



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***ORAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AMONG MALAYSIAN L2
LEARNERS IN ORAL COMMUNICATIVE LEARNING***

Gan Lai Kuen

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**ORAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AMONG MALYSIAN L2
LEARNERS IN ORAL COMMUNICATIVE LEARNING**

By

GAN LAI KUEN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

April 2017

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication

Learners should consciously use their cognition system to control their performance in oral communication and to maintain their interactions with others. Hence, in order to achieve these goals, learners' strategic competence can be developed by raising their awareness on specific oral communication strategy use and encourage independent learning skills through metacognitive strategies for future target language context. Therefore, this study involves three phases whereby in the first phase, it focuses on investigating the different learning strategies used by polytechnic students in Malaysia which provides a baseline for decisions made to develop a training module in the second phase. In the third phase, this study identifies the types of oral communication strategies used by students and also examines to what degree do metacognition strategies and oral communication strategies could be explicitly taught to enhance oral communication abilities and confidence. Due to many students still unaware of their learning strategies and the correct strategies relevant to overcome breakdown in communication, this study aims to raise learners' awareness of strategies that might be used to solve communication problems through the use of strategy embedded module; investigate how communicative strategy training affect students speaking proficiency; and how do learners perceive and use their strategies in class and beyond the classroom for independent learning. This quasi experimental study uses multiple method of data collection with two sets of questionnaires adapted from Oxford's Strategy Inventory Language Learning (SILL; 1990), Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) by Nakatani (2010), a pre and post test oral communication test for the experimental and control group, as well as a strategy diary. Data was triangulated qualitatively and tabulated quantitatively using the SPSS version 22 software, Transana 3.01 and Atlas.ti to analyse students' performance and also used the independent sample t-test and ANOVA to determine the impact of strategy training on the learners'

discourse. The findings show positive results of communication strategies used by learners such as fillers, asking for repetition, confirmation checks, fluency-oriented, negotiation for meaning and accuracy-oriented strategies. In addition, the strategy training had helped the learners to be more strategic competent and improve on their performance in learning and communicating in English. This study indicated that communication strategy could be used to help learners to solve communication difficulties and enhance their confidence during interactions with others.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**STRATEGI KOMUNIKASI LISAN DI KALANGAN PELAJAR-PELAJAR
BAHASA KEDUA DI POLITEKNIK MALAYSIA DALAM PEMBELAJARAN
KOMUNIKATIF LISAN.**

Oleh

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Pelajar seharusnya sedar tentang sistem kognitif mereka untuk mengawal prestasi mereka dalam komunikasi lisan dan untuk mengekalkan interaksi mereka dengan orang lain. Oleh itu, untuk mencapai matlamat ini, kecekapan strategic oleh pelajar boleh dipupuk dengan meningkatkan kesedaran mereka melalui penggunaan strategi komunikasi yang tertentu dan menggalakkan kemahiran pembelajaran sendiri melalui strategi metakognitif dalam konteks bahasa sasaran pada masa hadapan. Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini melibatkan tiga fasa dimana fasa pertama, ia memberi tumpuan untuk menyiasat pelbagai jenis strategi pembelajaran yang digunakan oleh pelajar-pelajar politeknik di Malaysia. Kajian fasa pertama ini bertujuan menjadi asas bagi keputusan yang dibuat untuk membangunkan modul latihan bagi fasa kedua. Dalam fasa ketiga, kajian ini mengenal pasti jenis-jenis strategi komunikasi lisan yang digunakan oleh pelajar dan mengkaji setakat mana strategi metakognitif dan strategi komunikasi lisan boleh diajar kepada pelajar untuk meningkatkan keupayaan komunikasi lisan dan tahap keyakinan pelajar. Disebabkan ramai pelajar kini masih tidak menyedari strategi pembelajaran mereka dan penggunaan strategi yang sesuai untuk mengatasi masalah komunikasi, kajian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kesedaran pelajar dalam penggunaan strategi yang boleh membantu mereka dalam menyelesaikan masalah komunikasi lisan melalui penggunaan bahan modul yang berteraskan strategi komunikasi; menyiasat bagaimana latihan strategi komunikasi memberi kesan kepada pelajar untuk peningkatan kecekapan bertutur; dan bagaimana pelajar memahami dan menggunakan strategi didalam dan diluar kelas dengan berkesan. Kajian eksperimen kuasi ini menggunakan pelbagai kaedah pengumpulan data yang berupa dua set soal selidik yang diadaptasi daripada Inventori Strategi Komunikasi Lisan Oxford (SILL; 1990), Inventori Strategi Komunikasi Lisan (OCSI) daripada Nakatani 92010); pra dan pasca ujian komunikasi lisan bagi kumpulan kawalan dan kumpulan eksperimen; dan

juga diari strategi. Dapatan data diproses secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif dengan menggunakan pakej perisian analisa statistic (SPSS) versi 22; Transana 3.01 dan Atlas.ti untuk menganalisa prestasi pelajar dan digunakan juga sampel ujian-t dan ANOVA untuk menentukan kesan latihan strategi pada pelajar wacana. Hasil kajian menunjukkan hasil yang positif kepada pelajar seperti penggunaan strategi pengisi, meminta pengulangan, semak untuk pengesahan, berorientasikan kefasihan, rundingan untuk makna dan strategi berorientasikan kejituan. Disamping itu, latihan strategi didapati dapat membantu pelajar menjadi lebih kompeten strategik dan meningkatkan prestasi mereka dalam dalam pembelajaran dan berkomunikasi dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Akhir kata, kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa strategi komunikasi boleh digunakan untuk membantu pelajar dalam penyelesaian masalah komunikasi dan meningkatkan keyakinan mereka semasa interaksi dengan orang lain.



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I am peeling like an onion
Shedding papery protection,
And superficial skin—
Tearing, skinning, ripping off the layers—
The firm and curving flesh
Of what onions used to be—
Peeling onions makes me cry.

Shrinking down to nothing
My shells are disappearing
And there's nowhere left to hide
But under all layers
--a tiny green shoot sprouting—
I'm growing from inside.
Wendy Orr (1996)

The embarkation on this journey of pursuing my study is a tiring and laborious ordeal for me as the metaphor of an onion being peeled off layer by layer making one cry and evolving into a new green shoot to be grown and cultivated inside me. Thinking of the three semesters of travelling every week to and fro for around 400 kilometers after work to attend classes in UPM is long and tiring one. Despite of this tiredness, I always tell myself that this trial and sacrifice is a worthy effort in order to change into a better person and I always believed that I had taken "The Road Not Taken" by my colleagues and dare to be different. At times there might be miseries of pain and insecurities from financial problems, restrictions from the environment, lamenting from my daughters saying that 'my mummy always go to study in KL" and waking up in the early dawn to study and cook for the family, but all these ordeals has molded me into a better person different from my prime years. This change would not have evolved if there is no perseverance from me and inspiration from my belated teacher, Sir Ivan Wong who has been a role model for me to emulate and his request "... do your PhD for me..." has been ringing in my head since I took this journey. He had taught me to be independent, self less, giving, continue learning and to perpetuate to the world. Without his motivation, I would not have learned much.

It seems shallow and arrogant for me to claim that this study is completely self made and which I owe my success to my own unaided efforts. Many hands and hearts and minds had generally contributed to my achievements, to them I am indebted and grateful. This study would not have seen the light of day if there were no support from the following people. Their unflagging commitment, patience, encouragement and synergistic contribution are much appreciated.

Firstly, with deep gratitude, I would like to extend my greatest gratitude to, my supervisor Assoc. Prof Dr Shameem Begum Mohd Rafik Khan for seeing me

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My unconditional love also extended to my two daughters, Pei and Ann who has been my inspiration and reason to finish this dissertation.

**Only the force of true, unconditional love can
turn the tide of degradation in our society.**

(Shih Cheng Yen, 2009)

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 25 April 2017 to conduct the final examination of Gan Lai Kuen on her thesis entitled "Oral Communication Strategies among Malaysian L2 Learners in Oral Communicative Learning" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS

CS	Communication Strategy
CSs	Communication Strategies
ESL	English as Second Language
L2	Second Language
MUET	Malaysian University English Test
OCST	Oral Communication Strategy Test
OCSI	Oral Communication Strategy Inventory
SILL	Strategy Inventory Language Learning

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter emphasizes several concerns related to the study. Firstly, the background of the study concerning the situation of students in polytechnics in Malaysia which contextualize the problems of the study and to provide justification on the use of communication strategies instruction to help the students in their oral communication skills. Secondly, the importance of oral communication skills for employability and the learning of Communicative English in polytechnics are also discussed. Then the purposes and the objectives are defined, its significance, and scope are described as well as the framework was delineated. Finally, various key terms are defined at the end of this chapter.

1.2 Background of Learning Communicative English in Polytechnics of Malaysia

Oral communication skills such as speaking and listening have often been regarded as deficiencies (Zhang, 2007), difficult (2004) and frustrating among most students of polytechnics in their classroom interactions and assessments or at the workplace. This is due to the fact that many students face “communication apprehension” (Azarfam & Baki, 2012; Horwitz, 2001) and “lexical deficits” (Bongaerts & Poulisse, 1989; Faerch & Kasper, 1983) during their learning and speaking of the second language. Furthermore, oral communication requires not only knowledge of its grammar but also knowledge of sociolinguistics and pragmatic skills. These phenomenon have caused much anxiety to students as mentioned in Tobias’ models of interference anxiety and interference retrieval anxiety (Tobias, 1985, pp. 135-142). Subsequently, the anxiety will inhibit students’ recall of previously learned material at the output stage and have problems at the input or processing stages of learning which may cause emotional and behavioural reactions during their performance in personal and interpersonal communication (Woodrow, 2006, p. 310).

Based on observations through video recordings in class, most learners in the researcher’s polytechnic have the tendency to depend on their prepared notes and have mental block of what to say when asked to role play in front of the class. They were seen to have “communication disruption” Nakatani & Goh (2011), and “dysfluency” effects, which occur “when the need to keep talking....threatens to run ahead of mental planning” Thornbury, Scott & Slade (2006, p. 12). Hence, there are instances of hesitation, word repetition, false

start, unfinished utterances, used of fillers in their speech and when disruption arises in their speech, they tend to give up, become nervous in performing their task, and most of the time resort to code switching and literal translation. This situation will probably lead to learners having fear in speaking the second language (English in this study) and lack of confidence among learners (Liu, 2006, 2007; Lu & Liu, 2011; Wang, 2003).

Below is the extract of a typical conversation that occurs for students in a Malaysian Polytechnic English assessment:

- (1) Assessor: Tell me about yourself.
Amy: My name is Amy. I'm from Chemor, Ipoh, Perak. . I have five siblings. Four girls, and one boy. My father ...He... He...Ahh...*bersara* (retired). My mother...Ahh...*kerani* (clerk). Sorry, madam.
- (2) Assessor: It's alright, we're here to talk. Anymore about yourself?
Amy: No.
- (3) Assessor: Describe your favourite sports.
Amy: Favourite sports. Ahh...*Olahraga*...Ah...*Saya lupa*, madam.
- (4) Assessor: What's "olahraga"?
Amy: Ah...madam, *olahraga*....I don't know.
- (5) Assessor: Describe about "olahraga".
Amy: Boleh saya speak Malay?
- (6) Assessor: Emm....
Amy: *Olahraga ini ada banyak pilihan seperti kita boleh ambik larian, lompat dan lontar peluru. Dlam larian ini adabanya iaitu lari 100 meter, 400 darab 400m, seribu lima ratus meter, so..dalam lompat pula kita boleh ambik lompat jauh, lompat tinggi. Kalau lontar peluru, apa ya....Kita boleh lontar peluru berdasarkan berat yang kita mampu ambik.*
- (7) Assessor: How do you manage your time between your studies and your sports?
Amy: Mm...Afternoon...ahh...time *masa* *sekolah* *dululah*...madam. After *saya balik dari sekolah*, and then...*saya buat kerja dulu, homework* and then at 5 p.m.,...ah...*saya keluar ke tempat train* and then *saya buat training* in two hours and then at 7 p.m. *saya balik ke asrama*, and then ahh...*saya...inilah bahagikanlah... malam itu saya buat homework atau buat revision sampai 11 p.m. and saya tidur. Then saya ulang benda yang sama*

(Refer to Appendix A1.1 for translation)

Based on the exchanges observed in a video recording (PSASER5_pre), Amy (the student mentioned in the transcript) was found to be trying to speak English in the first exchange between the teacher and herself but later resorted to "language switch" (Khanji, 1996; Yang & Gai, 2010, p. 61) as a compensatory device. She simply used her native language Malay when she had difficulties to relate her message to the teacher. She started to use a word or two in her first language (in the first exchange) so that the teacher would understand what is being communicated. Then, in exchange 3 onwards, she had difficulties with her linguistic expressions in English due to linguistic

resources incompetence and inadequate control of the target language (Khanji, 1996).

Hence, she resorted to the communication strategies of code switching and literal translations. Evidently, this phenomenon is common among many polytechnic students in Malaysia because their thoughts during the speaking process are always in their first language or mother tongue. The cognitive process in the mental system of the learners resort mainly to the use of their first language and then they translated the expressions to the second language in which they are supposed to communicate. Apparently, this situation may probably happen unconsciously. This state of unconscious use of a “representational system or language of thought” (Chapman, 2006; Fodor, 1976, p. 106) has caused some learners of polytechnics to use literal translation automatically when faced with a lack of linguistic resources and they do it without thinking or planning about what or how to engage in a discourse appropriately. Indirectly, it will cause communication breakdown when they cannot convey their message across to any listeners.

Thus, in order to help polytechnic learners’ in their English language learning and better manage their oral communication, one of the solutions to current problems of linguistic shortcomings which the researcher believes, is to introduce communication strategies based training that embodies an oral communicative approach in their classroom and encourage learner autonomy as well as self- regulated learning among learners. Communication strategies can be summarized as a form of activity or conscious plan that is used in response to overcome problems or language structures when and where they arise (Faerch & Kasper, 1983; Poulisse, Bongaerts, & Kellerman, 1987; Tarone, 1977). These problems might be found in discourse or within a social context or in the learner’s thoughts as well (Cohen & Macaro, 2010, p. 10). However, before any strategy based programme is implemented, the researcher believes that it is vital to investigate the learners’ prior knowledge of their language learning strategies used to identify any gaps in learning. Rivera-Mills and Plonsky (2007, p. 543) have pointed out through their analysis of the literature that before implementing any training programmes, instructors should develop simple survey to determine and assess students’ beliefs on the language learning strategies used and their learning methods. In finding out the students’ learning strategies, the instructor may become aware of the potential gap and lacks of their potential students’ perception and direct their instructions in a more focused manner. Hence, this rationale supports the researcher’s decision to conduct a survey to four polytechnics’ students’ use of strategies before implementing any strategy training. In the following section, the researcher will discussed the rationale as why oral communication skills are important to polytechnic learners.

1.2.1 Importance of Oral Communication Skills for Employability

As mentioned in the preceding section, oral communication skill has been a problematic issue among polytechnics students and it has been observed by the researcher that whenever there are any tasks which involve students to present and speak, they will always try to avoid such tasks by overstretching the preparation time in class activities due to communication apprehension and lack of confidence. They probably do not realize and are unaware that their procrastination and reluctance of performing in classroom activities will indirectly lead them to non-performance in future at the workplace and employment.

The students' lack of communicative abilities in oral communication has been a key factor to students' employment in the industry after graduation. There was much feedback from the industry which emphasized better oral proficiency and they lamented on the lack of oral English proficiency of the polytechnic students and graduates of higher education at large (Gill, 2005; Proton, 2011). This issue was also highlighted by the former Human Resource Minister of Malaysia, Tan Sri Dr Fong Chan Onn in the Star newspaper (2011) who noted that "students need to realize that when they go out to the real world, English is important and unless they brush up their skills, they will lock themselves from a big source of information and the latest development in knowledge." In the statement, English in the real world could refer to communication skills and frequent complaints have been raised by employers on the lack of command and quality of English among fresh graduates which is one of the reasons for their unemployable situation (Chin, 2016; Panirchellvum, 2013). The issue of English deterioration is commented on by the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) executive director in year 2011 and 2013 who stated that "The communication problem among school leavers, especially in English--either in oral communication or writing --is the biggest grouses among employers." Likewise, the former president of Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM), Tan Sri Mustafa Mansur (2012) also stated that in manufacturing field, English language proficiency probably is not as crucial as in financial field but workers will still need to communicate in English to negotiate deals and get contracts signed for their companies.

Furthermore, many concerned parties were unanimous on the importance of oral communication skills in English (Datin Azimah Abdul Rahim, PAGE; 2003-2013; Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohammad, former fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia; 2013 in Pannirchelvum, 2013; and Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, Sultan of Perak, (2016). For example, in a forum organized by *The Star* newspaper (2012), conducted along with The Star's English newspaper for "More Opportunities Initiatives", all parties featuring experts in English, employers in the markets, former Education Ministry Deputy Director-general Datuk Noor Rezan Bapoo Hashim, deputy vice-chancellor of Albukhary International University (AiU), and Prof Emeritus Dr. Omar Farouk Sheikh "...were unanimous that young graduates who joined the workforce needed to engage

and communicate in English if they wanted to move up in their careers” (Sheikh & Hashim, 2012).

Besides, literature on employability of graduates also indicated that there is a considerable gap between the existing communication skills in English of job applicants and the English competency skills required for the workplace (Isarji Hj Sarudin, 2011, p. 180). This situation was evident when a survey was conducted on 150 employers of the Financial Services, Manufacturing and Industrial, and Telecommunication, Technology & Media sectors where speaking skill (99.2% of employers) is placed the most prominent critical communication skills required during the recruitment process by employers, followed by listening skill (83.3%), reading skill (66.7%) and pronunciation skill (66.1%).

Hence, these needed employability skills of oral ability for the workplace has spearheaded the researcher in this study to look into the question as to whether the polytechnic students are adequately equipped with oral communication strategic competence and how communication strategies instructions could enhance polytechnics students' proficiency in oral communication. This leads to a need to understand the language learning situation of the polytechnic systems as discussed in the subsequent section.

1.2.2 English Language Learning in Polytechnics

Language learning of English in polytechnics has evolved through many stages of transformation. The stages involved from learning English for Specific Purposes and Commercial Purposes in the year 2002 to English for Communication in 2007, Communicative English in 2010 and a recent change was implemented in April, 2015. These transformations were due to many undertakings of memorandum of understandings and talks conducted with academicians in polytechnics, universities and employers from the industries by the Curriculum Centre of Polytechnics, Higher Education of Malaysia to enhance the quality of English for polytechnics and community colleges in Malaysia.

In addition, apart from complying with the requirements of the Transformation Plan of polytechnics in 2015, which targets at polytechnics being the preferred institution for all “Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia” (Malaysia Education Certificate) students, the importance of English language learning has also been highlighted. Part of the debate in the transformation is the importance and effectiveness to produce marketable and employable students for the workplace when they graduated from polytechnics. The feelings of worries among academicians of polytechnics had motivated various micro and macro programmes such as talks with industries as conducted in Port Dickson polytechnic in 2007 and Putrajaya in 2009; teaching approaches that moved

to learner centered from traditional teacher centered; curriculum revamps; blended learning; creation of niche areas of learning; star rating of polytechnics; signing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with 18 industries in Sarawak (2017) and higher institutions (for example, UTM, UiTM, and UMP) in 2015; and, establishing undergraduate and twinning degree programmes with Technology Mara University (UiTM) and Tun Hussien Onn University (UTHM) in Malaysia. However, only few researches were implemented on learner strategies and communication strategies in polytechnics when students encounter breakdowns in their speaking events.

In addition, since four decades ago, the language teaching and learning approaches in Malaysian polytechnics were mainly using modules and emphasizing on grammar to produce successful learners. However, in recent years the delivery approach has evolved to the learner centered approach with outcome based education, blended learning and work based learning as the focus. Blended learning is used widely in an online interactive platform called "CIDOS" (Curriculum Information Document Online System) where students only access the lessons' input through downloading files and uploading their assignments or tasks on this portal. This learner centered approach which enables students to be independent and take charge of their learning is pivotal for success in their language learning. However, this approach does not cater to face to face oral communication skills where in situation of communicative breakdown, employing strategies such as communication strategies could be of help to the students to overcome their communicative problems.

Accordingly, Brown (1994) defined this situation as the "Principle of Strategic Investment":

Successful mastery of the second language will be due to a large extent to a learner's own personal "investment" of time, effort and attention to the second language in the form of an individualized battery of strategies for comprehending and producing the language" (p. 20).

Brown (1994) postulated two implications for pedagogy in the classroom which are identifying and determining various strategies that the students apply for their learning and the importance of separating the individuals according to their strategies used.

Apparently, Karim Mattarima and Abdul Rahim Hamdan (2011) were also of the opinion that individual learner's differences of mixed ability in learning a foreign language "needs a great attention in increasing their communicative language skills". Hence, looking into the different learning strategies learners have could give light on how to improve the learner's proficiency level in polytechnics and help them to overcome their dysfluency during interactions.

1.3 Problem statement

Oral communicative learning of English is a vital subject and skill for polytechnic students to prepare them for workplace in future. At present, communicative approach is indispensable in language teaching and learning for students' future workplace communication where the ultimate goal of language learning is to improve communicative competence in their communication skills. Consequently, it is one of the significant skills that had distinguished the learners to different levels of proficiency and performance. The main reason why oral communication skill is highlighted in industry and used widely throughout multi-disciplines is because oral communication is used in all aspects of human speech to relate their ideas, messages and thoughts. According to Lynch (1996), communication enables someone to comprehend what ones wants to tell to others as messages. However, due to lack of linguistic resources, strategic and sociolinguistic competence, the intended message could not be communicated and there exist communication breakdown. Hence, to facilitate communicating with others, it is essential for polytechnic learners to use an effective way or strategy in which they could impart their information, ideas, messages and thoughts effectively to others.

The problems addressed in this research come with a few reasons. Firstly, polytechnic learners were found to have a lack of strategies in learning English. The low usage of strategies was evidently found in a study conducted by the researcher with 15 other representatives from 16 polytechnics using a part of an adapted Questionnaire by Oxford (1990) in 2009. The longitudinal study conducted from 2009 until 2011 aimed to investigate the performance of English proficiency to 1069 final semester students of 16 polytechnics who were then learning the old syllabus, English for Specific Purposes. Apparently, they were also the first batch of Teaching Mathematics and Science in English (PPSMTI) students. This group of polytechnic students, who had graduated in January 2011, was found to lack metacognitive, affective and compensation strategies in their English language learning. The results revealed that polytechnic students mostly use memory strategies ($M=2.66$), cognitive strategies ($M=2.61$), compensation strategies ($M=2.58$), metacognition strategies ($M=2.55$) and affective strategies ($M=2.58$). The minimum mean score measured for the study was 1 and the highest mean score measured was 5. This finding implied that students lacked strategies needed to learn certain appropriate linguistic and social expressions or signals to understand language input and integrate them into their thoughts. Consequently, the findings implied that learners should be made aware of the use of their learning strategies to enable them to perform and interact with others.

In this study, since there was a change of English syllabus from English for Technical Purposes to Communicative English for polytechnics in 2010, situation to improve on the students' use of strategies could probably change. Hence, do the existing students of the new syllabus also have the same learning strategies as the group before them? This phenomenon needs to be

researched in this study before any appropriate training programme is conducted to help the students.

Secondly, the lack of ease to convey ideas among learners in oral communication due to lack of communicative competence in a language is a stumbling block for most learners. According to Widdowson (1999, p. 67), linguistic skills are one of the elements of communicative skills but the acquisition of linguistic skills may not guarantee the consequent acquisition of communicative competence and even over-emphasis of drills and exercises for the production and reception of sentences would prevent communicative competence for development. The lack of strategy in communication may lead to situations which learners with good command of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge may get stuck and unable to communicate their intention (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1991). Hence, "...learners need to acquire not only a repertoire of linguistic items, but also a repertoire of strategies for using the language in concrete situations (Littlewood, 2000, p. 4).

Thirdly, the students' lack of confidence in using English especially during their industrial training at the workplace as confirmed by the Proton executives in 2011 during an industrial talk is another concrete situation that needs to be considered (PROTON, 2011). This problem was also based on observations and discussions with key personnel from the industry who confirmed that students would try their best to avoid any discussion using the English language because they lack knowledge on what to say and how to say it in terms of relevance, clarity (Grice, 1975) and discourse knowledge i.e. how linguistic elements are linked to one another to form meaningful text (Cohen, 1990) in English. In fact, in English classes, the students tend to express themselves in Bahasa Malaysia (Malay language) during group activities when they are required to explain or clarify ideas by the English lecturer. Therefore, in order to reduce such negative affective behaviour, the researcher believes that students should be taught communication strategies to enhance oral ability. Besides, meaningful based communicative tasks and opportunities to use meaningful English in context based on the students' field of studies as well as promote authentic interactions could be provided (Nakatani, 2010, p. 12).

Next, review of literature shows that students are generally taught content rather than looking at the process of how learners learn. They acquire their learning skills through "trial and error without formal training" (Saemah Rahman, 2010) and do not seem to be aware of what strategies to use to improve their communication. Hence, emphasis on communication strategies should be in the agenda of the classroom context (Woolfolk, 2008) as well as in different settings and learning conditions (Cohen, 2011, p. 695; Embi, 2000, p. 8).

Furthermore, many new polytechnic students with previous school experiences may depend on their teachers to spoon feed them with information as they have experienced formerly. They also tend to be passive receivers of information from their lessons and are not independent in acquiring their own knowledge. Furthermore, “reticence” (Zhang & Head, 2010) or shyness among the learners has inhibited them to participate in speaking activities designed to improve communicative skills such as role play, discussion, public speaking. Some students will sit at the back of the class to avoid being noticed and to be called upon to participate. Some even became very nervous during oral presentation assessments and this negative behaviour has led to frustration and failure to speak as they may become tongue-tied or suffers from mental block probably due to communication disruption and gaps in their lexical knowledge (Nakatani, 2010; Bialystok, 1983; Poulisse; 1990). They were also observed to be using unstructured sentences during presentations in their class lessons.

In addition, in recent years, there has been a kind of “changing winds and shifting sands” of methodological trends in the role of instructors and the learners (Brown, 2007). There had been a kind of progressive shift towards individualized instruction (Altman, 1979; Ellis, 1994) and learner autonomy (Finch, 2010) with a desire to provide the learner with the responsibility to be more self reliant and autonomous in their thinking, learning and behaviours (Oxford, 2008) . These approaches are often characterised by making decisions to advocate whether to enable students to be more responsible for their learning or to constrain their freedom; individualistic or community; and to view autonomy for language learning or vice versa.

Evidently, this shift of methodological trends and general debate on how best to learn has resulted into two practices in research: the first which concerns on developing learner autonomy as a requirement for learning and second, it focuses on determining the “secret” of what strategies are employed by proficient learners and the way how they learn (Finch, 2010; Holec, 1981). It is only ‘when learners make their own learning that is acquired in any generative fashion’ (Harris, 1999) that makes learning to be more meaningful and independent from the teacher.

Hence to realize this situation, Grenfell and Harris (1999) state that a whole set of techniques is required to help students move on this new direction of autonomy and independence in language learning and also to encourage “self-authorship” which enable learners to construct their own knowledge in learning rather than providing them with information (Kolb, 2005). By developing their effectiveness as learners, they can take responsibilities for self learning.

Thus, lessons on learning strategies could provide students to enhance their ‘meta-cognitive skills’ (Bransford, 2004) which probably be lacking among students of polytechnic. In the same scenario, students will be able to plan and monitor their levels of performance in learning. Indirectly, it will provide

“opportunities for learners to become aware of what language learning is all about and what they could do to become better learners” (Brown, 2007). Theory on metacognitive strategies revealed that by making students aware of their own learning, they have more control and be autonomous.

Subsequently, Communicative English syllabus of polytechnics which was introduced recently by the Curriculum Development Division of Department of Polytechnics and Community College Education in 2014, emphasizes the student centred approach and result oriented (outcomes) in speaking. This syllabus aims to prepare students for academic and occupational purposes in only three semesters: semester one, semester three and semester five in the diploma programmes. They are taught oral communication skills and reading for current issues during their Semester One. In their Semester Two, skills on how to describe processes and procedures, give and receive instructions, describe occupational instruments, make and reply to enquiries as well as complaints are respectively taught. Lastly, in the fifth semester, job hunting skills and conducting a mini project are taught. It was not evidently clear that any learning of communication strategy is introduced in the syllabus.

The implied purpose of the syllabus is one of developing the students to be able to communicate effectively in their workplaces. However many lecturers were unaware (Patil, Sunanda, Karekatti, & Tripti, 2015) and could not relate the syllabus with the intention of moulding students into autonomous learners and better speakers. Observations on teaching instructions were conducted on the lecturers and lecturers were interviewed. It was found that they mainly teach speaking using modules and are seen to disregard strategies or are ignorant of using strategies such as communication strategies to enable the students to adjust or approximate their messages, coin words, use circumlocution or get help to help to overcome their limitations in speaking. The learning approaches used are mainly discussion, role play, giving presentation and difficulties in the speech were often ignored and categorised as incompetent from the students. Subsequently, the final feedbacks given by lecturers are that students are weak in their English and they do not have motivation to learn. Some even reiterated that students did not have command of vocabulary and that was why they did not want to speak. In addition, some components of the learners' interlanguage system may be a result of the first language transfer (Selinker, 1972). As it has been a popular belief that the learners' first language has a strong influence on second language acquisition and considered one of the factor that influence the choice of CS used. This is a phenomenon which still remains unexplored on to what extent a learner's first language influences the use of CS (Ellis, 1986; Guo, 2011).

Based on the reasons highlighted, however, none or probably less report has been found so far in using strategies to help students through training instruction for polytechnic students. Hence, this research intends to investigate the Malaysian polytechnic learners' use of overall strategy using the Strategy Inventory of Language Learning (SILL) adapted from Oxford (1990).

Thereafter, from the analysis of SILL, the researcher aimed to use the information as a baseline and integrate it into a training module that focuses on oral communication strategies to improve the students' oral competence. Through the training, it was hypothesized that oral communication strategies are able to improve students' communicative competence and overcome their communication breakdown. Consequently, they are more confident in their speaking and become more autonomous.

1.3 Objectives and Scope of Study

Accordingly, the objectives of this research are to investigate the students of polytechnics of Malaysia's use of learning strategies; and to design a learning module for learners to manage their learning through oral communication strategies and metacognitive strategies; and use the module designed for strategy training which will indirectly enable the learners to be strategically competent and autonomous.

This research involves three phases. Firstly, the research conducted a preliminary investigation on the strategies used by the learners of polytechnics in four area zones of Malaysia. Then, the results of the first phase were used as baseline to develop a module in the second phase and finally, in the third phase, strategy training was conducted using the module that was produced to examine the effectiveness of the strategies taught to the learners. The target population for this study is Malaysian polytechnic diploma students between the ages of 19 years to 22 years old. Four polytechnics (acronym used are PSAS, PPD, POLISAS, PSP) were involved in the study and two polytechnics (PPD and PSAS) were used to conduct the strategy training. The justification for the use of the sample population and polytechnics involved will be discussed in Chapter Three and Four.

Thus, the specific objectives of the research are to:

- a. investigate what language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990) and communication strategies (Nakatani, 2010) are used by the learners of polytechnics of Malaysia.
- b. investigate on what extent the learners have utilize their metacognitive and communication strategies in their learning.
- c. determine to what extent the provision of communication strategies instruction help students to express their thoughts orally and more fluently through use of contextualised learning.

Based on the above objectives and scope of study, the following research questions are formulated.

1.4 Research Questions:

The research questions that are of concern for the undertaking of the study are:

1. What are the language learning strategies used by the students of polytechnics?
2. What are the perceived communication strategies used by the students of polytechnics?
3. To what extent does oral communication strategy training improve oral proficiency development and ability?
4. How do students perceive their progress of learning as they undergo training in oral communication strategies?

1.5 Overview on the Theoretical Background of the Study

A theory is "...a set of statements about natural phenomena that explains why these phenomena occurs the way they do" (VanPatten, 2007). It should be able to "...account for or explained observed phenomena" and "...make predictions on what would occur under specific conditions" (VanPatten & Williams, *ibid.*). Therefore, any attempt to answer the research questions of this study should be based on cognitive theory as most researchers in second language acquisition field generally viewed learning and communication as a process of developing complex cognitive skills. This theory differs from other second language theories which considered language acquisition to be unique phenomenon in human cognition. Linguistic theories of second language acquisition sustain that 'language is learned separately from cognitive skills and operates according to different principles from most learned behaviour' (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Rahimi, 2012). But Chamot and O'Malley (1987) raised concerns on this view and suggested that it should be enriched with a perspective that involved cognitive and metacognitive awareness in learning the second language. They argued that these decisions parallel cognitive processes involved in learning other complex skills. Similarly, Nakatani, (2010), Chamot and O'Malley, (1987) and Faerch and Kasper, (1984) have suggested that second language acquisition cannot be understood without addressing to the interaction between language and cognition. The processes of cognition are consciously used by learners to enhance learning and use of a language. Likewise, Widdowson (1984) also has claimed that actual communication involves the use of interpretive ways to associate particular instances of behaviours with the learners' familiar schemata and modify them when needed by using their knowledge of syntax and semantics as resources (p. 238).

Consequently, in order to argue for the use of strategy training in this study, it is advisable to look into the theoretical aspect of how skills for learning and using a language can be enhanced as well as how and why strategy training might be effective in overcoming communication breakdown of learners. The

theories underpinning this study are cognitive theories; information processing theory; input, interaction and output theory and oral communication strategy theories. These theories will be described at length in chapter two.

1.5.1 Basic concepts of cognitive theory and information processing theory

This section describes in a simple way the fundamental concepts of cognitive theory and information processing theory.

Researches in strategy have always been criticised for its “theoretical muddle” (Dornyei & Skehan, 2003, p. 610) resulting in ambiguous conceptual definitions for its term. However, Griffith and Oxford (2014) undertook a theoretical analysis and concluded that strategies are categorized into the cognitive phenomenon. From the cognitive view, learning a language does not mainly involve habit formation but it involves taking in information which is then processed and acted upon (Bialystok, 1978, 1990; Dornyei, 2005; A. Gass & Mackey, 2007; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Rubin, 1975; Skehan, 1998). From this view, learners are able to generate rules (Chomsky, 1959), learn from errors (Corder, 1967), develop interlanguage (Selinker, 1972), establish mental representation such as schemata (Anderson, 2008) and hence bring order into a complex and chaotic system (Larson-Freeman, 1997). According to Griffiths & Oxford (ibid), strategies are theoretically multifaceted with audiolingual or behaviourist elements, sociocultural/communicative/interactive dimension (Littlewood, 1981; Long, 1996; Oxford, 2011; Oxford & Schramm, 2007) in the form of interactive strategies that help to process and act upon information received from the sociocultural environment (Griffiths & Oxford, 2014; Leontiev, 1978).

A theory of second language acquisition (SLA) generally explained how the knowledge about a language is retained and stored in the memory and how the process of second language acquisition will result in automatic language understanding and production. Therefore, clarifying the role of learning strategies in second language acquisition from the theoretical and empirical viewpoint is important. This section describes the role of learning strategies in cognitive theory and how the target language is memorized, acquired and utilized in the production of speech. Theories in cognitive psychology and SLA such as Anderson (1983, 1985), Chamot et al (1987), and O'Malley and Chamot (1990) had influenced learning strategies research recently. Some fundamental principles underlying the cognitive theory are summarized as follows:

1. Language learning is an active and dynamic process where a learner makes use of a variety of information and strategic processing modes
2. Learning results from internal mental activity by developing and restructuring schemata (complex cognitive systems and networks)

3. In developing the proficiency of the target language, sub skills from complex language learning task are practiced and formed into mental representations.

Hence, second language comprehension and production of the new knowledge of learning consist of active and complex representations of meanings from aural and written information. In comprehending oral communication, learners will construct meaning from their higher level complex cognitive knowledge structures (schemata) which functions as an activator for pre-existing systems in organizing and interpreting discourse. Schemata is defined as the higher level complex knowledge structures which act as activators in the pre-existing cognitive systems for organizing and interpreting discourse (Brown & Yule, 1983). This complex knowledge structure will be organized and activated as representations in the learners' cognition to enable them to acquire the target language.

Before going any further, some terminology needs to be clarified in showing how a target language learner might memorize their knowledge through activating the schemata. Firstly, the difference between short and long term memory should be demarcated in order to avoid confusion. Then, the natures of declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge need to be previewed and how the two knowledges could be developed through metacognitive training strategy. Lastly, the difference between learning strategy and communication strategy also needs to be highlighted as this study involves the integration of learning strategies such as metacognitive strategies and communication strategies in its operational design.

1.5.2 Short and Long Term Memory

Two forms of information are stored in memory for cognitive theory: the short and long term memory. The active short term memory involves retaining some amount of information particularly for a short duration and the latter is described as the storage of information that may be represented as interconnected network. In the field of cognitive psychology, incoming data is processed by developing a representation or node through association or via more complicated representations such as schemata as interconnected networks showing complex concepts. In order to acquire the target language, learners need to activate and generate meaning from data through activating the nodes in long term memory and stimulating their information introduced from short term memory (Tarone, 1983; Ellis, 1986). Anderson (1983, 1995) also states that there are two types of long term memory in acquiring language. The first type is called declarative knowledge which is the static information in memory about what we know about a given topic in a language and the other known as procedural knowledge which is the dynamic information in memory on what we know how to utilize the language. The next section describes the

detail of declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge and how they are connected in the learning of a second language.

1.5.3 Definition of Declarative and Procedural Knowledge

Declarative knowledge is about the factual information in the memory. It is referred as store data and representation in long term memory as nodes in networks and these networks are connected and inter-related with one another. These nodes are likened to individual words that strung together to form propositions or sentences in language. They form the primary units of knowledge and meaning stored in the long term memory. The propositions are then combined into web of related representations sharing a common element. These webs of representations are in turn combined and organized as larger networks or schemas (Nakatani, 2010; Schunk, 2004).

Since this study also concerns information processing theory, it is necessary to look at how information or knowledge is represented within this approach. New knowledge or information is incorporated in the network of associated propositions by means of a process called spreading activation. At any given moment, most of the propositions or concepts in the network are inactive. Only a few that the learner is thinking about are active enough to be conscious in the working memory. However, it is assumed that other related concepts that are associated or linked to the active thoughts in working memory also received some degree of stimulation the process of spreading activation. Since the concepts closest to those already in working memory received the highest degree of stimulation, they can be easily brought to working memory. Other concepts, however, that are not semantically related to those in the working memory may be difficult or impossible to recall.

In any of the propositions or representations, the learners' previous knowledge or learning experiences determines the bond between the links of the nodes in the memory. Therefore, two types of schemata that could be introduced to enhance learning are:

- a. Natural category schemata which are based on real world phenomena, such as classification of natural beings and resources.
- b. Event organized schemata which are elements of knowledge acquired by the sequence of events related to language and social cultural knowledge.

Among the two schemata mentioned, natural category schemata seem to be easier to be transferred from the first language of the learner to the second language due to its information being described as observable reality. However, event organized schemata may be more difficult to transfer meaning from the first language to the second language of the learner because of sociocultural expectations that will hinder the activation of appropriate

schemata. Nakatani (2010) suggested that it is essential for learners to improve their event organized schemata through experiencing authentic social context in the second language culture by looking into the learner's processing elements in understanding a second language. He states that top down processing helps the speaker or learner to resolve ambiguities or select the alternative possible interpretations of particular meaning during moments of discourse. On the other hand, bottom up processing will ensure the speakers to be sensitive to information that is novel or differ from their ongoing hypotheses about the content or structure of the discourse. Hence the speakers need an advance organizing skills to provide sufficient background knowledge to help them in finding the appropriate schemata for comprehending the intention of other speakers. This could probably be practiced through metacognitive strategies training to provide the learner with opportunities of awareness of learning behaviour for example planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning.

Declarative knowledge is important during acquisition, transfer and problem solving. Defining words, retaining information on facts, grammar and spelling rules, understanding and generating language as well as including any memory for images and sequences of events are some of the examples of declarative knowledge which could be taught to speakers.

During communication, speakers tend to activate improper schemata due to transfer from their first language speech strategies to second language and due to failure in their pragmatic speech (Thomas, 1983, pp. 91-112). This is because speakers may lack cross-cultural information in their speech behaviour and they may fail to activate their schemata to comprehend speakers' intention correctly. Therefore it is assumed that specific cultural schemata enable speakers to understand cultural attitudes as well as information of the discourse. Hence in classroom setting, it is suggested that learners' event organized schemata be activated as part of declarative knowledge in order to enhance their background knowledge for any speech act strategies (Nakatani, 2010, p. 20).

Besides declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge is the knowledge of how to do something. It is required for learners to develop the speech act strategies of the target language for communication. Faerch and Kasper (1986) summarize the role of procedural knowledge into five components:

1. Reception procedures which infer meaning of incoming data
2. Production procedures which involve planning and monitoring of speech during production
3. Conversation procedures which involve organization of cohesion and coherence of utterance
4. Communication strategies which solve communication breakdowns
5. Learning procedures which develop inter language through the process of using actual target language

Nakatani (2010) also supported the role of this procedural knowledge and stated that it is vital for foreign language learning as it enables students to use strategies which realize comprehension and production in the target language. In cognitive theory, both declarative and procedural knowledge are considered as important elements to acquire the target language, accompanied by extensive opportunities for practice. Yet there is a question to what extent does such knowledge grow and learning can be extended in classroom settings during learning.

Apparently, in cognitive theory, schemata are formed through the process of abstraction (Adams, 1990; Hintzman, 1986) Learners may be experiencing the same situations repeatedly. Overtime, what are retained in the schema are repeated experiences that are familiar and set in their memory. Schema theorist argued that once schemata and concepts are formed, specific details in the memory will be lost and instead ideas that are meaningful will be retained and emphasized.

Consequently, what was experienced and remembered in these schemata also involve three processes which are selecting, extracting the gist and interpreting meaningful experiences. In the first process, the mind selects the experience/situation that is relevant and meaningful. For example, in a role play, learners will only remember those aspects of experience that are consistent with the role play scripts (i.e. how to start the conversation, how to complain appropriately, negotiate and conciliate and end a complaint). Then, in the second process of extracting the gist from the experience, it will only begin after the first process is selectively encoded and stored. In this second stage, the learner will roughly get the gist of the role-play script and roughly read through the whole script without paying attention to any detail to the task. Lastly, in the interpretation process of retaining the experience, the information on the role-play is comprehended and interpreted with additional modification and restructuring of the original script to enable more flexibility and changes to the script of the role play. Hence, the role play is performed according to the learner's procedural knowledge (Byrnes, 1996).

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that activation of appropriate prior knowledge of schemata and integration of new knowledge with them are essential to facilitate the acquisition of declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge. It has been claimed that to develop this skill, learners need to experience strategy training on how to manage their strategy use consciously in the context of communication, be it in the classroom or at the workplace (e.g. Nakatani, 2010; Wenden, 1987; and O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Chamot, 2009).

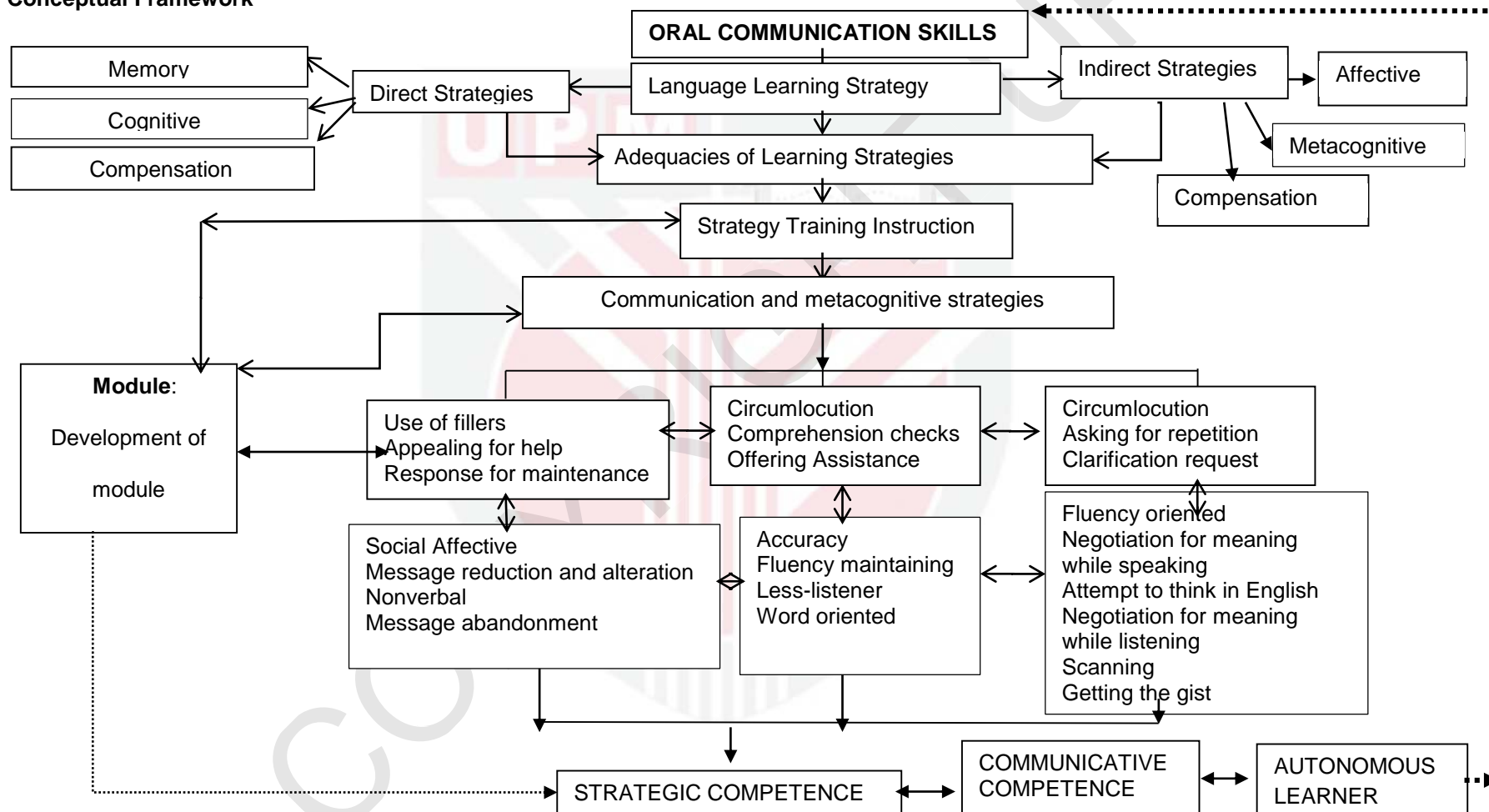
Cohen (1998) also states that learners often fail to apply strategies appropriately in times of task at hand even though they seem to be active strategy users. Apparently, they lack certain thinking strategies such as

metacognitive strategies which may help them to know what strategy to use and how to use it successfully. Wenden (1991) believes that metacognitive strategies namely planning, monitoring and evaluating are skills that students need to develop their own learning. Hence, metacognitive strategies could be another alternative way to help students in bridging the gap between what learners know (declarative knowledge) and how to communicate effectively (procedural knowledge) in the second language for this study. Moreover, as the researcher had mentioned earlier in section 1.2, polytechnic students are still lacking in metacognitive strategies. Therefore, it is reasonable to adopt metacognitive strategies into the study to overcome the polytechnic learners' communication problems.

Chamot and O'Malley (1994) had proposed a metacognitive model which aimed at enhancing the learner's strategies in learning the second language, for example, to plan, monitor, solve problems and evaluate their communicative task performance. During the planning stage, learners are encouraged to plan their own approaches to the task given by the instructors, for example, setting a task goal, activating prior knowledge from previous tasks, and anticipating the potential difficulties for the task. Then, in the monitoring stage, learners are encouraged to monitor their own performance by looking into their strategy used and checking on their comprehension of the task, imagery and personalising the task by relating information to their background knowledge. Later, in the problem solving stage, learners are required to find their own solutions to complete the tasks given by making inference, asking for clarification and compensating for their lack of language resources by using relevant communication strategies. Lastly, the evaluation stage requires learners to gauge how far they had achieved their initial goals and assess their own performance by using reflection in order to transfer their strategies to other tasks or situations in future.

This approach had been adopted in this study because the researcher believed that students of polytechnic still do not have any systematic way of planning and evaluating their learning tasks in their classroom. It is hoped that with the metacognitive strategies training and communication strategies training, learners in polytechnic will be given the opportunity to plan their own learning and monitor their second language use to overcome their deficiencies in oral communication through activating their own natural category schemata.

1.5.4 Conceptual Framework



1.6 Strategic Competence and Communication Strategies

Based on literature of applied linguistics, there were four studies that prepared the ground for the study of communication strategies. First, Selinker's (1972) classic article on interlanguage introduced the notion of interlanguage in L2 communication. Second, a systematic analysis of CSs and its categories using Selinker's notion was elaborated and published by Varadi (1973, 1983) and Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1977; 1976). Then, Savignon (1972) reported on an experiment using a communicative method involving training students with coping strategies. Since 1972, many studies had been conducted to determine the typologies of CSs but "there is still lack of empirical research exploring how communication strategies and communication problems are related" (Guo, 2011).

As mentioned in the problem statement, polytechnic students are having communication problems in expressing their ideas and thoughts during speaking because they may probably be lacking in linguistic resources or strategic competence. In addition, language teaching in polytechnic has traditionally been aimed at developing linguistic competence and the strategic competence is most neglected in language course books and by instructors for second language and foreign learners (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1991). Another problem with teaching Communicative Language in polytechnic is that great importance is attached to the accumulation of knowledge whereas training the students to be able to use the second language is always neglected. According to Widdowson (1999, p. 67), linguistic skills are one of the components of communicative competence, but not the reverse; the acquisition of linguistic skills does not guarantee the consequent acquisition of communicative competence and even over-emphasis of drills and exercise for production and reception of sentences would prevent communicative competence from development. The lack of strategic competence may account for this situation where even good language learners with good command of grammatical knowledge and lexical words may face difficulties and be unable to express their messages (Dornyei and Thurrell, *ibid.*). Therefore, strategic competence is important. Strategic competence is considered important since Canale and Swain (1980) introduced and included this construct in the term communicative competence. It is defined as "verbal and non-verbal strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdown in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence" (p. 30).

Unanimous stand has not been achieved in defining CS, but most researchers consented that CS is "a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his or her meaning when faced with some difficulty" (Corder, 1981, p. 103). This definition is in accordance with Canale and Swain's (1980) and Faerch and Kasper's (1983) conceptualization who proposed that being conscious and solving problems are main features of communication strategies. Hence, strategic competence could be realised by using communication strategies training in this study.

1.6.1 Interactionist and Psycholinguistic Perspectives of Oral Communication Strategies

This section previews the two perspectives that had been advocated by researchers on communication strategies studies: the interactional and psycholinguistic view. The psycholinguistic view focusses on learners' behaviour based on their mental process when they encounter difficulties with lack of vocabulary and problems in their speech. In contrast, the interactional view of communication strategies addresses the distinct features of how the speakers negotiate meanings and overall effectiveness of their message with their hearer. These two perspectives will be discussed further in Chapter Two. The next section describes the different types of model for language learning training to distinguish the existing models that could be adopted for this study.

1.7 Models of Language Learning Instruction

The following table categorises four models that are frequently adopted in researches of strategy instruction (Chamot, 2005; Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, and Robbins, 1999; Cohen, 1998; Dornyei, 1995; Graham & Harris, 2003; Grenfell & Harris, 1999).

Table 1.1: Model for language learning instruction

Styles and Strategies based Instruction Model (SSBI) (Cohen, 1998)	Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) Model (Chamot, 2005; Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, and Robbins, 1999)	Dornyei (1995)	Grenfell and Harris (1999)
Instructor as the diagnostician who helps learners to determine existing strategies and learning styles of learners.	Instructor distinguishes learners' existing learning strategies to cater to common tasks in the preparation stage.	Elicit learners' previously used strategies and make them aware of their own strategies and how to use them.	Learners become aware and identify their strategy used through completion of a task.
Instructor reveals their processes of thinking and experiences in learning	Instructor presents examples of new strategies to learners in the presentation stage.	Encourage learners to take risk and use communication strategies in real conversation.	Learners practise generally new strategies with different tasks.
Instructor trains learners on the usage of strategies.	Learners practise new strategy and subsequently, instructor reminds learners on the use of strategies independently in the practice stage.	Demonstrate the examples of strategy use to learners.	Learners set and choose strategies to attain those goals in action planning stage.
Instructor coordinates and regulates learners' plan and	After practice, learners immediately reflect and evaluate on their own strategy use.	Highlight cross-cultural differences in communication	Learners carry out action plan using selected strategies. Instructor fades

keeps track on their learning		strategies to avoid wrong practices	prompts to encourage learners to use strategies automatically.
Instructor coaches and gives continual feedback on learners' development	Learners apply their newly learned strategies to other situations or tasks.	Communication strategies are taught to learners by using a list of expressions or taxonomies.	Instructors and learners assess successful action plan. They set new objectives and begin another cycle of learning.
	Instructor evaluates learners' strategies used and their performances.	Provide learners with opportunity for practice in strategy use to encourage automaticity.	

Table 1.1 compares four instructional models for training learners on language learning strategy stage. These four models have the same features of building learners' metacognitive strategies in learning through the modelling and demonstration stage. Metacognitive strategies involve guiding the learners to think, plan, monitor the learning task and evaluate what they have learnt. All the four models also emphasize practice to use strategies to enable learners to use them independently and in an autonomous way. The four models administered the evaluation approach by assessing the effectiveness of the strategy, the choice of strategies used and feasibility of the strategies to other situations or tasks.

In addition, these four models also start with determining learners' present condition of learning strategies use through activities using questionnaire, conducting discussion on tasks using strategy, and using reflection right after performing a task. Although all the four models have similar elements and features, the CALLA model has a "recursive" and "revisiting" stage prior to instructional phases as needed by the learners or instructors. But the Grenfell and Harris (1999) model only has a fix cycle of six steps and it begins a new cycle. There are no revisiting and recursive steps as CALLA. Cohen's model on the other hand, has the instructor to take on a variety of roles to enhance their learners' use of learning strategies in-line with appropriate learning styles. Dornyei's (1995) model has the highlight of cultural differences in communication strategies use for certain language and this could be applicable to Malaysian students' multicultural scenario. Grenfell and Harris' Model (Chamot, 2005) has the familiarization approach on the strategies to the learners and then the learners plan their own actions to enhance their learning. But the CALLA model builds the learners' own self-evaluation phase to reflect upon their strategies used before applying their strategies to other situations or tasks. Hence, this study adopted the CALLA model to develop knowledge about the learners' own thinking and strategic processes as well as encourage learners to use communication strategies that will improve their oral communication skills and also Dornyei's model which encourage learners to take risk and highlight certain cultural differences in the use of CS.

1.8 Preview on some Contentious Terminology

As this study involved the integration of communication strategies and metacognitive strategies, it is appropriate to discuss the difference between the two terms as some scholars have difference conflicting views on their definition.

a. Learning strategies and communication strategies

Language learning strategies are broad and goal specified actions which enable learners to use and with some degree of consciousness to complete second language tasks with great responsibility for or control over their learning (Oxford, 2008). Similarly, O' Malley and Chamot (1990) also mention that language learning strategies are used to promote learning while communication strategies are not stated. They define language learning strategies as "...special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn and retain new information".

However Faerch and Kasper (1984) had different views and divided strategies of English Second Language learners as communication, learning and production strategies. Learning strategies are learners' efforts and motivation to enhance their competency in learning a language. Production strategies are learners' attempts to achieve communicative goals and communication strategies are learners' adaptation to failure in realising communicative goals where both linguistic structures and sociolinguistic rules are limited between interlocutors. Both communication and production strategies could be categorized as language use strategies whereas learning strategies are seen as strategies for learning purposes.

Cohen (1998) claims that there need to be a split between language learning and language use strategies. He defines language learning strategies as conscious thoughts used by learners to improve their knowledge and to understand the target language with an explicit goal in mind while language use strategies are described as skills that help learners to utilize the language that already been acquired. In this situation, communication strategies are regarded as strategies for language use instead of strategies for learning.

Nakatani (2011) also defines communication strategies as learners' attempt to overcome difficulties in order to achieve communicative goals (p. 25). He states that communication strategy is a subset of learning strategies. Likewise, Nakatani and Goh (2011) also claim that both language learning and communication strategies need to be differentiated and split because the two concepts can be considered to be in different territory. Language learning strategies are strategies used to acquire the target language while communication strategies are used to promote or enhance communication

goals especially when learners encounter difficulties during communication. Hence, the researcher supported Nakatani's claim and position for this study and defines communication strategies as learners' initiatives in overcoming difficulties and generating language learnt in order to achieve communication goals during interactions. As far as this research is concerned, learning strategies such as metacognitive strategies are special thoughts or behaviours that learners used to promote learning. Another concept that needs to be clarified in this research is oral communication strategy.

b. Oral communication strategies

One of the reasons why learners of polytechnic are not able to communicate and have lack of confidence in speaking is probably due to their "mental activity" (Macaro, 2001) which is still unconsciously thought in their first language and they are not aware of using strategies to counter their problems when there exist communication breakdown. Hence, in this study, oral communication strategies could probably be a way to help learners to be aware of different linguistic cues and phrases in the conversation that may guide them to understand a dialogue and associating their idea or information with another in their speech. Learners could also be made aware of speaking in phrases instead of word by word to improve their fluency in their speech. In addition phrases such as "As far as I'm concerned...", "As I see it, ..." "In my opinion...", "As what I was saying earlier..." which are called "starters" will enable learners who have difficulties in speaking in real time to pause and have time to think and organize their speech in the next proceeding lines or ideas of thought.

CSs have relevance in learning because through looking into the cognitive process, the learners create in themselves and internal representation of the language they are learning in the target language. CSs could also represent a series of alternatives one employ in his communicative attempts with native speakers. In such way, the researcher in this study would position the study in the psychological orientation in which the study examines the ways in which learners make up or compensate for a lack of lexical items in communicative tasks such as description of pictures, processes and role plays. The psycholinguistic and interactionist perspectives of oral communication strategies will be explained further in Chapter 2.

c. Communicative competence

Canale and Swain (1980) regard strategic competence as the ability to use communication strategies. In their model, they differentiated communicative competence as knowing the rules of language use while communicative performance is considered as the ability to use the language. They state that communicative competence consists of four main category i.e. grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. Grammatical competence encompasses the facts on the grammar rules and lexis, sociolinguistic competence refers to the facts on how contextual and cultural

factors are realized through languages; discourse competence involves knowing how meaning is represented through connected text and strategic competence involves how one use communication strategies to overcome difficulties as mentioned earlier.

1.9 Significance of the Study

A few significant aspects of the study could be seen from this research. Firstly, with the rapid change and transformation of the polytechnic system in Malaysia, where student focused learning is prioritized, lecturers would be able to understand their students better through looking into the types of learners' learning strategies. This will result in better planning of their lessons and such a study will provide learners with greater autonomous learning and better pedagogical teaching of English in polytechnics. Teaching English for just a few hours a week in class will not be able to advance the students' proficiency and students have to be responsible for their own learning.

Secondly, this study is significant because at present, there is no known study of Communication Strategies in the learning of Oral Communication among polytechnic students which the researcher could review. The result of the study will provide a platform for future reference and research, especially for use in the polytechnics.

Thirdly, there is no module on how to promote communication strategies in Mechanical field and the new approach requires lecturers in polytechnics to emphasize learning strategies to achieve the institutions' focus on outcome-based learning. This study would be an avenue for polytechnic researchers to develop and address some of their problems in the English class through effective strategy use.

The next section will discuss on the operational definition of this study.

1.10 Operational Definitions

In relation to the terminologies surveyed, the following are the definitions and scope of the terms salient to this research.

- a. **Strategic competence** is the skill of getting one's meaning successfully across to other listeners during communication interactions and when problems emerge.
- b. **Learning strategies** are mindful thoughts and behaviours that learners adopt to attain specific learning outcomes. The learners are able to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning and think strategically (Chamot, 2004).

- c. **Communication strategies** are learners' manner of adapting to overcome difficulties and to realize oral communication success, which is essential in negotiation of meaning where meanings are not understood between the speaker and its listener.
- d. **Oral communication strategies** are strategies used in oral interactions, and interlocutors' negotiation behaviours for coping with communication breakdown.
- e. **Metacognitive strategy** refers to strategy of planning, monitoring and evaluation of the learners' own learning.
- f. **Learning module** refers to the instructional package with integrated of content specific to learners' subject matter that imparts facts and information to promote specific skills such as oral communication strategies that are introduced to overcome communication breakdown during oral communication events. It is a learning activity package.
- g. **Strategy training/instruction** refers to the explicit teaching of both oral communication strategies and metacognitive strategies.
- h. **Communication breakdown** refers to the situation where the learners are unable to express their meanings and proceed with their speech during their conversation with others. They will have situations of anxiety and lack of confidence due to the absence of lexical knowledge or lexical deficits and tip of tongue condition where they are thinking of the correct words/concepts but was not able to express the words because of semantic processing is at variance with phonological processing (i.e. the sound of words failed to be produced).
- i. **Learner centered** involves providing situations of learning according to learners' priority and the learning outcomes are the learning target.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

Albeit its significance, this study also has limitations, which will naturally affect its scope of study. These limitations are discussed as the following:

- a. The respondents in the first phase were selected randomly from four polytechnics of the existing 32 polytechnics (mainly representing the northern, southern, centre and eastern zones of Malaysia). This random selection of respondents by the researcher was due to constraint of time and the location of all the polytechnics. Even though there are 32 polytechnics, most of the polytechnics are located far from each other and this distance limits the researchers to conduct research to a wider sample.
- b. The time chosen for the treatment for the two experimental groups in the third stage of the study might pose a limitation as both groups, the control and experimental group could not be conducted simultaneously in the two polytechnics because of the time table allocated for them is different and should not be manipulated to interrupt the research purposes. For example, polytechnic PSAS (acronym) may not administer the lessons the same time as the lessons for polytechnic

PPD (acronym). This limitation was countered by choosing both classes for the control group and experimental group to be conducted on the same day for the two polytechnics to obtain external validity.

- c. Another limitation is that random sampling is not feasible in the selection of control and experimental group during the training session. Hence, data collection procedures are replicated for the study by using different groups of subjects and in different situations.
- d. The number of students chosen for the intervention stage was 89 students out of 114 because some students did not complete the post-test and answer the oral communication strategy questionnaires in the post test.
- e. Technical limitation occurred during the post-test video recording sessions. Some of the recordings for respondents were lost due to technical problems of the video recorder and the time for recording for each respondent was an arduous tasks. Some data were unable to be retrieved due to technical problems. Around 5 subjects' data which could not be retrieved has to be dropped from the research. Later, precautions were undertaken by using two video recorders to prevent further technical problems. In addition, some students are found to be reluctant to write their strategy journal due to too much of assignments from their core subjects and hence the collection of data for the metacognitive strategies was not completed.

1.12 Summary

This chapter begun with the discussion on the background of the study, the demands of the industry for employability in the context of the importance of communication skills, the students' lacks of strategies used which impede them from orally expressing their ideas proficiently and the process of learning in cognitive theory. This study was undertaken to investigate learners' of polytechnics' use of learning strategies in second language and to find out to what extent communication strategies and metacognitive strategies awareness taught to learners of polytechnic would enable them to be strategically competent in their oral communication skills.

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