

## استخدام استراتيجيات المحادثة بين طلاب المرحلة الثانوية بالمدرسة الليبية في دولة ماليزيا

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### ملخص البحث :

تهتم هذه الدراسة باستخدام استراتيجيات المحادثة (CSs) بين طلاب المرحلة الثانوية بالمدرسة الليبية في دولة ماليزيا. بحثت أيضا هذه الدراسة الفروقات في استخدام استراتيجيات المحادثة بين الذكور والإناث. تم جمع البيانات في عام 2013 باستخدام طرق بحث مختلطة (الكمية والنوعية). كانت عينة البحث تتكون من 51 مشاركًا في هذه الدراسة (سنة اولى و سنة ثانية من الطلاب الليبيين). الأدوات المستخدمة لجمع البيانات هي الاستبيان والملاحظة داخل الفصل الدراسي. أظهرت النتائج أن المشاركين استخدموا عدد عشرة من أصل اثني عشر نوعًا من استراتيجيات المحادثة التي اعتمدها (Tarone1980)، (Willems ،Faerch& Kasper 1984) (1987). كانت الاستراتيجيات الأكثر استخدامًا هي: استحداث كلمة، استخدام كلمة قريبة من حيث المعنى، تجاهل المحادثة، استخدام لغة الام، والإصلاح الذاتي في حين كانت أقل الاستراتيجيات المستخدمة هي الترجمة الحرفية واستخدام الكلمات الشائعة التي تتماشى مع جميع الأغراض. أثبتت النتائج أيضا أنه لا توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الذكور والإناث باستخدام استراتيجيات المحادثة. تقترح هذه الدراسة على مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية تزويد طلابهم بتعريف واضح لاستراتيجيات المحادثة (CSs) ومساعدتهم على استخدامها عبر التمارين والأنشطة في هذا الصدد.

## **Communication Strategies Used by Secondary Students at the Libyan School in Malaysia**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the use of communication strategies (CSs) among Libyan secondary school students. It examined the differences in the use of communication strategies between males and females. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected in 2013 using a mixed-method design. There were 51 participants involved in this study (year one and year two Libyan students). The instruments employed for data collection were questionnaire and classroom observation. The findings showed that the participants have used ten out of twelve types of communication strategies adopted by Tarone (1980), Faerch & Kasper (1984), and Willems (1987). The most frequently communication strategies used were Word Coinage, Approximation, Message Abandonment, Code Switching and self-Repair. Whereas the least strategies used were Literal Translation and Use All-purpose Words. The findings also proved that there were no statistically significant differences between males and females using communication strategies. This study suggests that teachers of English should provide their students with the definitions of CSs and help them using CSs via tasks and activities in this regard.

**Keywords:** Communication Strategies (CSs); Communicative Competence; Gender Differences

## **Introduction**

Language is a mean of communication among people regardless of tongues and races. The first goal of studying a second language is to use it for communication. Therefore, it is highly essential to understand the language of communication of any nation or society. Students learn FL/SL to improve their communicative skills if they have enough opportunities to communicate. It is a system of communication based upon words and the combination of words into sentences. English as a universal language has become the most widely spoken language in the world. It is spoken as a first language by the majority of the population of many countries. At the present time, English has become more important. More than 300 million people are speaking as native speakers and more than 400 million as second or foreign language speakers, M. Samanth (2016). Moreover, English is applied in majority of academic situations such as instruction in publishing and international communication. It is very crucial that non-native speakers of English need to get a better competence in the use of communication strategies.

Rubin (1981) classifies communication strategies as indirect learning strategies that can indirectly help language learning. Using communication strategies is therefore seen as a springboard to language learning. This is because learning takes place through communication. Communication provides exposure to the target language which is a necessary criterion for learning a language. The more communicative situations the learner engages in the more possibilities the learner has for practicing the target language.

Since the late 1970s, studies of CSs concentrated on primarily descriptive issues to do with their definitions, identification and classification. It was confirmed by Faerch&Kasper, (1983) and Nandini, (2015) that developing the learner's communicative competence can be attained by relating their needs to the syllabus, which might satisfy these needs and by enhancing their awareness of employing appropriate CSs that allow them to overcome different communication problems encountered. In some related researches such as Şener&Balkır, (2013), female learners tend to use more appeal for assistance strategies comparing to their counterparts male EFL learners in the interactional task. Therefore, more research is needed on the relationship between gender and use of CSs to find out the existence of differences or similarities between female and male students.

### **Background of the Study**

Libya is an Islamic Arab country, located in the African continental, within the Mediterranean region ( Zarrough, et al.,(2001). Libya has a free of charge education system along all the stages of studying from primary school right up to university. The first nine years (six years of primary school and three years of preparatory) are compulsory and considered as basic education, (national Report of Libya Zarrough, et al. 2001). The English language learning system in Libya starts in the fourth grade of primary school then continues learning English during the preparatory school (Pathan et al., 2016).

English language competence has become an important topic in Libya not just in the field of education but also among society structure. Usually, students are looking forward to

travelling abroad to pursue their higher education taking the advantage of learning a foreign language and a new culture. They hope to develop new skills and experience by meeting international students. This is believed to give them a prestige of having a certificate from an English native language country. The major problem of Libyan students is related to their low proficiency level of English language. As a result, the Global Education Center, (2009) points out that Arab students including Libyans prefer to study in other countries such as Malaysia, England and so on.

Identifying how the learners perform the learning process has been in the focus of research. Moreover, the focus is also being put more on how learners process new strategies and what kinds of CSs they use, (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). Factors related to CSs range from cultures and educational environments to individual learners variables such as gender and language proficiency. Communication assists people to send and receive messages effectively and negotiate meaning (Thao, 2005). We cannot communicate successfully unless we master certain CSs. Our ability to energize and arouse people to even higher levels of performance is related to our communication ability during English language learning process. Poor communication in which the message is not comprehensive will cause misunderstanding between people. This is because the speaker will not convey the idea he/she wants to talk about. Communication strategies awareness to solve communication problems is essential component of communicative competence (Rababah, 2005). In Libya, students learn English throughout only the classroom where the teacher is an Arabic native speaker. So, Libyan

students in general are facing problem in using communication strategies and in practicing English language. However, there has been a lack of studies on the use of communication strategies by secondary school students .

### **The aim of the study**

This study aims to investigate the communication strategies employed by Libyan secondary school students at the Libyan school in Malaysia regarding gender differences. It examined the differences in the use of communication strategies between males and females. The results obtained is presumed to be exploited by the English teachers and curriculum designers as well.

### **Research Questions**

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the types of communication strategies that Libyan Secondary school students use?
2. Are there any differences between male and female students in using communication strategies?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Communication Strategies**

During the last decades, communication strategies have become in the concern of a field of research for many scholars in the field of English as second or foreign language (Poullisse, 1990; Ownie, 2010; Mariani & Kay, 2012; Rodríguez & Roux, 2012; Hoesny, 2016; Martínez-Adrián, Gallardo-del-Puerto & Basterrechea 2017; Palmer & Christison, 2018). According to Dörnyei and Scott (1997), a communication Strategy is “the selection of appropriate communication objectives and the identification of the specific brand awareness and brand attitude

strategy” (Google Web Definition). Boxer and Cohen (2004) defined CSs as "a systematic attempt by the speakers or the learners to deliver or give the exact meaning that is not proportionate with the rules of the target language". Tarone, (1981) claimed that Communication strategies are used by the Learners in interactions to compensate for their lack of appropriate knowledge when expressing their intended utterances.

The notion of Communication strategies refers to a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in real Communication attempting to bridge the gap between the linguistic knowledge of the second-language Learner and the linguistic knowledge of his or her interlocutor in real Communication situations. Approximation, Mime, and Circumlocution may be used to bridge this gap whereas Message Abandonment and Avoidance may be used where the gap is perceived as unbridgeable, (Ya-ni, 2007). Communication strategies have witnessed different ways of defining. All these definitions reveal the same purpose of Communication strategies, namely, to solve an emerged Communication problem by applying some kinds of techniques. More focus is being put on the Communication skills among non-native speakers as English is used essentially for Communication (Savignon, 2003). Communication assists people to send and receive messages effectively and negotiate meaning (Rubin & Thompson, 1994). Communication is simply defined as a process in which a message is sent from senders to receivers. Technically, it is said that the sender encodes a message and the receiver decodes it (Thao, 2005). For most people, in order to receive and send

message in the target language, they have to get high Communication competence which is the main aim of Learning a foreign or a second language. (Rubin & Thompson, 1994:30). Communication is a broad area of research which involves many different ways of Communication with all the variables that may have an impact on them. Communication can also be oral or written or formal and informal. In other words, Communication strategies can help students to keep on using the language when Communicating with others and perform well in oral performance to give a clear message to the listener.

### **COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

Strategic competence or communication strategies‘ has become an important element of the communicative competence that a second or foreign language learner needs in order to communicate effectively (Bachman 1990; Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1995; Ahmed & Pawar, 2018). Communicative competence enables learners to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meaning interpersonally within specific contexts (Brown, 2000). The notion of communicative competence has been further developed by Canale and Swain, (1980) who identified four dimensions: grammatical competence that is knowledge of what is grammatically correct in a language, discourse competence that is knowledge of intersentential relationships, and strategic competence that is knowledge of verbal and nonverbal Communication strategies. According to Savignon, (1983), communicative competence means one's knowledge of appropriateness of utterances with respect to sociocultural factors. One's success in Communication may vary from situation to another. She also claimed that Competence is one's

knowledge and performance. However, only performance is observable and it is only through performance that Competence can be developed, maintained and evaluated. Canal and Swain, (1980) believe that Communicative Competence does not include the Communication Strategies that the Learner employs in order to achieve the Communicative Competence. However, they state that it is necessary to clarify further the concept of “Communicative Competence”. Accordingly, they suggest a new paradigm called “Strategic Competence”.

### **Taxonomies of Communication Strategies**

Communication strategies have been classified in different ways according to the principles of terminology and categorization of different researchers (Surapa and Channarong, 2011). According to Bialystok, (1990), generally, there is no agreement on specific classifications or taxonomies. The literature review proposed varieties of taxonomies that differ mainly in terminology and overall categorizing principles more than in the specific strategies. Tarone's taxonomy of Communication strategies in figure 1 below has been used by the researcher to investigate the types of Communication strategies used by Libyan secondary school.

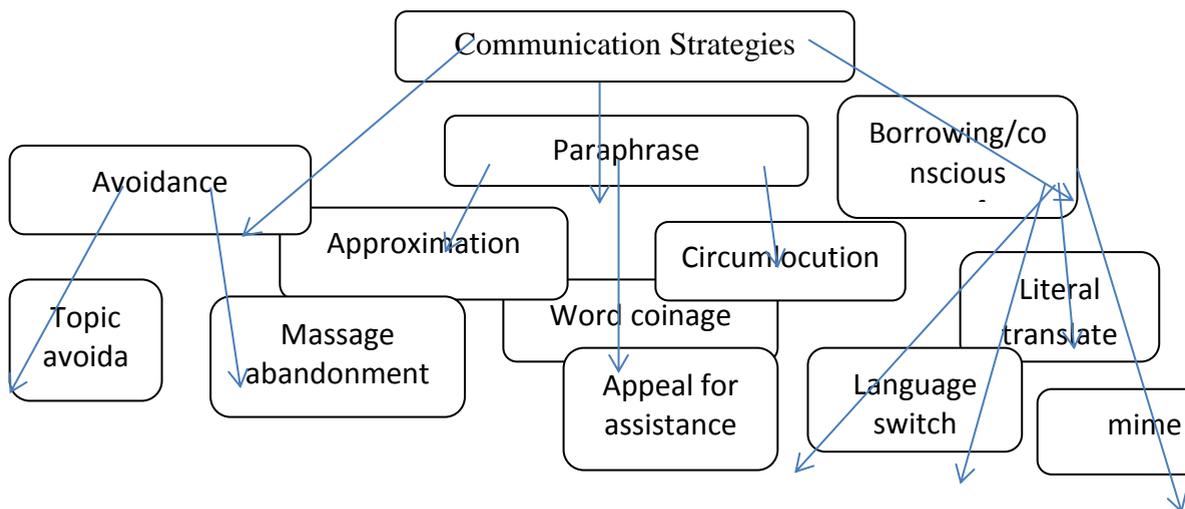


Figure 1: Communication Strategies Taxonomy by Tarone, (1980)

Table 1: a collection of the most common Communication Strategies classification as presented by Hua. Et al., (2012).

<b>Avoidance or Reduction Strategies</b>		
1	<b>Message Abandonment:</b> the interlocutors start their talk but fail to keep talking because of language difficulties, so they give it up.	<b>Avoidance</b>
2	<b>Topic Avoidance:</b> the learners refrain from talking about the topics which they may not be able to continue for linguistic reasons.	

<b>Achievement or Compensatory Strategies</b>		
3	<b>Literal translation:</b> the learners literally translate a word, a compound word, an idiom, or a structure from L1 into L2.	<b>Inter-lingual strategies (strategies that involve transfer from L1 to L2)</b>
4	<b>Borrowing or code switching:</b> the learners use an L1 word or phrase with an L1 pronunciation.	
5	<b>Foreignizing:</b> the learners utilize an L1 word or phrase by morphologically or phonologically adjusting it to an L2 word.	
6	<b>Approximation or Generalization:</b> the learners employ an L2 word which is semantically in common with the targeted lexical item.	<b>Intra-lingual strategies (strategies that involve only L2)</b>
7	<b>Word coinage:</b> the learners coin a non-existing L2 word by overgeneralization.	
8	<b>Circumlocution:</b> the learners describe or exemplify the action or object instead of using the right L2 structure or item.	
9	<b>Use of all-purpose words:</b> the learners use a general word to fill the vocabulary gaps.	
10	<b>Self-repair or restructuring:</b> the learners establish a new speech plan when their first attempt fails.	

11	<p><b>Appeals for assistance:</b> the learners turn to partners for assistance (e.g. Do you understand?; Can you speak more slowly? What do you call?).</p>	
12	<p><b>Stealing or time-gaining strategies:</b> the learners employ such hesitation devices as fillers or gambits to gain time to think.</p>	

In table 1 above, Hua et. al., (2012) presented a collection of the most common Communication Strategies classification that adopted from Tarone, (1977). The table also shows twelve types of Communication strategies employed by language learners in their communication. These strategies were used in various degrees . Some learners may take advantage of all of them while some others may choose to employ a few of them. However, these strategies assist the learner to establish successful communication.

### Communication Strategies and Gender Differences

In foreign language learning, gender differences in the use of communication Strategies have recently witnessed a considerable increase in the amount of research. Many of which approved that females were more Communication Strategies users than males. Green and Oxford, (1995) stated that females are more social interactive than males. In a study by Baker &MacIntyre (2000), females have reported a greater level of willingness to employ CSs inside the classroom. Songsang, (1998) studied the effect of gender on communication strategies. The results indicated that the female learners tend to use more appeal for assistance strategies than the male EFL learners in the

interactional task.. Previous studies on the Turkish context also revealed that gender had an important effect on use of CSs. All Turkish ESL learners used more CSs with female than with male interlocutors (Aslan,2009). On the other hand, minor differences between male and female learners have been reported by Mahardhika, et al., (2014) and Hajiesmaeli,&Darani, (2017) who examined ninety undergraduate foreign language native speakers and found that females made slightly greater users of social interactions strategies. The gender has no effect on the use of CSs in terms of frequency and effectiveness but it has considerable effect in terms of types of CSs used by different genders. Females have more appeal in using assistance strategies than males and the males are more eager in taking risk to communicate with others (Moazen, 2012). A study conducted by Lai, (2010) on 36 Chinese EFL learners concluded that there was no significant difference between male and female in the use of CSs.Also in by Hajiesmaeli&Darani, (2017), there was no significant difference between male and female Iranian EFL learners.

## **Methodology**

To gain broader prospective and to give more in depth and clear image of that is being explored, the researcher employed multiple research methods of the triangulating quantitative and qualitative data sources. This study investigates two issues; communication strategies that Libyan secondary school learners use and gender differences in the use of CSs.

## **Participants**

The targeted population of this study were Libyan secondary school students. 51 out of 400 participants (27 male

and 24 female) enrolled at the Libyan school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia have been chosen based on their willingness to participate.

### **Instruments**

The quantitative data were collected through the use of a forty-item questionnaire while the qualitative data were collected through classroom observation. These are used to gain demographic information about students and communication strategies they use.

### **Questionnaire**

Ten types of CSs were included in the questionnaire which was a modified version adopted from Oxford, (1990). These types of CSs were defined in the classification of Torone, (1980, 1977), Faerch and Kasper, (1983), and Willems, (1987). The questionnaire is consisted of two parts. The first part was to gather personal information about the participants' gender while the second part included ten items of CSs. For the purpose of reliability and validity, the questionnaire has been translated to Arabic Language and the calculated value of alpha was (0.874). The questionnaire has been distributed to the participants by the researcher in the classroom. The researcher explained exclusively the meaning of CSs and the way to achieve the task.

### **Classroom Observation**

Classroom Observation was the second instrument employed to support the main instrument for data collection. With a permission granted from the school management, the researcher as a non-participant observer has observed students' use of CSs during their interactions in English classes.

## Procedures

Data collection procedures took place during the school year 2012-2013 at the Libyan school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Quantitative data have been collected via the communication strategy questionnaire. This was to obtain detailed information about the use of each type of communication strategy. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software (version 13.0) to accomplish the descriptive analysis of inferential statistics such as frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Qualitative data collected from classroom observation checklist were analyzed through content analysis procedures and used to supplement data gathered from the questionnaire. Details and points of the observation that were marked as “satisfactory” or “outstanding” then were analyzed and interpreted and later integrated with data collected from questionnaires, (table 2).

Table 2: Data Analysis

Research Question	Data Collection Instrument	Data Analysis Instruments
1. a. What are the types of CSs that Libyan secondary student use?	Questionnaire Classroom Observation	SPSS Observation Checklist
2. Is there a difference between male and female students in using CSs?	Questionnaire	SPSS

## **Findings and Discussions**

The quantitative data obtained were statistically analyzed to establish frequency distribution in the form of descriptive statistics. To examine the CSs that the interlocutors used in the classroom, the CS typology proposed by Tarone (1980) and Tarone (1977), Færch and Kasper (1983), and Willems (1987) was used for data analysis. The classification contained ten types of CSs. Separate t-test was performed to determine the effect of gender variable on CSs use. The analysis steps were organized according to the sequence of the research questions.

### **Research Question One.**

What are the types of CSs that Libyan secondary school students use?

Based on the results of the questionnaire presented on table 3, ten types of CSs were used by the participants. They were Word coinage, Approximation, Message Abandonment, Code switching, Appeals for assistance, Topic Avoidance, Self-Repair, Circumlocution, Use of All-Purpose Word, and Literal Translation. The most frequently CSs used strategies were Word Coinage strategy (M=3.4) follow by Approximation (M=3.0), Message Abandonment (M=3.0), Code Switching (M=2.9), and Self-Repair (M=2.9).

**Table 3: types of CSs Used by Libyan Secondary School Students**

rank	No items	Questionnaire items	M	SD	always	Often	Sometimes	Never	Not sure	
									0	0
1	6	Word Coinage	3.039	.77358	0	14	21	16	0	0
2	5	Approximation	2.9804	.70683	1	10	29	11	0	0
3	1	Massage Abandonment	2.9608	.97900	4	11	21	13	2	3.9
4	4	Code Switching	2.9020	.85452	0	20	17	13	1	2.0
5	10	Appeals for Assistance	2.8824	.97256	5	11	21	13	1	2.0
6	2	Topic Avoidance	2.8627	1.1665	7	13	15	12	4	7.8
7	9	Self-Repair	2.8627	.95958	2	18	19	9	3	5.9
8	7	Circumlocution	2.8431	.70349	0	17	25	9		0

2.0	0
1	0
13.7	25.5
7	13
41.2	27.5
21	14
41.2	37.3
21	19
2.0	9.8
1	5
.80196	.96933
2.7255	2.6863
Use of All-Purpose Words	Literal Translation
8	3
9	10

### Observation

Data from classroom observation also supported the findings gained from the questionnaire. In an in-depth analysis of the classroom observation data, the students were observed repeatedly using the strategy of coining a non-existing L2 word by overgeneralization and the strategy of employing an L2 word which is semantically in common with the targeted lexical item. Generally, the researcher has reported the frequent use of the same ten types of CSs in classroom and the focus of the students was on those indicated in table 5 as the most frequently used strategies. Table 4 shows the frequent and percentage use of CSs which are illustrated as follows: item no 3 (47.1%), No. 8 (43.2%), no. 4,2 and 9 (39.2%), no. 7 (33.3%), no. 10 (31.4%), no 1 (29.4%), no 6 (27.5%), and no. 5 (21.6) respectively.

Table 4 the frequency and percentage of students who always and often use CSs

No of items	CSs	Frequently	Percentage %
3	Literal Translation	24	47.1
8	Use of All-Purpose Words	22	43.2
4	Code Switching	20	39.2
2	Topic Avoidance	20	39.2
9	Self-Repair	20	39.2
7	Circumlocution	17	33.3
10	Appeals for Assistance	16	31.4
1	Message Abandonment	15	29.4
6	Word Coinage	14	27.5
5	Approximation	11	21.6
Total		179	351.1

These results were in agreement with the results of a study conducted by Wongsawang (2001). However, these results were in contrast with other studies like Hua et al, (2012) who found that the least used CS was ‘word coinage’ at 21 items (2.74%).

**Research Question Two.**

Are there any differences between male and female in using CSs?

Table 5 the difference in types of CSs by female and male learners

Type \ Gender	Female	Male
Word Coinage	3.0417	3.0370
Approximation	2.9583	3.0
Message Abandonment	3.0	2.9259
Code Switching	3.1250	2.7037
Appeals for Assistance	2.8333	2.9259
Self-Repair	2.9583	2.7778
Topic Avoidance	2.8750	2.8519
Circumlocution	2.8750	2.8148
Use of All-Purpose Words	2.9167	2.5556
Literal Translation	2.6250	2.7407

The results in table 5 showed that the strategies which male students used most often are much the same as those used most by female students. This result is different from those obtained by Songsang, (1998) and Wang, (2008). According to a study conducted by Hou, (1998) females used more appeal for assistance strategies than males because they are more field-dependent. Although Wang (2008) found female used more Code Switching strategies, she failed to explain it convincingly, this finding is in consistency with what Kaivanpanah, et al (2012) has mentioned regarding gender difference in the use of CSs. They stated that there is a positive significant for Circumlocution.

Interestingly, the findings obtained showed no significant correlation between CSs use and gender. This finding is in agreement with what Lai(2010) has found. In this regard, Lai found that female university students in Taiwan applied strategies more often when speaking English. The statistical analysis in this study shows that there are few differences between males and females when using different types of strategies, i.e., Libyan male and female students tend to use strategies in the same way. This is because Libyan students, both males and females, learn English in the same environment.

### **Recommendations**

One way to solve the problems of using CSs is by raising students' awareness of the nature of CSs and sensitizing them to an appropriate situations.

Libyan teachers of English should provide their students with the definitions of CSs and perform tasks that make students use them.

For further research, the researcher suggested that future research papers may investigate larger samples to find out more CSs and to compare their order with the results of this study. As there were no statistical significant differences between males and females in the use of CSs, the researcher also suggested further studies to be conducted segregated secondary schools where the study environment may be different. Moreover, other studies are recommended to discover if there are any statistical significant differences in the regard of different factor such as language proficiency level of study and use of CSs. Educational inspectors and material developers should incorporate a variety of tasks and activities that target CSs that teachers view as critical for success in TEFL classroom.

## **Conclusion**

Communication strategies have been recognized as techniques that help speakers to compensate for their linguistic insufficiency and keep communication channel open when they are involved in oral communication. In this study, the researcher has highlighted definitions, classifications and taxonomies of Communicative Competence and communication strategies. The results concluded that ten types of CSs were used by the participants. They were Word coinage, Approximation, Message Abandonment, Code switching, Appeals for assistance, Topic Avoidance, Self-Repair, Circumlocution, Use of All-Purpose Word, and Literal Translation. The most frequently CSs used strategies were Word Coinage strategy. In the findings and discussion, gender differences in communication strategies proved no statistical difference between genders (male and female) in using communication strategies (CSs) in a process of practicing language.

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