TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC NGOẠI NGỮ, ĐẠI HỌC HUẾ
UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES,
HUE UNIVERSITY

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NHIỀU TÁC GIẢ

KỶ YẾU HỘI THẢO QUỐC TẾ

NGHIÊN CỨU LIÊN NGÀNH VỀ NGÔN NGỮ VÀ GIẢNG DẠY NGÔN NGỮ LẦN THỨ X

THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS:

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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FOREWORDS

Today, the interdisciplinary approach to research has become inevitable. In response to this trend, the University of Foreign Languages and International Studies, Hue University, Vietnam, organizes the annual Conference on Interdisciplinary Research in Linguistics and Language Education to offer an academic forum for scholars to exchange, update and report their research results, as well as trends and approaches in language education. It also creates opportunities for scholars to connect and form interdisciplinary research groups across universities and institutions, fostering academic exchanges and cooperation among national and international scholars.

This year, the conference was organized in collaboration with Thailand's Buriram Rajabhat University and James Madison University. It attracted participants from various provinces in Vietnam, including Thai Nguyen, Tra Vinh, Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Can Tho, Da Nang, Binh Duong, Nha Trang, and Hue, as well as scholars from Thailand and South Korea. The conference has contributed to maintaining HUFLIS's academic growth and reputation.

Among approximately 80 full-text submissions from nearly 20 domestic and international universities, colleges, and institutes, 68 papers were selected through a rigorous blind review and editing process for official publication in these proceedings. The papers in the present proceedings were organized under themes in the same vein as the parallel sessions of the conference.

The HUFLIS Academic Council and the conference organizers would like to take this opportunity to extend the acknowledgment of the reviewers and editors for their devotion and high-quality editorial work. Special thanks also go to the staff of Hue University Publishing House for their support and assistance in publishing these proceedings.

Best regards,
Head of the Academic Council
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pham Thi Hong Nhung

MỤC LỤC

THE USE OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN EFL SPEAKING BY ENGLISH-MAJOR STUDENTS AT A VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: This research paper examined the communication strategies (CSs) employed by Vietnamese English-major students at a Vietnamese university to cope with the difficulties they encountered in speaking English. Thirteen first-year and ten second-year university students performed pair/group speaking tasks related to various topics in the required course books in their normal class hours. Their performances were audio and video recorded, with 26 and 13 recordings obtained from first-year and second-year students, respectively. In-depth individual interviews were further conducted with 18 of the participants subsequent to their speaking performances. The results indicated that use of pause fillers and hesitation devices, repetition, self-repair, and translanguaging was among the common CSs employed by both groups. However, the first-year students tended to resort to translanguaging and literal translation more than their second-year counterparts, whereas the latter appeared to abandon their intended messages, and use all-purpose words and repetition more frequently than the former. The underpinning reasons for these strategies were generally reported to center around avoiding communication breakdown, gaining more time for thinking, emphasizing thoughts, and creating an enjoyable conversation atmosphere. Implications of these findings for L2 speaking instruction are discussed.

Keywords: English speaking, communication strategies, EFL university students

1. Introduction

Speaking in a foreign or second language (L2) is challenging, especially when learners take part in a conversation with multiple interlocutors in the target language because L2 speaking is a complex process of "monitoring, forming accurate sentences, and being fluent and intelligible" (Mede et al., 2019, p. 1). As such, successful communication relies on not only speakers' language proficiency but also their ability to resolve communication issues that arise in the interaction process. To achieve the goal of effective communication, being aware of communication strategies (CSs) and deploying them appropriately could help prevent communication breakdowns. According to Wagner and Firth (1997), CSs are "a very prominent element in speech production and therefore an important element in natural discourse" (p. 342). They align with the strategic competence defined as the ability to use CSs to compensate for L2 learners' linguistic deficiencies and as such it is one key component of the multidimensional communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). It is referred to as "the verbal and non-verbal CSs that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient

competence" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 30). Viewed in this way, CSs are strategic moves that indicate learners' ability to communicate intended messages successfully without being impeded by linguistic issues. They are "first aid devices used for interaction and communication, to address problems or breakdowns, and to remain active in communication" (Chou, 2018, p. 611). It is therefore important to understand how learners employ CSs to cope with difficulties that arise. Their "problem-management in L2 communication" (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997, p. 203) is pedagogically worth examining in order to obtain insights into students' oral communication, inform instruction and learning to develop their oral communicative competence. This is significant in the context of pressing calls for research to understand all the resources learners have in order to communicate or to function as 'resourceful speakers' (Pennycook, 2014).

Given the importance of CSs in communication, many researchers have explored CSs for the different purposes of their research, namely the impact of CS instruction on L2 learners' oral performances (e.g., Rabab'ah, 2016), the use of CSs in oral presentations (e.g., Panggabean & Wardhono, 2017), and by lower and higher proficiency students (e.g., Charoento, 2016; Rayati et al., 2022), learners' self-reported use of CSs (e.g., Nakatani, 2010). These lines of research have provided valuable insights into how they employ CSs to tackle communication issues they encounter. Although considerable research has examined Vietnamese students' perceptions of the use of CSs via questionnaires and interviews (e.g., Nguyễn Dương Nguyên Châu & Lưu Ngọc Bảo Thi, 2024) or the use of CSs in speaking performances (e.g., Hoàng Quốc Việt & Bùi Phú Hưng, 2023), limited research has investigated the use of CSs in their EFL speaking task performances, and the reasons behind the employment of such CSs, especially in Vietnamese tertiary contexts. The present study thus aims to explore the CSs EFL students use in their English speaking and their voices in a Vietnamese tertiary context. It seeks to answer the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1. *What CSs do Vietnamese English-major students employ in their EFL speaking task performances?*

RQ2. *What are the reasons underlying their employment of CSs?*

2. Literature review

2.1. Communication strategies (CSs)

CSs are defined in various ways by different scholars. In the field of second language acquisition, CSs have been regarded as production phenomena consciously used by learners to resolve communication problems (Sato et al., 2019). Selinker (1972) first defined CSs as "by-products of learners' attempt to express their speaking intentions due to the limited target language in spontaneous speech" (p. 88). In this way, CSs "highlight interlocutors' negotiation behavior for coping with communication breakdowns and their use of communication enhancers" (Nakatani, 2010, p. 118). Shared understanding of CSs involves

problem-based issues as CSs enable learners to "decide to try and remain in the conversation and achieve their communicative goal" (Dörnyei, 1995, p. 80).

CSs have been conceptualized from both interactional and psycholinguistic perspectives. Regarding the former, CSs refer to the interlocutors' attempts to negotiate meaning to get across intended meanings and make themselves understood such as comprehension checks, confirmation checks, as well as clarification requests (see Nakatani 2005; Nakatani, 2010; Nakatani & Goh, 2007; Tarone 1980). In Nakatani's (2010) words, CSs "highlight interlocutors' negotiation behavior for coping with communication breakdowns and their use of communication enhancers" (p. 118). In this view, CSs are directed to both the speaker and the listener. However, the psycholinguistic view of CSs places an emphasis on the cognitive processes involved during communication (e.g., Bialystok 1990; Faerch & Kasper, 1983). They are "the mental processes that learners engage in when they experience a language deficit" (Pawlak, 2018, p. 273). From a psycholinguistic perspective, CS are more "conscious plans" (Faerch & Kasper, 1983, p. 36) that display the speakers' strategic competence (Rabab'ah, 2016). Regardless of theoretical foundations, CSs aim to sustain communication and enhance its effectiveness. It should be noted that each theoretical view has different foci that necessitate appropriate adoption or adaptation that suits intended research. Indeed, CSs have been categorized in different ways to serve the different theoretical views one adopts and their research purposes. For example, in Tarone's (1980) typology, CSs are viewed as conscious moves that include three groups: i) avoidance (topic/message avoidance), ii) paraphrase (approximation, circumlocution and word coinage) and iii) conscious transfer (literal translation, language switching, appeal for help and mime). Dörnyei (1995) groups CSs differently into three broad types avoiding strategies, compensation strategies and time-gaining strategies. As its name indicates, by employing avoiding strategies, the speakers elect to abandon the intended message that they do not have sufficient linguistic means to convey or shy away from the topic of the conversation if they are not capable (topic avoidance). Compensatory strategies include circumlocution, approximation, use of all-purpose words, word coinage, prefabricated patterns, literal translation and non-linguistic means, code-switching, appeal for help, time gaining, and strategies for negotiation of meaning such as comprehension checks, confirmation checks and clarification requests. In the last category, time-gaining strategies refer to the use of fillers and hesitation devices in order to buy time to think about and generate ideas or find linguistic means for message conveyance. Overall, these two typologies of CS share the same underlying belief CSs reflect the speakers' attempts to resolve communication issues, though Dörnyei's (1995) taxonomy is more comprehensive to include fluency enhancers such as fillers and hesitation devices. Later, Dörnyei and Scott (1997) extended previous typologies to also include own-performance (e.g., self-repair, self-rephrasing and repetition) and other-performance problem strategies encompassing CSs such as confirmation check, comprehension check and clarification request (also see Nakatani 2010; Nakatani & Goh

2007). In Nakatani's (2010) words, "it is reasonable to consider that CSs consist of any attempts to solve communication problems and enhance communication with interlocutors" (pp. 118-119). In this way, CSs are not only to resolve linguistic issues, but also to enhance the effectiveness of communication between interlocutors. These CSs are further delineated in Table 1. Dörnyei and Scott's (1997) taxonomy is comprehensive and has been used in previous research (e.g., Hardianti, 2016; Nugroho, 2019) finding a wide range of CSs employed by learners in EFL contexts. It was thus adopted in the present study to analyse the CSs that Vietnamese EFL students employed to cope with their speaking difficulties.

Table 1

Taxonomy of CSs Used in the Present Study (based on Dörnyei & Scott, 1997)

	CS categories	Description
1	**Avoidance strategies**	**Message abandonment**: Learners start to talk about a certain concept or topic but cannot continue and stop halfway.
		Topic avoidance: Learners choose not to talk about the given topic or concept when they have problems expressing themselves due to linguistic issues such as failure to recall appropriate words or structures or simply a lack of linguistic means to talk about that topic.
		Topic replacement: Learners substitute the topic they are talking about with another that they are more able to talk about.
2	**Compensatory strategies**	**Circumlocution**: Learners describe an object or action indirectly instead of using the target language words.
		Approximation: Learners use substitute words that share similar meanings.
		Use of all-purpose words: Learners use words with general meanings such as *stuff, thing, things, people, do, make* (e.g., *I need to get back to the office because I forgot my…**thing***.).
		Word-coinage: Learners create a new word that does not exist in the target language.
		Literal translation: Learners translate word by word from their native language to the target language.
		Code-switching: Learners do not translate but use their native language directly.
		Foreignizing: creating an L2 word using an L1 word and changing it phonologically or morphologically.
		Non-verbal means: Learners employ non-verbal strategies to make meanings (e.g., pointing, clapping).

3	**Time-gaining strategies**	**Pause fillers and hesitation devices**: Learners use phrases such as *"well", "let me think"* and "*as you know",* etc., in order to buy time with the intention of sustaining communication when difficulties arise.
4	**Own-performance problem strategies**	**Self-repair**: Learners identify an error and promptly correct it. **Self-rephrasing**: Learners repeat a word by adding something or paraphrasing. **Repetition:** Learners repeat a word to have time to think.
5.	**Other-performance problem strategies**	**Comprehension check:** Learners ask questions to check whether the interlocutor understands what he/she is saying. **Confirmation check**: Learners ask for confirmation that what he or she hears or understands is correct. **Clarification request:** Learners request interlocutors to clarify what has been said.

With regard to code-switching in Table 1 above, in recent years, a new term, "translanguaging", has increasingly garnered attention among researchers in the field of language studies. While code-switching, according to Balam (2021), is the practice of alternating between two or more languages or dialects within a conversation, translanguaging, on the other hand, is "the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system" (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 401). In this way, translanguaging reflects more fluid and dynamic use of all linguistic resources available to the speaker (Balam, 2021; García & Wei, 2014). In the present research, we used the term translanguaging over code-switching to denote the fluid nature of shifting between L1 Vietnamese and English as the target language.

2.2. Previous studies

Given the importance of CSs in oral communication, they have been investigated in many educational contexts. Learners' perceptions of CS use have been the focus of many researchers (e.g., Hoàng Quốc Việt & Bùi Phú Hưng, 2023; Lê Văn Tuyên et al., 2020; Nakatani, 2010; Nguyễn Dương Nguyên Châu & Lưu Ngọc Bảo Thi, 2024; Trần Thị Thu Sương, 2019). Another strand of research, which is relevant to our study, elects to analyse the CSs employed in language production by different groups of learners and found the use of certain CSs was more frequent than others across studies. For example, English-major students in Hardianti's (2016) study in a Malaysian tertiary context utilized fillers frequently due to their limited English vocabulary and lack of content knowledge regarding the discussed topics such as drama and poetry.

Also focusing on university contexts, Panggabean and Wardhono (2017) analyzed the CSs used in oral group presentation in a Cross-Cultural Understanding course by Indonesian

university students and found that code switching, requesting help and using non-verbal means were commonly used. By analysing college students' speaking performances during picture description tasks in Oman, Alawi (2016) also found a wide range of CSs were employed and language proficiency was a mediating factor affecting the use of CSs by these students. Other research has demonstrated that self-reliant compensatory strategies such as using all-purpose words, approximation, and fillers were more frequently employed than relying on others by Spanish learners of English in their informal, peer-to-peer conversation and formal interview (e.g., Kouwenhoven et al., 2018) and lower-level learners tended to abandon the intended message to resolve linguistic deficiencies while more advanced learners focused more on accuracy in their speaking performances of a picture description task (Rayati et al., 2022).

Hua et al. (2012) targeted a different group of learners, international students in a Malaysian tertiary context. The participants were ten low-proficiency Arabic speakers of English and ten high-proficiency Chinese and Arabic speakers of English. Analysis of audio recordings of oral group discussions on the topic of whether studying abroad is better than in one's home country and a self-reported CSs revealed that code-switching was the most frequently employed CSs while word coinage was the least used. These findings are generally consistent with other studies (e.g., Nugroho, 2019) showing that the most frequently used strategies were time-gaining, self-repetition, self-repair, appeal for help, code-switching, circumlocution, approximation, use of all-purpose words, other-repetition, message abandonment, other correction, topic avoidance, use of non-linguistic means, and literal translation. The studies reviewed here have shown the deployment of CSs could vary for learners in different contexts. While they are useful to inform instruction on CSs, the reasons behind participants' CS choices have not been explored, with the exception of Hardianti's (2016) research reporting how learners justified their use of fillers as a specific type of CSs.

In Vietnam, while considerable research has investigated the perceptions of students of CS use in different EFL contexts in general (e.g., Hoàng Quốc Việt & Bùi Phú Hưng, 2023; Lê Văn Tuyên et al., 2020; Nguyễn Dương Nguyên Châu & Lưu Ngọc Bảo Thi, 2024), a much smaller number of studies have documented EFL learners' employment of CSs in their English performances with a specific focus on certain groups of Cs. For instance, Vũ Kiều Hạnh (2020) investigated the use of CSs by first-year students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry. The participants were 30 first-year students majoring in Forestry. Data were collected using observation forms and transcribed data from two different tasks: a picture description task and a role-play task. The results showed that the students employed avoidance strategies, target language-based strategy, L1-based strategy, modification devices, and non-linguistic strategies, of which modification devices were most common. With a narrower focus on hesitation devices, Nguyễn Song Huyền Châu's (2008)

study with Vietnamese English majors revealed three most frequent CSs namely repetition, fillers, and self-repair. However, insightful as these studies are, the reasons why the learners used the reported CSs were not known. Nguyễn Thị Thu and Nguyễn Thị Kiều Thu (2016) was a rare study to include both audio data and student interviews. Their findings indicated that fillers and hesitation devices were most frequently used, followed by self-repair, self-repetition, and code-witching. Although this study reported students' general perceptions of using CSs, the reasons why they employed certain CSs were not examined.

The review of these previous studies has shown that students' justifications for their use of CSs in their actual EFL speaking performances are underexplored in L2 research on CSs. This research aims to investigate the use of CSs to cope with difficulties in English communication among first- and second-year students in a Vietnamese university context. More specifically, by audio recording in-class English speaking activities and conducting semi-structured interviews based on the recorded data to explore the reasons underpinning students' use of CSs, it is hoped that the results of this study will contribute to our understanding of the CSs used to handle linguistic issues as well as enhance the effectiveness of interaction and thus inform materials designs and instruction of English speaking skills.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants include 13 first-year students and 10 second-year counterparts from two English speaking classes at a Vietnamese university taught by the second author. They volunteered to be audio recorded during their normal classroom speaking performances while those students who wished not to be audio recorded were just participating the class activities without being so. The selection of these two groups of students was to further explore the differences in the CS they employed. The first-year students were aged around 18 and the second-year around 19. Ten of the former and seven of the latter were female, and their speaking proficiency levels varied, from A2 to B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), as observed by the class teacher. At the time of data collection, these first-year and second-year students enrolled in Speaking 1 and Speaking 3 courses, with upper B1 and B2 as expected learning outcomes. NorthStar Speaking and Listening, level 1 (Merdinger & Barton, 2015) and level 3 (Solorzano & Schmidt, 2015) were used as the respective required coursebooks.

3.2. Research methods

3.2.1. Audio recordings

The participants described above elected to audio record their performances via their smartphones. In total, 26 recordings were from the first-year students, with a total duration of approximately 107 minutes and an average length of around 4 minutes per recording. As for the second-year students, there were 13 recordings, totaling approximately 42 minutes,

with an average length of about 3 minutes per recording. The students engaged in various pair- and group-work activities which were open-ended tasks aiming to elicit a wide range of responses (Ur, 2012) and covered different topics such as travelling, transportation, charitable giving, outdoor activities, communication methods, animal rights, and technological devices as they were in the target English speaking courses (see Appendix 1 for further details).

The recorded sessions also served as an additional resource, aiding students in recalling the CSs they utilized or the difficulties they encountered in a later stage of interviews. This, in turn, facilitated the interview process and data analysis.

3.2.2. Interviews

The students who were audio recorded for the analysis of CSs in their speaking performances were invited for voluntary interviews. In total, 10 first-year students and 8 second-year students were willing. These students were ensured that all their personal information would be kept confidential, and they would not be identifiable in any form in the current research. They also could request to end the interview if they no longer wished to participate.

The interviews were conducted in an individual format in Vietnamese at a café, sometimes in a classroom, or in the university's cafeteria, depending on the convenience of the participants. Semi-structured interviews were adopted for its flexibility in allowing researchers to navigate the interview questions and follow up on interviewees' responses (Cohen et al., 2018). The interviews aimed to seek understanding of why students employed the CSs as observed in the recorded audio sessions. The focus was on most frequently used CSs and the interviewees were encouraged to explain the reasons underpinning their use of CSs. The data from the interviews were audio recorded via a smartphone with students' permission.

3.3. Data analysis

3.3.1. Audio recordings

The recorded data was transcribed in their entireties, and students' names were de-identified by assigning codes such as Student 1, Student 2, Student 3, etc. The analysis focused on identifying and categorizing CSs used by first-year and second-year students to overcome difficulties that occurred during their interactions. The classification of CSs by Tarone (1980) and Dörnyei and Scott (1997) presented in Table 1 in the literature review was employed to guide the analysis of the CS in the present study. Table 2 presents some examples of the CSs for each type as they were found in students' oral communication and confirmed by the respective student users. Some of the CS categories in Table 1 were not present in the data.

Since the present data focused on the audio performances, the non-linguistic strategies were not examined. There were no instances of self-rephrasing, circumlocution and clarification requests in the present data. The CSs identified in the audio recordings were further calculated for their frequencies and percentages. Ten per cent of the randomly selected recorded data were independently identified and analyzed for the CSs by the first author and another EFL student who had experience doing research. The results showed large agreement between the two coders for all the categories, from 87% onwards, which was reliable according to Cohen et al. (2018). Any disagreements in the analysis results were further resolved through discussion.

Table 2

Examples of Css from Students' Task Performances

CS categories	**Examples from students' task performances**
1.Avoidance strategies	**Message abandonment**: A: *The symbol of love and (er) …. **something ....** yes …..* B: *OK, and you?* (Task recording, Student 16) **Topic avoidance:** A: *[…] when we play a game we forget about hungry … or thirsty …yeah most of us …* B: *No, no, no. I think playing game maybe additive.* A: *I'll prove that, let me think uhmm …* [long pause, then talk about other ideas]. (Task recording, Student 14)
2.Compensatory strategies	**Approximation:** *And after that the pigeon erm er bring a er a ..a … cành cây nhỏ … a.. a… a … **stick of tree*** er and er *I think it erm its meaning er for to er to a … a meaning er for the peaceful.* (Task recording, Student 21) *(uhm) because it's romantic (uhm) and I would like to ah **campsite** on the beach uh with ah friends ah and we ah…ah play uhm.* (Task recording, Student 5) **Use of all-purpose words**: *A: Club? Dance?* *B: It's so … I think it's so interesting it's so funny but it's not suitable for us, (you know), and what do you think?* *A: That's a bad **thing** (er) … it's not good for us so.* (Task recording, Student 4)

	Word coinage: *I mean playing computer game is very interesting. It can support me to feel **relaxity** and improve my mind.* (Task recording, Student 19) **Literal translation:** I ***very agree*** *with you (I totally agree with you).* (Task recording, Student 20) **Translanguaging:** *In my picture, I can see two women, the... I guess the one is the seller and one is the buyer. The buyer has... has the **tóc xù**, and the **tóc xù** ...* (Task recording, Student 9)
3.Time-gaining strategies	**Pause fillers and hesitation devices:** ***You know**, I'd like to uhm eat fried meat uhm but sometimes I would like to eat ve...vegetables...* (Task recording, Student 4) *...sorry, **uhm** ...you speak so loud and **uhm** .. everyone in here uhm. I think everyone in here is **uhm** ...feel ah uncomfortable. **Uhm** could you speak **ah ..** lower?"* (Task recording, Student 1)
4. Own-performance problem strategies	**Self-repair:** *I think the motivation of er giving sympathy to the other is er to er ...you know a great great er a great er **de-develop - development** of a country.* (Task recording, Student 9) *... er because er er I.. I see many pigs er er **were** er **is are** raised in farmer house...* (Task recording, Student 7) *ok, in in the picture I ...I can see three men and I ...I think they are the **work** ... **official worker** because ... because they wear the T-shirt...* (Task recording, Student 11) **Repetition:** ***They are (er) eating** (er) maybe (er) (er) (er) **they are eating** for lunch because (er) I can see the time is late.* (Task recording, Student 9)
5.Other-erformance problem strategies	**Comprehension check:** A: *(er) It's just a ... yeah I think ...think computers doesn't replace teachers with education. Because of er because it's just a device erm er it help er pro\-promote promote er ...er teacher er yeah and make er students er feel interesting (er er) and focus on (er yeah) on your lesson (yeah) I think so.* ***But do you get it?*** B: ***Yes** er to be like you, I... I er I also think computer er re\- doesn't replace teachers in education because it it's just a device and teacher is a person who understand their students er clearly and erm so ... so she can er she can*

side by side with students to teach to encourage. (Task recording, Students 6, 9)

Confirmation check:

A: *Barbeque party? Oh, I like it.*

B: ***You like?***

A: *Yeah, I like it.* (Task recording, Student 2)

3.3.2. Interview data

The recorded interviews were transcribed to identify the reasons behind the students' use of specific strategies. The analysis was conducted in the original language of Vietnamese L1 using a theme-based approach (Clarke & Braun, 2013), focusing on the recurring themes present in the interviews. The underlying reasons for the employment of the most frequent CSs in the students' task performances were examined via repeated reading of the interview transcripts to derive themes inductively. For example, coping with limited vocabulary, making speech natural, aiding idea generation, maintaining communication, and spicing up talk were among the repeated themes underpinning the use of fillers and hesitation devices. Similarly, reflection on language use, noticing and fixing errors were coded as example reasons for the use of repetition and self-repair. For the strategy of translanguaging, repeated mentions include improving the speaking speed, seeking help from peers, engender interesting talk, to name a few. These themes were then tallied for the number of mentions, and the thematic contents were further reviewed by the interviewees for accuracy. The same student who inter-coded the CS data mentioned above independently coded 10% of the interview data and shared 89% of the themes identified and tallied, indicating high consistency.

4. Results

The results of the present study are reported according to the research questions (RQs) in the following sections.

4.1. RQ1. Students' use of CSs in their EFL speaking task performances

The first RQ asked what CSs students employed in their EFL speaking in order to cope with their difficulties in speaking English and the results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

CSs Used by First-Year and Second-year Students

	First-year		**Second-year**	
CSs	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**
Message abandonment	10	0.8	8	1.4

Topic avoidance	3	0.3	0	0
Use of all-purpose words	3	0.3	8	1.4
Word coinage	2	0.2	3	0.5
Approximation	2	0.2	1	0.2
Translanguaging	40	3.4	14	2.4
Literal translation	17	1.4	4	0.7
Pause fillers and hesitation devices	897	75.6	420	71.2
Confirmation check	15	1.3	3	0.5
Comprehension check	1	0.1	0	0
Repetition	137	11.6	96	16.3
Self-repair	59	5.0	33	5.6
Total	**1186**	**100**	**590**	**100**

From Table 3, we can see that the most frequent CSs employed by the first-year students were pause fillers and hesitation devices (75.6%), followed by repetition (11.6%), self-repair (5%), language switching (3.4%), and message abandonment (0.8%). Other CSs were used much less frequently, at under 0.5 % each.

Regarding the CS employed by the second-year students, there were no instances of topic avoidance, and comprehension check. Similar to the first-year students, the second-year counterparts utilized pause fillers and hesitation devices most often (71.2%). A similar pattern of frequency was observed for repetition (16.3%), self-repair (5.6%) and translanguaging (2.4%). However, it could be noted that first-year students tended to use more translanguaging (3.4%) and literal translation (1.4%) than their second-year peers (2.4% and 0.7%, respectively) whereas the latter appeared to employ the CSs of message abandonment, word coinage, all-purpose words, and repetition than the former. These findings could only be exploratory and should be interpreted with caution, since the data samples were small, preventing reliable statistical analyses to confirm the differences between the two groups of students.

4.2. RQ2. Students' reasons for using the identified CSs

By further interviewing students, the present study aimed to understand the reasons why they employed certain strategies during their speaking. This section focuses on the most frequently used CSs, namely such CSs as i) pause fillers and hesitation devices, ii) repetition, iii) self-repair, and iv) translanguaging. The primary purposes of the use of these strategies were reported to sustain communication, particularly gain more time for idea generation,

recall of lexical and grammatical items to overcome communication problems, create an engaging conversation atmosphere that is listener-oriented and increase one's comfort and confidence. These explanations are presented according to each of the frequent CS categories below.

4.2.1. Pause fillers and hesitation devices

Regarding the use of pause fillers and hesitation devices, which were the most commonly used strategies by both first-year and second-year students (more than 70% each), explanations were centered around a lack of vocabulary on the one hand as challenges, and natural language use that involves fillers, on the other hand. One first-year student stated:

> *I use "uhm" and "ah" a lot... I have limited vocabulary, so it's natural for me to use "uhm" and "ah".* (Student 1)

In students' perceptions, the utilization of hesitation devices such as "uhm" and "ah" further facilitated the allocation of additional time for idea generation. Students 3 and 4, in their first year, who encountered comparable limitations in vocabulary, remarked:

> *The first thing about using "uhm" and "ah" is that I can think of more words to say. Secondly, my vocabulary is not yet rich, and I can't speak long sentences fluently, so in moments of hesitation, I find using "uhm" and "ah" helps me think more.* (Student 3)

> *When I can't think of the next idea, I have to pause, use "uhm", "ah" to think about what I'm going to say next."* (Student 4)

They suggested that the purpose of employing fillers and pauses is to give students more thinking time while striving for a smoother conversational flow through the use of filler words like "mm" and "uh". Like the first-year students, the majority of second-year students also employed pause fillers and hesitation devices (71.2%) to give themselves more time to think about their ideas and continue the conversation. This also contributes to making their dialogue more natural and engaging, as shared by one student:

> *Firstly, it's to give myself more time to think, and secondly, it makes the conversation flow more naturally.* (Student 12)

It is evident that alongside the benefits of fillers as a time-gaining strategy that provides students additional time to formulate appropriate words and structures, these students prioritized the naturalness of their speech, which led them to frequently use hesitation fillers.

In general, the most common pause fillers and hesitation devices used by first-year students are "uhm" and "ah". Additionally, some students often use phrases like "you know", "like", and "actually". Among them, Student 2, who had good language proficiency,

explained the use of these particular phrases stemming from being exposed to the American conversational culture as follows:

> *I am influenced by the cultural aspect of native speakers' conversation. Americans use phrases like "you know" and "like" a lot, so gradually, I got used to it and started using them too.* (Student 2)

Another student also said:

> *"I usually watch conversations on UK websites or learn from former education major students, and they taught me to use the word "you know".* (Student 16)

Other purposes include gaining more time to generate ideas and use them in speaking:

> *Sometimes when I speak, I might get nervous or forget my point, so using "you know" and "like" buys me about 1-2 seconds, which is enough time for me to come up with another idea and remember it to continue speaking.* (Student 16)

There is an interesting difference in the use of pause fillers and hesitation devices between first-year and second-year students, as the latter tended to use more filler words like "you know" and "like" in their conversations for the purpose of speech development:

> *I often think that using "you know" helps the person I'm talking to understand what I mean... I use "you know" to extend my speech.* (Student 18)

For second-year students, the use of these fillers was believed to 'spice up' the sentences they produced:

> *... those "uhm" and "ah" ... I think if I don't use "uhm" and "ah" and instead stay silent, I should add a few phrases that are interesting, like "sentences are spiced".* (Student 12)

Clearly, the use of fillers is not to "fill" the pauses but also indicate the speakers' intention to make their speech engaging. Yet, this student advised against the overuse of fillers. He continues:

> *But don't overuse it; many people have overused it, and I think it should be used a little bit.* (Student 12)

In short, in the speakers' perceptions, pause fillers and hesitation devices were used as valuable CSs to address challenges such as lack of vocabulary, limited time in order to maintain the communication flow and enhance fluency. In addition, they also revealed that learners' oral abilities could be influenced by the way they are exposed to authentic language input and how they personally want to sound when they speak. For the second-year students, these CSs were used to assist them to expand ideas and additionally make their talk more interesting.

4.2.2. Repetition

Similar to the use of pause fillers and hesitation devices, eight first-year and five second- year students reported employing the repetition strategy in order to give themselves more thinking time. Illustrative comments are as follows:

> *I repeat my words to allow myself thinking time because repeating the structure helps me gather my thoughts.* (Student 10)

> *...I repeat my words frequently so that I can have sufficient time to think about the next ideas, as it is challenging to speak coherently without pauses.* (Student 8)

Using the repetition strategy in communication not only provides additional thinking time but also serves as a means to emphasize important points, as stated by one first-year student:

> *...when I asked if someone wants to sing, and no one volunteered, then I said, "Okay, I will, I will" to emphasize once again that I will definitely sing.* (Student 3)

Furthermore, employing this strategy helps avoid communication breakdowns. Student 10 shared an example when discussing a task describing a picture in class:

> *...when looking at the picture, I couldn't immediately think of the English word for the food they were eating. So, to avoid interrupting the conversation, I repeated "They are er eating er maybe er er er they are eating for lunch because er I can see the time is late", and that also gave me time to think in English.* (Student 10)

For second-year students, the reasons behind the frequent use of repetition were to adjust language use when they encountered linguistic difficulties, particularly vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation. One student commented:

> *Because I felt like I mispronounced the first instance of the word "swim", so I repeated it (the word "swim") to pronounce it correctly, more clearly.* (Student 11)

The repetition strategy was employed to contemplate the grammatical structure that should be used in the next sentence. For example,

> *...I'm trying to think again to decide whether I should use a direct sentence or an indirect one or just use a simple present tense. I'm considering how to express it appropriately.* (Student 16)

Overall, both first-year and second-year students utilized the repetition strategy to have time for idea generation and emphasis, thus ensuring a smoother and more coherent flow of their speech. Particularly for the second-year students, this allowed them to think about and reflect on their pronunciation, lexical and grammatical use to facilitate better understanding by the listener.

4.2.3. Self-repair

Although, self-repair accounted for 5 and 5.6% of the total CSs employed by first- and second-year students respectively in their speaking task performances, it was reported to be commonly used by both first-year and second-year student interviewees. When students realized their mistakes while speaking, they promptly corrected them. One student explained:

> *Because I used the word "are", I realized that "are" should be followed by "V-ing," so I knew I made a mistake and corrected it to match the correct English sentence structure.* (Student 10)

Similar to the cases of first-year students, some second-year students also share this perspective. One student commented:

> *Some … somewhere like er hospital or er school er they teaching er teaching children in … the … in the mountain area something like that... they* ***prepear... prepare*** *meal for (er) children in the hospital.* (Student 17)

It is evident that Student 17 corrected the word "prepare" that she mispronounced. She further shared:

> *Because I recognized it was wrong and different from the word in my mind. Sometimes, I might say one word while thinking of a different word in my mind, and then suddenly I realize that I used the wrong word. So, I make the correction.*

Another example of self-repair is from Student 15:

> *...er because er er I see many pigs er er were er* ***is…are*** *raised (self-repair) in farmer house.*

In their speech, Student 15 replaced the verb "were" with "is" and later with "are". Here is how Student 15 explained his self-repair:

> *Because I was still unsure whether to use the present tense or the past tense, actually it should be the present tense, but then I changed it to the present tense without knowing whether to use the singular or plural form.*

In conclusion, the self-repair strategy allowed for the immediate correction of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation during speech. It shows that these students were aware of some erroneous use in their speech and were able to promptly correct it via the strategy of self-repair.

4.2.4. Translanguaging

Translanguaging was used by both first-year and second-year students, though at around 3% of all the strategies in the task recordings. The motivation behind their use of translanguaging varied, from naturally enhancing speech as students all shared L1 Vietnamese to improving the speaking speed. Using the native language to seek help when encountering difficulties in finding words or constructing sentences was a common practice among the interviewees. For example, Student 9 could not pronounce the word "candle"

correctly and used Vietnamese to ask for help from her peer: "*Because they have table and (er) chair and the flower and candle nến là candle?"* He explained, *"Because I thought it was a normal conversation between friends, when I don't know a word, I seek help from my friend... so I usually use Vietnamese to ask for help".*

In addition, recourse to Vietnamese L1 was to assist others in response to requests for help. Student 3 also shared:

> *Because someone asked what "grill" means, I explained that it's "vỉ nướng" in Vietnamese because I couldn't provide an accurate explanation in English. So, I used Vietnamese to make it easier for them to understand and continue the conversation quickly.* (Student 3)

Sharing the same perspective with first-year students regarding the purpose of using the translation strategy to seek language assistance from the interlocutor, some second-year students believed:

> *Because I couldn't come up with it when thinking, I already had the image of that word in my mind, but I couldn't pronounce it properly, so I said "kết hợp" (combine) for you to understand and provide the word.* (Student 15)

This demonstrates that Student 15 used Vietnamese to seek help from their peer. In addition, speaking in Vietnamese makes the conversations more enjoyable and engaging.

> *...to use both English and Vietnamese, like 'don't be so tào lao". I didn't even know the meaning of "tào lao", so I just said it in Vietnamese. It made the conversation more fun.* (Student 1)

In addition, translanguaging assisted students to improve the communication flow, when they failed to recall the intended lexical items, as Student 9 narrated, *"After pausing for a moment, I tried to recall, but I couldn't remember, so I spoke in Vietnamese to continue my conversation".*

Translanguaging was also reported as to help students speed up their speech, as two second-year students shared:

> *Because I forget what I was saying and can't remember the English words, I want the conversation to be faster.* (Student 14)

> *During the conversation, when it comes to a word that I haven't thought of in English, I think it's better to ask in Vietnamese to make it quicker.* (Student 15)

In summary, both first-year and second-year students often switched to their native language when they faced challenges in English communication. This strategy facilitates more effective communication and sustained communication flow during cases of linguistic difficulty. Additionally, this approach contributed to a more engaging and expedited conversational experience, according to their observations.

5. Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the CSs that EFL university students utilized to cope with their speaking difficulties and the reasons they gave for such use of CSs. Task interactions and in-depth interviews with first-year and second-year students reveal that pause fillers and hesitation devices were the most prevalent strategies, while repetition, self-repair, and language-switching strategies were employed to a much smaller extent. The underlying reasons for employing these strategies were identified as efforts to avoid communication breakdown, allocate additional time for cognitive processing, emphasize key points, and create a more engaging conversational atmosphere.

The finding that the students in the present study employed pause fillers and hesitation devices generally find resonance in prior research (e.g., Hardianti, 2016; Kouwenhoven, 2018; Nguyễn Thị Thu & Nguyễn Thị Kiều Thu, 2016; Nugroho, 2019). However, it is not congruent with those from some studies (e.g., Hua et al., 2012; Panggabean & Wardhono, 2017) which found code-switching was most common. The differences in the deployment of CSs across studies could be attributed to the different communicative task prompts in use and learners' proficiency levels. In the present study, a wide range of open-ended speaking tasks such as role-plays and opinion giving tasks were used while in others (e.g., Alawi, 2016; Rayati et al., 2022) picture description tasks were employed. Learner-related factors such as proficiency could influence the frequency of CSs used to handle linguistic issues to maintain communication (e.g., Alawi, 2016; Rayati et al., 2022). That pause fillers and hesitation devices as time-gaining devices were most frequently used by both first- and second-year students could well suggest that they were driven by fluency, and this could be understandable given the communicative tasks that these students were engaged in. The meaning-focused nature of these speaking tasks further necessitated the need to convey intended messages. Furthermore, even though students' proficiency levels varied, those who were willing to be audio recorded for their oral performances were perhaps somehow confident, and this might have inclined them to opt for fluency management devices such as pause fillers or hesitation devices to enhance fluency. However, this is just speculative and further research is clearly necessary. The insights from students' experiences are revealing of the motivation behind the use of CSs, that is, not to solely overcome communication breakdowns, but also enhance the effectiveness of the communication. Interestingly, the use of time-gaining strategies such as 'you know' as a filler reflects the influence of exposure to authentic input from the target culture (American culture, as reported in the interviews) and students' own interest to 'spice up' their speech.

Another notable finding was that translanguaging emerged as a useful CS for these students. Other research has found similar results indicating this strategy is natural and necessary with multilingual speakers (García & Wei, 2014; Seals et al., 2020; Weber, 2014). These findings reiterate the current discourse around the necessity to train 'resourceful

speakers' (Pennycook, 2014) where communicators draw on whatever resources they have at their disposal to communicate. Furthermore, the interview findings in the present study demonstrated that translanguaging could be a tool for them to accelerate their speech and make it more enjoyable. In this way, translanguaging surfaced not as a natural CS but also a communication enhancer. The lower percentage of use in comparison to the other strategies could be perhaps because the students who volunteered to be recorded tended to be confident about their English, thus translanguaging only when necessary.

That the first-year students in the current research had a tendency to employ more translanguaging and literal translation as compensatory strategies than their second-year counterparts could be at first glance attributable to their lower proficiency, since lower proficiency might resort to L1 in their speaking than more advanced learners (e.g., Ugla et al., 2019). However, the possible influence of proficiency is less clear when the second-year students dropped their intended messages and used all-purpose words more while utilizing more repetition as a way to reflect on their language use. The latter strategy could be because more able students are more likely to attend to accuracy (e.g., Rayati et al., 2022). Due to the limited sample sizes, these findings should be treated as only exploratory and more research is warranted to further explore the differences in the use of CSs between student groups of different proficiency levels.

Above all, the CSs employed reflect students' attempts to make strategic moves to sustain communication, overcome linguistic barriers such as deficiency in lexical and grammatical items on the one hand. This, on the one hand, indicates coping strategies and resilience of the students to be listener-oriented, to enhance fluency and aid recall of linguistic means to express intended meanings. Furthermore, language production is an opportunity for students to produce "pushed output" (Swain, 2005) by noticing the gaps, the errors and adjusting their talk (self-repair, repetition as among frequent CSs).

6. Implications and conclusion

The present study set out to explore the CSs that EFL students in a Vietnamese tertiary context employed during their English speaking performances and the underpinning reasons for their use. The results from the audio recordings of task interaction and in-depth interviews with first-year and second-year students indicated that pause fillers and hesitation devices were most predominant, followed by repetition strategy, self-repair strategy, and language-switching strategy. The reasons underlying these strategies were reported to center around preventing communication breakdown, gaining more thinking time, emphasizing thoughts, and fostering a pleasant conversation atmosphere. Implications of these findings for teaching and learning English communication are discussed below.

First, since the students in the present study reported the values of using CSs to enhance communication, teachers could consider incorporating CSs into their lesson plans

to teach students about their usefulness and application. Nakatani (2006) also supports the idea that language learners should be aware of how to use CSs to speak English. Teaching and equipping students with specific CSs is beneficial in enhancing the effectiveness of their communication (Maleki, 2007; Rabab'ah, 2016). Introducing various filler phrases for students to practice and apply during communication would also be useful. Recall that the speaking tasks used in the present study were open-ended, meaning-focused activities which provided students ample opportunities to make their own meanings. It is therefore important for teachers to organize diverse speaking activities which are meaning-focused (Ellis, 2003) so that students could mobilize their full linguistic and non-linguistic repertoire to achieve the intended communicative purposes.

Next, the voices of the learners in the present study indicated that translanguaging could be a useful coping strategy to maintain the communication flow, and recall necessary lexical items to convey meanings, pointing to the necessity to reconsider allowing students to use L1 in EFL classrooms as needed. Translanguaging should not be seen as a sign of deficiency but rather strategic acts on the part of students to maintain communication or assist peer interlocutors. This speaks to the role of theorizing translanguaging from a task-based perspective (Seals et al., 2020). In order to be effective, teachers need to recognize the value of translanguaging and at the same time, observe how it is used and the extent at which it is used to prevent off-task talk during the course of pair/group speaking tasks. Furthermore, that fillers and hesitation devices were used frequently by the participants in the present study does not mean that teachers should always encourage the use of these CSs. Rather, their overuse could be a sign of disfluency, as shared by some students.

Equally, learners should also recognize the importance and benefits of using CSs in overcoming difficulties in English communication and becoming proficient English speakers. They might need to equip themselves not only with the English language knowledge but also develop a repertoire of CSs ready to use in the communication process. In this way, they can develop their strategic competence, one of the key components that constitutes communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) that enables them to become resourceful speakers.

Despite the valuable insights into the CSs employed by Vietnamese tertiary students and their justifications, the present study has some limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the number of volunteer participants in oral task performances, and in-depth interviews was limited in this study, thus constraining its generalizability. Future studies with a larger scale with more participants in the first-year and second-year student categories would allow more robust between-group comparisons and gain a better understanding of the CSs employed by EFL students in their speaking. Secondly, our data was constrained to students' audio performances of the speaking activities, thus leaving the employment of non-verbal communication means as useful CSs unexplored, which could be an interesting line

of future research. Further studies could also explore the relationship between the use of CSs and students' language proficiency. Teaching CSs to students and assessing the impact of such instruction on students' communication could be further research avenues to explore.

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Appendix 1. Summary of the speaking tasks

First-year students		**Second-year students**	
Recording	**Speaking task**	**Recording**	**Speaking task**
Recording 1	Group discussion: How to become a good communicator?	Recording 1	Group discussion: Animal Rights: Should people eat animal meat? Why/Why not?
Recording 2		Recording 2	
Recording 3		Recording 3	Pair discussion: Animal Rights: Should animals be kept in zoos? Why/Why not?
Recording 4		Recording 4	
Recording 5		Recording 5	
Recording 6	Group discussion: Discuss the pros and cons of playing games	Recording 6	Group/Pair discussion: The role of technology in education
Recording 7		Recording 7	
Recording 8		Recording 8	Group/Pair discussion: In your opinion, what is the most useful technological device?
Recording 9		Recording 9	
Recording 10		Recording 10	Group discussion: Do you participate in any voluntary work? Why/Why not?
Recording 11	Pair discussion: Do you enjoy travelling? Which	Recording 11	
Recording 12		Recording 12	

Recording 13	place(s) would you like to visit and why?	Recording 13	Group/Pair discussion: If you could be animal, what would you be?
Recording 14			
Recording 15			
Recording 16	Pair discussion: What are your favorite outdoor activities?		
Recording 17			
Recording 18			
Recording 19			
Recording 20			
Recording 21	Group discussion: Which means of transport to use (public transportation/private cars) and why?		
Recording 22			
Recording 23			
Recording 24			
Recording 25			
Recording 26			

VIỆC SỬ DỤNG CÁC CHIẾN THUẬT GIAO TIẾP KHI NÓI TIẾNG ANH CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGỮ TẠI MỘT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM

Tóm tắt: Bài viết trình bày nghiên cứu về những chiến thuật giao tiếp mà sinh viên tiếng Anh năm 1 và năm 2 tại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam sử dụng để ứng phó với những khó khăn khi nói tiếng Anh. 13 sinh viên năm 1 và 10 sinh viên năm 2 thực hiện những hoạt động nói về những chủ đề khác nhau có trong sách giáo khoa trong giờ lên lớp. Phần thảo luận và trình bày của sinh viên được ghi âm/thu hình; có tổng cộng 26 bài ghi âm/ thu hình từ sinh viên năm 1 và 13 bài từ sinh viên năm 2. Ngay sau những buổi học Nói, 18 sinh viên đã được mời phỏng vấn sâu. Kết quả nghiên cứu chỉ ra rằng chiến thuật ngập ngừng, từ đệm, chiến thuật lặp lại, chiến thuật tự sửa và chiến thuật chuyển đổi ngôn ngữ là những chiến thuật giao tiếp được cả hai nhóm sinh viên sử dụng nhiều nhất. Tuy nhiên, sinh viên năm nhất có xu hướng dùng chuyển đổi ngôn ngữ và dịch thô nhiều hơn sinh viên năm hai, trong khi đó sinh viên năm hai dường như từ bỏ thông điệp muốn diễn đạt, dùng từ đa mục đích và chiến thuật lặp lại nhiều hơn. Lý do đằng sau việc sử dụng những chiến lược này là sinh viên không muốn bị gián đoạn trong quá trình giao tiếp, muốn có thêm thời gian để suy nghĩ, muốn nhấn mạnh lời nói của mình, muốn tạo ra bầu không khí giao tiếp thú vị và muốn giảm bớt căng thẳng khi giao tiếp. Dựa trên kết quả nghiên cứu, những đề xuất dành cho việc dạy kỹ năng Nói cũng sẽ được thảo luận.

Từ khóa: Nói tiếng Anh, chiến lược giao tiếp, sinh viên tiếng Anh

KỶ YẾU HỘI THẢO QUỐC TẾ

NGHIÊN CỨU LIÊN NGÀNH VỀ NGÔN NGỮ VÀ GIẢNG DẠY NGÔN NGỮ LẦN THỨ X

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