signals	7	12.07%
3	Literal Translation	1	1.724%
4	Code-Switching	46	79.31%
5	Stalling or Time-Gaining Strategies	1	1.724%
Total		58	100%

Table 1 depicts that, five communication strategies were employed in the classroom by the English teacher, specifically prefabricated patterns, non-linguistic signals, literal translation, code-switching, and stalling or time-gaining strategies. Here are the details:

The first communication strategy employed by the teacher was prefabricated patterns, the patterns involve memorized common phrases or sentences. The teacher used this strategy three times or 5.17%. The teacher employed this strategy consistently, using phrases such as “Okay, good.”

Each time the students correctly answered her questions or repeated the pronunciation of vocabulary related to items in the school bag and classroom. Although she could’ve chosen alternatives phrases like “That’s correct” or “That’s right” she consistently used “Okay, good.”



Picture 1. The teacher signals approval to one of the students with a thumbs-up gesture

The teacher’s consistent use of the phrase “Okay, good.” was explained when asked about it. The teacher mentioned that this phrase naturally came to her mind whenever the students responded correctly to her questions or repeated her words. She clarified that her intention behind using this phrase was to encourage the students to actively participate in the class. Additionally, she noted that when the students were told about this, they would often smile and feel appreciated. Furthermore, the teacher emphasized the significance of praising the students for their responses or echoing her words as a means to motivate them to be more engaged and participative in the classroom.

The second communication strategy employed by the teacher was non-linguistic signals, which include actions such as mimes, gesture, facial expressions, and sound imitations. In this case, the teacher used non-linguistic signals as a total of seven times, accounting for approximately 12.07% of her communication strategies.



**Picture 2. Teacher points a student to test their pronunciation**

When asked about the purpose behind using this strategy, the teacher explained that its primary aim was to encourage students to be mentally prepared to answer questions before she singled them out. By doing so, she aimed to foster active thinking and participation among her students. The teacher clarified the purpose behind her use of non-linguistic signals. She emphasized that the main objective was to prompt students to be mentally prepared to respond to questions or think about how to pronounce vocabulary words before she directed her attention to them. Furthermore, the teacher's use of non-linguistic signals extended to indicating various objects within the classroom, such as the student's books, a picture of the president, the door, and the cupboard. When questioned about this practice, especially why she didn't simply verbally state the names of these objects, the teacher explained that her intention was to enhance students' attention and engagement in class. She noted that some students had difficulty maintaining focus, so by physically pointing at objects, she aimed to capture their attention and encourage active participation.



**Picture 3. To capture the students' attention, the teacher directs their focus toward the door by pointing**

The third communication strategy employed by the teacher was literal translation, characterized by the direct translation of lexical items, idioms, compound word, or structures from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2). In this instance, the teacher used literal translation once, accounting for approximately 1.724% of her communication strategies.

Specifically, the teacher used the phrase "lesson book." which is a literal meaning translation of the Indonesian term "buku pelajaran." However, it's worth noting that the more appropriate term in English for "buku pelajaran" is "textbook." In English, a "lesson" typically refers to a period of instruction in a subject or skill, while a "textbook." It is a book designed to accompany a particular academic course or one recommended by the course' authors for students to read.



**Picture 4. The teacher points on the note**

When asked why she used “lesson book” instead of “textbook” the teacher explained that she was thinking about the Indonesian term “buku pelajaran” and the word “lesson book” seemed to come out of her mouth spontaneously. This highlights a common occurrence in language use, where literal translations from one’s native language can sometimes surface when speaking or translating into a second language.

The fourth communication strategy employed by the teacher was code-switching, a practice involving the use of a word from the first language (L1) with its corresponding pronunciation or a word from a third language (L3) with its appropriate pronunciation while speaking in the second language (L2). In this case, the teacher utilized code-switching a total of forty-six times, representing approximately 79.31% of her communication strategies. For example, she would say, “Okay, what is this? Jawabnya kayak bagaimana hayo?”

When asked about her reasons for using code-switching, the teacher explained that she resorted to this strategy after noticing the hesitancy among her students when she posed questions in English. She used code-switching as a means to facilitate comprehension and make her students more comfortable with speaking English in the classroom. This approach aimed to bridge the language gap and ease the students into using English as part of their learning process.



**Picture 5: The teacher points at one of the students (1)**

The teacher used another code-switching, but this time transitioning from Indonesian to English. She said, “Sekarang kakak tanya, what is that?”

When questioned about her use of this strategy, the teacher outlined two key objectives. Firstly, she used code-switching to assess whether the students genuinely comprehended the instructions. Secondly, she employed it as a motivational tool to encourage the students to use and feel at ease with speaking English in the classroom. This dual-purpose approach aimed to ensure both comprehension and active participant among the students, fostering a conducive learning environment for English language acquisition.



**Picture 6: The teacher points at one of the students (2)**

The fifth communication strategy employed by the teacher was a stalling or time-gaining strategy. This technique involves using fillers to bridge silences and provide additional time to think. In this case, the teacher used this strategy once, accounting for approximately 1.724% of her communication strategies. For instances, she uttered, “Uh.... what is that?”

In this context, the teacher employed the stalling or time-gaining strategy as a way to ensure that she could accurately and thoughtfully respond to the student’s inquiries while maintaining the flow of the lesson.



**Picture7. While examining the items inside the school bag, the teacher noticed one of her student's books and pointed towards it, asking the student of its English name**

The teacher’s reason for using the stalling or time-gaining strategy was to create a familiar and contextually conscious learning environment for the students. By posing questions about items, they commonly use in their everyday studies, and by doing so in English, the teacher aimed to foster a sense of familiarity and comfort among the students. This approach encouraged the students to relate their daily experience to the English language, making the learning process more relatable and engaging.

#### **IV CONCLUSION**

In the classroom’s teaching and learning process, employing communication strategies can serve several valuable purposes. These strategies can encourage students to actively use English, mitigate confusion or misunderstanding, and enhance their comprehension skills. Due to the limited exposure to the English language, which can make learning challenging, teachers often rely on communication strategies to facilitate effective communication and learning. In this study, it was observed that the 6th grade English teacher utilized five communication strategies when instructing her students: prefabricated patterns, non-linguistic signals, literal translation, code-switching, and stalling or time gaining strategies. Among these, code-switching emerged as the most frequently used strategy. Findings from the teacher’s interview sheds light on why code-switching was the predominant strategy in her classroom. The primary reason was to motivate and create a comfortable environment for the students to use English

confidently. This approach aimed to bridge the gap between their limited exposure to English and the need to actively engaged with the language in the classroom, ultimately facilitating a more effective English learning experience.

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