

English as a Foreign Language Preparatory School Students' Communication Strategies: A Case Study

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Abstract

Effective communication strategies are crucial for students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to express themselves effectively and overcome language barriers. The use of these strategies enhances confidence, reduces anxiety, and promotes active participation in language classrooms. This study investigates the communication strategies most frequently employed by EFL preparatory school students at a private higher education institution. Data were collected through questionnaires to determine which strategies were used and how often. A total of sixty-seven EFL students, both Francophone and non-Francophone, participated in the study. The findings revealed that non-Francophone students frequently used code-switching, similar-sounding words, and asking for confirmation, while Francophone students commonly employed repair, topic avoidance, code-switching, asking for confirmation, and filler strategies. Notably, both groups subconsciously adopted similar strategies, particularly asking for confirmation and code-switching. The study recommends that educators promote the conscious use of communication strategies and incorporate instructional activities that foster their effective application in language learning contexts.

Keywords: Communication strategies, English as a Foreign Language, Francophone, higher education

Introduction

English-medium universities continue to attract students worldwide due to the global prominence of English as a language of international communication. Proficiency in English enhances the academic and professional prospects of international students, especially those from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Many students enrolled in private universities have studied English as a second language but still face challenges using it effectively because of limited exposure and practice. Overcoming these challenges serves as strong motivation for achieving educational and professional goals.

Parents often choose to send their children abroad not only to improve their language proficiency but also to broaden their cultural understanding and adaptability in an increasingly globalized world. Northern Cyprus, with its English-medium universities, has become a popular destination for such students. However, students from non-English-speaking backgrounds often struggle with communication barriers, such as low confidence, limited vocabulary, and overreliance on translation tools.

For many international students, relocation to the island presents both opportunities and challenges. While some enjoy exploring Turkish culture and improving their English skills, others find it difficult to adapt to the new environment and lifestyle. Francophone students, in particular, admit neglecting English during secondary education but now recognize its importance for their academic and professional futures. Compared to French, English is often perceived as less complex in grammar and linguistic structures. Studying abroad also helps students develop independence, perseverance, and adaptability qualities that support both personal growth and effective language learning.

The present study examines the communication and learning challenges faced by international students studying in English-speaking contexts. Deficiencies in language

proficiency often lead to miscommunication and hinder classroom participation. At a private university preparatory school, many foreign students struggle to communicate effectively in English, often resorting to their first language or remaining silent. Employing communication strategies, however, can help address these challenges and enhance students' participation and confidence (Awang & Careemdeen, 2021; Strelkova et al., 2022).

Drawing on Dörnyei and Scott's (1997) framework, this study investigates the communication strategies used by international students, particularly Francophone learners, in a private university's preparatory program. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Identify the communication strategies utilized by EFL students;
2. Examine how frequently these strategies are employed; and
3. Explore differences and similarities between Francophone and non-Francophone students in their use of communication strategies.

Literature Review

Theoretical perspectives emphasize the importance of learners' strategies for facilitating more effective language learning, encompassing both cognitive and metacognitive approaches. The term communication strategy was introduced to address the difficulties faced by second language learners when linguistic resources are insufficient (Tarone, 1977/1983).

Researchers including Tarone (1983), Faerch and Kasper (1983), Bialystok (1990), Dörnyei (1995), and Rabab'ah (2001) have proposed different taxonomies to classify communication strategies. Tarone (1977) focused on social strategies such as avoidance and paraphrase, while Faerch and Kasper (1983) distinguished between avoidance and achievement strategies, dividing them into cooperative and non-cooperative types. Bialystok (1990) introduced analysis-based and control-based strategies that highlight cognitive processing. Dörnyei (1995) proposed three major categories: avoidance or reduction, achievement or compensatory, and stalling or time-gaining strategies. Later, Dörnyei and Scott (1997) expanded

this model into direct, indirect, and interactional strategies, adding elements such as self-repair and mumbling. Rabab'ah (2001) differentiated between L1 and L2-based strategies, emphasizing factors that prompt language switching.

Although these frameworks differ in terminology and scope, researchers agree on two defining features of communication strategies: problem-orientedness and conscious use. Collectively, the six major models proposed by Tarone (1983), Faerch and Kasper (1983), Bialystok (1990), Dörnyei (1995), Dörnyei and Scott (1997), and Rabab'ah (2001) form the theoretical foundation of current research.

Recent studies have expanded on these theoretical models by exploring how EFL learners apply communication strategies in practice. Rahman and Novia (2021) found that EFL students often used clarification requests, explanations, and circumlocution to overcome communication barriers. Yanju and Yanmei (2016) studied Middle Eastern learners and reported frequent use of modification devices to improve oral interaction. Cervantes and Rodriguez (2012) identified language switching as a common strategy influenced by class-related factors such as group size and seating arrangements. Similarly, Yusef Demir et al. (2018) emphasized negotiation for meaning among Turkish EFL learners, while Fyaak and AbdlHameed (2016) observed that students used message reduction, approximation, and circumlocution, often mirroring teachers' implicit use of these strategies. Hansson (2020) found that students relied on guesswork, whereas teachers employed questioning techniques to encourage comprehension. Rahman et al. (2020) recommended paraphrasing and reformulation as effective alternatives to native-language use. Furthermore, Velasco et al. (2022) explored the combination of communication strategies and vocabulary development, finding that systematic instruction and practice improved students' communication skills and reduced dependence on translation tools.

In summary, the literature reveals a consistent focus on the classification, function, and pedagogical importance of communication strategies among EFL learners. However, limited attention has been given to comparing strategy use among Francophone and non-Francophone learners, which this study aims to address.

Methodology

Research Design and Procedures

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate communication strategies used by EFL preparatory school students, guided by Dörnyei and Scott's (1997) taxonomy. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires to identify and measure the types and frequency of strategies used. This approach enables systematic data collection, enhances reliability, and allows for the comparison of variable relationships (Molina-Azorin, 2016).

The English preparatory school at the selected private institution was established to help international students from non-English-speaking backgrounds build the linguistic competence required for undergraduate studies. The program lasts one academic year, with six months devoted to intensive English practice. Students receive online access and orientation at the beginning of the year and are required to complete at least 70% of the communication skills program by semester's end (Stratton, 2021).

Following ethical approval from the institution, questionnaires were developed based on Dörnyei and Scott's (1997) framework and other relevant research. The researchers met with the preparatory school director to obtain permission and coordinate data collection logistics.

Participants and Sampling

A convenience sampling method was used, selecting participants based on accessibility (Babbie, 2016). Since the study was conducted after final exams, only one, B1-level group (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) was available. A total of 67 students participated, including 14 Francophone and 53 non-Francophone learners.

Data Collection and Analysis

Two questionnaires, Communication Strategy I and Communication Strategy II, were administered. These instruments were based on Dörnyei and Scott's (1997) taxonomy, which distinguishes three main types of communication strategies: direct, indirect, and interactional. Direct strategies offer alternative means of conveying meaning (e.g., circumlocution or approximation). Indirect strategies help maintain the flow of communication and prevent misunderstandings, while interactional strategies involve cooperative negotiation between interlocutors to achieve mutual understanding.

Dörnyei and Scott's framework was selected for its comprehensiveness, relevance, and widespread recognition in applied linguistics research.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0. Descriptive statistics summarized the frequency of strategy use, and Independent Samples t-tests were applied to examine significant differences between Francophone and non-Francophone groups. Data cleaning and visual checks ensured accuracy. Construct validity was assessed to confirm the suitability of the questionnaire items, and potential threats to reliability such as participant bias or inconsistent responses were minimized through careful design and monitoring.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings and discussion, categorized into two parts: the student questionnaire on Communication Strategy I (20 items) and Communication Strategy II (12 items). Both instruments included two groups of students—Francophone and non-Francophone. The first part examines the strategies employed, while the second part explores the frequency of strategy use.

Communication Strategy I

A total of Thirty-three (33) students participated in the Communication Strategy I questionnaire, including twenty-three (23) non-Francophone students (from Turkey, Indonesia, and Iraq) and ten (10) Francophone students (from Congo and Burundi).

Part 1A: Communication Strategy I – Non-Francophone Students

This section presents findings from the non-Francophone group (see Tables 1 and 2).

The overall mean score for Communication Strategy I was 3.91 with a standard deviation of 0.15, indicating that most non-Francophone students strongly agreed that they frequently employed these strategies to communicate in English. This result aligns with the findings of Tabrizian et al. (2019), who also observed consistent use of communication strategies among EFL learners.

When asked whether they focus more on what they say than on pronunciation, students reported a high mean score ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.756$), showing that meaning takes precedence over accuracy in pronunciation (Statement 2, Table 1). This indicates a meaning-oriented approach to communication, where students prioritize comprehension over phonological correctness.

Similarly, when students were asked if they repeat what they have just said to gain thinking time (Statement 1, Table 1), they strongly agreed ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.693$). This reflects the use of the *Other-repetition strategy* identified in Dörnyei and Scott's (1995) taxonomy, which helps maintain the flow of conversation during pauses in thought.

Another highly rated behavior was supplementing discussions with examples or elaborations ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.941$). This corresponds to the *Self-rephrasing strategy*, which supports meaning negotiation and coherence during discourse.

Regarding lexical choice, students agreed that they substitute synonyms or phrases with similar meanings when facing lexical gaps ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 0.998$). This use of the *Message*

replacement strategy demonstrates compensatory language behavior consistent with Dörnyei and Scott (1995).

Students also reported that they imitate how their teachers speak ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.92$), representing the *Imitation strategy*, a subcategory of *achievement strategies* described by Faerch and Kasper (1983). This imitation likely aids pronunciation and natural discourse rhythm.

Consulting teachers' notes or materials during communication difficulties was moderately frequent ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.268$). This behavior reflects the *Retrieval strategy*, where learners rely on visual or written prompts to recall correct grammatical structures or vocabulary.

A similar trend appeared in the *literal translation strategy*: students often translate words into their first language to aid comprehension ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.185$). This reliance on L1 supports comprehension but may hinder spontaneous L2 production.

Simplification also appeared as a common coping mechanism. Many students reported using simpler vocabulary during conversations ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.125$), demonstrating the *Message reduction* or *topic avoidance strategy*, where learners deliberately use basic language to avoid communication breakdowns.

Another frequently used strategy was asking for clarification when unsure about the speaker's meaning ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.061$), a behavior directly aligned with Dörnyei and Scott's (1995) *asking for clarification strategy*, which promotes interactive communication repair.

Finally, students confirmed the use of gestures or non-verbal cues when encountering comprehension difficulties ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.998$). This reflects the *Mime strategy*, a *non-linguistic or paralinguistic device* noted by Dörnyei and Scott (1995) and earlier researchers. It highlights learners' resourcefulness in maintaining communication even when linguistic competence is limited.

Table 1.*Communication Strategy I Non-Francophone Students*

Statement	M	SD
1. I will repeat what I have just said when I need to think of what to say	4.31	0.693
2. I pay more attention to what I say rather than how I say it or pronounce it	4.41	0.756
3. When I have difficulty to use the right word(s), I try to describe it to the other students	3.94	1.268
4. I prefer to redirect the conversation rather than remain silent when I do not understand a discussion	3.69	1.176
5. I gradually translate the words into my first language to help me comprehend what the speaker is saying	3.63	1.185
6. I use a simpler word(s) when involving in any conversation	3.66	1.125
7. When other students do not appear to understand or agree with my point of view, I speak up	3.77	1.203
8. When others do not understand me, I use gestures and facial expressions	3.90	0.908
9. I enjoy supplementing the discussion with additional examples (building on a previous comment made by another student)	4.22	0.941
10. When I am not sure of what someone is trying to convey, I will ask them to clarify what they are saying.	3.69	1.061

Table 2.*Communication Strategy I Non-Francophone Students*

Statement	M	SD
11. When I am confused, I seek assistance from my peers to assist me	3.78	1.099
12. When I am having difficulty comprehending something, I'll use gestures	3.69	0.998
13. When I am anxious about using a new word or phrase, I take a deep breath and try it again	3.69	1.091

14. When I have difficulty in using a word(s), I will substitute synonyms or phrases with a similar connotation to assist me in communicating my thoughts	4.19	0.998
15. My preferred method of understanding others is to request them to repeat what they just said	3.81	0.965
16. I use fillers such as 'um', 'well', 'you know, and 'I see what you mean' when I need to think of what to say	3.88	1.129
17. When I have difficulty expressing myself, I consult the teacher's notes for suggested words and structures to assist me during the discussion	3.56	1.268
18. When I don't understand what others are saying, I listen quietly and hope to understand without asking them to clarify	4.06	1.031
19. I usually make a clear mental image of [a new] word to remember it	4.13	0.976
20. I imitate how the teachers speak	4.16	0.92
	M	SD
General Mean	3.91	0.15

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 = Strongly Agree; 3.41 – 4.20 = Agree; 2.61 – 3.40 = Undecided;

1.81 – 2.60 = Disagree; < 1.81 = Strongly Disagree

Key: M: Mean Score SD: Standard Deviation

Overall, non-Francophone students actively employ a variety of communication strategies to overcome linguistic limitations. The most dominant strategies include meaning-focused communication, repetition, self-rephrasing, message replacement, imitation, and clarification requests. These findings confirm that learners prioritize intelligibility and message delivery over linguistic perfection, consistent with the notion that effective communication in EFL contexts often relies on compensatory and interactive strategies rather than grammatical precision.

Part 1B: Communication Strategy I – Francophone Students

The findings from the Francophone group reveal a consistent use of diverse communication strategies to facilitate English interaction. The overall mean score for Communication Strategy I was 3.89 (SD = 0.21), indicating that most students actively used these strategies.

Students strongly agreed that they use gestures and facial expressions when others fail to understand them (M = 4.38, SD = 1.061). This behavior aligns with Dörnyei and Scott's (1995) *Expressing non-understanding strategy*, where learners use verbal or non-verbal cues such as facial expressions or gestures to indicate confusion and maintain communication.

They also strongly agreed that they listen quietly and hope to understand without asking for clarification (M = 4.29, SD = 0.756). This corresponds to the *Ignorance acknowledgment strategy*, discussed by Rabab'ah, in which learners passively depend on context to infer meaning rather than requesting clarification.

In addition, many students agreed that they form a clear mental image of new words to remember them (M = 4.29, SD = 0.951). This reflects the *Imagery strategy*, a cognitive technique highlighted by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), where visualization enhances memory and comprehension.

Students further reported that they *focus more on meaning* than pronunciation (M = 4.25, SD = 1.165), emphasizing communicative intent over phonetic precision an approach consistent with meaning-focused language use observed among non-Francophone participants.

When encountering lexical difficulties, students stated that they describe unknown words to peers (M = 4.25, SD = 1.035), demonstrating use of the *Circumlocution strategy*, a paraphrasing technique within Dörnyei and Scott's (1995) taxonomy.

Repetition also featured prominently. Students agreed that they repeat what they have said to gain thinking time ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.414$), an example of the *Other-repetition strategy*, which supports fluency during speech formulation.

When facing comprehension difficulties, many preferred to redirect conversations rather than remain silent ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.155$). This illustrates the *Message reduction or topic avoidance strategy*, which enables learners to sustain dialogue despite gaps in understanding.

Similarly, students agreed that they use simpler words during conversations ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.309$), again reflecting the *Message reduction strategy*, allowing them to communicate effectively while avoiding lexical challenges.

When asked about clarification in peer discussions, students moderately agreed that they speak up to clarify their points of view ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.302$). This behavior demonstrates the *Response expansion strategy*, in which learners elaborate or rephrase to enhance understanding.

Finally, the mean score ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.134$) indicates that many students consult teachers' notes or written materials for assistance with vocabulary and structure. This represents the *Retrieval strategy*, where learners draw upon external sources to maintain accuracy and fluency.

Table 3.

Communication Strategy I Francophone Students

Statement	M	SD
1. I will repeat what I have just said when I need to think of what to say	3.5	1.414
2. I pay more attention to what I say rather than how I say it or pronounce it	4.25	1.165
3. When I have difficulty to use the right word(s), I try to describe it to the other students	4.25	1.035
4. I prefer to redirect the conversation rather than remain silent when I do not understand a discussion	3	1.155

5. I gradually translate the words into my first language to help me comprehend what the speaker is saying	3.75	1.488
6. I use a simpler word(s) when involving in any conversation	3.5	1.309
7. When other students do not appear to understand or agree with my point of view, I speak up	3.38	1.302
8. When others do not understand me, I use gestures and facial expressions	4.38	1.061
9. I enjoy supplementing the discussion with additional examples (building on a previous comment made by another student)	3.75	1.389
10. When I am not sure of what someone is trying to convey, I will ask them to clarify what they are saying.	4	1.069

Table 4.*Communication Strategy I Francophone Students*

Statement	M	SD
11. When I am confused, I seek assistance from my peers to assist me	4.13	1.126
12. When I am having difficulty comprehending something, I'll use gestures	3.63	1.598
13. When I am anxious about using a new word or phrase, I take a deep breath and try it again	4.00	1.414
14. When I have difficulty in using a word(s), I will substitute synonyms or phrases with a similar connotation to assist me in communicating my thoughts	4.14	1.069
15. My preferred method of understanding others is to request them to repeat what they just said	4.00	1.155
16. I use fillers such as 'um', 'well', 'you know, and 'I see what you mean' when I need to think of what to say	3.86	1.215
17. When I have difficulty expressing myself, I consult the teacher's notes for suggested words and structures to assist me during the discussion	3.57	1.134
18. When I don't understand what others are saying, I listen quietly and hope to understand without asking them to	4.29	0.756

clarify

19. I usually make a clear mental image of [a new] word to remember it	4.29	0.951
20. I imitate how the teachers speak	4.20	0.83
General Mean	3.89	0.21

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 = Strongly Agree; 3.41 – 4.20 = Agree; 2.61 – 3.40 = Undecided;

1.81 – 2.60 = Disagree; < 1.81 = Strongly Disagree

Key: M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

Francophone students actively employed a range of communication strategies both cognitive and compensatory to support English learning. The most frequent were gesture use, imagery, meaning focus, and circumlocution, showing that learners rely on both linguistic and non-verbal methods to overcome communication barriers.

Comparison of Non-Francophone and Francophone Students Regarding Communication Strategy I

In general, Tables 5 and 6 present the mean responses for both non-Francophone and Francophone students. The results revealed that non-Francophone students employed communication strategies more frequently, with a general mean of 3.91 (SD = 0.15) compared to Francophone students' mean of 3.89 (SD = 0.21). This indicates that non-Francophone students generally use communication strategies slightly more often than their Francophone counterparts.

When participants were asked whether they repeat what they have just said when thinking of what to say, the non-Francophone students reported a higher mean score (M = 4.31, SD = 0.693) compared to Francophone students (M = 3.50, SD = 1.414), indicating a more frequent use of this strategy (Statement 1, Table 5).

Regarding whether they pay more attention to what they say rather than how they pronounce it, the non-Francophone students also scored higher (M = 4.41, SD = 0.756) than Francophone students (M = 4.25, SD = 1.165) (Statement 2, Table 5).

However, when participants were asked if they describe a word when they cannot recall the correct one, Francophone students ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.035$) outperformed non-Francophone students ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.268$), suggesting that Francophones rely more on this descriptive strategy (Statement 3, Table 5).

When asked whether they redirect the conversation rather than remain silent when they do not understand a discussion, non-Francophone students ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.176$) reported using this strategy more than Francophones ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.155$) (Statement 4, Table 5).

In contrast, when students were asked if they translate words into their first language to aid comprehension, Francophone students ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.488$) used this strategy more than non-Francophones ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.185$) (Statement 5, Table 5).

Regarding whether they use simpler words during conversation, non-Francophones ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.125$) reported a slightly higher mean than Francophones ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.309$), suggesting greater reliance on simplification among non-Francophones (Statement 6, Table 5).

When asked whether they speak up when others do not seem to understand or agree, non-Francophones ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.203$) again surpassed Francophones ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.302$) (Statement 7, Table 5).

In terms of using gestures and facial expressions when misunderstood, Francophones ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.061$) demonstrated greater use of nonverbal strategies than non-Francophones ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.908$) (Statement 8, Table 5).

When asked whether they supplement discussions with additional examples, non-Francophones ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.941$) scored higher than Francophones ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.389$) (Statement 9, Table 5).

Finally, when participants were asked whether they seek clarification when unsure of what someone is saying, Francophones ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.069$) reported using this strategy more often than non-Francophones ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.061$) (Statement 10, Table 5).

Table 5.*Comparison of Communication Strategy I*

Statement	Non-Francophone		Francophone	
	M	SD	M	SD
1. I will repeat what I have just said when I need to think of what to say	4.31	0.693	3.5	1.414
2. I pay more attention to what I say rather than how I say it or pronounce it	4.41	0.756	4.25	1.165
3. When I have difficulty to use the right word(s), I try to describe it to the other students	3.94	1.268	4.25	1.035
4. I prefer to redirect the conversation rather than remain silent when I do not understand a discussion	3.69	1.176	3	1.155
5. I gradually translate the words into my first language to help me comprehend what the speaker is saying	3.63	1.185	3.75	1.488
6. I use a simpler word(s) when involving in any conversation	3.66	1.125	3.5	1.309
7. When other students do not appear to understand or agree with my point of view, I speak up	3.77	1.203	3.38	1.302
8. When others do not understand me, I use gestures and facial expressions	3.9	0.908	4.38	1.061
9. I enjoy supplementing the discussion with additional examples (building on a previous comment made by another student)	4.22	0.941	3.75	1.389
10. When I am not sure of what someone is trying to convey, I will ask them to clarify what they are saying.	3.69	1.061	4	1.069

Table 6.*Comparison of Communication Strategy I*

Statement	Non-Francophone		Francophone	
	M	SD	M	SD
11. When I am confused, I seek assistance from my peers to assist me	3.78	1.099	4.13	1.126
12. When I am having difficulty comprehending something, I'll use gestures	3.69	0.998	3.63	1.598
13. When I am anxious about using a new word or phrase, I take a deep breath and try it again	3.69	1.091	4	1.414
14. When I have difficulty in using a word(s), I will substitute synonyms or phrases with a similar connotation to assist me in communicating my thoughts	4.19	0.998	4.14	1.069
15. My preferred method of understanding others is to request them to repeat what they just said	3.81	0.965	4	1.155
16. I use fillers such as 'um', 'well', 'you know, and 'I see what you mean' when I need to think of what to say	3.88	1.129	3.86	1.215
17. When I have difficulty expressing myself, I consult the teacher's notes for suggested words and structures to assist me during the discussion	3.56	1.268	3.57	1.134
18. When I don't understand what others are saying, I listen quietly and hope to understand without asking them to clarify	4.06	1.031	4.29	0.756
19. I usually make a clear mental image of [a new] word to remember it	4.13	0.976	4.29	0.951
20. I imitate how the teachers speak	4.16	0.92	4.2	0.837
	M	SD	M	SD
General Mean	3.91	0.15	3.89	0.21

Communication Strategy II

Thirty-four (34) students participated in the questionnaire containing 12 items: thirty were non-Francophone (from Turkey, Indonesia, and Iraq) and four were Francophone (from Congo and Burundi).

To address the research question related to the frequency of strategy use, an Independent Samples T-test was conducted to analyze the responses between Francophone and non-Francophone students for the questionnaire titled Communication Strategy II.

Part 1A: Communication Strategy II – Non-Francophone Students

This section presents findings from the questionnaire focusing on Communication Strategy II, specifically responses from non-Francophone students. The overall mean score for non-Francophone students was 2.72 (SD = 0.12), indicating that the majority of participants rarely used the strategies under Communication Strategy II. It was also found that most non-Francophone students did not employ these strategies consistently.

When asked whether they use their first language when they cannot find the appropriate English term, the mean score was 3.14 (SD = 1.246), suggesting that most non-Francophone students frequently used this strategy (Statement 12, Table 7). This strategy corresponds to *Code Switching*, as defined in Dornyei and Scott's (1995) taxonomy, and also appears in Tarone (1977), Faerch and Kasper (1983b), Bialystok (1983), and Willems (1987) as *Language Switch*, *Transfer*, or *Borrowing*.

When asked whether they do not mind making errors when speaking, the mean score was 3.00 (SD = 1.206), indicating that most students were comfortable using this strategy (Statement 2, Table 7). This behavior aligns with the *Use of Similar Sounding Words strategy* (Dornyei & Scott, 1995), where learners compensate for lexical uncertainty by producing words that sound close to the intended term.

When asked whether they seek confirmation of unfamiliar words or phrases from peers, the mean score was 3.00 (SD = 1.38), showing that most students frequently employed this strategy (Statement 8, Table 7). This corresponds to *Asking for Confirmation*, as described by Dornyei and Scott (1995).

When asked whether they use gestures and facial expressions when others do not understand them, the mean score was 2.87 (SD = 0.968), suggesting that students rarely employed this strategy (Statement 6, Table 7). This strategy, known as Mime, is classified by Dornyei and Scott (1995) and also referred to as *Nonlinguistic/Paralinguistic Strategies* by other scholars.

When asked whether they avoid a conversation when the meaning or structure of a word is unclear, the mean score was 2.83 (SD = 1.154), implying that most students did not prefer to avoid conversations under such circumstances (Statement 4, Table 7). This is identified as *Topic Avoidance* in Dornyei and Scott's (1995) taxonomy.

When asked whether they repeat words or phrases to gain time or aid understanding, the mean score was 2.09 (SD = 1.125), showing that most students never used this strategy (Statement 1, Table 7). This behavior reflects the *Other-Repetition strategy*, as defined by Dornyei and Scott (1995).

When asked whether they attempt to explain something when unable to find the correct word, the mean score was 2.39 (SD = 0.941), suggesting that students rarely used this strategy (Statement 3, Table 7). This aligns with the *Circumlocution strategy* in Dornyei and Scott's (1995) taxonomy.

When asked whether they express disagreement with peers, the mean score was 2.61 (SD = 1.27), indicating that most students rarely did so (Statement 5, Table 7). Their limited expression of disagreement may involve alternative strategies such as *Asking for Clarification*,

Expressing Non-Understanding, or *Response Rejection* (e.g., saying “No”) to communicate disagreement indirectly.

When asked whether they use phrases such as “really,” “I agree,” or “what do you mean by that” to continue a conversation, the mean score was 2.61 (SD = 1.033), indicating that most students rarely employed this strategy (Statement 7, Table 7). This corresponds to *Asking for Clarification* in Dornyei and Scott's (1995) taxonomy.

When asked whether they substitute words or phrases with similar meanings when at a loss for words, the mean score was 2.64 (SD = 1.177), showing that most students rarely used this strategy (Statement 10, Table 7). This reflects the *Message Replacement strategy*, described by Dornyei and Scott (1995) and also mentioned in Willems (1987) and Faerch and Kasper (1983b).

Table 7.

Communication Strategy II Non-Francophone Students

Statements	M	SD
1. I repeat the words or phrases they have just said to help me understand and to gain time	2.09	1.125
2. I do not mind making errors when speaking	3.00	1.206
3. When I cannot find the appropriate word to describe something, I attempt to explain it.	2.39	0.941
4. When the meaning or structure of a word is unclear, I prefer to avoid a conversation.	2.83	1.154
5. If I don't agree with other students, I let them know	2.61	1.27
6. When others do not understand me, I use gestures and facial expressions	2.87	0.968
7. I use some phrases such as 'really', 'I agree', 'what do you mean by that' to respond to or expand on a conversation	2.61	1.033
8. I am not afraid of asking other students to confirm the meaning of any unfamiliar words or phrases.	3.00	1.38
9. I am not afraid to assist someone unsure of a word's meaning or grammatical structure.	2.77	1.152

10. When I am at a loss for a phrase or a word, I will substitute something that has a similar meaning.	2.64	1.177
11. I use fillers such as 'um', 'well', and 'you know to help myself in deciding what to say,	2.64	1.049
12. I use my first language when I cannot find the appropriate English term	3.14	1.246
	M	SD
General Mean	2.72	0.12

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 = *Strongly Agree*; 3.41 – 4.20 = *Agree*; 2.61 – 3.40 = *Undecided*; 1.81 – 2.60 = *Disagree*; < 1.81 = *Strongly Disagree*

Key: M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

Part 2B: Communication Strategy II (Francophones)

The overall mean score for Communication Strategy II among francophone students was 3.01 (SD = 0.13), indicating that most participants sometimes used these strategies but not consistently.

When asked whether they were willing to assist peers unsure of a word's meaning or grammatical structure (M = 3.64, SD = 1.152), most francophone students reported frequent use of this behavior. This corresponds to the *Other-repair strategy* under *Direct strategies* (Dornyei & Scott, 1995).

Similarly, they often asked peers to confirm the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases (M = 3.45, SD = 1.572), reflecting the *Asking for confirmation strategy* identified in multiple taxonomies.

Moderate use was observed for *Topic Avoidance* (M = 3.36, SD = 1.362), suggesting that some francophone students occasionally avoid conversation breakdowns by withdrawing when meaning or structure is unclear.

Frequent *Code-Switching* was also evident (M = 3.36, SD = 1.69), aligning with strategies described by Dornyei and Scott (1995) and others (Tarone, 1977; Faerch & Kasper, 1983b; Bialystok, 1983; Willems, 1987).

Students also reported occasional use of fillers such as “um,” “well,” or “you know” ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.555$), a strategy classified as *Stalling/Time-gaining* under *Indirect strategies*. In contrast, *Other-repetition* ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.567$) and *Asking for clarification* ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.567$) were seldom used, suggesting limited self-monitoring and conversational elaboration.

Nonverbal communication, such as *Mime* ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.753$), was also rare among participants, while *Message Replacement* ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.177$) and *Circumlocution* ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.578$) were employed only occasionally.

Overall, francophone students appeared more inclined toward direct and cooperative strategies, such as assisting others and confirming meaning, while showing less reliance on compensatory or nonverbal techniques. This pattern suggests that their communication management relies more on linguistic and social interactional repair strategies rather than nonverbal or avoidance-based approaches.

Table 8.

Francophone Students' Communication Strategy II

Statement	M	SD
1. I repeat the words or phrases they have just said to help me understand and to gain time	2.36	1.567
2. I do not mind making errors when speaking	3.18	1.471
3. When I cannot find the appropriate word to describe something, I attempt to explain it.	2.91	1.578
4. When the meaning or structure of a word is unclear, I prefer to avoid a conversation.	3.36	1.362
5. If I do not agree with other students, I let them know	3.00	1.789
6. When others do not understand me, I use gestures and facial expressions	2.55	1.753
7. I use some phrases such as ‘really,’ ‘I agree,’ ‘what do you mean by that’ to respond to or expand on a conversation	2.36	1.567
8. I am not afraid of asking other students to confirm the meaning of any unfamiliar words or phrases.	3.45	1.572

9. I am not afraid to assist someone unsure of a word's meaning or grammatical structure.	3.64	1.362
10. When I am at a loss for a phrase or a word, I will substitute something that has a similar meaning.	2.64	1.69
11. I use fillers such as 'um', 'well', and 'you know to help myself in deciding what to say,	3.27	1.555
12. I use my first language when I cannot find the appropriate English term	3.36	1.69
General Mean	3.01	0.13

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 = Strongly Agree; 3.41 – 4.20 = Agree; 2.61 – 3.40 = Undecided; 1.81 – 2.60 = Disagree; < 1.81 = Strongly Disagree

Key: M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

Comparison of Non-Francophone and Francophone Students' Responses Regarding Communication Strategy II

Tables 9 and 10 summarize the comparative results for both non-francophone and francophone students. The analysis revealed that non-francophone students rarely employed Communication Strategies II ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 0.12$), while francophone students showed a higher frequency of use ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.13$). This indicates that francophone participants made slightly greater use of communicative strategies overall.

When examining individual strategies, francophone students reported higher means across most items, particularly in *Circumlocution*, *Topic Avoidance*, *Asking for Confirmation*, *Other-repair*, and *Code-switching*. These strategies suggest a greater reliance on direct verbal repair and collaborative communication among francophone learners. Conversely, non-francophone students exhibited slightly higher use of *Mime and Repetition strategies*, indicating a preference for compensatory, nonverbal approaches.

Specifically, francophone students scored higher in assisting peers ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.362$) and confirming meaning ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.572$), while non-francophones relied more on gestures and repetition ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.968$). Both groups demonstrated occasional code-switching behavior (francophones: $M = 3.36$; non-francophones: $M = 3.14$), confirming that

resorting to the first language remains a common communicative resource in multilingual learning contexts.

Table 9.

Comparison of Communication Strategy II

Statement	Non-Francophone		Francophone	
	M	SD	M	SD
1. I repeat the words or phrases they have just said to help me understand and to gain time	2.09	1.125	2.36	1.567
2. I do not mind making errors when speaking	3.00	1.206	3.18	1.471
3. When I cannot find the appropriate word to describe something, I attempt to explain it.	2.39	0.941	2.91	1.578
4. When the meaning or structure of a word is unclear, I prefer to avoid a conversation.	2.83	1.154	3.36	1.362
5. If I don't agree with other students, I let them know	2.61	1.27	3.00	1.789
6. When others do not understand me, I use gestures and facial expressions	2.87	0.968	2.55	1.753
7. I use some phrases such as 'really', 'I agree', 'what do you mean by that' to respond to or expand on a conversation	2.61	1.033	2.36	1.567

Table 10.*Comparison of Communication Strategy II*

Statement	Non-Francophone		Francophone	
	M	SD	M	SD
8. I am not afraid of asking other students to confirm the meaning of any unfamiliar words or phrases.	3.00	1.38	3.45	1.572
9. I am not afraid to assist someone unsure of a word's meaning or grammatical structure.	2.77	1.152	3.64	1.362
10. When I am at a loss for a phrase or a word, I will substitute something that has a similar meaning.	2.64	1.177	2.64	1.69
11. I use fillers such as 'um', 'well', and 'you know to help myself in deciding what to say,	2.64	1.049	3.27	1.555
12. I use my first language when I cannot find the appropriate English term	3.14	1.246	3.36	1.69
	M	SD	M	SD
General Mean	2.72	0.12	3.01	0.13

Overall, the comparison reveals that francophone students are more proactive in managing communication breakdowns through verbal and cooperative strategies, while non-francophone learners depend more on nonverbal or time-gaining methods. This pattern may reflect differences in linguistic confidence, exposure to multilingual environments, and cultural communication norms.

Conclusion

The present study highlights both the convergences and divergences in communication strategy use between Francophone and non-Francophone students learning English as a second language. Overall, the findings indicate distinct patterns in the selection and frequency of strategy use among the two groups. Non-Francophone learners tended to rely more on strategies such as other-repetition, self-rephrasing, message replacement, imitation, and imagery. In contrast, Francophone learners more frequently employed expressing non-understanding, acknowledging ignorance, imagery, and circumlocution strategies (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997).

The least used strategies also differed: non-Francophones showed minimal reliance on retrieval, literal translation, message reduction, clarification requests, and mime, whereas Francophones reported limited use of other-repetition, message reduction/topic avoidance, response expansion, and retrieval. Regarding Communication Strategy II, non-Francophones were more inclined toward code-switching, using similar-sounding words, and asking for confirmation, while Francophones predominantly employed other-repair, topic avoidance, code-switching, and filler-use strategies (Awang & Careemdeen, 2021).

Despite these observed variations, the study revealed no statistically significant difference between Francophone and non-Francophone learners concerning Communication Strategies I and II. However, mean comparisons indicated that non-Francophones generally favored Communication Strategy I, whereas Francophones employed Communication Strategy II more often. Ultimately, this study reinforces the understanding that second-language learners strategically adapt their communication behavior when confronted with interlanguage limitations. The choice of strategy is influenced by individual learner behavior, linguistic awareness, and the nature of the communicative challenge encountered (Dörnyei, 1995; Strelkova et al., 2022).

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