

Communication Strategies Used by ASEAN Undergraduate Students in the ELF Setting

Thomas Kirst^a, Phakhawadee Chaisiri^{b*}, Nutch Chantaruchikapong^c

and Jeffrey Dawala Wilang^a

^a*School of Foreign Languages, Institute of Social Technology,
Suranaree University of Technology, Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand*

^b*Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, Khon Kaen University, Nong Khai, Thailand*

^c*Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University,
Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand*

^{*}*Corresponding Author. Email: phakha@kku.ac.th*

Received: January 26, 2023

Revised: July 2, 2023

Accepted: August 31, 2023

Abstract

With its deviations from standard English norms, speakers of English as a lingua franca (ELF) employ skillful use of communication strategies (CSs) to negotiate meaning and compensate for any deficiencies in their English repertoire during interactions. This mixed-methods study aims to identify CSs used by ASEAN students at an international tertiary level institution in Thailand, in addition to exploring communication challenges they face in the ELF setting. Data was collected from an informal group talk, a self-report survey, and a focus group interview with seven undergraduate students from five different ASEAN countries. The findings show that the participants applied all five main types of CSs of which stalling, self-monitoring, and interactional strategies were reported to be used most frequently. Accommodation was found to be an emergent strategy in this context. Comprehension was the major difficulty faced by participants, particularly during those instances of ELF discourse where their interlocutors did not sufficiently collaborate in the negotiation of meaning. These findings suggest that CSs, especially stalling, self-monitoring, and interactional strategies, should be emphasized while teaching English for communication to aspiring ELF speakers. Students should also be made aware of and provided with exposure to varieties of English they are likely to encounter in ELF settings as a part of their listening and speaking practice.

Keywords: ASEAN, communication strategies, English as a lingua franca, tertiary context, Thailand

Introduction

English has become the universal medium of communication in settings as various as international trade and politics to foreign travel and education. In light of this continuously advancing development, it is well noted that non-native speakers of English outnumber the native speakers. Hence, most of the global communication that takes place in English is conducted among non-native English speakers (Seidlhofer, 2011; Smith and Nelson, 2006). The rise of internationalization has increased these types of interactions, thus contributing to the increased use of English as a lingua franca (ELF). ELF is defined as the use of English as a contact language among people who do not share a first language in common (Jenkins et al., 2011). Since ELF has been used among multilingual speakers from different countries, the growth of non-native English varieties and norms has become more common.

However, communication in the ELF context can be challenging due to the unique English variations and accents of multilingual people who have learned English as a second or a foreign language. Misunderstandings or misinterpretations can easily occur because of the complicated, dynamic, and emergent patterns that typify ELF interactions (Canagarajah, 2020; Jenkins et al., 2011; Mauranen, 2006). While managing to understand each other despite their respective variants of English, speakers of ELF can adapt their Englishes to reach their communicative goals (Cogo and Dewey, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2011; Srikrai and Wannaruk, 2022). Seidlhofer (2009) argues that ELF users focus on intelligibility and employ communication strategies (CSs), which are key for negotiating meaning and to both correct and prevent misunderstandings from occurring.

Meanwhile, globalization and the spread of English have also contributed to internationalization in higher education. In this context, English has served as a medium of instruction not only to improve local learners' English competence, but also to attract international students. This drive to internationalize academic sites has brought about increased student mobility, which is opportune for the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations (ASEAN), which supports regionalization. Enhanced student mobility among the 10 member countries of ASEAN gained support from the European Union (EU) in 2015. (Hénard et al., 2016). As such, Thailand has been highlighted to play an active role in investing in cross-border higher education to spark regional development (Thon and Nicoletti, 2018).

This cross-border movement in tertiary education has involved many students in addition to academic and support staff, which emphasizes the importance of ELF for both academic purposes and social interactions (Doiz et al., 2013; Taguchi, 2014). Despite its significance, few studies have examined the linguistic terrain of students using ELF in the international or study abroad context, particularly in the ASEAN setting (Thon and Nicoletti, 2018). In the Thai university context, most ELF researchers have focused on the attitudes of Thai students towards ELF and the call to integrate ELF into English language teaching (ELT) curriculum (e.g. Ambele and Boonsuk, 2020; Boonsuk and Ambele, 2021). As insufficient attention has been paid to communication among ELF speakers at international Thai university programs, the present study aims to address underexplored aspects, namely the challenges faced by ELF speakers and the CSs they use to overcome those difficulties. Ultimately, it is hoped that the findings reveal specific areas of language instruction for fledgling ELF speakers in this context that warrant focus.

Communication Strategies (CSs) in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) Context

Second language (L2) researchers first made note of communication strategies (CSs) in the early 1970s “in recognition that the mismatch between L2 speakers’ linguistic resources and communicative intentions leads to a number of systematic language phenomena whose main function is to handle difficulties or breakdowns in communication” (Dornyei and Scott, 1997: 174). Dornyei and Scott explained that the term “communication strategy,” was coined by Selinker in his seminal

1972 work on interlanguage. The research on CSs advanced by the end of the 1970s, perhaps most notably by Elaine Tarone, who provided a more concise definition and conceptualized CSs as “a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where the requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared” (Tarone, 1980: 419). Around the same time, according to Dornyei and Scott, CSs gained prominence by playing an integral role in Canale and Swain’s 1980 model of communicative competence. CSs appeared here as part of the model’s strategic competence component. Henceforth, additional taxonomies detailing the CSs employed by L2 speakers have been refined and put forward.

It is the work of Celce-Murcia et al. (1995); however, from which this study utilizes a five-part taxonomy for CSs. This updated model of communicative competence advances on Canale and Swain’s (1980) model. The CSs denoting strategic competencies hail from three perspectives. First, the psycholinguistic perspective focuses on strategies speakers use while having difficulty expressing themselves, such as avoidance and achievement (Færch and Kasper 1983). Second, the interactional perspective leads us to the negotiation of meaning to achieve communicative goals, as seen in self-monitoring and interactional strategies (Tarone, 1980). Third, the communication continuity/maintenance perspective is about keeping the conversation going and creating time to think or make alternative utterance plans, including strategies such as stalling.

According to Vettorel (2018), research whereby CSs are identified and described within authentic ELF discourse began to intensify in the 1990s and has since continued. Mauranen (2006) examined misunderstandings in ELF communication and the strategies employed to resolve them within the context of an international university degree program. Overall, misunderstandings were found to be uncommon and the greatest emphasis was on the use of proactive CSs, where interlocutors worked to prevent misunderstandings before they occurred. Mauranen’s study, however, focused on highly proficient ELF speakers of mixed nationalities and included undergraduates,

graduate students, and faculty. Additionally, formal talks, such as classes, thesis defences, and conferences were the sources of data. It is the aim of the current study to analyze more natural and informal communication scenarios, and devote attention to the shift in language analysis from formal linguistic structures to more natural spoken data (Overstreet, 2012).

Some studies have focused on CSs in more natural settings for international university students (Hanamoto, 2016; Konakahara, 2012). Both involved looking at small numbers of students of mixed nationalities engaging in ELF conversation deemed to be naturalistic. Hanamoto’s study looked at lower proficiency undergraduate males, while Konakahara looked at higher proficiency female graduate students. Konakahara’s higher proficiency female subjects made use of restructuring and appeal for help CSs primarily, while Hanamoto’s lower proficiency male subjects made use of more clarification checks and repetition CSs. Both studies noted, however, the important role that non-verbal CSs play in keeping the conversation going in times of difficulty in understanding.

In Thailand, there has been some interest in CSs in the last decade (e.g. Phonhan, 2019; Wilang and Ngamchatturat, 2021). Most studies focus on the English as a foreign language (EFL) context and only use Thai participants. To the best of our knowledge, the use of CSs has not been investigated in the ELF context in Thailand. Most studies are also limited to quantitative design and rely on self-reported survey data. This study intends to incorporate a significant qualitative component including analysis of actual CS usage by ELF speakers engaging in informal group talk.

Whereas previous studies have been light on data triangulation, this study will combine transcribed data from a group talk, self-report data, and a post-group talk focus group interview with participants. In doing so, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the communication strategies used by ASEAN undergraduate students in the ELF setting?

2. What are the communication challenges that the ASEAN undergraduate students face in the ELF setting? How do they overcome those challenges?

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a mixed methods approach with a concurrent embedded design in which the qualitative data were collected first, followed by quantitative data to provide a supportive role to the qualitative findings (Creswell et al., 2003). We contributed to the field of ELF with the qualitative analysis of CSs and included the quantitative measurement to triangulate the data to examine how our participants self-evaluated their use of CSs. To explore the communication challenges and strategies used to overcome them, a focus group was used to understand our participants' experiences in more detail.

Context of the Study

This study which was carried out in May 2022 took place at a public university in the northeast of Thailand where nearly 50 programs are instructed in English. Most of the international students are from ASEAN countries. Thus, English is used as a lingua franca in this setting.

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select individuals who were studying in undergraduate international programs and willing to take part in the study. The maximal variation sampling strategy was used so the participants were comprised of different nationalities, providing the opportunity to record diverse views on CS use. After a list of the potential participants was compiled, we informed them of the purposes and methods of the study. Ultimately, seven students were recruited. Their demographic information is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic information of the participants

Participant code (gender)	Nationality	Languages	English proficiency	Major (year)
P1 (F)	Burmese	Burmese, English	C1	Engineering (2)
P2 (F)	Cambodian	Khmer, English, Thai	B2	Agricultural Technology (2)
P3 (M)	Lao	Lao, Thai, English	B2	Engineering (3)
P4 (F)	Thai	Thai, English	B1	Engineering (2)
P5 (F)	Filipino	Filipino, English	C1	Engineering (1)
P6 (M)	Filipino	Filipino, English	C1	Engineering (2)
P7 (M)	Filipino	Filipino, English	B1	Agricultural Technology (1)

Instruments

Qualitative data from a conversation involving our seven participants was collected to note their CS use in a natural setting. They were invited to join in on a group talk activity in which they were asked to speak with each other for about 30 minutes. This 30-minute benchmark coincides with previous studies that have engaged subjects in informal ELF talks (e.g. Konakahara, 2012; Matsumoto, 2011). The participants were free to generate topics spontaneously.

A self-report survey was used to collect data on the frequency of CS usage in the participants' daily lives. The survey was based on the model of strategic competence by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995). It consisted of 19 statements about CSs and used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never (1) to always (5). Two expert native English speakers examined the statements to ensure both precision and that each item accurately characterized the CS being alluded to. The value of Cohen's kappa was 1.0 meaning that the items in the survey can measure the attributes. Some wording adjustments were made according to the experts' suggestions. The survey was piloted prior to this study.

Semi-structured focus group interview questions examined the participants' use of English, communication challenges and strategies, their interlocutors, their feelings, and experiences communicating in the ELF setting (see Appendix A).

Data Collection

The data collection took place in a café near the university, in which our team reserved a large, private, co-working space. The participants were informed that both audio and video recordings would be made during the group talk activity to ensure accuracy. Participants convened for the talk while sitting across from one another at a rectangular café table. The research team was present in the room, but upon initiating the recording, remained distanced as to not impede, influence, or interfere with the conversation in any way. This conversation was wholly initiated by the participants and covered aspects of their studies, personal lives, and cultures. The group talk lasted approximately 25 minutes, at which time the researchers stopped the recording, having ascertained that each member of the group was afforded adequate opportunities to engage in the conversation. Afterward, the self-report survey was administered to participants individually. The survey was distributed after the group talk to avoid the priming effect. Finally, a focus group interview about communication challenges in the ELF setting was conducted in tandem by two members of the research team. The focus group session lasted about 20 minutes.

Data Analysis

The group talk was transcribed verbatim using transcript conventions (see Appendix B) according to Mauranen (2006). The completed transcript was cross-checked by the researchers and reviewed by the participants as well for accuracy. Content analysis was used to check for CSs used by the participants. Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) strategic competence framework served as the guide for the deductive coding of CSs. The codes included the 19 subtypes stemming from the five main types of CSs as shown in Table 2. All CS usage was recorded, and the frequencies of each individual CS used by each participant were calculated into percentages. It should be noted that we were limited in getting a complete and accurate count of all non-linguistic CSs, particularly facial expressions. This was due to the quality of the video recording and the fact that participants were wearing masks in line with

national COVID-19 safety protocols in effect at the time. To ensure trustworthiness and to avoid individual bias, the researchers coded the data together and discussed any discrepancies until reaching an average agreement rate of 90% in the initial coding process. Two weeks later, one researcher re-analyzed 50% of the data. The intra-rater reliability score was 98%.

Table 2 Examples of CSs used from the group talk data

Types of CSs	Subtypes	Examples from group talk and from Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) framework
1. Avoidance	1.1 Message replacement	
	1.2 Topic Avoidance	P3 actually, I got married before. How to say, ended? I, but, I, I, some is cccuu, cute [@P??? @] P3 but, ok, you can talk to me if you like have a crush and then I can talk to them
	1.3 Message Abandonment	P3 you mean like male or [uh P4 both] P3 both
2. Achievement	2.1 Circumlocution	P6 the white one, it's like a bread P7 yeah, it's white
	2.2 Approximation	e.g. fish for carp
	2.3 All Purpose Words	P3 and I studied hard, like you know because she like kinda asked me the questions
	2.4 Non-linguistic means	e.g. pointing, gestures, drawing pictures
	2.5 Restructuring	P2 I saw that. I saw them do a lot of reports
	2.6 Word-coinage	e.g. vegetarianist
	2.7 Literal translation from L1	
	2.8 Foriegnizing	e.g. L1 word with L2 pronunciation
	2.9 Code Switching	P3 you wanna gin mu-grata? (Thai language)
	2.10 Retrieval	P3 I was not good in chemm , in chemistry .

Table 2 Examples of CSs used from the group talk data (cont.)

Types of CSs	Subtypes	Examples from group talk and from Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) framework
3. Stalling	3.1 Fillers	P3 but, <i>uhhh, I think</i> , I don't know I believe she had a little bit of feeling, like <i>you know</i> like, how to say it?
	3.2 Self-Repetition	P5 It sounds nice so <i>I just, I just</i> think it's fun
4. Self-monitoring	4.1 Self-Initiated Repair	P1 <i>I was very. She was</i> way open-minded
	4.2 Self-Rephrasing	P1 <i>I think my mother is different like that, my mother used to tell me that</i> if a girl has to start first, you know, you should go
5. Interactional	5.1 Appeal for Help	P1 I think like, the girls are, <i>how do you say?</i> They? Do not tell. The girls, do not tell truth.
	5.2 Meaning Negotiation	P7 Like a potluck, like especially in the Philippines it gets really big. P3 <i>the potluck and the, you, your family cooks something and share, right?</i>
6. Accommodation	6.1 Co-construction	P4 I, I like <i>rat-nah</i> (Thai language) P3 Lat [nah P4 Rat – nah] P3 Raat – naah P4 Rat-nah P3 <i>Rat-nah. Oh, I see.</i>

To analyze the quantitative data from the self-report survey, descriptive statistics regarding the frequency of each CS subtype used by all participants were presented in terms of mean and standard deviation (SD). The qualitative data from the focus group interview was transcribed. The same transcript accuracy crosscheck and participant transcript review from the group talk were also applied. Thematic analysis with inductive coding was used to look for patterns and to interpret emergent themes. Like the coding process of CSs, the data was first analyzed by the researchers, having reached an average agreement rate of more than 90%. A re-analysis of the data was made two weeks after the initial analysis by one researcher. The score of intra-rater reliability was 95%.

Results

Use of Communication Strategies

To answer the first research question, data from the group talk and self-report survey were used to determine what CSs our subjects use. Table 3 shows the percentages of CSs used by each participant (P1-P7) from the group talk data. All five main categories of CSs were observed to be used by the participants. The third category, "Stalling," accounted for the highest percentage of CSs used. This was mainly due to the use of the sub-type of "fillers," and to a lesser extent, "self-repetition." The first category, "Avoidance," was shown to account for the lowest percentage of CS use by the participants. Of further interest stemming from these group talk findings was the appearance of an emergent CS during the coding process. This CS we referred to as "Accommodation," and dubbed a specific subtype to go along with it as "co-construction."

Table 3 Percentages of CSs used by each participant from group talk data

Types of CSs	Subtypes	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
1. Avoidance	1.2 Topic Avoidance			1				
	1.3 Message Abandonment			1			3	
2. Achievement	2.1 Circumlocution						3	
	2.3 All Purpose Words			5			3	25
	2.4 Non-Linguistic	11	36	11	28	32	22	25
	2.5 Restructuring		9				3	
	2.9 Code Switching			2				
3. Stalling	2.10 Retrieval	3		1				
	3.1 Fillers	53	46	52	24	28	33	
4. Self-Monitoring	3.2 Self-Repetition	11	9	8	28	24	16	
	4.1 Self-Initiated Repair	3		2.5	5	4		
5. Inter-actional	4.2 Self-Rephrasing	5.5		2	5	4	6	
	5.1 Appeal for Help	5.5		8			8	25
6. Accommodation	5.2 Meaning Negotiation	8		5.5	5	4		25
	6.1 Co-construction			1	5	4	3	

According to the survey, participants self-reported that they most frequently use “Self-Monitoring” and “Interactional,” strategies. Participants reported that they were least likely to use “Avoidance,” as a strategy as seen in Table 4.

Table 4 Means of CSs used by all participants from self-report survey

Types of CSs	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Avoidance	2.67	0.92	Sometimes
1.1 Message Replacement	2.86	0.90	Sometimes
1.2 Topic Avoidance	2.86	0.90	Sometimes
1.3 Message Abandonment	2.29	0.95	Rarely
2. Achievement	3.61	0.90	Often
2.1 Circumlocution	4.71	0.49	Often
2.2 Approximation	4.71	0.49	Often
2.3 All-purpose words	3.43	1.72	Often
2.4 Non-linguistic means	4.57	0.53	Always
2.5 Restructuring	4.41	0.69	Always
2.6 Word-coinage	2.86	1.21	Sometimes
2.7 Literal translation	3.14	1.07	Sometimes
2.8 Foreignizing	2.71	0.76	Sometimes
2.9 Code-switching	2.57	0.79	Rarely
2.10 Retrieval	3.29	1.25	Sometimes
3. Stalling	3.57	0.97	Often
3.1 Fillers	3.71	0.95	Often
3.2 Self-repetition	3.43	0.98	Often
4. Self-monitoring	4.57	0.66	Always
4.1 Self-initiated repair	4.57	0.79	Always
4.2 Self-Rephrasing	4.57	0.53	Always
5. Interactional	4.57	0.64	Always
5.1 Appeal for help	4.71	0.49	Always
5.2 Meaning negotiation strategies	4.43	0.79	Always
Total	3.80	0.85	Often

Interpretation: 1.00-1.80 = Never, 1.81-2.60 = Rarely, 2.61-3.40 = Sometimes, 3.41-4.20 = Often, 4.21-5.00 = Always

Communication Challenges and Solutions

To answer the second research question, Table 5 displays the communication challenges and solutions to overcome them from both the speaker’s point of view (SPoV), and the listener’s point of view (LPoV). Regarding communication challenges, two main themes were identified: 1) difficulties in comprehension and 2) noncollaborative communication. The solutions included 1) use of communication strategies, 2) gain of sociolinguistic awareness, and 3) acts of self-improvement.

Table 5 Communication challenges and solutions in ELF interactions

	Themes and subthemes
Challenges	1) Difficulties in comprehension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor pronunciation - Different levels of vocabulary knowledge - Accentedness of speech - Fast speech rate 2) Noncollaborative communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interlocutor trait e.g. shy - Low English proficiency
Solutions	1) Use of communication strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appealing for help - Using approximation, all-purpose words, non-linguistic means 2) Gain of sociolinguistic awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exposing themselves to English variations and levels - Ignoring grammar 3) Acts of self-improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practicing pronunciation - Speaking English with friends and families - Studying new vocabulary

Participants noted that their ability to make messages comprehensible (SPoV) and the ability to comprehend others in conversations (LPoV) were the most challenging aspects of ELF interactions. Their concerns centered around poor pronunciation,

different levels of vocabulary knowledge, accented speech, and fast speech rate. The excerpts below illustrate challenges in English pronunciation. While P5 referred to her own pronunciation as a cause for misunderstanding (SPoV), P2 reported that her interlocutor's pronunciation made it difficult for her to comprehend what was said (LPoV). Both suggested solutions to overcome these challenges which were noted in the solution themes of "acts of self-development," and "use of communication strategies," namely appealing for help.

I get a little bit misunderstood because of my pronunciation, so I just practice every now and then with that (P5 [Participant code], 2022).

[...] It's because of their pronunciation. But whenever I encountered that, I would just ask them directly to repeat the question (P2 [Participant code], 2022).

The different levels of vocabulary knowledge are also a cause of major communication challenges in the ELF setting. From the LPoV, some participants expressed that it is difficult to comprehend some technical terms, jargon, or unfamiliar words used by their interlocutors as follows:

In difficult subjects like physics or chemistry, they use some technical terms. It's hard to catch. If I don't understand, and if I didn't get a chance to ask them (the lecturers) during that time, maybe I ask my friend or take a note and memorize the difficult words (P1 [Participant code], 2022).

If there are some jargons, some vocabulary I don't know, I ask them to show me pictures. And if I understand, I remember that vocabulary, I use (it) with them next time, like "Tilapia", right, P1?... (P4 [Participant code], 2022).

As presented, to lessen or remedy issues related to difficult vocabulary, both P1 and P4 employ communication strategies. While P1 states that they appeal for help either from the lecturers directly or

from classmates, studying new vocabulary is also a way to improve herself. P4 also appealed for help with a specific use of non-linguistic means such as the use of visual aids, when possible, to negotiate meaning.

From the SPoV, a few participants mentioned that they prefer to use difficult or academic words such as 'commence' instead of 'begin' and 'anticipate' instead of 'expect', when possible, to inflate their social status and perceived level of intelligence, which they link to advanced use of English. They felt this would allow them to give the impression of being well educated; however, this could lead to comprehension problems as their interlocutors might have lower levels of English proficiency. Also, there may be a contrast in that their interlocutor does not value ascribing elevated status to such displays of proficiency. To overcome this challenge, one participant takes initiative to familiarize himself with and be aware of different speakers' perceived proficiency levels within his current ELF community. He then adjusts by using approximation instead of specific words that might be too difficult for his interlocutor.

In addition, both accented and fast speech were reported to provoke comprehension difficulties among the participants. All were aware that people from different countries had unique accents and individuals had different rates of speech. From the SPoV, all participants noted that they continue to work on their speaking skills by practicing pronunciation and speaking English with friends and family. To reduce struggles in understanding various English accents from the LPoV, participants said they take advantage of opportunities to maximize exposure to the various Englishes in their ELF community.

While some participants knew they normally spoke fast (SPoV), some said they had difficulties in ELF communication because of their interlocutor's fast speech rate (LPoV). To deal with this challenge, the speakers tried to adjust by speaking slower and louder, and also by using the CS of all-purpose words, such as "I mean" and "you know" to allow time and check that their listeners established the meaning of what was said. On the other hand, the listeners used the CS of appealing for help,

e.g. “What do you mean?” and “Can you repeat that, please?” to request the elaboration necessary for them to understand the message.

Another aspect participants found challenging was that of noncollaborative communication. From the SPoV, the non-Thai participants said their Thai friends seemed shy about communicating in English. They felt this shyness culminates in a lack of collaboration in the interest of establishing mutual understanding in conversations. They surmised this was due to their Thai peers’ low English proficiency, perhaps from their having relatively fewer opportunities to practice authentic English in everyday life. Our Thai participant agreed with this assertion and explained that when studying in class, Thai students only listen to lectures and rarely have chances to use authentic English. They then lack self-confidence in spoken English, resulting in somewhat less robust communication in ELF situations. One international participant further commented on how she managed to survive in the ELF community as follows:

(Despite their low English proficiency) I know they want to be friends with us, but they only don’t like communicating in English. Like, it’s complicated and they’re just shy. But now we have grown up more. They talk a lot, like, even though they don’t talk in complete grammar, they understand that we get it. And we understand. So, they try to talk more and communicate more (P5 [Participant code], 2022).

According to our participants, it is thought that ignoring mistakes related to English grammar in conversations could increase the interlocutors’ confidence and enhance the productivity of interactions. This suggests that focusing on comprehensibility rather than strict concepts of standard English is key for successful ELF communication.

Discussion

Two different data collection points used in this study to determine CSs used by our participants resulted in different findings. While both the group talk and the self-report survey showed that all five categories of

CSs from Celce-Murcia et al.’s (1995) framework were employed by the participants, observations from the group talk showed that the most frequently used CSs were “Stalling” and “Achievement” while “Avoidance” was used the least. This differs from the self-report survey, in which our participants reported that they most often used “Self-Monitoring,” and “Interactional” strategies, while the use of “Avoidance” mirrored data from the group talk in being the CS used least. Seeing the use of all CSs was not surprising, as ELF speakers must employ a wide range of CSs to negotiate meaning as they jointly participate in achieving mutual comprehension according to Taguchi and Ichihara (2018).

Concerning the data from the group talk, the use of “Stalling,” being observed the most coincides with Wilang and Ngamchatturat (2021) who also observed the widespread use of this CS in Thai subjects. The use of “Achievement” as a CS was observed to be the second most used, particularly by “non-linguistic” strategies. This is in line with the work of Phonhan (2019), Konakahara (2012), and Hanamoto (2016), who all found non-linguistic strategies, particularly in the use of gestures among their subjects in the ELF setting. Perhaps the higher level of “Self-Monitoring,” and “Interactional” CSs self-reported by the participants shows that they are concerned with adjusting their own speech and cooperating with their interlocuter, but they are simply not aware of how much more likely they are to stall for time or use gestures when talking.

One aspect that remained consistent across both data collection instruments was that “Avoidance” was continually proven to be the least used CS, both in the observed group talk and in the self-report survey. According to Lewandowska (2019), this is not surprising, as avoidance strategies are not much use to ELF speakers and more often lead to communication breakdown. ELF speakers typically go to any length to get their messages across, and according to Pitzl (2005), ELF users instead present high levels of cooperation to sustain the conversation and convey meaning.

Of further interest is the emergence of a sixth category of CS found to be used by the participants during the group talk that could not be accounted for with the coding system based on Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) framework. This strategy was noted during instances where one participant actively helped the other arrive at the meaning of something. Cogo and Pitzl (2016) and Taguchi and Ichihara (2018) state that it is common for ELF speakers to accommodate the other by assisting and participating in the co-construction of meaning. One speaker acknowledges a deficiency in the language of the other and then actively helps them both arrive at a shared understanding. This phenomenon of negotiation manifested itself in the group talk in forms that De Bartolo (2014) referred to as simultaneous speech as well as utterance completion. This can be seen in actual use by our participants in example number 6 in Table 1. Here, two participants were talking, and one was trying to assist the other in arriving at the correct pronunciation of a food dish that one participant had just recently been made aware of. Szczepek (2000) states that these instances have also been referred to as collaborative productions, and their use shows a desire on the part of interlocutors to keep the conversation moving.

Regarding challenges experienced in ELF communication, comprehension and sociolinguistic differences were at the forefront. According to Lewandowska (2019), in terms of international communication, ELF speakers have to deal with an "unpredictable variability" (Maley, 2009: 191) due to the situations they face where aspects of the other speakers' L1 impact the communication. ELF speakers therefore need to be concerned with and prepared to enhance their chances for effective communication. ELF encompasses sociolinguistic differences, and the main goal is to promote communication in the international setting. Examples of this are seen in the solutions our participants employ, such as the time they spend on improving their language skills and getting to know their interlocutors' speaking traits and proficiency.

Conclusion

This study endeavoured to fill in a gap concerning the lack of significant qualitative analysis alongside the quantitative component of studies examining CSs used in the ELF setting among international students in Thai higher education. It also examined communication challenges faced by our participants as ELF speakers and the solutions they employ. The findings showed that each of the seven participants from five different ASEAN countries employed all five main types of CSs based on Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) framework. These include strategies of avoidance, achievement, stalling, self-monitoring, and interactional strategies. While data transcribed from the group talk revealed stalling to be used most frequently, the self-report survey revealed self-monitoring and interactional strategies to be what participants considered themselves most likely to use. Moreover, accommodation, namely the co-construction of utterances, was identified to be an emergent strategy in this context. Regarding communication challenges, two main themes emerged from the focus group. These were related to difficulties in comprehension and noncollaborative communication. To overcome these challenges, participants applied CSs, remained cognizant of sociolinguistic differences, and continued to work on improving their English skills.

The following implications have arisen from the findings. Methodologically speaking, since the data from two research instruments employed in this study (self-reporting and group talk), showed different CS use by our participants, the mainstream etic perspective used to assess CS usage should be supported with an emic approach. Qualitative data gained from authentic conversations could yield a greater understanding of the sociolinguistic complexities of this ELF context. In terms of pedagogy, students need to be advised in class to apply CSs and regularly practice asking for confirmation and help, and modify their responses when misunderstandings occur. Teachers can be role models for co-constructing strategies in class by providing scaffolding for student speakers who struggle to deliver their message. Additionally, the ability to comprehend different Englishes and knowledge of

sociocultural diversity need to be highlighted in class so that students become aware of these linguistic and cultural differences. The teachers can raise awareness of ELF by exposing students to varieties of English and English accents and provide them with a multilingual model of communication, which focuses on making themselves comprehensible, instead of nativelike.

Finally, there are a few limitations to address. First, despite an attempt to represent as many ASEAN countries as possible, the number of participants in this study was small, only allowing us to include five of the ten member countries. Second, although this study contributed an enhanced qualitative analysis regarding CSs in this ELF setting, only one 25-minute group talk session totalling just under five thousand words was conducted due to time constraints. It is recommended that further investigation into this topic involve an increased number of participants and speaking sessions. Additionally, while we strived to create an atmosphere for our informal group talk that was as natural as possible, it cannot be considered completely natural. We recommend various other naturalistic communication scenarios be explored, such as online conversations. It is our contention that these contributions will ultimately serve to inform educators of the proper and most effective pedagogy for the instruction and use of CSs among ELF speakers.

References

- Ambele, E. A. and Boonsuk, Y. (2020). Voices of learners in Thai ELT classrooms: A wake up call towards teaching English as a lingua franca, *Asian Englishes*, **23**(2), 201-217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2020.1759248>
- Boonsuk, Y. and Ambele, E. A. (2021). Towards integrating lingua franca in Thai EFL: Insights from Thai tertiary learners. *International Journal of Instruction*, **14**(3), 17-38. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2021.1432a>
- Canagarajah, S. (2020). Transnational work, translanguaging practices, and interactional sociolinguistics. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, **24**(5), 555-573. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12440>
- Canale, M. and Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, **1**(1), 1-47. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/I.1.1>
- Celce-Murcia, M., Dornyei, Z., and Thurrell, S. (1995). Communicative competence: A pedagogically motivated model with content specifications. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, **6**(2), 5-35. <https://doi.org/10.5070/L462005216>
- Cogo, A. and Dewey, M. (2012). **Analysing English as a lingua franca: A corpus-driven investigation**. New York: Continuum.
- Cogo, A. and Pitzl, M. L. (2016). Pre-empting and signalling non-understanding in ELF. *ELT Journal*, **70**(3), 339-345. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccw015>
- Creswell, J. W., Plano Clark, V. L., Gutmann, M. L., and Hanson, W. E. (2003). Advanced mixed methods research designs. In A. Tashakkori and C. Teddlie (Eds.). **Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research**. (pp. 209-240). California: Sage.
- De Bartolo, A. M. (2014). Pragmatic strategies and negotiation of meaning in ELF talk. *EL LE*, **3**(3), 453-464. <http://doi.org/10.14277/2280-6792/115p>
- Doiz, A., Lasagabaster, D., and Sierra, J. M. (2013). **English-medium instruction at universities: Global challenges**. Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters.
- Dornyei, Z. and Scott, M. L. (1997). Communication strategies in a second language: Definitions and taxonomies. *Language Learning*, **47**(1), 173-210. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.51997005>
- Færch, C. and Kasper, G. (1983). Plans and strategies in foreign language communication. In C. Færch and G. Kasper (Eds.). **Strategies in interlanguage communication**. (pp.20-60). London: Longman.
- Hanamoto, H. (2016). How participants in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) employ communication strategies: multiple realities in minimal responses in ELF. *Asian Englishes*, **18**(3), 181-196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2016.1229832>
- Hénard, F., Bonichon, S., Maulana, A., Iqbal, G., and Oratmangun, K. (2016). **Student mobility and credit transfer system in ASEAN: Mapping student mobility and credit transfer systems in ASEAN region**. Jakarta: SHARE.
- Jenkins, J., Cogo, A., and Dewey, M. (2011). Review of developments in research into English as a lingua franca. *Language Teaching*, **44**(3), 281-315. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444811000115>
- Konakahara, M. (2012). Reconsideration of communication strategies from an English as a lingua franca perspective. *Bulletin of the Graduate School of Education of Waseda University*, **20**(1), 201-216.
- Lewandowska, E. (2019). English as a lingua franca: An overview of communicative strategies. In B. Loranc-Paszylk (Ed.). **Rethinking directions in language learning and teaching at university level**. (pp. 27-52). Research-publishing.net. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2019.31.890>

- Maley, A. (2009). ELF: A teacher's perspective. **Language and Intercultural Communication**, 9(3), 187-200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708470.902748848>
- Matsumoto, Y. (2011). Successful ELF communications and implications for ELT: Sequential analysis of ELF pronunciation negotiation strategies. **The Modern Language Journal**, 95, 97-114. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2011.01172.x>
- Mauranen, A. (2006). Signaling and preventing misunderstanding in English as lingua franca communication. **International Journal of the Sociology of Language**, 177, 123-150. <https://doi.org/10.1515/IJSL.2006.008>
- Overstreet, M. (2012). Pragmatic expressions in cross-linguistic perspective. **Applied Research on English Language**, 1(2), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.22108/are.2012.15451>
- Phonhan, P. (2019). Strategies in English oral communication employed by Thai engineering students across majors and types of academic programs. **Journal of Liberal Arts Maejo University**, 7(1), 152-174.
- Pitzl, M. L. (2005). Non-understanding in English as a lingua franca: Examples from a business context. **Vienna English Working Papers**, 14(2), 50-71.
- Seidlhofer, B. (2009). Common ground and different realities: World Englishes and English as a lingua franca. **World Englishes**, 28(2), 236-245. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971X.2009.01592.x>
- Seidlhofer, B. (2011). **Understanding English as a Lingua Franca**. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. **Product Information International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching**, 10, 209-241. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/iral.1972.10.1-4.209>
- Smith, L. E. and Nelson, C. L. (2006). World Englishes and issues of intelligibility. In B. B. Kachru, Y. Kachru, and C.L. Nelson (Eds.). **The handbook of world Englishes**. (pp. 428-445). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Srikrai, P. S. and Wannaruk, A. (2022). Attitudes toward English as a lingua franca in multilingual university contexts of Northeast Thailand. **Journal of Mekong Societies**, 18(3), 159-181. Retrieved from <https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/mekongjournal/article/view/261339>
- Szczepek, B. (2000). Formal aspects of collaborative productions in English conversations. **InLiSt-Interaction and Linguistic Structures**, 17, 2-35.
- Taguchi, N. (2014). English-medium education in the global society. **International Review of Applied Linguistics**, 52(2), 89-98. <https://doi.org/10.1515/iral-2014-0004>

- Taguchi, N. and Ishihara, N. (2018). The pragmatics of English as a lingua franca: Research and pedagogy in the era of globalization. **Annual Review of Applied Linguistics**, 38, 80-101. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190518000028>
- Tarone, E. (1980). Communication strategies, foreigner talk, and repair in interlanguage. **Language Learning**, 30(2), 417-428. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1980.tb00326.x>
- Thon, S. and Nicoletti, K. (2018). The use of English in an English as a lingua franca (ELF) context: A study of ASEAN international students at a Thai university. **Veridian E-Journal**, 11(4), 227-240.
- Vettorel, P. (2018). ELF and communication strategies: Are they taken into account in ELT materials? **RELC Journal**, 49(1), 58-73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688217746204>
- Wilang, J. D. and Ngamchatturat, T. (2021). Communication strategies of engineering students with low, moderate and high anxiety in a group discussion task. **The Asian ESP Journal**, 17(4), 38-57.

Interviews

- P1 (Participant code). (2022, May 8). **Interview**. Student.
- P2 (Participant code). (2022, May 8). **Interview**. Student.
- P4 (Participant code). (2022, May 8). **Interview**. Student.
- P5 (Participant code). (2022, May 8). **Interview**. Student.

Appendices

Appendix A Focus Group Interview Questions

- With whom do you speak English the most and in what context?
 How do you feel when you speak to this person or these people?
 Do you usually find the communication easy or difficult?
 What is most challenging about communicating with other ELF speakers?
 How do you overcome communication challenges?

Appendix B Transcription Conventions

- (.) pause of up to five seconds
 @ laughter
 [] overlapping speech
 (x) transcription not possible; each x roughly standing for a word
 ? question intonation

italics used here to highlight parts of the transcript discussed in the text
 P???@ multiple participants laughing at one time