Strategies of Thai undergraduates for dealing with oral communication problems

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      ปัจจุบันนี้ เป็นที่ยอมรับกันว่ากลวิธีในการสื่อสารมีบทบาทสำคัญยิ่งในการเรียนการสอนภาษา ดังนั้น ในการที่จะสามารถจัดการกับปัญหาที่เกี่ยวกับการสื่อสารได้ ผู้เรียนจะต้องพัฒนาความสามารถในการสื่อสาร โดยผู้เรียนสามารถพัฒนาความสามารถในการสื่อสารได้โดยการใช้กลวิธีในการสื่อสาร ซึ่งเป็นวิธีที่สามารถช่วยให้ผู้เรียนพัฒนาความสามารถในการทำให้การสื่อสารดำเนินต่อไปได้ ดังนั้น วัตถุประสงค์หลักของงานวิจัยเรื่องนี้ เพื่อศึกษาถึงกลวิธีการสื่อสารที่นักศึกษาระดับอุดมศึกษาใช้ในการจัดการกับสถานการณ์ที่ต้องมีการติดต่อสื่อสารโดยใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ งานวิจัยเรื่องนี้ได้ทำการเก็บข้อมูลโดยการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง จากนักศึกษมหาวิทยาลัยขอนแก่น จำนวน 43 คน แล้วนำข้อมูลมาวิเคราะห์ในเชิงคุณภาพ ผลการศึกษาพบว่ากลวิธีการสื่อสารที่นักศึกษาใช้ในการจัดการกับปัญหาในการสื่อสาร แบ่งออกได้เป็น 2 กลุ่ม ได้แก่ 1) กลวิธีเพื่อการสื่อสารให้บรรลุผลสำเร็จ และ 2) กลวิธีการหลีกเลี่ยงปัญหาในการสื่อสาร นอกจากนี้จะพบว่านักศึกษา จะใช้กลวิธีการสื่อสารให้บรรลุผลสำเร็จทั้งในฐานะที่เป็นผู้ส่งสาร หรือผู้รับสารมากกว่า กลวิธีในกลุ่มที่สอง และนักศึกษาจะใช้กลวิธีหลีกเลี่ยงปัญหาในการสื่อสารเมื่อทดลองใช้กลวิธีในกลุ่มแรกแล้วไม่สามารถแก้ไขปัญหาที่เกิดขึ้นเฉพาะหน้าได้

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Abstract

Nowadays, it is undeniable that communication strategies (CSs) play an important role in language teaching. Thus, in order to effectively cope with many of the difficulties associated with a conversation situation, students need to develop communicative competence. Language learners can improve their communicative competence by employing communication strategies which can help them to develop their ability in keeping a conversation going. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate how university students deal with face-to-face oral communication situations. A semi-structured interview was used for collecting data from 43 Thai students studying at Khon Kaen University. The obtained data were analyzed qualitatively. The results showed that there were two main categories of communication strategies employed by the participants to deal with communication difficulties: 1) strategies for achieving communication, and 2) strategies for avoiding difficulties in communication**.** Furthermore, the students reported that they used the strategies in the first category, as a message sender or a message receiver, more frequently than the strategies in the second category. The strategies for avoiding difficulties in communication were employed when the students could not deal with the problems being faced.

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Keywords: achieving communication, communication strategies, difficulties in communication

Introduction

In the age of globalization, English has played an increasingly important role as the medium of communication among people from different countries and Thailand is no exception (Somsai, & Intaraprasert, 2011). Thus, nowadays teaching and learning English is extremely important. One of the main objectives of teaching and learning English is to enable learners to communicate effectively and successfully. That is, communicative language teaching is aimed at improving the learner's communicative competence (Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 1991). According to Hua, Nor, and Jaradat (2012), communication is a crucial skill that permeates virtually all human interaction activities. However, Thai students generally, except those who attend international programs where English is used as the medium of instruction, encounter problems and difficulties in English learning and communication (Saengpakdeejit, 2014). In order to be able to communicate effectively in English, it is necessary for the learners to find efficient means of communication which can help them achieve the purpose of communication. Moreover, most EFL learners have experienced a specific difficulty in communicating in English. In this situation, some steps need be taken by the learners to enhance the effectiveness of their communication. These steps are known as

communication strategies (Littlemore, 2003). Thus, communication strategies have been progressively adopted in language classrooms.

Over the past three decades, there has been a growing body of research on communication strategies (Yaman, Irgin, & Kavasoğlu, 2013). This may be because communication ability is generally accepted as the main goal of learning English language. However, the employment of communication strategies are associated with communication problems. Thus, verbal or non-verbal means are employed when the learners encounter difficulty in expressing themselves. In order to ensure that the message they want to convey is understood as intended, they have to employ strategies that can help them to succeed in communication (Cusipag, and Chen, 2010).

At Khon Kaen University, students are required to take at least five English courses: three foundation courses and two English for academic purposes (EAP) or English for specific purposes (ESP) courses. The main objective of the English courses is to develop the students' communicative competence. In doing so, language learners are expected to be able to efficiently express themselves in the target language and successfully communicate in real-life situations (Lightbown & Spada, 1999 cited in Somsai, & Intaraprasert, 2011). However, in the typical communicative situation, both students of low and high proficiency in English encounter difficulties in oral communication. Then, in order to overcome the problems, they need to develop communication strategies. According to Canale (1983), communication strategies are

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helpful tools for EFL learners to compensate for insufficient competence. The use of these strategies can also enhance language learners' confidence, flexibility, and effectiveness in oral communication (Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011). Therefore, it is important to include strategy training in a language classroom. Thus, in a conversation situation, when a communication breakdown occurs due to the learners' linguistic deficiencies, they can deal with such problems. As a result, the learners can employ some strategies to help them continue the conversation. Then, the present study is designed to answer the research question below:

What types of communication strategies do the undergraduate students report employing in the conversation?

Literature Review

1. Definition of communication strategies

The terms 'communicative skills' and 'communication strategies' can be confusing and the two terms sometimes overlap (Oranpattanachai, 2010). A skill is generally accepted to be an acquired ability that operates largely subconsciously, whereas a strategy is a conscious procedure carried out to solve problems in the comprehension process (Pang, 2008:6 cited in Oranpattanachai, 2010, p. 28).

Regarding a definition of communication strategies (CS), there have been numerous attempts to define the strategies. That is, different researchers offer various definitions for communication strategies. According to an early definition provided by Tarone (1980, p. 420),

communication strategies are "a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared." Ellis (1994) suggests that CSs are procedural skills that the speakers employ to compensate lack of sources of interlanguage. He (1997, p. 138) also provides another well-known definition of communication strategies as "the strategies used by both native speakers and L2 learners to overcome communication problems resulting from lack of linguistic resources or inability to access them." Further, Boxer and Cohen (2004) sees CSs as a systematic attempt by the speakers or the learners to deliver or give the exact meaning that is not proportionate with the rules of the target language. Similarly, Bialystok (1990), defines CSs as a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express himself/herself when faced with some difficulties. For Stern (1983), CSs are the techniques used to cope with difficulties in oral communication. In addition, Faerch & Kasper (1983, p. 36) define CSs as "potential plans for solving problems in reaching a particular communicative goal." From the definitions of CSs mentioned above, it can be said that CSs are seen as language devices used to overcome communication problems related to interlanguage (Dörnyei and Scott, 1997). That is, CSs are used when learners wish to convey messages which their language knowledge does not allow them to express successfully. According to Somsai, and Intaraprasert (2011), CSs are generally used by foreign language learners when the linguistic or sociolinguistic knowledge of a message is unavailable. They are

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procedural skills that help the learners achieve their communication in foreign language. From different definitions, it is found that it is not easy to achieve the communicative goal, especially in the foreign language communication situation. For the present study, the term 'communication strategies' refers to a systematic attempt expressed by students to cope with communication problems both to achieve communication; and to avoid difficulties in communication.

2. Taxonomies of Communication Strategies

Currently, a lot of empirical studies based mostly on learners' self-reporting of their communication strategy use are found. The available researches on communication strategies show that strategies have been classified differently according to the principles of terminology of different researchers. On the whole, the classifications proposed by Tarone (1980), Færch and Kasper (1983, 1984), and Dörnyei (1995) are often cited in the studies on communication strategies. For example, five main categories of CSs which are classified by Tarone (1980) include avoidance, paraphrase, conscious transfer, appeal for assistance, and mime. Dörnyei (1995) has collected a list of CSs based on the studies conducted by Váradi (1973), Tarone (1977), Færch and Kasper (1983a), and Bialystok (1990) and divided into three groups: 1) Avoidance or Reduction Strategies, 2) Achievement or Compensatory Strategies, and 3) Stalling or Time-gaining Strategies. Færch and Kasper (1984) show two types of CSs which are achievement strategies and reduction strategies. In addition, there is another accepted classification as suggested by

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Nakatani (2006). He classified communication strategies based on the information obtained through a self-reporting questionnaire. The fifteen strategies were classified under two main categories: Speaking Strategies, and Listening Strategies. Although different taxonomies of CSs use different terms to describe the strategies within each category, there are many similarities between models. Dörnyei and Scott's classification (1997) is another one which is frequently cited in the literature on communication strategies. They have shown a full comparison of the strategies presented in nine of the main CS taxonomies. Poulisse's classification (1993) is another one which is one of the most well- known communication strategy taxonomies. Poulisse's taxonomy (1993) consists of three main categories of strategies—substitution, substitution plus, and reconceptualization.

The available taxonomies of communication strategies mentioned above reveal that CSs taxonomies have been classified differently according to the experiences and categorization of different researchers. According to Somsai and Intaraprasert (2011), there is no agreement yet for CS types and classification. In Thai context, there are different problems that are likely to affect the ability in English speaking of language learners. This means that those problems, e.g. a lack of confidence in speaking English, a lack of opportunity to be in a real English communication, a shame of making mistakes, low level of English proficiency, have an effect on the use of CSs. Each of the mentioned taxonomies, especially by Færch and Kasper (1984) and Nakatani (2006)

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which have been often adapted, have advanced our understanding in many aspects, but they may not cover sufficient number of communication strategy items specific to Thai situation. Accordingly, the present study aims to explore strategies which are reported employing to deal with the oral communication problems.

Methodology

1. Participants

The participants in the study were 43 undergraduate students studying at Khon Kaen University. They were selected through the purposive sampling method on the basis of convenience and availability. Within this group, there were 22 science-oriented student and 21 non-science-oriented students. The sample students had been studying at the University for different lengths of time.

2. Data Collection

To investigate the students' awareness of communication strategy use, one-to-one semi-structured interviews were carried out in Thai and were conducted as the main instrument of data collection. One-to-one semi-structured interview was selected as a main method for this study because it is a very good way of accessing learners' perceptions of their communication strategy use (Somsai & Intaraprasert, 2011). Moreover, it can yield unexpected information that the researcher has not planned to ask for because of its flexibility. There were two main parts in the interview. The first part was concerned with gathering basic

information of the interviewee, e.g. name, year of study, field of study, etc. The second part of the questions focused on the students' use of communication strategies which they employed when faced with communication problems. Prior to the actual collection of the data, the interview questions were piloted with the Khon Kaen University students in order to check whether or not the questions worked properly (Intaraprasert, 2000 cited in Saengpakdeejit, 2014). Then, the questions which were not clear were rechecked and refined. For example, the question (When communicating in English, what were the problems you often encountered?) was refined because the students answered differently. Then the question was added some more explanation to make it clearer (When communicating in English, could you get the intended messages across to your interlocutors? If not, what were the problems you encountered?) Before starting the interview, each interviewee was given a piece of paper containing thirteen main questions for the interview. According to Intaraprasert (2000, p. 91), it was found to be helpful for students to have an interview question guide before the interview took place in order that they could consider, in advance of the interview, their responses to the proposed questions.

3. Data Analysis

After completing the data collection stage, the stage of data transcription followed. The interview data was transcribed verbatim. Then the transcribed data was translated from Thai into English for the purposes of data analysis (Saengpakdeejit, 2014). 'Open and axial coding'

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techniques were used to analyze the transcribed data. The following shows the steps that were followed when analyzing the data obtained from the interview.

3.1 In order to see the overall picture of the communication strategies the 43 students reported using, when they encountered problems in real communication situations, I read through all the interview data carefully.

3.2 After looking at each interview transcription, I made a list of statements which can be seen as communication strategies. 670 statements eventually emerged.

3.3 These 670 statements were grouped together according to the similarities of the context or situation in which the communication strategies were reported as being employed in the conversation situation. The statements which were not considered as strategies used to cope with oral communication problems were deleted. At this stage, the reported statements were initially classified into 52 groups.

3.4 This step involved the coding of each of the fifty-two groups. At this stage, I looked for a suitable name which neutrally covered the characteristics of every single reported statement in the same group.

3.5 All the identified fifty-two groups were rechecked. At this stage, when considering each individual strategy, I found that most of the strategies were initially used to achieve a certain purpose: to be successful in sending a message or to understand the message from the

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interlocutor. Then, the definition of the CSs for the present study was taken into consideration in order to judge the emergent strategies.

3.6 After some intensive revisions, the researcher had to delete some groups of the reported statements because some of them seemed to overlap with others. Moreover, some of them were not consistent with the purposes of the study. Eventually, 15 groups were deleted.

3.7 Within the 37 remaining strategy groups, there were altogether 63 strategy items existed. Then, these 37 strategy groups were reconsidered and reclassified. At this step, some individual strategy items were merged because they shared similar characteristics.

3.8 After that, the 37 strategy groups were reclassified under the three main purposes: a) strategies for sending a message to the interlocutor; b) strategies for receiving a message from the interlocutor; and c) strategies for escaping from the difficult situation.

3.9 At this stage, two main communication strategy categories emerged—1) strategies for achieving communication; and 2) strategies for avoiding difficulties in communication. Under the strategies for achieving communication, there are two subgroups—a) Strategies for sending the message, and b) Strategies for receiving the message. Within the two main categories, forty-four strategies emerged.

Result

Based on the results of the data analysis, the emergent strategies for dealing with communication situation were identified and

classified into two main categories: 1) strategies for achieving communication; and 2) strategies for avoiding difficulties in communication. Under these two main categories, there are altogether 44 individual strategies. Under the first category, there are two subcategories: 1.1) Strategies for sending the message (Strategies for coping with speaking problems); and 1.2) Strategies for receiving the message (Strategies for coping with listening problems). The first subcategory comprises 23 individual strategies, and the latter comprises 16 individual strategies. The other five individual strategies are under the second main category. Figure 1 below shows the communication strategy classification found from the stage of data analysis.
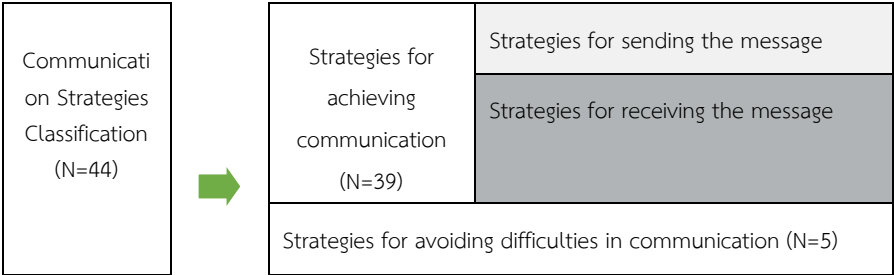
Figure 1: A Classification of Communication Strategy

Category 1: Strategies for achieving communication

Strategies for achieving communication are the strategies that a student, as a message sender or a message receiver, reported employing

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in an order to be effective in the communication situation. As a message sender, the student reported different strategies to get the message across to the interlocutor successfully. While attempting to send the message, the student could make more than one attempt before achieving sending the message. As a message receiver, the student reported employing different strategies in an attempt to understand the interlocutor's message. This main category was further subdivided into two subcategories based on the student's role in the communication situation. The two subcategories are 1) strategies for sending the message, and 2) strategies for receiving the message. The strategies for achieving communication are the strategies which were reported employing by all interviewees. It may be because these strategies can help the learners to establish successful communication. However, the 39 individual strategy items were reported employing in the communication in varying degrees. The individual strategies are presented in order of the frequent of the students' reports, raking from highest to lowest.

Subcategory 1: Strategies for sending the message (Strategies for coping with speaking problems: SSM)

The strategies under this subcategory are the strategies that the students as a message sender reported employing to deal with communication problem. As the message sender, the student attempted to express his/her idea to the interlocutor without any intermissions or

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problems by employing the strategies under this subcategory to achieve the communication purpose. The strategies under this subcategory includes:

SSM 1: Thinking of what I want to say in my native language.

SSM 2: Using simple expressions.

SSM 3: Using a simple word, which has a similar meaning to the intended word

SSM 4: Using non-verbal expressions to express his/her meanings such as gestures, body languages, facial expressions, eye contact, pointing and drawing.

SSM 5: Using some sounds, words, or phrases such as *er, em, well, and your know*, *uh* to fill in pauses in order to gain more time to think

SSM 6: Meaning replacement: use alternative expression

SSM 7: Giving examples to make sure that the listener understands.

SSM 8: Repeating the sentences.

SSM 9: Using synonyms or antonyms to express ideas to the interlocutor

SSM10: Thinking of any familiar sentences and try to change those patterns to fit the situation.

SSM 11: Inserting a native word in an English sentence.

SSM 12: Correcting the statements when a mistake is noticed

SSM 13: Applying language rules to create a new word

SSM 14: Modifying or correcting inaccurate forms of one's utterances

SSM 15: Using words that can be used for a variety of purposes

SSM 16: Using words which sound like the target word

SSM 17: Drawing a picture

SSM 18: Using a general term to represent the referent and apply observed rules or principles in other cases

SSM 19: Making comprehension checks to ensure that the listener understands the message.

SSM 20: Paying particular attention to the listener's reaction.

SSM 21: Paying attention to the sentence structure.

SSM 22: Paying attention to the intonation while speaking.

SSM 23: Making eye-contact while speaking.

Subcategory 2: Strategies for receiving the message (Strategies for coping with listening problems: SRM)

Strategies for receiving the message refers to the strategies that students reported employing in an attempt to understand the interlocutor's message. As a message receiver, the students employed the strategies under this subcategory to cope with listening problems. Sixteen strategies were reported as being employed to achieve this purpose. They include:

SRM 1: Trying to translate into one' native language.

SRM 2: Using a word by word to translate a sentence from native language to a target language

SRM 3: Asking an interlocutor to speak slowly

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SRM 4: Asking for help from her/his peers by using facial expression, eye contact, or asking questions

SRM 5: Asking an interlocutor to repeat a sentence

SRM 6: Asking an interlocutor to explain more to clarify the statement

SRM 7: Asking an interlocutor to give an example to clarify the statement.

SRM 8: Repeating a statement to make sure if what s/he heard or understood is correct

SRM 9: Asking an interlocutor to simplify the language

SRM 10: Asking a listener to answer his/her questions in order to make sure that the listener understands.

SRM 11: Using more words to describe an object or an act when s/he does not know the exact word/ describing or exemplifying the target object or action

SRM 12: Asking for help from other people around to clarify the interlocutor's message

SRM 13: Paying attention to the subject and verb of the sentence.

SRM 14: Paying attention to the interlocutor's rhythm and intonation in order to judge if it is an interrogative sentence.

SRM 15: Paying attention to the interlocutor's pronunciation.

SRM 16: Focusing on familiar expressions or words.

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Category 2: Strategies for avoiding difficulties in communication (SAD)

The strategies under this category are those reported as being employed in an attempt to avoid the difficulties encountered in many communication situations. These strategies were employed when they failed to manage to get the message across to the interlocutor or not to be able to understand the message from the interlocutor. In employing the strategies under this category, the students gave up some parts of the conversation or discontinued the conversation for a while in order to seek a way to escape from the difficult situations. These strategies could be employed either before starting the conversation or after the conversation had already started. The individual strategies under this category are also presented in order of the frequent of the students' reports, raking from highest to lowest. Five emergent strategies in this category include:

SAD 1: Keeping quiet to avoid participating in the conversation

SAD 2: Message abandonment: Stop in mid-utterance/ leaving a message unfinished because of linguistic difficulties

SAD 3: Stopping the conversation when it becomes too difficult to keep the conversation going.

SAD 4: Topic avoidance: Avoid discussions about the concept/ avoiding topic areas or concepts which pose linguistic difficulties

SAD 5: Word avoidance

Discussion

The main purpose of the present study was to investigate how Khon Kaen University students deal with their English communication problems. The findings from the interview demonstrated that different strategies emerged to handle the communication situation. The findings also showed that the students could cope with communication problems despite the limited English language knowledge. In summary, this study has arrived at the result that the students relied on various strategies to achieve the communication purpose. They reported employing different strategies to deal with the communication problems and keep the conversation going. The following is a discussion of certain strategies employed to deal with communication problems.

'Using simple expressions (SSM 2)', 'using a simple word (SSM 3)' and 'using non-verbal expressions (SSM 4)', were reported to be employed by all 43 students when they were in the communication situation. These strategies are classified under the category of strategies for sending the message. That is, in these situations the problems experienced whilst sending the message concerned the students. This finding is consistent with that of Somsai and Intaraprasert (2011) who found that in the Rajamangala Universities of Technology (RMUT) context, 'using non-verbal expression' has been mentioned as a vital strategy which was reported as being employed to convey the intended message to the interlocutor without an intermission or a pause. According to Nakatani (2006), he found that in a Japanese context, non-

verbal strategies were also reported to be employed by the students to achieve communication goals. They were used to attract the listener's attention or to give hints and help the listener guess what the speaker wants to say. In addition, Yaman, Irgin, and Kavasoğlu (2013) points out that in the Turkish context, the students use gestures when they have difficulty in the communication. Regarding 'using a simple word' and 'simple expression', Nakatani (2006) points out that the students try to avoid a communication breakdown by simplifying their utterances, or using simple expressions that they can use confidently. When the students faced difficulties in expressing their feelings or ideas in English, they then tried to avoid those difficulties by using simple and familiar words. According to Cusipag and Chen (2010), they found that when the students encountered the communication difficulties, they resorted to deletions to reduce a structurally complex item. 'Using non-verbal expressions', 'using a simple word', and 'using simple expressions' are likely to help promote achievement in the communication. Therefore, it can be said that non-verbal strategy, simple word strategy, and simple expression strategy are likely to be significant for language learners to employ when they wish to convey messages to the interlocutor successfully.

'Thinking of what I want to say in my native language (SSM 1)' was another reported strategy by all of the students to convey messages to the interlocutor. This strategy was specially reported twice by one third of the interviewees. The use of this strategy is consistent with the study conducted by Somsai and Intaraprasert (2011) which showed that

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the strategy of switching unknown words or phrases into Thai were reported to be used by RMUT students. Somsai and Intaraprasert (2011) point out that when the students faced difficulties in expressing themselves in English and they realized that they were in the contexts where they and their interlocutors were likely to have the same knowledge of one language, they then occasionally switched to that language, i.e. Thai. Then, through the use of this strategy, they did not stop expressing their ideas and the conversation could continue. That is to say, the students could convey the intended meanings to the interlocutors through this strategy.

With regard to the strategies to receive message or understand the interlocutor's message, asking the interlocutor for help was reported. 'Asking an interlocutor to repeat a sentence (SRM 5)', 'asking an interlocutor to explain more to clarify the statement (SRM 6)', 'asking an interlocutor to simplify the language (SRM 9)', 'asking an interlocutor to give an example to clarify the statement (SRM 7)', and 'asking an interlocutor to speak slowly (SRM 3)' were the strategies reported by the students to cope with listening problems. This is consistent with Ya-ni's study, Ya-ni (2007) found that language learners sometimes directly ask the interlocutor about an unknown word, e.g. 'What do you call this...?' In addition, based on Somsai's and Intaraprasert's study (2011), the students also reported asking for help from the interlocutor. Then, the interlocutor helped the students with the words or phrases that could be used to convey the meaning. Dörnyei (1995) also states that students

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can ask for help either directly, e.g. 'what do you call...?' or indirectly, such as eye contact, puzzled expression. Based on the findings of the present study, the students sometimes asked for help from their interlocutor when they encountered difficulty in understanding the interlocutor's message. This shows that instead of keeping silent when the students cannot understand the interlocutor's message, they chose to resort to this strategy in order to continue smooth interaction and communication.

'Translating into one' native language (SRM 1)' was another reported strategy by more than half of the participants to understand the interlocutor's message. Nakatani (2006) points out that the students try to translate into their native language little by little and depend heavily on familiar words to understand what the speaker has said. They do not think in English. However, this strategy seems to be more negative than positive. This is because the more they use this strategy, the less they improve listening skill. Employing this strategy leads the students concentrating on only translating the sentence into their mother language.

With regard to the strategies to avoid difficulties in communication, 'keeping quiet to avoid the conversation (SAD 1)', and 'stopping the conversation when one can't keep the conversation going (SAD 3)' were reported. Nakatani (2006) states that when the EFL learners face difficulties executing their original verbal plan, they tend to give up their attempt to communicate by stopping the conversation or leaving the message unfinished. According to Dörnyei (1995), the strategy of

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leaving message unfinished is one of the strategies employed by a speaker to express his or her meaning when faced with some difficulty. However, avoiding difficulties may be an effective way but not a beneficial way for students to learn a language (Yani, 2007).

Conclusion

The present study attempted to explore strategies for dealing with communication difficulties employed by Thai students. Communicative ability is very important for students but they normally feel a lot of anxiety about communication. Based on the results of the data analysis, 44 strategies for dealing with communication emerged. These strategies were grouped into two main categories: 1) strategies for sending the message, and 2) strategies for receiving the message. From these research findings, some implications in the field of foreign language teaching, especially for tertiary level, may be emerged. Both language teachers and learners should be aware of how important CSs are in the communication situation. Raising awareness of the benefits of employing different CSs to overcome communication problems should be included as part of the language teaching plan. It is acceptable that being able to employ different CSs can be beneficial for language learner. Accordingly, the language teachers who are seen as the most important resource persons in the class (Somsai and Intaraprasert, 2011) can play an important role in raising students' awareness and encouraging them to make use of CSs. Furthermore, they can introduce useful CSs as part of

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classroom lessons and, in the meantime, encourage their students to practice using CSs in a classroom conversation situation. Raising awareness of the students' communication problems and communication strategies used to overcome their communication problems in different contexts may assist the leaners to overcome the communication difficulties. As a result, the students' communicative competence can be improved.

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