2 English as a lingua franca: an overview of communicative strategies

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Abstract

The present contribution discusses the importance of communicative strategies in introducing English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). A brief meta-analysis of the research conducted in the area of pragmatics reveals that one of the most salient elements of using ELF is the users' ability to conduct meaningful exchanges through various communicative strategies. The results of the case study show that certain strategies are less favoured by ELF users, like those that seem to require manipulation of the language content and adjusting the language forms to meet the goals of communication. It is also demonstrated that contrary to the results of the meta-analysis, the participants of the study use all types of strategies: avoidance, compensation, and stalling without easily observable differences in the gathered results. The analysis of the results allows us to claim that incorporating communicative strategies should be of importance in considering the possibility of teaching ELF or at least allowing the learners of the English language to explore various strategies that may be proved as useful in their language use in a global marketplace.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca, English as a foreign language, communicative strategies, effective communication.

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1. Introduction

The new linguistic reality involves finding ways of communication in the globalised environment, where people move all around the world in order to find work, learn, or share experiences. Consequently, just as Hülmbauer, Böhringer, and Seidlhofer (2008) put it, we need to: "find a common voice in order to bridge language barriers" (p. 26). Therefore, it seems salient to find the ways that would help in bridging communication between people of different mother tongues and different cultures.

The choice of a language that becomes a *lingua franca*, so merely the language of communication between people who do not share a common native language of communication (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1985), is always linked with many socio-cultural, and probably, more importantly, political reasons. The promotion of English worldwide that resulted in English becoming the new *lingua franca* has many economic, cultural, and social causes, but it is a fact that: "English has been successfully promoted, and has been eagerly adopted in the global linguistic marketplace" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 7).

ELF transcends the boundaries and allows for constant variation that is the result of the user's backgrounds, both linguistic and sociocultural, which influence their performance. Although in the works of Jenkins (2000), Seidlhofer (2005), Breiteneder (2005), or Dewey (2006), certain repetitive regularities of ELF have been discovered, they did not result in ELF becoming a codified variety and is still far from being treated as a norm. However, it seems that there are certain suggestions concerning introducing certain aspects of ELF into the teaching programmes (Lopriore & Vettorel, 2016; Llurda, Bayyurt, & Sifakis, 2018). These would include raising teachers' awareness about English and those ELF elements that are already recognised as prevailing in the *lingua franca* context.

In this sense, communicative strategies that are employed by ELF users should be given more attention by teachers. Drawing on the research findings concerned with regards to the most common strategies that are characteristic in ELF communication can be considered practical and helpful for English language

learners. When teachers of English know which strategies prevail, they can allow their students to deal with the changing environment of English use worldwide with accordance to the very needs of students concerning communication in the *lingua franca* context. Therefore, before a meta-analysis of ELF communicative strategies is presented, salient information concerning the theory of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) and their importance in foreign language teaching and learning will be presented.

2. Literature review

2.1. Language learning strategies

LLS have been defined by Scarcella and Oxford (1992) as "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task used by students to enhance their own learning" (p. 63). Consequently, employing such techniques by the learners allows them to deal with language learning more effectively. The notion of LLS hence deals with the possible individual approaches employed by the learners during the process of second language learning that can have positive outcomes in their performances.

The notion of LLS, however, seems to be less examined nowadays, which can be linked with the fuzziness of the definitions related to this concept and certain discrepancies concerning conceptualisation of the notion (Gu, 2012). There are almost 24 different descriptions of LLS (Horváthová, 2013), and it seems that the attempts to put the strategies in fitting categories were rather fruitless. Macaro (2006) claims that the researchers cannot agree on matters such as the classification of strategies into clear groups or frameworks, and Gu (2012) claims that some concepts share the name, however, differ in meaning, and scholars are presenting opposite views when even describing the notion of a language strategy itself. Yet, regardless of the definitional conundrum, we may briefly conclude that LLS refer to the situation when learners undertake various steps (either externally observable or referring to mental processes) to achieve measurable

language benefits (in terms of skills). As it was explained, learning strategies can be divided into several types that will vary on the basis of which taxonomy is employed by the researcher. Therefore, in this paper, only communicative strategies will be presented in detail. Such a choice results from the fact that ELF is a communicative phenomenon, thus users of ELF must know and employ various communicative strategies that provide them with a chance of having a successful communicative exchange. It seems obvious then if one wants to increase the chances of effective communication, he or she should be able to effectively use the strategies that are of help and prevail among ELF users.

2.2. Communicative strategies

According to Dörnyei (1995), L2 communication poses a lot of possible problems for the interlocutors. To tackle them, one may employ a range of verbal and non-verbal strategies that may foster communication. Although, as it was mentioned above, there is a lack of complete consensus on how to define communicative strategies, a working definition proposed by Corder (1981), in which communicative strategies are defined as techniques that are of help when a communication breakdown is to be avoided, seems to cover our understanding of the phenomenon in question. According to Dörnyei (1995, p. 58), comprising Váradi (1980), Tarone (1977), Færch and Kasper (1983), and Białystok's (1990) principles, by following a traditional conceptualisation of the term, communicative strategies can be divided into three main types of strategies: avoidance or reduction, achievement or compensation, and stalling or time gaining tactics. The avoidance or reduction strategies comprise two sub-strategies: strategy of not putting the message forward due to insufficient language skills, or leaving the message without a logical continuation or end. Achievement or compensation strategies comprise such actions as:

- circumlocution, by the use of which the interlocutor provides a definition rather than the concrete word that is needed;

- approximation which refers to the use of those vocabulary items that are close in meaning to the target words;

- the use of words that denote a general category of words, when context specific words are lacking;
- creating new words on the basis of some presumed rules;
- the use of body language;
- calques from L1;
- attempts to use vocabulary items in a manner to make them sound as words of foreign origin; and
- switching between two linguistic codes and finally asking for some help in finishing the message.

The last type of communicative strategies – stalling and time gaining tactics – comprises the use of filled pauses or lexical fillers in order to have time to think about the utterance.

Regardless of the fact that the presented division is broad, it serves the purpose of this paper and namely allows us to investigate the use of communicative strategies among ELF users on the basis of the existent research in a form of a meta-analysis and furthermore, allows us, although somewhat briefly, to investigate the use of communicative strategies among ELF users in our own case study.

Research concerning the use of communicative strategies among L2 users indicates that they are effective in increasing the chances of involving themselves in a meaningful communicative exchange, especially when they lack the linguistic means to put the message forward.The study of Dobao and Martínez (2007) revealed that both native and non-native users of L2 try to use some strategies that may enhance communication. Moreover, there is a correlation between the level of proficiency in a given language and the dependence on the use of strategies. In other words, the lower the level is, the higher the use of strategies seems to be (Dobao & Martínez, 2007; Terrel, 1977).

There are also studies aimed at identifying the use of communicative strategies among international learners of English as a foreign language. The study conducted by Tan, Fariza, and Jaradat (2012) revealed that code-switching is the most commonly used strategy by the international learners of English according to their self-reported claims, whereas word coinage was the least common one. Moreover, the study conducted by Nakatani (2005) reveals that strategy training may improve the overall spoken competence of L2 users. Such training helps the learners to use more of achievement or compensation strategies, and less of the avoidance ones. In a similar study of Rabab'ah (2015) in which the author investigated the usefulness of strategy training on learners' performances, it was revealed that "participants in the strategy training group significantly outperformed the control group in their IELTS speaking test scores" (p. 625). We can conclude that communicative strategies are crucial in developing learners' skills and that training may significantly improve their overall spoken competence. In the attempts aimed at introducing ELF into teaching policies, the importance of incorporating communicative strategies seems to be of even greater importance.

2.3. Communicative strategies employed by ELF users

What transpires through ELF research is that although no propositions concerning teaching it are put forward by the researchers in a straightforward manner, some suggestions derived from the nature of ELF in face of the research done so far call for some changes in English Language Teaching (ELT) concerning pedagogical implications of ELF nowadays. In terms of international communication, the users of English are faced with an "unpredictable variability" (Maley, 2009, p. 191); the situations in which the sociolinguistic elements of L1 impact communication in L2. Our students must be prepared for it in order to enhance their chances for effective and sufficient communication. ELF encompasses the sociolinguistic changes, as its main feature is to promote communication in an international setting among speakers of different L1, which does not necessarily mean acquiring a native-like proficiency (Seidlhofer, 2001).

The strategies people use in general while involved in ELF communicative exchanges may extend mainly to the use of communicative strategies. Such knowledge, as a consequence, may be of help for learners of English that will be forced to deal with the 'fluid' nature of ELF that is, whether we like it or not, a linguistic reality.

Although in general, when it comes to learning foreign languages, the use of various direct and indirect strategies may enhance the ultimate outcome of language education, from an ELF perspective in which ELF is used but yet not taught, communication strategies seem to be even more important for their users. A meta-analysis of the existent research on ELF pragmatics with the main aim of pointing to the use of communicative strategies of ELF users will be of importance in the following sub-section.

2.4. Avoidance strategies used by ELF users

What can be observed in the research on the use of English in the *lingua franca* context is that ELF users go to any lengths to put the message forward. Research conducted by Pitzl (2005) revealed that ELF users tend to present a high level of cooperation aimed at sustaining meaningful communication. Through the negotiation of meaning, they approach communication creatively and because of that are able to deal with problems that are present in communicative exchanges more easily. Moreover, Mauranen (2006), while investigating the characteristic features of communicative exchanges between ELF users, found out that through 'pro-active' work that entails various strategic practices used by the speakers, they are able to communicate more effectively. It seems that in terms of communication in ELF, the avoidance strategies are not of much help and as such introducing them to learners, as well as adapting them, is not desired. Communication in ELF is aimed at putting the message forward and achieving mutual goals. In a situation when both parties use a language that is not their L1, it seems that avoidance techniques would not result in mutual intelligibility, but rather cause communication breakdowns. That is why ELF users tend to employ compensation strategies more often.

2.5. Compensation strategies used by ELF users

Studies conducted by Lichtkoppler (2007), Watterson (2008), and Cogo (2009) revealed that a common strategy employed by ELF users is repetition and paraphrasing. Both practices seem to be common ways aimed at dealing with communication breakdowns (Cogo & Dewey, 2006), especially if prolonged silence occurs. Therefore, what should be made clear for ELF users is that circumlocution strategies may be helpful. Presenting the importance of such a strategy seems to be a fair choice in raising awareness of ELF among international users.

Another strategy that must be recognised and should be used by ELF speakers is code-switching, which along with coining new words and foreignising mother-tongue words, seems to be commonly used and is corroborated in research. Hülmbauer (2013) in her investigation showed that ELF speakers make an active use of their L1 nativeness. It means that L1 is far more important in ELF communication than it is in using English as a foreign language. The techniques that are common are code-switching, transferring of L1 words to L2, and changing them in a fashion aimed at making them 'sound' foreign. What can be also observed is an increased use of cognates. A fact worth mentioning is that code-switching serves a more important purpose than just to sustain mutual intelligibility, as it also signals speakers' cultural values (Klimpfinger, 2007). What can be drawn from this, is that ELF users must be aware of the fact that making use of their bilingual or even plurilingual resources is something desired in the *lingua franca* context, contrary of employing such techniques in using English as a foreign language, which is considered a mistake. Yet again, creating a positive image of L1 that influences and can be of help in using ELF seems to be a desired practice in the *lingua franca* context.

One of the communicative strategies introduced by Dörnyei (1995) is time-gaining tactics. In terms of ELF communication, it seems important to mention the usefulness and commonness of such a strategy. Böhringer (2007), while investigating the role of silent and filled pauses in ELF, revealed that apart from the fact that they are common resources, ELF users turn to when they face

communicative obstacles in order to find how to effectively put the message forward. They also have an important role in creating meaning in ELF exchanges.

As it was presented above, the studies concerning communicative strategies in the *lingua franca* context are mainly focussed on ELF users. Choi and Jeon's (2016) claim that "ELF pedagogy has been mostly discussed at only a conceptual level and pedagogical research is scarce" (p. 1) seems to be in line with such an assumption. That is why the study conducted by Dimoski, Yujobo, and Imai (2016) in the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which focussed on the effectiveness of communicative strategies training in the pro-active listening activities in ELF-based pedagogical contexts, seems both extremely interesting and important. In the study, 53 students, who actively participated in an English class at the *Center for English as a Lingua Franca* at Tamagawa University, were trained to use communicative strategies in pro-active listening comprehension activities. According to their self-reported claims, their ability to tackle miscommunication was increased by over 20 percent due to training. The authors of the study claim that: "ELF pedagogy should incorporate opportunities for students to explicitly learn and use [communicative strategies] independently to become competent international communicators among other ELF speakers" (Dimoski et al., 2016, p. 67). It is up to our understanding that the effective use of communicative strategies, can indeed increase the ability to sustain meaningful communication among all international users of English worldwide.

What can be concluded at this point is that ELF users employ communicative strategies very often when they are involved in spoken exchanges with other non-native speakers of English. Therefore, raising awareness of such strategies, as well as allowing the learners to practice them on their own studying seems to be of a high importance. The nature of ELF, which makes it an emergent phenomenon that is influenced by its users to a high degree (by their L1, culture, social background, personal language preferences, style, etc.), makes it hardly teachable at this point. Regardless, allowing students to become accustomed to all the intricate details of ELF use concerning its lexicogrammar, phonology and pragmatics should be desired by the educators and learners themselves,

as for now, it is a fair assumption to be made that ELF findings are of great importance for ELT. And because ELF research may not result in ELF being defined as a variety, and as such will not be introduced in the curricula, it must not be a limitation for the teachers and learners. At this point, a pivotal point of ELF research should be raising awareness of its importance in worldwide communication.

2.6. The importance of communicative strategies in teaching English in the new era of global communication

The changes in the way scholars approach language can be explained not only on the basis of the inevitable changes of students' needs in relation to their language knowledge but also in the nature of knowledge concerning the study of languages itself (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In other words, the more is known about the language itself, the more it results in a shift in the way a language must be taught. Moreover, students' needs are also salient elements of language changes, as the nature of language use has been transformed from a rather passive knowledge to an active use of language in the international environment. That is why, knowledge concerning language use is in a state of flux, with new ideas being created worldwide that aim at improving the ways in which language is acquired (Turula, 2010). Yet, language education was and still is associated with a significant attachment to the traditional conception of language as a property of its native speakers. The creators of traditional, humanistic, and communicative methods were more interested in providing ideas and explanations of their utility, rather than being interested in assessing the increasing role of English as an international language. Although the incorporation of ELF and its main paradigms into methods of language teaching and learning should resemble the changes of the evolving nature of English and the needs of the students in the global marketplace, the reality seems to contradict such an assumption. In the ELF context,

> "mastery of the system (or perhaps better systems), needs to involve developing the ability to use the linguistic resources of English in an especially flexible way. The notion of inclusion in a lingua franca

> community should relate not to conformity to a predetermined set of [English as a new language] norms, but to a speaker's ability to converge towards an interlocutor as the communication progresses moment by moment" (Dewey, 2006, p. 230).

This requires not only creativity and openness, so cherished in the scope of humanistic, communicative, and post-methods and approaches, but firstly knowledge of the evolving nature of English in the 21st century. Maybe, the increased reluctance to acknowledge the fact that English is no longer a singular property of it native speakers does not come only from the fact that language is usually seen a cultural product of a given community, but as Dewey (2006) suggests, following Pavlenko's (2002) statements, that the strong objections towards rejection of standardised forms come from "a broad postmodern tradition of questioning current paradigms" (cf Pavlenko's (2002) discussion of poststructuralist approaches to social factors in second language acquisition, in Dewey, 2006, p. 192). The position of English worldwide has changed, and we should try to accommodate to these changes. If we want to prepare our students for a bright future, they must be able to communicate effectively in the *lingua franca* context, where communicative conventions differ from those established by the native users of English. And definitely, by pointing to the importance of communicative strategies, and focussing on those that prevail in the lingua franca context, we may help our students in becoming successful users of English.

The presented meta-analysis of ELF research allowed us to identify various strategies employed by ELF users in *lingua franca* communication. By analysing the available and approachable research papers it was possible to conclude that the strategies used by ELF users fall into the category of communicative ones.

3. The study

In order to provide insights into the presented issues, a case study was designed to investigate the use of communicative strategies by the users of ELF (in this case non-native users of English in a foreign language environment for whom English

is the only language of communication). It seems salient to investigate the use of communicative strategies by the ELF users in order to establish which strategies are the most common when communicating in the *lingua franca* context and if there an observable tendency among the ELF users towards a particular type of the communicative strategies. Therefore, an exploratory research question was created: which strategies are employed by ELF users and what is the frequency of use of communicative strategies among them?

It is hypothesised by the author that ELF users must deal with a high level of unpredictability in terms of oral communication due to ELF's fluid end emergent nature. That is why the participants should present a strong inclination towards the use of various strategies, ranging from the ones requiring some form of language manipulation such as approximation, circumlocution, or creating new words, and the ones that are more related to a person's attitude such as time gaining tactics, gestures, or asking for help. It is also hypothesised that the participants may show certain preferences towards the use of compensation strategies in place of the ones that require avoidance, as it is suggested by the existing research concerning the pragmatic competences of ELF users.

3.1. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative data collection technique – an asynchronous structured online interview. Drawing on Dörnyei's (1995) framework comprising Váradi (1980), Tarone (1977), Færch and Kasper (1983), and Białystok's (1990) principles, this study aims to investigate the use of communicative strategies among the ELF users. The participants were presented with various communicative scenarios, all of them arranged in such a way to present a given communicative strategy and asked whether they employ them while involved in a communicative exchange. They were also asked about the frequency of use of a given strategy if it was indicated as used and four questions concerning their general attitude towards communication in English, especially language problems, were elicited. The participants were also asked to answer questions concerning their personal background such as their age, language level, knowledge of other languages, and years of language education. The interview

was devised in English, as all participants conduct their studies in English as it is for them the language of instruction.

3.2. Participants

The study was based on the data collected from six participants – all of whom are university students – three women and three men. The average age of the participants was 22; the average time spent on school education and language education was 13 years. The majority of the respondents reported that they are on the B2 level (66%); one stated that she knows English at C1 level (16 %) and one on B2/C1 level (16%) when it comes to their self-perceived language proficiency.

The participants were the Erasmus students studying in Poland coming from different countries (Spain, Bulgaria, and Turkey), conducting their studies in the interdisciplinary model for whom English was the language of instruction.

- **P1** – the first participant was a 23-year-old student from Spain. She has been learning English since she was seven years old. Her self-perceived level of English is B2. She knows Bulgarian on a C2 level, and Polish on an A1 level. She agrees that English is a modern *lingua franca*, and claims that she mainly communicates in English with native speakers.

- **P2** – the second participant was a 21-year-old student from Spain. He has been learning English since the first grade of primary school. His self-perceived level of English is B2/C1. He knows French at an A2/B1 level and is fluent in Galician. He agrees that English is a modern *lingua franca*, and claims to use it with non-native speakers more.

- **P3** – the third participant was a 21-year-old student from Spain. She has been learning English for 15 years. Her self-perceived level of English is C1. She knows Basque at a C1 level and French at a B2 level. She agrees that English is a modern *lingua franca* and claims to use it with non-native speakers more.

- **P4** – the fourth participant was a 21-year- old student from Turkey who has been studying English for six years only. His self-perceived level of English is B2. He knows Spanish but he has not specified the level. He disagrees that English is a modern *lingua franca*, yet claims that he uses English more with non-native speakers.

- **P5** – the fifth participant was a 23-year-old student from Turkey. He has been learning English for ten years. His self-perceived level of English is B2. He agrees that English is a modern *lingua franca* and claims that he uses English with non-native speakers more.

- **P6** – the sixth participant was a 23-year-old student from Bulgaria. She has been learning English since kindergarten and claims to be on a B2 level. She knows Spanish on a C2 level as well. She agrees that English is a modern *lingua franca* and claims to use it more with non-native speakers.

As it can be seen, the sample that has been gathered is neither representative nor pretending to reach any research completeness. Our task, which must be emphasised, was only to investigate the tendencies of ELF users concerning the employment of communicative strategies and to indicate the frequency of use that would provide us with some basic information concerning their language choices.

3.3. Data collection

The data was collected with the help of an asynchronous structured online interview. The use of an asynchronous structured online interview was connected with the fact that such an instrument is very flexible in terms of small-scale research (Ratislavová & Ratislav, 2014). The questions in the interview were aimed to obtain information concerning participants' self-awareness in the use of communicative strategies, as they were asked if and how often they use a particular strategy. The questions were created in such a way to allow them to clearly understand what a given strategy requires, therefore, examples of use

were provided. Additional issues concerning their general use of English in the *lingua franca* context were also discussed if they logically followed the direction of the conversation and the participants were eager to discuss them. A fixed time frame was established, where the participants had two weeks to fill in the interview, to allow us to respond to any misunderstandings or interesting issues that were raised by their answers.

4. Results

After the interviews were received, the answers were analysed and compared. The results are presented in two sections in the following way: (1) difficulties in ELF communicative exchanges and (2) use and frequency of employing communicative strategies by ELF users.

4.1. Difficulties in ELF communicative exchanges

All of the participants, when asked about communicative problems that they sometimes experience in *lingua franca* communication, answered that the problem of miscommunication is common. Among the reasons provided by them, vocabulary problems were indicated as the most common source of miscommunication, with the participants stating:

> "when I try to explain a situation with more complex vocabulary, I often realise I do not know how is the word" (P1).

> "when someone use more difficult words I usually have problems in understanding them" (P4).

When asked about their reaction to such situations, three of them indicated that they prefer to remain silent in such a situation:

> "If I know I will not be able to explain my idea I remain silent" (P1).

"yeah, I will stay quiet" (P4).

Two stated that they would either stay quiet or laugh nervously: "I prefer to remain silent and laugh because the other person can think I am stupid if I talk without knowing the topic" (P2). However, one of the responses showed a different attitude, as one participant said that he tries to deal with the problematic situation as he knows that: "I will have to deal with burdens sooner or later" (P5).

The subsequent cause of problems was the speed of delivering the message which sometimes poses real difficulties, not only in understanding the message but also in delivering one, as one participant stated that she often makes mistakes when talking too fast. Two of them also pointed to the problem of various accents which may be sometimes intelligible: "you have to get used to the different accents of people from different parts of the world because sometimes you can have listening problems" (P2).

What was quite interesting in the provided answers is that the participants seem to be fully aware of their own skills and the lack thereof. They stated that they are *afraid of* making a mistake, they do not want to be *laughed at*, and remaining *silent* is their best option if they experience difficulties. It can be connected with the fact that they are simply insecure in terms of their own skills, which they assess against the standard English, regardless of whether their attempts are successful – the message is delivered, understood and acted upon – but rather whether they were grammatically correct in doing so.

4.2. Frequency and use of communicative strategies by ELF users

The participants' answers concerning the frequency and use of communicative strategies by ELF users are divided into three groups: (1) avoidance or reduction strategies, (2) achievement or compensatory strategies, and (3) stalling or time gaining tactics, as exemplified in the theoretical part following Dörnyei's (1995) framework.

4.2.1. Avoidance or reduction strategies

In the area of avoidance or reduction strategies, the participants claimed that they often remain silent if the subject matter is too difficult or they lack ample knowledge to deal with the topic. One of the participants claimed that she is more eager to involve herself in the conversation of difficult topics if she knows her interlocutor well: " I avoid difficult topics only if I am not confident of another person" (P6), which means that it is easier to make an effort when you are not judged by your delivery. Other participants were in agreement that they do not talk with others when they feel that their skills are not appropriate: " I just feel that I am not good enough" (P4), "I can make a mistake when I don't know what I am talking about" (P5). It may imply that the use of avoidance strategies is common, but also constrained by the environment where the conversation takes place and the interlocutors themselves. The higher the level of familiarity with the environment and other interlocutors, the lower the possibility of avoidance seems to be. Moreover, the higher the feeling of anxiety concerning one's skills, the lower the chance of successful conversations is.

4.2.2. Achievement or compensation strategies

In the case of the strategy of circumlocution, the participants show a tendency towards the use of this strategy in case of having troubles with putting the message forward. All of them claim that they always or almost always try to provide the interlocutor with a general idea of what they want to put forward if they cannot recollect the proper word in a given context either in the form of a definition or by using exemplification. One of the participants claimed that the frequency of using definitions is closely related with the level of language that is required: "when the vocabulary requires a higher level I need to use definitions, I use them often" (P4). Another claimed that it is sometimes: "the only way to say what I want to say" (P6).

When asked whether they sometimes use words which only point towards the one they have in mind, yet are sometimes less precise, all of the participants claimed to do so, yet with varying intensity. One of the participants said: "yes,

I do, and almost always" (P2), whereas the rest said that they do it sometimes, with one participant stating that such a situation happens: "much often than I want, but usually it happens to me" (P1).

When asked about word-coinage, the participants stated that it happens rarely or never. Yet, if it happens they do not consider it a problem, but rather, as it was aptly stated by one of the participants: "a common mistake that arises in communication" (P2). However, in the question concerning the fact whether they foreignise their L1 words by, e.g. adding the *–ing* ending by saying *messaging* instead of *sending a text message*, the results show that the majority of them either rarely, not often or never foreignise mother-tongue words. They were not sure when and why does it occur, but two participants said that it is connected with the fact that some words 'look' similar in English and their native tongue, so sometimes they may:

> "use [their] native vocabulary 'changed' into English" (P1).

> "say the word in such a way that it sounds like English" (P6).

When it comes to the use of non-linguistic means the participants were unanimous in stating that they very often use gestures when talking. In case of using facial expressions and gestures, which are considered salient in any type of conversation not only in the context of ELF, the participants stated that:

> "I use that kinds of action" (P1).

> "sometimes your hands can be better than your words" (P5).

When the participants were asked about the possibility of translating word for word from their L1 to L2 (in this case English) while communicating, their answers showed lack of unanimity in the use of this particular strategy. The participants stated that they use it sometimes when they have problems finding the right word:

> "It happens from time to time" (P1).

> "I sometimes translate word for word, but sometimes I get it wrong" (P6).

One stated that it happens: "sometimes, but I try to avoid it, as it is not helpful" (P5) whereas the other stated that she never uses it as: "the language arises by itself" (P2), so he finds no reason for translations.

When it comes to code-switching, which is considered a common strategy while L2 is used as it helps to avoid prolonged silence and helps to put the message forward, the participants are not unanimous in the answers provided, however, four of them say that they use code-switching in order to communicate effectively:

> "Yes I do. Terms from Spanish to English look similar for me, so they use to coincide, in this way if I am not sure, I will use my native vocabulary 'changed' into English" (P1).

> "From time to time it happens. I will use a words in my L1 if I can't remember what English word can be used" (P4).

One participant showed a negative attitude towards such a statement: "if I am speaking in English I try to use English words" (P3) and one stated that he uses this strategy from time to time, yet remained undecided about the usefulness of it "It sometimes happens, but also sometimes it is ineffective" (P6).

The subsequent type of compensation strategies that were taken into consideration in the study considers the possibility of asking for lexical help or clarification when facing a language problem that slows down or causes the communicative exchange to stop.

They stated that they always or very often ask for clarification if they have problems with understanding what the other person is trying to say:

> "I always use such phrases: Could you repeat? I didn't understand that" (P1).

> "I ask the other person to explain what they mean" (P5).

and also try to do the same if they observe that their interlocutor does not understand them.

> "If someone does not understand me I try to explain the fact in a different way. I also repeat the message because maybe the receiver did not fully understand" (P4).

> "I try to explain if I see that someone does not understand me, but usually I just repeat myself" (P5).

The results gathered allow us to state that ELF users have a rather strong tendency to ask for clarification or use other forms of lexical help in order to put the message forward with all respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing with the statements provided in the questionnaire.

4.2.3. Stalling or time gaining tactics

In the category of using time gaining tactics, the results gathered yield a quite interesting set of answers, especially in the area of using filled pauses. The majority of the participants (P1; P2; P3; P5; P6) use filled pauses such as *errr*, *uhmm*, *so*, in the form of time gaining tactics, yet some consider the use of them as an example of poor language skills.

> "Yes, I sometimes use them, but I think its not good to do it" (P2).

> "When I use them I feel that the other person thinks that I am not a good speaker" (P3).

One participant (P4) stated that he likes to think silently and does not use filled pauses. It seems, therefore, that the tactic is considered by them as effective, yet should not be used as it is connected with having lower language knowledge.

In regard to the use of such phrases as *let me think*; *Oh, just give me a minute; well…*, *as* the participants claim that they sometimes use them but they try not to overuse them.

> "I will sometimes say something like that, when I am trying to remember the word I need, but usually I can't" (P3).

> "I try to be clear when I talk in English, but sometimes I need some time to think, so I say something like that to have some extra time. But I don't do it often" (P5).

With one participant (P2) stating that she does not use such phrases but prefers filled pauses, it may be therefore stated that stalling or time-gaining tactics are used by the participants, but they are not used as often as expected.

5. Discussion

The results showed rather small differences among the results which seem to corroborate the hypothesis that ELF users use various communicative strategies in their utterances. What can be observed, however, is that certain preferences are slightly less favoured by the users of ELF. It seems that those strategies that require manipulation of the language content and adjusting the language forms to meet the goals of communication (transformations, paraphrases, foreignisation, and coining new words) are less frequently used; whereas those which are more limited, namely using options that are still placed within the confines of a given language and do not require changes of the forms or structures being used (circumlocution, approximation, generalisation, code-switching, asking for help, and time gaining tactics with body language being the most popular among them) are more commonly observed. This seems to be a possible direction in introducing communicative strategies if ELF is to be taught. What can be also noted is that avoidance strategies are also commonly used by the participants of the study. Contrary to the findings made by Pitzl (2005) that ELF users show high levels of involvement and cooperation in a communicative exchange, and

also to what was claimed by Mauranen (2006) in the research on pro-active behaviour, the presented case study yields a slightly different result. ELF users use avoidance strategies almost as often as compensation ones.

Among the most common problems, the pace of delivery of the message, intelligible accent, or difficult vocabulary were enlisted. It seems that the preparation of students to communication in English as a foreign language is not enough to prepare them to deal with the unpredictable nature of ELF communicative exchanges. Preparing the students to one pronunciation model leads to a situation where an understanding of other, international models is harder. Not enough communicative practice leads to problems with fluency. And a problem with fluency, in turn, results in an increased use of avoidance strategies. Interestingly enough, there is no correlation between the answers to the questions and the linguistic backgrounds of the learners as the answers given were not in a line with the user's language level, the length of learning of the language, and whether they are bilingual or multilingual.

6. Limitations of the study

It has to be noted that the present study has limitations. The limitations are due to the fact that the gathered sample consisting of six participants was the only one available in the environment of the researcher that would meet the definition of a *lingua franca* user. Given the limited size of the sample, it was not possible to draw inferences of statistical significance from the results. The idea was not to establish any pattern statistically, but simply to get some indication of whether typical ELF users use communicative strategies and whether a certain preference towards a given type is observable.

7. Conclusion

The use of various communicative strategies is mainly aimed at having a successful communicative exchange among the interlocutors. Various studies

concerning the usefulness of training learners in the use of communicative strategies, such as those of O'Malley and Chamot (1990), Dörnyei (1995), as well as those of Cohen (2002), Nakatani (2005), Maleki (2007), Thomas and McDonagh (2013), and Kongsom (2016) concerning the effectiveness of communicative strategies when used in L2 exchanges, showed that explicit training and the active use of communicative strategy help the learners deal with communication more successfully in comparison to those people who do not receive such training or do not employ such strategies; proficient language users that employ communicative strategies show a far greater ability in moulding the language to their needs and show a stronger inclination towards sustaining communication regardless of the possible inadequacies in their language proficiency. In light of the research on the use of strategies in ELF, it seems plausible to assume that effective use of communicative strategies is one of the most crucial elements of having a successful communication in the *lingua franca* context due to its extreme fluidity and variation. However, what was revealed in Vettorel's (2018) study was that the importance of communicative strategies in ELF has not yet been recognised in ELT materials. Therefore, a more open attitude of educators towards introducing the knowledge concerning the nature of ELF and what follows (understanding the need of incorporating such knowledge into the teaching programmes with an emphasis on training the learners to effectively use communicative strategies) is advisable. However, more research is needed which would exceed the scope of this paper, so the self-reported use of strategies. As the study of Tan et al. (2012) revealed, there may be discrepancies between the self-reported and actual use of strategies by the English users, so observation of ELF learners along with self-reported interviews on a bigger scale seems to be advisable in future research.

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