Thai Diving Instructor Usage of English Communication Strategies in Teaching Foreign Student Diverse

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Abstract

Communication strategies (CSs) are used when second language speakers do not know how to say a word in English, CSs helps second language speakers communicate effectively by using their hands, imitating sounds, creating new words, or describing what they mean. Communication Strategies are an important field of interest when it comes to second language learning and it also draws attention from many linguists in the field of Second Language Acquisition.

This study investigated the communication strategies employed by two Thai diving instructors who used English to teach international student divers. This thesis aimed at analyzing how communication strategies were used alongside English in natural conversations. The data was collected from three sources: (1) audio/video recordings of natural interactions; (2) researcher diary; (3) observation. The data from the audio transcriptions were examined using an adapted taxonomy of communication strategies carefully selected from Tarone's (1980), Faerch and Kasper's (1983), and Dornyei and Scott's (1997) taxonomies. This study used conversation analysis Methodology to analyze how Thai diving instructors

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use communication strategies. The results indicated that the communication strategies most frequently used by both participants were non-linguistic strategies as they occurred in natural conversations in combination with other communication strategies. Moreover, the specific phenomenon which appeared in the study might lead to the discovery of a new strategy which the researcher has named as "Key Idea Emphasis". The findings of this study might contribute to the better understanding of communication strategies used by Thai diving instructors to enhance effective communication.

Keywords: Diving instructor, diver, scuba diving, conversation analysis, communication strategies

Introduction

In the last decade, the field of tourism in Thailand has been continually growing at a rapid rate. Nowadays, Tourism lies at the heart of the national income. The main reason is that Thailand is a country full of natural beauty known for its tropical weather, plentiful underwater resources and biodiversity. Over 5.3 million tourists come to dive in Thailand. For this reason, the significant contribution of the diving industry to the Thai economy and the diving instructor has grown in popularity. Phuket is the gateway to the best scuba diving in Thailand. The island is the place where divers can either live abroad or take short day trips to enjoy some of the great nearby local sites. Consequently, Thai diving instructors unavoidably have to use English as a mean to communicate with students because they are generally from different countries. Nowadays, English is spreading worldwide. Numbers of non-native speakers are higher than native speakers, at a ratio of 4:1 (Crystal, 1997). Thus, the roles of the English language have changed and led to an increasing requirement for English proficiency in order to facilitate communication among non-native speakers or between native speakers and non-native speakers. The researcher believes that although people are considered native speakers of English, if they are from different countries or cultures, the use of the language can differ significantly. Business within the field of tourism such as sightseeing tours, tour guide services, transportation, hotel and restaurant reservations are advised to be concerned with English communication skills, cultural influence, social behavior and how to behave as a host. The Government and Association of Tourism provide numerous workshops and seminars to train employees within this field. Additionally, there are multiple research projects which are related to English communication. On the other hand, these same institutions rarely take an interest in the English communication skills of diving instructors'.

With this reason, this research investigates Thai diving instructors' English communication strategies when communicating with foreign diver students. Communication strategies are considered verbal and non-verbal devices used in order to overcome any communication gaps between two or more people to reach the communication goals (Dörnyei and Scott, 1997). Diving lessons require accurate and clear communication to ensure the students are able to receive the messages an instructor gives accurately and completely to avoid risk that may happen underwater.

Objectives

1. To study the communication strategies used by Thai diving instructors when communicating with foreign student divers.

2. To study the communication strategies that are most frequently used by Thai diving instructors.

3. To study how Thai diving instructors overcome communication breakdown by using particular communication strategies.

Methodology

Population and sample

Population was Thai diving instructors, who used English to teach diving. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who met the following set of criteria. First, participants must have more than 10 year experience in teaching diving in Phuket. Second, participants must use English to communicate with student divers but did not have any educational background related to English. Third, participants must agree to sign the consent form before cooperating with the researcher to participate in this study. Fourth, participants' must be 20 years old or over.

Sample: The current study investigated the use of communication strategies by two participants in order to gain in-depth details. They were guaranteed to be anonymous which meant all the names in this study are not the real names of the participants and/or their students.

Case 1: Manta (M): The first participant is a 29 year old male who has been working as a diving instructor for 11 years.

Case 2: Nudi (N): The second participant is a 38 year old female. She has been working as a diving instructor in Phuket for 12 years.

Research Instruments

The research instruments used in the study were researcher diary, observation and audio/video recordings

Table 1:   Summary of methods used in the present study

Method	Case	When used	Duration
Researcher diary	Nudi and Manta	during observations or after completing data collection each day	5 months
Observations and Video recordings	Nudi and Manta	Classroom and pool session (Day 1)	Approximate 3 hours per day/case
Observations and Tape recordings	Nudi and Manta	Open water dive session by boat (Day 2,3)	Approximate 2 hours per day/case

Research procedures

The research procedures were organized into nine steps. The first step was to identify a problem and develop a research question. After the problem had been identified, the project studied more about the topic under investigation and reviewed the literature related to the research problem. This step provided foundational knowledge about the problem area. Then, cases were selected based on a set of criteria shown on the next page. In the fourth step, case study protocol served as the road map for the entire study; specifying who would participate in the study; how, when, and where data would be collected. After that, a pilot study was conducted, specifically to test aspects of the research instruments and to allow necessary adjustments before making a full and final commitment to the research. Once the instrumentation plan was completed, the actual study began with the collection of data. The collection of data is a critical step in providing the information needed to answer the research questions. Naturally occurring talks were recorded using audio and video recorders during the diving course. A researcher diary was used after completing data collection each day. In the seventh step, the data was analyzed, the findings of this analysis were then reviewed and summarized in a manner directly related to the research questions.

Data analysis

The data collected for this study were transcribed using Conversation Analysis transcription conventions. Conversation Analysis is used as a Methodology to investigate the communication strategies analyzed. Conversation analysis gave the researcher a clearly visible view of interactions during the study. The aim of using conversation analysis in the study is to discover how participants

understand and respond to one another in the conversation, with a central focus on how sequences of action are generated. Additionally, from the data, the frequency of the use of communication strategies was calculated to determine frequency and percentage of total use.

Results

1) The two participants employed 18 of 20 communication strategies based on the taxonomy the CSs used are; Non-linguistic strategies, approximation, use of fillers devices, self-repair, comprehension check, omission, circumlocution, use of all-purpose words, literal translation, self-repetition, word coinage, other-repetition, appeal for help, asking for repetition, mumbling and asking for confirmation as shown in Table 2.

Table 2:   The comparison of communication strategies frequently used by Manta and Nudi

Communication Strategy	Manta	Nudi
	Percentage of Total used (%)	Percentage of Total used (%)
Appeal for help	0.53	-
Approximation	15.61	21.74
Asking for clarification	-	-
Asking for confirmation	0.17	-
Circumlocution	4.12	0.81
Code-switching	-	2.03
Comprehension check	7.36	15.44
Literal translation	3.41	6.30
Message abandonment	-	-
Mumbling	0.53	-
Non-linguistic strategies	27.28	25.20
Omission	6.10	8.13
Other –repetition	1.07	-
Self- repetition	2.69	6.30
Self-repair	11.13	4.26
Topic avoidance	-	-
Use of all-purpose words	3.77	3.65
Use of fillers devices	14.00	4.06
Word coinage	1.25	1.01
Total	100	100

2) The communication strategies most frequently used by the two participants were non-linguistic strategies.

3) The two participants overcame the communication breakdown by randomly selecting communication strategies based on the problem confronted with and the factors influenced. The way Manta and Nudi used communication strategies were different. The use of each communication strategy was dependent on the situation as discussed below. It should be noted, that more than one communication strategy was used in each excerpt but the diving instructors randomly used communication strategies as a combination of two communication strategies or more. Due to the limit of space in this research article, I would present only two communication strategies frequently used by the two participants.

Case One: Manta

Non-linguistic strategies

The following excerpt, occurred in a classroom section. The instructor and the student were talking about how humans recognize sound underwater. Manta tried to explain that the human brain figures out which direction a sound is coming from by measuring the time delay of those sounds in reaching his/her ears. Sound travels faster in water, so the brains cannot figure out where sounds are coming from.

Excerpt 1

1→M: usually when during the ↓dive (2.0) when they like err:: (1.0)

2   like: I would like to ↑call you or m<u>ake</u> you at<u>ten</u>tion

3→   I (will) [PANK PANK PANK

4   [((imitate the sound of tapping a tank))]

5→   on my tank and <u>then</u>:: [you will ↑<u>loo</u>king a↓round=

6→   [((pretend like looking for something))]

7   = where they °from°

8   Y: yep! where the sound ↑come from

In Line 1, Manta paused twice and he also uttered "err::" before the second pause which implies he needed more time to think of how to best explain. This was defined as a use of filler devices. He started to explain in Line 2 that if he wanted to call someone underwater, he usually made a sound by tapping on

a tank or by using a pointer. As shown in Line 3, Manta imitated the sound of tapping a tank as a non-linguistic strategy. He left a gap in a sentence and filled it by making a sound imitation "PANK PANK PANK". He employed the sound imitation instead of using the right word to complete the sentence because it was beyond his current ability. He also used a gesture as a CS in Line 6 to explain more about the direction of the sound by turning his face to the left and right. He was pretending to look for the direction of the sound. In Line 7, he uttered "where they from", but it seemed like he was talking to himself to act as he was looking for something. It became clear in Line 8 that the combination of two communication strategies, non-linguistic strategies (sound imitation and gestures) and the use of filler devices, seemed to be effective. The student said "yep!" as a response that he understood. Moreover, the student repeated his sentence in Line 7 which is the same as what the instructor said.

Approximation

In the following excerpt, Manta and his Japanese student was talking about the accidents that might happen with the pressure gauge during the confine water section in the pool.

Excerpt 2

1   M: before you start: to open your tank <u>first</u> DON'T:

2   look at your air– the pressure gauge

3 → because ↑this one ((point the finger the pressure gauge))

4   they have (0.2) high pressure come directly to this ((point to the pressure gauge))

5 → SO:: that mean this glass can be broken

6   Y: because ↑ca[n…

7 →   M: [broken BWOOM]

8   Y: ohh: yaa::

In this excerpt, Manta was trying to elicit the word "dial" and verb "blow up" which he did not know in English. Clearly seen in line 3, Manta avoided to speak out the word that he did not know by pointing at the pressure gauge. This strategy can be defines as non-linguistic strategies instead of using the word "dial". Then, he wanted to explain more that the pressure in the tank could make the dial blow up. In line 5, Manta employed approximation strategies to express his idea by using the word "glass" instead of "dial" and "broken" instead of "blow up.

This is because of his lacks vocabulary knowledge. The sentence in line 5 is not understandable to his student because he repeated the word "can" by using the rising tone in line 6. Manta then directly fixed his mistake, he used self-repair and non-linguistic strategies to fix his mistake in line 7. He repeated his word "broken" and imitated the sound of an explosion "BWOOM" to describe what he had said as an additional strategy. This proved to be successful because Y responded to Manta by saying "Ohh yaa::" with prolongation of the sound.

Case Two: Nudi

Non-linguistic strategies

In the following excerpt, Nudi was trying to explain how to orally inflate the BCD which is a skill included in the confined water section. The BCD or Buoyancy Control Device is a device that divers wear like a jacket. The BCD is connected to the air tank via the "Low Pressure Inflator Hose". It is also equipped to be "orally inflatable". Orally inflating a BCD is a critical skill which the divers might do if they have a low pressure inflator problem. The divers could continue the dive using the oral inflator to adjust the buoyancy or they might want to use the oral inflator to save air from the tank at the surface. The divers do this by blowing into the hose while holding down the deflate button which opens the valve to allow air in/out.

Excerpt 3

1   N: this is the way (1.0) if your BCD … problem

2   and the:: like kaa:: you cannot inflate from [this one-

3→   [((pointed to the inflate))

4   you can ORAL the BC<u>D</u> in- air in your BCD

5   from your mou<u>th</u> in [over here

6→   [((pointed to the mouthpiece of the BCD inflator))

7   D: uhh::

8   N: how do you canna do like kaa: [press here

9→   [((hold the deflate button))

10   and ORAL

11→   ((blow into the mouthpiece of the BCD inflator))

12   AND let go leave your mouth and let go in the same time

Nudi employed a lot of skills to get through this topic. In Line 1, she used omission. She provided only important words by leaving a gap within sentences. In Line 2, she uttered the filler word "like kaa::" as she wanted to gain time to think. It seemed too hard for her to explain or search for the right word. Then, she employed non-linguistic strategies to reach the target word by uttering the word "this one" while she pointed at the Low Pressure Inflator Hose. She used the word "ORAL" in Line 4 which indicated that she employed approximation, but it supposed to be the word "blow". This was shown in Line 5, from the phrase "from your mouth" She also employed non-linguistic strategies by pointing to the mouthpiece of the BCD inflator while saying the word "over here". In Line 8, Nudi employed use of filler devices again. She used words "like kaa::", followed by using non-linguistic strategies. Then, she said "press here". She uttered the word "ORAL" again in Line 10. Then, she blew air into the mouth-piece of the BCD inflator as a demonstration. This action is considered a use of a non-linguistic strategy.

Approximation

The next excerpt occurred after the excerpt above. Nudi tried to tell students that after pulling the strap tightly around the tank and securing it with the locking mechanism, they had to test that the BCD was securely attached by holding the top of the BCD and gently shaking it. If they did correctly the tank strap should not slide around.

Excerpt 4

1 N: when you lock already: check (2.0)

2   your tank they (very) high or they gonna lost

3   hold on the handle [this one

4   [((hold the handle))

5   and bring it [up

6   [((carry the tank up and shake it))

7→   (see) ↑right? that's strong

8→   if not strong (1.0) strap might shaking- moving around

She explained how she checked the straps to her students. In Line 6, she employed non-linguistic strategies to help make her words, being more comprehensible. Approximation occurred in Line 7 and 8. She uttered the word

"strong" instead of using the word "tight" which was more suitable. But in this excerpt she said it twice in Line 7 and 8 as she did not notice that it was not the target word. In Line 8, the phrase she uttered after the pause made the sentence clearer. Moreover, she also employed self-repair to fix the word "shaking" to the word "moving". She first uttered the word "shaking" but she suddenly cut it off and replaced it with the word "moving"

It is possible to see in the findings above, especially when the participants are not very proficient in the target language that they seem to use more economic communication strategies. Such methods include non-linguistic strategies, approximation, literal translation and omission. These strategies did not need excessive elaboration from the participants. All they had to do gesturing the target word or pointing to the location where the language item could be found. In order to elicit the word or use a more general term to substitute the target item. For this reason, non-linguistic strategies and approximation were ranked first and second for strategies most frequently used by the two participants. However, no strategy could prove to be effective to use as a stand-alone strategy.

Discussions

The first discussion is related to the four competences in Canale's Model (1983). Which competence were the most important? Canale and Swain (1980) said that "Just as Hymes (1972) was able to say that there are rules of grammar that would be useless without rules of language use, so we feel that there are rules of language use that would be useless without the rules of grammar" (1980: 5) They also stated that grammatical competence should not be ignored.

With respect to this study, I found that strategic competence was used to enhance the effectiveness of communication. It is different from the other three components of communicative competence. It is not a type of stored knowledge and it includes non-cognitive skills such as self-confidence, willingness to take risks or motivation. However, I could not deny that it interacted with other components. It did enable a speaker to deal successfully with a lack of competence in one of the fields of competence. Based on the findings of this study, the participants totally rely on strategic competence which also refers to communication strategies. I could say that I strongly agreed with Hymes and Canale and it could be proved that without communication strategies the other components would be useless.

Another interesting aspect found in the findings was the different usage of repetition. With regard to processing time pressure, several researchers refer to it as a strategy which allows second language speakers to gain time to think

and plan what to say next. It is related to strategies such as the use of fillers, unwillingness devices, and repetitions (e.g., Canale, 1983 ; Dornyei, 1995 ; Dornyei and Scott 1995a, Savignon, 1972 ; Tarone and Yule, 1987).

The researchers such as Canale (1983), Dornyei & Scott (1995) and Tarone and Yule, (1987) agreed to include repetition as a method to resolve processing time pressure. However, this view is not always the case because not every single repetition is employed to gain time to think. The findings from Excerpts 5 and 6 showed that the participants also used repetition for other purposes. Tarone (1987) describes the term self-repetition as "repeating a word or a string or words immediately after they were said" and the term other-repetition as "repeating something the interlocutor said to gain time". The description of self-repetition from Tarone's taxonomy could not describe phenomenon found during the data analysis. Excerpt 5 and 6 shows a new strategy which emerged from data collected from the present study.

Excerpt 5

5   N: just breath a °long°:: out

6   ((breath out from her mouth))

7→   as well stop <u>kick</u>ing ↑right? <u>STOP</u> kicking

8   D: ((nod))

The first example was selected from Excerpt 30. It was illustrated in Line 7 that Nudi first uttered the phase "stop <u>kick</u>ing" with stress in the word "kick". Then, she employed a comprehension check. After the comprehension check she repeated the same phase once again. This time not only did she stress the word "<u>STOP</u>" but also said it louder than other words as to convey the urgency for the message to be received.

Excerpt 6

1   N: when you set up done alrea↑dy:: (1.0) <u>every</u> time

2→   <u>close</u> your <u>tank</u> ↑right? <u>close</u> your tank o↑kay?

3   if you not close your tank

4   and then take the pressure of the hose out

In Excerpt 6, the phenomenon was exemplified in Line 2. Nudi tried to emphasize the phrase "<u>close</u> your <u>tank</u>" by stressing the words "close" and "tank", which was followed with a comprehension check. After that she repeated the phrase "<u>close</u> your tank" with stress again and a comprehension check by

uttering the word "o↑kay?" again. It seems like she tried to remind her student not to forget to close the tank.

In this study, the repetition occurred when the speaker repeated the word or sentence with a stress on certain words. It showed that the word or sentence is very important to know or to remember. Moreover, Nudi probably used this kind of repetition after a comprehension check. According to an instructor's responsibility, she must realize the safety of the student divers which corresponds to the discovered repetition in the present study. This phenomenon might lead to discovering a new strategy which this study has dubbed "Key Idea Emphasis".

Suggestions

With regard to communication strategies in the language classroom, Oxford (1990) and Dörnyei (1995) suggested that teaching CSs is necessary in second language acquisition in order to help learners be aware of strategy use and employ appropriate strategies in certain situations. Therefore, this suggests that teaching of direct strategies be useful to raise learners' awareness and improve their strategic competence (Sato, 2005). Namely, learners need to be encouraged and motivated to use communication strategies. The practice of direct strategies such as approximation and use of all-purpose words might be useful for learners in order to use these in real world communication. In the researcher's view, CSs might help students feel more confident as they had the tools in hands and know how to use it effectively. This study was conducted under specific contexts. For further research, it would be interesting to undertake a similar investigation but with multiple cases. Furthermore, both participants in this research have worked as diving instructors for at least 10 years which might affect the results. The use of communication strategies on different participants with more or less experience may lead to different results which await further research.

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