

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN A CASUAL CONVERSATION, the Case of the First Year Students of Semarang State Polytechnic

Jozef Bambang Tri Joga
Polliteknik Negeri Semarang

Abstract

This study aimed at listing the communication strategies applied by Semarang State Polytechnic students sitting in the first year of Business Administration Department in a recorded natural conversation with a native-like speaker. Through the research question of “what communication strategies do the Polytechnic students use in a casual conversation?”, and using the nine criteria such as paraphrasing, borrowing, and avoiding and six other criteria of communication strategies, this study evaluated the strategies used to keep a casual conversation run well. The recorded data were transcribed using ordinary orthography, analyzed and identified what communication strategies were used, then, explained the reason for using them. The result showed that Non Native Speaker managed to carry out a casual chatting, even though it jumped from one topic to another, due to no special topics provided. Grammatical errors were occasionally made, however, they didn't hamper the flow of the conversation. The Native-Like Speaker was often found lowering the level of difficulty by slowing the speed of speaking, repeated words with the synonym, and uttering items with considerable clarity.

Key words: *communication strategies, casual communication, flow of communication.*

A. Introduction

In a conversation class, the teacher explains a dialogue, drills the students the phrases in the dialogue, and asks them to repeat the dialogue. Practicing the dialogue among their friends by changing the sentences, replacing the names and location, but the topic is still the same. The students also get pronunciation drills, grammar exercises and vocabulary development in line with the academic studies. At one time or another, each student is instructed to do a presentation on a particular topic of interest which can create classroom discussion. Exposing them more in English, there is extracurricular activities called PECC (Polytechnic English Conversation Club); students are expected to participate actively in English discussion with fellow students. This is mostly English exchanges among Indonesian students.

This study investigated how the students use English as a means of communication in a casual exchange. How did they initiate the topics in the dialogue, how did they maintain the topic. What the students usually do in the class setting is not a real communication. They memorize, imitate or rephrase the taught-dialogue, but never build up a real dialogue especially with a native speaker of English. Through this study, it would be carried out a case study in communication strategies in a casual conversation with a native speaker of English.

The new paradigm of teaching English as a Foreign Language is changing the notion from something of receptive nature (reading, listening) to another thing of more communicative nature (speaking, writing). In this respect, English as a Foreign Language is viewed within interactional perspective (Agustin 1997: 12, citing Backman and Palmer) that 'language ability must be considered within an interactional framework of language use' (1996:2). In other words, the language ability is treated in a broader conception of a **speaker's competence** (Chomsky 1965), **communication competence** (Hymes 1972), and **meaning potential** (Haliday 1979).

Competence

In Chomsky's Aspect of the Theory of Syntax (1965), the term 'competence' is opposed to 'performance'. The former refers to a person's knowledge of language and the latter to the actual use of language (McArthur 1992:242). Thus, linguistics competence consists of knowledge about language systems – namely the system of sounds normally associated with phonology, the system of grammar associated with morphology and syntax, and the system of meanings associated with semantics. With linguistic competence, a person can make judgement on the acceptability of linguistic forms; and located in this competence is the 'property of what is known in Chomsky's term as the language acquisition device (LAD) with which a person organizes language data to which he is exposed to. Linguistic performance, on the other hand, is represented in the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing – the actual use of the language.

Communicative Competence

The term communicative competence is associated with Hymes (1972) who argues that Chomsky's concept of competence does not describe the real day-to-day language use. This is because of Chomsky's limited reference of competence to ideal and homogeneous speaker-hearer linguistics community, as something Hymes claims does not exist in reality. Thus, Hymes coined the term 'communicative competence' to refer to the heterogeneous speaker-hearer linguistics community in which 'competence' (in Hymes' sense) refers not only to the relationship and interaction between grammatical knowledge but also to the knowledge of the rules of language use or between grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983, Agustien 1997).

Most significantly therefore, the goal of learning a language is to be able to use it in discourse. In this respect, teaching English as a Foreign Language in the new paradigm is always contextualized in the sense that no single utterance that the students have to learn is put out of context. In other words, rote-learning is avoided as far as possible so that the ultimate goal of communication in the target language at discourse level is made possible and doable.

This is in line with the schematic representation of communicative competence (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995:10) in which discourse competence is placed at the center as illustrated below.

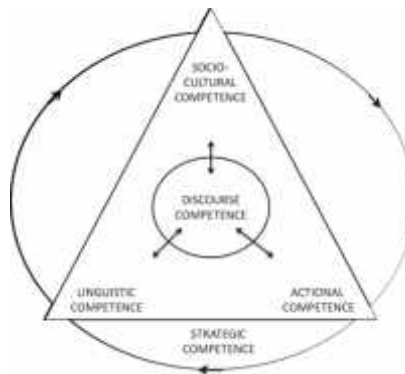


Figure1. Schematic Representation of Communicative (Adopted from Celce-Murcia et.all.1995:10)

From figure 1 above, it is clear that a person who can use a language, must be able to use it at discourse level. The discourse competence itself is inter-related to other competences, such as social-cultural competence, linguistic competence, actional competence and somewhere beyond the three, strategic competence. In other words, one must possess the four supporting elements in order to have the discourse competence.

Meaning Potential

With respect to meaning potential, Halliday highlight the tristratal system of language (Halliday 1978) that includes semantics, lexicogrammar and phonology. The tristratal system of language or , as Eggins (1994) refers it to, a tri-stratal semiotic system involves a stratum of meaning, a stratum of wordings, and a stratum of sounds/orthography (Eggins 1994:81). The language model can be illustrated as below.

Figure2. The Strata of Language

	Folk Names	Technical Terms
CONTENT	Meanings	(discourse) semantics
	Wordings (words & structure)	Lexico-grammar
EXPRESSION	Sounds/letters	Phonology/graphology

Adopted from Eggins (1994:81)

Based on figure 2, it can be inferred that the unit of analysis of the stratum of discourse-semantics is text; that of lexico-grammar is clause; and that of phonology is phoneme/grapheme (Eggins 1994:82). Thus, discourse analysis involves the analysis of the highest stratum (text), down to the lower stratum (clause, phrase), and the lowest stratum (sound/letter) depending on the purpose of the study.

It is further argued that ‘any text is the realization of not just one meaning, but three main kinds of meaning’ (Eggins 1994:81), namely ideational meaning what the

text is about), interpersonal meaning (participants' relationship), and textual meaning (modes of language: spoken or written).

In communication, therefore, the act is centered around three variables, namely 1) field, expressing the ideational meaning, 2) tenor, expressing the interpersonal meaning, and 3) mode, expressing the textual meaning. All of them contribute to the success of communication which is, of course, supported by discourse, and linguistic, socio-cultural, actional, and strategic competences. Thus, there is a kind of compatible perspective with respect to communicative competence

Interlanguage/Foreigner Talk

Interlanguage is continuum between the first language and the target language along which all learners traverse (Larsen, et al, 1992:60). The term 'interlanguage' was firstly used by John Reinecke in 1935. He always used 'interlanguage' to refer to a non standard variety of a first or second language, used as a means of intergroup communication.

Many of the utterances produced by language learners are perceived as ungrammatical. They contain many mistakes in lexis, pronunciation, and grammar. Ellis (1989:135) mentions that the characteristics of interlanguage learners' talk is dynamic (constant adapting to new information) and influenced by the learners. The following is Ellis' (1934:351) quotation of Selinker's idea about the characteristics of interlanguage communication:

- 1) Language transfer (some, but certainly not all, items, rules, and subsystems of a learner's interlanguage may be transferred from the first language)
- 2) Transfer of training (some interlanguage elements may derive from the way in which the learners were taught)
- 3) Strategies of second language learning (Selinker talks about an identifiable approach by the learner to the material to be learned)
- 4) Strategies of second language communication (identifiable approach by the learner to communication with native speakers of the target language)
- 5) Overgeneralization of the target language material (some interlanguage elements are the result of a 'clear overgeneralization' of target language rules and semantic features)

Good language learners will always make attempts to practice the target language they learn, in order that their target language mastery will approach the standard one. Ellis (1989:122) mention the following as a list of characteristics of good learners:

- 1) Be able to respond to the group dynamics of the learning situation so as not to develop negative anxiety and inhibitions
- 2) Seek out all opportunities to use the target language
- 3) Make maximum use of the opportunities afforded to practice listening to and responding to speech to meaning rather than to form
- 4) Supplement the learning that derives from direct contact with speakers of the L2 with learning derived from the use of study technique (such as making vocabulary lists) this is likely to involve attention to form
- 5) Be an adolescent or an adult rather than a young child at least as far as the early stages of grammatical development are concerned
- 6) Possess sufficient analytic skills to perceive, categorize, and store the linguistic feature of the L2, and also to monitor errors

- 7) Posses a strong reason for learning the L2 which may reflect an integrative or an instrumental motivation) and also develop a strong 'task motivation' (i.e. respond positively to the learning tasks chosen of provided)
- 8) Be prepared to experiment by taking risks, even if this makes the learner appear foolish
- 9) Be capable of adapting to different learning condition.

Communication Strategies

To be able to communicate, people need strategies. The strategies are numerous. The proficiency level of the learner influences his choice of the strategies. According to Diane Larse (1992:67), the learner strategies identified in early developmental studies are among others the use of formulaic utterances, simplification, reflexification. Taylor (1975), as quoted by Rod Elis (1989:171) adds the strategies of transfer and overgeneralization which he describes as strategies of relying on prior knowledge.

There are two kinds of simplification strategy: semantic and linguistic simplifications. A learner is said to employ semantic simplification if he selects specific constituents for encoding and leaves the others to be inferred by the listener. The constituents deleted are not syntactic but semantic. Linguistic simplification involves the omission of the form words and affixes.

Reflexification strategy is the use of L2 words in L1 syntactic patterns, while the overgeneralization strategy is over generalizing the rule. Tarone (1978), as quoted by Diane Larsen et al (1992:127), classifies transfer strategy into literal translation, language switch, appeal for assistance, and mime. Kellerman (1978), as quoted by Rod Ellis (1989:172), concludes from his studies that transfer is strategy available to compensate for lack of L2 knowledge. Other strategies introduced by Tarone are among others: approximation, word coinage, circumlocution.

Slobin (1982), as quoted by Diane Larsen et al. (1992, 70), introduces scaffolding strategy in which the speaker and his interlocutor collaborate to produce a combined social discourse. Rod Ellis (1989:185) mentions cooperative strategies i.e. the ones that involve a joint problem-solving effect by the learner and his interlocutor. So it is like the scaffolding strategy proposed by Slobin. Another strategy introduced by Red Ellis is substitution in which the learner replaces one L2 form with another.

Psycholinguistic Domain of Communication Strategies

The psycholinguistic domain of communication strategies can be outlined as Tarone's taxonomy on communication strategies. According to Tarone (1978), there are three categories of communication strategies, namely 1) paraphrasing, 2) borrowing, and 3) avoiding, each of which are explained below.

1) Paraphrasing

1. Approximation: use of a single TL vocabulary item or structure, which the learner knows is not correct, but which shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item to satisfy the speaker (e.g. *pipe* for *water pipe*)
2. Word Coinage: the learner makes up a new word in order to communicate a desired concept (e.g. *airball* for *balloon*)
3. Circumlocution: the learner describes the characteristics of elements of the object or action instead of using the appropriate TL item or structure

2) Borrowing

1. Literal translation: the learner transpsycholinguistic tes word for word from the native language (*He invites him to drink for they toast one another*)
 2. Language switch: the learner uses the native language term without bothering to translate (*balon for balloon, bule for western people*)
 3. Appeal for assistance: the learner asks for the correct term (e.g. “What is this?”, “What is this called?”)
 4. Mime: the learner used non-verbal strategies in place of lexical item or action (clapping one’s hand to illustrate applause)
- 3) Avoiding
1. Topic avoidance: the learner simply tries not to talk about concepts whose TL item is not known
 2. Message abandonment: the learner begins to talk about a concept but he is unable to continue and stops in mid-utterance

Besides the nine communication strategies stated above which emphasized on the production on the part of the learner, however, there are different communication strategies which some scholars provide for trying to communicate. Those are *repair, repetition, over elaboration, comprehension indicator, clarification request fillers* and *gambits*, each of which will be explained below.

- 1) Repair (Richards and Schmidt, 1983): “effort made by the speaker or the hearer to correct trouble spots in conversation”
- 2) Repetition (Tarone and Yule, 1987): “The speaker repeats of utterances before getting to the desired terms”
- 3) Overelaboration/overexplicitness (Tarone and Yule, 1987): The great use of detail in conveying a message or answering more than required.”
- 4) Comprehension indicator (Richard and Schmidt, 1983): Responses used to indicate that what is being said by the speakers is understood. Implicitly these are signs to let the speaker go on with his presentation and also as an expression of appreciation to make the conversation more fluid.”
- 5) Clarification request (Richards and Schmidt, 1983): an explicit or implicit request to the speaker to explain, or clarify what has been said.
- 6) Fillers and gambits (Edmonson and House, 1981): Words and phrases that serve to regulate the smooth flow of a conversational talk. Although they do not have meaning in the traditional sense of the word, they are a very important part of conversational behavior.

B. Methods

This research is based on a descriptive, qualitative, and exploratory type of research. It is descriptive because it only describes the existing phenomena as naturally as possible. It is qualitative because it does not employ complicated statistical calculation. If it turns out that percentage or frequency distribution is used, its main aim is to facilitate qualitative description. It is also exploratory in nature, because it does not have any hypothesis to prove.

The data were obtained by means of recording a casual conversation purposefully made up in the Self-Access Center of State Polytechnic of Semarang. In this study, the recording was made as naturally as possible without any particular conditioning. The conversation was made by two students of State Polytechnic of Semarang, Non Native Student 1 (NNS1), Non Native Student 2 (NNS2), and one

Native Speaker of a language other than English. Really, that he is not a native speaker of English, but a Russian, whose English is excellent. Therefore, he is a Native-Like Speaker (NLS). At that moment, he was a student of Economics Faculty of Satya Wacana University, Salatiga. While Dewi was a friend of the researcher who helped the recording process.

The students of Polytechnic who were chosen to get involved in the recording have showed their interests in participating in the research project as it was a chance for them to practice their English with a foreigner. They are within the average proficiency of English among their classmates. Dewi, a friend from the researcher, just helped the recording process. After the conversation was recorded, later on the recorded data were transcribed using ordinary orthography. No suprasegmental symbols were used as the study focused only on the communication strategies. However, any non-linguistic element that contributes to the flow of communication was written out between brackets. What the subjects had to do was conversing in natural interaction with the native-like speaker. It is called natural conversation because the only purpose of the talks was to establish relationship and obtaining information about what being conversed. Therefore, the subjects would normally talk to avoid silence.

The researcher acted as the main instrument in this study, as an instrument and a data collector at the same time. By means of a tape recorder, a casual conversation among the three individuals was recorded. A field note is devised especially to record the kinesic behaviour showed while the conversation was going on. Theories of communication strategies were utilized to further sort, and interpret the data. A technique of passive participation was employed for the current study in order for the researcher to write out field notes consisting of objective and reflective descriptions. The objective descriptions include what was seen, heard, and experienced during the observation. The unit analysis in the study is turn; each turn is observed to find out the communication strategies employed, then the reason for employing the communication strategies are explained.

To develop the criteria for communication strategies that will be used to analyze the data, this study used the three categories of communication strategies of the psycholinguistic domain, 1) paraphrasing, 2) borrowing, and 3) avoiding (Tarone, 1978). In addition, to anticipate the presence of some strategies beyond those described above, the researcher also included the communication strategies like *repair*, *repetition*, *overelaboration*, *comprehension indicator*, *clarification request*, *fillers*, and *gambits*. While the method of data analysis was as follow 1) two tables were prepared, each provided with columns for classification of communication strategies, 2) each turn in the conversation was matched to a suitable communication strategy, 3) the frequency distribution of each communication strategy was quantified using percentage (%) to facilitate the qualitative description, which is the main goal of the study, 4) with the respect of how subjects (NNS) initiated and maintained the conversation, there was no quantification, It was discussed on the strategies in use.

C. Findings

According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1995:10), the communicative competence is supported by other competencies, namely discourse competence, linguistic competence, social-cultural competence, and strategic competence. With the respect to discourse competence, it seems that the students have not been able to focus on a particular topic.

They tended to jump from one topic to another without a clear transition. It can be seen from the following quotation.

113. NLS: It used to be....But....last year Indonesia bought a war ship, a military ship....but I don't know. May be buying Sukoy
114. NNS2: Sukou
115. NLS: Yes, I don't know. But the casual or ordinary people,....no
116. NNS2: And then after you came here?
117. NNS1: Like the tissue maybe
118. NLS: I know this is a great country. Really friendly people I mean, I never meet so friendly people before

(Recorded Data)

NLS made a Move 113 'It used to be,....Butlast year Indonesia bought a war ship, a military ship; but I don't know. Maybe buying Sukoy.' In response to NNS1's move 112 'Because I heard that Indonesia has a good relationship with Russia. Isn't that popular for you?'

Move 112 ended in a question 'Isn't that popular for you?' which is not very clear. Therefore, move 113 NLS responded to the question 'It used to be ... (implying that it is not popular anymore); but then he corrected his own statement by a conjunction 'but' which negated the previous statement. NLS further stated that he did not know much, saying 'Yes, I don't know. But the casual or ordinary people ... no' which is not clear either to which the discussion is directed. Move 116 NNS2 continued to produce a question by means of an incomplete sentence 'And then after came here?' and NNS1 (Move 117) clarified NNS2's question by saying 'Like the tissue maybe' which implies Indonesian cultural values (such as the use of tissue). Finally NLS stated his impression on Indonesia by saying 'I know this ia a great country. Really friendly people I mean, ... I never meet so friendly people before' which is somehow irrelevant to the topic.

From the analysis above, the topic of he relationship between Russia and Indonesia has not been fully discussed due to lack of information on both sides, then they jumped to talk about Indonesia after being initiated by NNS2 (Move 116), and further elaborated by NNS1 (Move 117) in the use of tissue. Finally they managed to change the topic though without a smooth transition. However, NLS was very considerate of the situation and tried to make the conversation go on.

In terms of linguistic competence, the students seemingly have not mastered the basic elements of communication: sentence pattern, morphological inflections, lexical resources, etc. It can be seen from the following quotation. Notice that it is a transcript of a real conversation and contains grammar mistakes and un-English phrases.

21. NNS1: Have you go there?
27. NNs2: About your study, maybe. What faculty?
- 32.NNS2: Ok, with your friend.... You use language? Eh ...Indonesia language
- 35.NNS2: Because I know you sweat. There is only this one.

Move 21, for example, clearly violates the morphological inflection ‘go’ instead of ‘gone’ as required by the morpho-syntactic rules. In Move (Turn) 27, NNS2 produced ‘About your study, maybe. What faculty?’ Communicatively, the utterance seems to create no problem because NLS (Move 28) managed to respond to the question appropriately as ‘I study in Salatiga at UKSW Satya Wacana.’ Similarly, NNS2 (Move 32) produced awkward utterances ‘Ok, with your friend ... you use language? Eh ... Indonesia Language’ which indicates that the English proficiency is of basic survival. In another part of the dialogue, NNS2 produced utterances ‘Because I know you sweat. There is only this one.’ There is a kind of grammatical violation in ‘...I know you sweat’ And there is no logical relation between ‘sweat’ and ‘only this one’

In terms of socio-cultural competence, both NNS1 and NNS2 showed one type of incompetence though they soon repaired by speaking in Indonesian as in Move 128 ‘So...*apa ya?* Don’t ask about private.’ However, in terms of actional and strategic competences, they were considerably good in the sense that they spoke English confidently without being afraid of making mistake. Thus in general, the two students performed communicatively well especially in actional and strategic competence, but they need improvements in linguistic, socio-cultural and discourse competences.

In the following table, it appears that the most dominant use of communication strategies is of **literal translation** (43.48%), followed by **language switch** (39.13%). The third rank is topic **approximation** (10.86%), and **topic avoidance** occupies 6.52% of the communication strategies used. Some types of literal translation produced by the students can be found in the following moves.

- 16. O, Jambi near Lampung
- 27. About your study, maybe. What faculty?
- 32. Ok, with your friend... use language? Eh...Indonesia language
- 35. Because I know you sweat. There is only this one
- 39. For our face, after eating

Table 1. Distribution of Communication Strategies

No	Communication Strategies		%
1	Approximation	5	10.86
2	Word Coinage	-	-
3	Circumlocution	-	-
4	Literal Translation	20	43.48
5	Language Switch	18	39.13
6	Appeal for Assistance	-	-
7	Mime	-	-
8	Topic Avoidance	3	6.52
9	Message Abandonment	-	-
Total		46	100

In Move 16, for example, the student simply translated the Indonesian sentence ‘O, Jambi dekat Lampung’ in which the word *dekat* is equivalent to the word ‘near’ while ignoring the syntactic rule of English which requires the linking verb ‘is’. Move 27 derives from direct literal translation of the source language ‘Tentang studimu, mungkin, Fakultas apa’, ignoring the syntactic rule of Wh-question in English. However, he managed to construct a noun phrase ‘your study’ from ‘studimu’ which agrees to the English syntax.

In Move 32, the student simply translated word by word and put them in a string, 'Ok dengan temanmu...kamu menggunakan bahasa? Eh... bahasa Indonesia with only one correct construction of a noun phrase 'your friend' for 'temanmu'. Meanwhile, Move 35 derives from literal translation of 'Karena aku tahu kamu berkeringat. Inilah satu-satunya yang ada' in which a syntactic rule is ignored 'you are sweating.' And the sentence 'There is only this one.' Should have been said as 'This is the only one available' for a better linguistic form. Finally, Move 39 derives from 'Untuk muka (kita), setelah makan.' It is still good because the students managed to comply with the grammar of English by using a gerund form for the word 'eat' – eating.

With respect to **language switch** (39.13%) some types can be quoted and described below.

19. *He..eh*

47. *Ha.... mbak Dewi gitu...*

55. Yes, we're classmate. My best friend. *Alah...*I'm so speechless

Walah!

70. *Ya...ya*

101. *Eh apa ya? Sepuluh pertemuan.*

Move 19 from the above quotation is ambiguous. It can mean 'Yes' in Javanese. It is also possible that phrase was actually spelt as 'Uh-uh' which is 'Yes' in English. Upon being rechecked from the recording. It turns out that it is the 'He-eh' of Javanese. Move 47 indicates an embarrassment, which in English is equivalent to 'Oh, come on, Dewi.' Meanwhile, the words '*Alah* and *Walah*' in move 55 are both expressions of despair in Javanese and occur spontaneously in response to a surprise or despair. Move 70 '*Ya...ya*' is similar to Move 19 'He eh' Move 101 '*Eh... apa ya? Sepuluh pertemuan*' indicates inability of finding the English word for '*Sepuluh pertemuan*' resulting in a Javanese expression 'Eh... apa ya? (um.. what do you call it?)

With respect to **approximation** (10.86), it can be seen from the following quotations.

12. live in Lampung

21. Have you... go there?

36. This can use as paper to rub your face

In Move 12, the student dropped the subject of the sentence. This may be due to the fact that the sentence is a correction of Move 11 'Your parents are in Lampung' which is corrected as 'live in Lampung.' If that is the case, then it is a kind of repair strategy (in the six criteria below). Move 21 presents approximation of the form 'go' which should be 'gone'. This did not seem to create a problem in communication. Similarly, in Move 36, the approximation is in the absence of the passive construction; 'can use as' should be reconstructed as 'can be used...'. However, this did not seem to create a communication problem, either.

Finally, the topic **avoidance** (6.52%) is present in the dialogue due to the fact that the students did not have enough knowledge about the subject. It can be seen from the following quotation.

303. Oh, no...

307. No...no

Both Moves 303 and 307 express a simple strategy of avoidance by saying ‘no’ to an offer of discussing ‘politics’ (Move 302). Meanwhile, Move 307 is a further reiteration that the student was not interested in politics in response to a persuasion in Move 306.

Not every move in the dialogue constitutes a certain communication strategy. Therefore it is necessary to employ the six criteria for communication strategies to accommodate the rest.

The Six Criteria

Table 2 below shows the distribution of communication strategies based on the six criteria. It should be noted that ‘Comprehension Indicator’ includes any exchange which constitutes the flow of conversation with a clear topic, and that ‘Fillers and Gambits’ includes any expression though meaningless which helps smoothen the conversation and thus indicates fluency of speaking, including ‘ice-breaking’, ‘topic initiation’.

Table 2. Distribution of CS by NNS				Table 3. Distribution of CS by NLS			
No	Communication Strategies		%	No	Communication Strategies		%
1	Repair	4	1.69	1	Repair	-	-
2	Repetition	7	2.95	2	Repetition	-	-
3	Over-elaboration	19	8.02	3	Over-elaboration	5	4.13
4	Comprehension Indicator	105	44.30	4	Comprehension Indicator	58	47.93
5	Clarification requests	24	10.13	5	Clarification requests	11	9.09
6	Fillers and gambles	78	32.91	6	Fillers and gambles	47	38.94
	Total	237	100.00		Total	121	100.00

Table 4. Distribution of Communication Strategies by D

No	Communication Strategies		%
1	Repair	1	3.45
2	Repetition	-	-
3	Over-elaboration	2	6.90
4	Comprehension Indicator	6	20.69
5	Clarification requests	3	10.34
6	Fillers and gambles	17	58.62
	Total	29	100.00

The distribution is of three types, one refers to the students (NNS), another to Native-Like Speaker (NLS), still another to the recording and talk initiator (D). From the three tables, it seems that the conversation among two students, a native-like speaker, and a recording operator has run smoothly. On the part of the students, for example, they managed to keep the conversation going on smoothly. It can be seen

from the strategy of 'Comprehension Indicator' (44.30%, the highest percentage among the other criteria. Interestingly, Filler and Gambits occupied the second rank (32.91%). This indicates that the students are skillful in maintaining the conversation, such as by initializing a new topic or any filler that can keep the conversation going on and on. Language repair occupied a very low percentage (1.69%). This means that the students were confident enough in speaking with a native-like speaker even though it was the first time for them to meet a foreigner.

However, there was a minor communication break-down. It can be seen in the following quotation.

- 144. You know *sambal*. Where is water?
- 145. Have you heard PENYET?
- 146. Yes, I do

In Move 144 NLS created a new topic 'sambal' but NNS failed to catch the intention of NLS; even worse, the NNS initiated another new topic 'PENYET'. Better still, NLS saved the communication break-down by responding to the question by responding 'Yes, I do' which actually violated the grammatical rule of English.

Furthermore, quite often the students applied 'language switch' whenever they found it difficult to find the word in the target language or when they wanted to ask for clarification or agreement from the other student, such as shown in the following quotation.

- 87. Her students... what...*apa you blasteran? Bule?*
- 320. In my examination...*apa ya....I get good score,nilai*
- 374. *Mosok tho? 84? Like Mas Soleh...ya? You are BIG*

In Move 87, it is clear that the student failed to supply the term 'bule' in English, which was then supplied by D in Move 90 as 'expatriates'. Similarly, in Move 320, the student was not sure of the diction of 'score' for the meaning of 'nilai'. Finally, a Javanese gambit '*Mosok tho?*' occurred in response to a surprise caused by Move 373 'Greg is 84, I am 79. He is younger than me'.

On the part of Native-like Speaker (NLS), who is actually Russian, he was quite considerate of the students' English proficiency by lowering the level of English up to a point to be understood by the students. This resulted in mistakes he might or might not realize, as shown in the following quotation.

- 120. Yes... really really friendly...They just smile to you and everybody ask you where are you going? Where do you from...you have a wife or children...Ha...ha...it's like a cultural question
- 168. Where do you from?
- 180. When you use it? Every time?

In Move 120, the NLS failed to supply the inflected form of 'ask' in agreement with the subject 'everybody'. He also has dropped the non-finite verb 'come' resulting in 'Where do you from...' As well, he made a similar mistake in Move 168 'Where do you from?' However such grammatical violation seemed not to bother communication.

This also applies in Move 180 'When you use it? Every time?' which, of course, has violated the syntax of English.

D. Discussion

In general, there was no problem in communication in the casual conversation among the two students and one native-like speaker despite the fact that the English they use was of basic level and thus, consisting of fragments of sentences or phrases. However, since the conversation was set to be informal with no specific topic of discussion, it then lacked focus. In other words, what they were talking jumped from one topic to another without clear direction of talk.

One good thing about the casual conversation in the current study is that the subjects share similar positions. The two subjects are students of State Polytechnic of Semarang and the native-like speaker identified as a student of UKSW-Salatiga, who is actually a Russian. They share similar positions at least as college students, who have something in common and therefore they can create communication. Even though, the students refused to talk about a bit sensitive topic such as politics, they still have common topics such as hobbies, food, extra jobs.

The study indicates that the use of fillers and gambits was very effective as a means of ice-breaker, topic initiation, topic avoidance. If they are thoughtfully used, they can help solve the problem of miscommunication. In addition, the study indicates that communication strategies can be viewed from two angles, one is communicative competence (something that has been described as having five other elements of competence, such as discourse competence, actional competence, linguistic competence, socio-cultural competence, and strategic competence. These elements with the discourse competence at the center, work cooperatively in order to be labeled as 'communicative competence'. However, competence is identical to knowledge, it is located in the brain and becomes the basis for the performance. Therefore, Halliday (1978) differentiates communicative competence from actual communication.

E. Conclusion

In general, the conversation they made was a casual one, having no specific focus of discussion, therefore they jumped from one topic to another. Occasionally, NNS made some grammatical mistakes, such as in verb inflections and tenses, but did not create communication blocks. This might be due to the fact that NLS was aware that the subjects were still in the process of learning English. Very often, NLS lowered down the level of difficulty in using English, by slowing the speaking speed and uttering the lexical items with considerable clarity.

With respect to the use of communication strategies (of the Nine Criteria), NNS mostly employed 'literal translation' (43.48%) out of the total communication strategies in use (46). This means that the students were very much influenced by their native language (Indonesian), and simply translated the (Indonesian) utterances into English with significant ignorance of English grammatical rules. Language Switch was also used (39.13%), resulting in the use of Indonesian (sometimes Javanese) whenever they failed to find the English words. Another communication strategy in use was 'Approximation' (10.86%) resulting in sentences with subjects missing. Finally, 'Topic Avoidance' was

the least in use (6.52%) in which difficult topic of discussion was avoided due to lack of background knowledge on the part of the students.

F. References

- Agustien, Helena I.R. 1997. *Interlanguage Communicative Strategies in Sustained Casual Conversation*, unpublished thesis for the degree of Doctor Philosophy in the School of English and Linguistics. Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia
- Canale, M and Swain, M. 1980. *Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing*, Toronto: Ministry of Education
- Canale, M. 1983. Communicative Competence to Communicative Language Pedagogy in Richards and Schmidt (eds) *Language and Communication*. London: Longman
- Celce-Murcia, Marianne and Olsrain, Elite. 2000. *Discourse and Context in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: University Press
- Chomsky, N. 1965. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press
- Ellis, R. 1989. *Are Class and Naturalistic Acquisition the same? A Study of The Classroom of German Word Order Rules*. Studies in Second Language Acquisition.
-, 1989. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- 1994. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Eggins, S. 1994. *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*. London: Pinter Publisher
- Halliday, M.A.K. and Plum, G. 1983. *On Casual Conversation*. In Hasan (ed) *Discourse on Discourse*. Occasional Papers No 7, 1983 Macquarie University
- Tri Joga, Jozef Bambang. 2008. *Communication Strategies in a Casual Conversation*. The Case of the First Year Students of Semarang State Polytechnic. Unpublished Thesis for the Master Degree of English Education Semarang State University