

การศึกษาความต้องการด้านการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษระหว่างผู้พูดที่ไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษาในสถานการณ์การใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษากลางในบริบททางวิชาการ

An Investigation of Communication Needs Experienced by Non-native Speakers of English as a Lingua Franca Academic Context

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยเรื่องนี้มุ่งศึกษาปัญหาด้านการสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษระหว่างผู้พูดที่ไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษาในสถานการณ์การใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษากลางในบริบททางวิชาการ ประชากรที่ใช้ในการวิจัยครั้งนี้คืออาจารย์ชาวไทย จำนวน 2 คน นักเรียนไทย จำนวน 15 คน นักเรียนกัมพูชา จำนวน 15 คน ระดับชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 ที่ลงทะเบียนเรียนชั้นเรียนพิเศษในมหาวิทยาลัย ซึ่งนักเรียนทั้งหมดใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษากลางในการสื่อสารในบริบททางวิชาการ ผู้วิจัยเก็บข้อมูลโดยการสัมภาษณ์ และใช้วิธีกำหนดรหัสข้อมูล ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ผลการวิจัยพบว่านักเรียนชาวไทยและชาวกัมพูชา มีความต้องการด้านการสื่อสารคล้ายกัน 2 อย่างคือ นักเรียนมีความรู้ด้านภาษาอย่างจำกัดซึ่งประกอบด้วยความต้องการการแก้ปัญหาด้านความเข้าใจ การใช้ไวยากรณ์ผิดพลาดรวมถึงการมีความรู้ด้านคำศัพท์จำกัด และอีกความต้องการคือการมีอคติทางด้านสังคมและวัฒนธรรมจึงทำให้การสื่อสารไม่ประสบผลสำเร็จ

คำสำคัญ: ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษากลาง, ปัญหาด้านการสื่อสาร, กลวิธีด้านการสื่อสาร

Abstract

This study investigates common communication needs encountered in an ELF academic context. The participants consisted of two Thai professors, fifteen Thai, and fifteen Cambodian students who studied in grade 12 and enrolled at the university where ELF was used in an academic context. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data which was analyzed by coding method. The findings revealed two primary common communication needs shared between Thai students and Cambodian student: There are -1) limited linguistic knowledge, which contained three aspect: comprehension skill, grammatical errors, and inadequate vocabulary,

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and 2) sociocultural bias, which contained two aspect;; cultural bias and mindset, which led to unsuccessful communication.

Keywords: English as a lingua franca, communication needs, communication strategies

Introduction

It is widely accepted that English is used internationally across boundaries in intercultural communication among people whose first languages often are not English (Baker, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011). The number of English users is increasing and it is a fact that non-native English speakers outnumber native English speakers worldwide (Crystal, 2003). The opportunities for communication do not limited only to native speakers. It also spreads to non-native speakers' contact. In non-native English speakers' conversations, native-like English proficiency is not needed for international communication (Nguyen, 2017). Negotiation of meaning is crucial for successful communication (Kiczowski, 2019). Thus, individuals need to become fluent multilingual speakers while retaining their national identity in accent and the unique skills required for intercultural communication, especially internationalization (Baker, 2015; Graddol, 2006). In line with internationalization in Thailand, an increasing number of Cambodian students come to pursue further study in many educational institutes. Since their first language differs from Thai, English is employed as a language medium for communication between international students. Both Thai students and Cambodian students are non-native speakers of English, who use English as a lingua franca

(ELF) in the classroom or in the context of the academic situation. They face language challenging to understand each other for communicative purposes. Some scholars (e.g., Dornyei, 1995; Kongsom, 2009) have attempted to assist them by offering communication strategies instruction, but the needs were not getting from the learners. Moreover, Thai academia has paid little attention to helping such international students prosper here in an ELF context. As a result, it is timely and relevant to pay more attention to students' actual needs for assisting them to achieve communication. This line of investigation is underexplored and warrants further study.

Objective

The objective of this study was to investigate common communication needs, reported by Thai students and Cambodian students, encountered in an ELF academic context

Method

The objective of this study was to research common communication needs of Thai and Cambodian students in an ELF academic context, which emphasizes Thai and Cambodian students. The process of the research in this study is summarised in the table below:

Table 1 The process of the study

Goal	Participants	Instrument	Data collection	Data Analysis
To research common communication needs in an ELF academic context	2 Thai professors, who teach in the classroom and use English as a means of teaching language - 15 enrolled Cambodian students - 15 enrolled Thai students	Interview	Semi-structure interview	Coding method

Participants

The participants in this study were two Thai professors who had experience teaching a class in which Thai students and Cambodian students were enrolled. Using purposive sampling, Thai and Cambodian students were also chosen as the participants. The expected number of participants in this study was 30 students, 15 Thai and 15 Cambodian students, who studied in grade 12 and enrolled for a special class at the University where ELF was used in an academic context.

The Cambodian students participating in this study speak Cambodian as their first language. While Cambodian students usually study English under their national curriculum, the students from public or private schools often have different levels of English background. In general, Cambodian students who attend public school begin to study English in Grade 7, and they may also take some extracurricular courses from private language tutoring institutes. In contrast, Cambodians in private schools can attend special English language classes in primary school. After high school, they are required to take a university entrance examination.

Similarly, the Thai students who participated in this study speak Thai as their first language. According to the curriculum of Thai Education, Thai students usually begin to study English at Grade 1 or the primary level in both public and private schools. Thai and Cambodian students are quite similar in terms of English background knowledge. For example, their English is mainly based on what they studied in high school.

Instrument

A semi-structured interview was employed to obtain in-depth data and examine common communication needs in an ELF academic context. The interview protocol consisted of several topics, such as their communication needs that they faced while learning in the classrooms where English is used as a lingua franca. This semi-structured interview was designed to encourage as much flexibility and spontaneity as possible to help the respondents express their perspectives on communication needs arising in the ELF academic context. The interview was conducted in three languages; English, Thai, and Cambodian, depending on the students' choices.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

The data from this interview with Thai and Cambodian students and two Thai professors were transcribed professionally and rechecked for the accuracy. Then, the data were analyzed using the coding method developed by Saldana (2009). who proposes three steps of the coding method: - 1) open coding, 2) axial coding, and 3) selective coding. For the first step, open coding is the process of labeling and naming categories from the data analysis. The aim is to grasp each part's core idea and develop a code to describe it. The researcher read, reread, and identified the codes in the interview data. The second step, axial coding, aims to identify the relationships among the principles to generate categories. selective coding phase, involves the process of combining the categories into themes. To enhance the trustworthiness of the data, a member check technique was used by bringing the emergent themes to the participants to check whether they reflected their authentic communication needs.

Findings

The objective of this phase was to investigate common communication needs in an ELF academic context experienced by Thai students and Cambodian students. In this phase, 15 Cambodian and 15 Thai students were interviewed, focusing on their learning English experiences in their classrooms. Two English instructors were also interviewed to examine their perspectives on teaching these students. The interview questions were about

the communication problems between Thai students and Cambodian students in the classroom and how they solved their communication problems. Then, the interviews were analyzed by using the coding method. The analysis revealed two themes of communication problems between Thai students and Cambodian students: limited linguistic knowledge and sociocultural bias.

1. Limited linguistic knowledge

The interviews obtained by data analysis of Thai and the Cambodian student' revealed that the students had communication problems about limited linguistic knowledge in terms of three aspects. : 1) comprehension skills, 2) grammatical errors, and 3) inadequate vocabulary.

To begin with, Thai students and Cambodian students reported having difficulty comprehending the message when listening to their counterparts in the English classrooms. All Thai students (n = 15) said that it was challenging to listen to Cambodian students in the classrooms. They attributed this challenge to the speed of Cambodian students' talking. From this problem, one student said that the speed of delivering the message meant that it was difficult to identify the words and understand the message. The quotes below illustrate the responses.

"They speak too fast, so I cannot catch the words." (Thai student, interview)

"Cambodian friends speak unclear and fast, so I lose some words in the sentence." (Thai student, interview)

In addition, Thai students reported that some Cambodian students used their mother tongue in the sentence. This indicated that they lacked vocabulary knowledge in English, so they inserted the vocabulary from their mother tongue into the sentence. This created confusion since Thai students did not know the message's meaning from their interlocutors.

"Some of my Cambodian friends use their mother tongue in the sentence, which is the main idea or key word of the sentence" (Thai student, interview)

"Cambodian students made me confused because they spoke fast in their regular conversation, and they used the Khmer language" (Thai student, interview)

Similarly, in the interview, Cambodian students also reported difficulties communicating with Thai students in the classrooms. They said that the Thai counterpart spoke very fast, and they may not understand the meaning and catch the expression of words. Moreover, some Thai students half used the Thai language in the sentence. The quotes below illustrate the responses.

"I cannot catch all message from Thai interlocutor because he/she speaks too fast" (Cambodian student, interview)

"Thai friend sometimes uses Thai language in the sentence" (Cambodian student, interview)

The above quotes showed that Thai and Cambodian students had similar needs in comprehension skills; they could not comprehend

the message from interlocutors because of the speedy talk and L1 interference. Moreover, the lecturer confirmed the findings in the interview that when communicating with each other in the classes, Thai students and Cambodian students had comprehension needs, and they did not understand the message.

"My students often say I don't know or I don't understand when they worked in pair. It showed that they do not comprehend the message from the interlocutor." (Instructor, interview, The above problem showed that the students could not understand each other because Thais and Cambodians both face rapid talk and mother tongue language use from their interlocutors. Therefore, they could not comprehend the message from their interlocutors.

In the second aspect of limited linguistic knowledge, the communication need was related to grammatical errors. From the interview, all Thai students (n = 15) also stated that their interlocutors might not use correct grammar or used incorrect tense. The quotes below illustrate the responses.

"Some Cambodians use present tense and put the word tomorrow at the end of the sentence to show that they will do it" (Thai student, interview)

Moreover, some Cambodian students reported that their interlocutors used incorrect grammar, especially in sentence arrangement. The quotes below illustrate the responses.

"I am confused when talked with my friend. They uses wrong grammar, and the

words in a sentence is in the wrong position, such as he put the adjective before the infinitive verb.” (Cambodian student, interview)

The two instructors also confirmed the data from the interview that their student's used incorrect grammar but some of them could understand each other. Upon asking the Thai students, they said that although they spoke with incorrect grammar, they could guess what the interlocutor wanted to communicate from vocabulary meaning. The quotes below illustrate the responses.

“Most of my students use present simple tense, and they also have incorrect sentence arrangement, when they had conversations with their classmate” (Instructor, interview)

“My students are non-native speakers; normally, they have grammatical errors.” (Instructor, interview)

The above indicated that all Thai and Cambodian students had the exact same problems for grammatical accuracy, particularly tenses and sentence arrangement. Thai students reported that some of their counterparts used incorrect grammar such as tense, while Cambodian students stated that their counterparts used incorrect grammar such as sentence arrangement, which made them confused and unable to negotiate meaning. The instructor also confirmed that these students had grammatical problems, when they communicated with their interlocutors. From this problem, it was seen that grammatical accuracy may be one of the problems in their communication.

In the third aspect of limited linguistic knowledge, the communication problem is concerned with students' inadequate vocabulary knowledge. All Thai students (n = 15) and Cambodian students (n = 15) reported that they encountered the problems in limited vocabulary knowledge. They could not remember or did not know enough the vocabulary to express their ideas with interlocutors when they did the pair work in the classroom. Hence, they sometimes kept quiet or sentence avoidance. The quotes below illustrate the responses.

“I cannot remember the vocabulary. I try to use body language or drawing pictures to communicate with my interlocutors” (Thai student, interview)

“I don't know the vocabulary to express my idea. I stop and keep quiet.” (Thai student, interview)

“When Cambodian friends used more difficult vocabulary, I did not understand them.” (Thai student, interview)

“I try to describe or give an example about the word when I cannot recall the vocabulary” (Cambodian student, interview)

“I try to use a synonym to help interlocutor understand what I said” (Cambodian student, interview)

“I wanted to explain some things; I did not know what the word is” (Cambodian student, interview)

The above quotes presented that the students attempted to solve their communication

problems of pair work when they could not remember or were faced with inadequate vocabulary by using non-verbal communication, synonyms, or giving examples to achieve their communicative goals. However, it was found that some of them kept quiet.

The instructors also reported that upon asking Thai and Cambodian students, all ($n = 30$) seemed to have limited vocabulary knowledge. It was observed that they did not know the vocabulary in English to express what they wanted to say. However, they tried to solve their needs by using body language, drawing pictures, or giving examples. The quote below illustrates the response.

“My students have an inadequate vocabulary. It is one of the problems that occurred in their communication. Cambodian students attempt to use a synonym, while Thai students try to use body language.” (Instructor, interview) In the interviews, it was found that Thai students and Cambodian students faced a limited vocabulary to negotiate meaning. Since they study English as a foreign language, so their conversation seemed to be not smooth. However, they attempted to maintain the conversation to achieve communication.

It can be concluded that both Thai students and Cambodian students faced communication problems, in which communication failed. This study found three communication problems, the first aspect related with comprehension skills, the second aspect was grammatical accuracy, and the third aspect was inadequate vocabulary.

2. Sociocultural Bias

The data from the interview revealed that culture and mindset affected communication between Thai students and Cambodian students in the classroom. It was found that Thai and Cambodian students did not understand each other because of their cultural differences, forming socio-cultural biases. They also expected their interlocutors to have native-like English accents, so they developed socio-cultural biases against each other when using English with localized accents.

For the cultural aspect, since Thai and Cambodian students had different cultural backgrounds, the ways they communicated and delivered their messages were still rooted in their cultural beliefs and their first language repertoire. Therefore, the intended messages could be interpreted differently according to their sociocultural backgrounds. For example, during class time, Thai students and Cambodian students play charades in pairs. The direction of the game was guessing the meaning of a word. A Cambodian student received the word metal basin. He hinted to Thai students that it was a vehicle used to transport in the lake or the river. That student could not guess this word until the time was up. The Cambodian student told his partner that the answer was a metal basin. The Thai students were surprised to learn that metal basins were used as transportation. That student said that water transportation should be only ship or raft. Thai students also

stated that the basin is only used to contain something such as water to wash the clothes in Thai culture. The Cambodian student ensured that children used metal basins as boats to go to nearby places in his country. It can be concluded that the problems occurred because of different cultural backgrounds. The ways they communicated and delivered their messages was still rooted from their cultural beliefs and first language repertoires. Therefore, their detail of messages could be interpreted as having many different meanings according to interlocutors' backgrounds. Leung et hui (2013) state that an individual would deliberately select a typical message to communicate with a member of a certain culture by applying meta-knowledge of the culture. Therefore, unsuccessful cross-cultural communications may arise not only from the lack of motivation to take the perspective of individuals in a foreign culture, but also from inaccurate meta-knowledge of the foreign culture. Misunderstanding is possible when people from different backgrounds are involved in an intercultural communication without shared cultural schemas. Coming from different cultural backgrounds, individuals tend to behave in a way that is appropriate to their own cultural norms. Therefore, a successful ELF speaker has to adopt new competence and strategies to achieve their communicative goals. Moreover, the students should be aware about cross-cultural understandings in English language learning, this study examined ELF speakers' use of strategies in cross-cultural communication in which English is being used

as a Lingua Franca. Intercultural strategies are essential aspects of English language learning in the ELF context since learners are not only encouraged to maintain their native identities but also to understand various cultures of English-speaking people, which are not restricted to the native speakers' cultures (Suwannasom, 2019). Communication strategies are recommended to help negotiate meaning (Dörnyei & Kormos, 1998) such as clarification requests fng clarifying unclear points or confirmation checks for checking the corrected understanding.

Another aspect of the cultural bias was accent. Thai students expected their interlocutors to have native-like English pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Similarly, Cambodian students also expected Thai students to have accents similar to native English speakers. They reported that they were unable to understand their interlocutors' accents. Some Thai students said that their interlocutors' accent was tough to understand. Thais reported that Cambodian students spoke with one tone. Moreover, Thais felt that Cambodian students pronounce English with L1 interference, leading to confusion.

On the other hand, the needs of Thai students reported by Cambodian students that the final sounds of the words were not clear enough. They also said that some Thai friends lack the confidence to pronounce the words, leading to misunderstanding. Moreover, Cambodian students revealed that the critical problem of Thai students was that

Thai students use slang or translate word by word, which they do not understand and cannot guess the meaning. For example, a Thai student said, 'I eat star egg (fried egg) as breakfast.' In addition, Cambodian students stated that some Thai interlocutors stressed the words incorrectly, which may result in misunderstanding by the listeners. Since the culture was different, speakers did not understand the delivery meaning. Both Thai students and Cambodian students were unaware of the appropriate language regarding the intrinsic importance of words and signs. Speakers usually encountered intercultural communicative needs when translating from one language to another without changing the original purpose or misusing the language genre, such as using slang words in a formal situation or the classroom with an ELF interlocutor. According to these problems, it can be concluded that Thai students reported that their interlocutors' accent was very difficult to understand, and Cambodian students spoke with one tone. While Cambodian students stated that some of Thai interlocutors stressed incorrectly. This point made them confused about interpreting the meaning, which led to perception of incorrect meaning and failure in communication. ELF users or non-native speakers should be allowed to speak their own 'accented' English as an expression of their ethnic distinctiveness since accent is a dominant social marker for individuals. Therefore, they needed not to be expected to follow native norms as long as their communicative goals are achieved (Jenkins

2007; Kirkpatrick 2010; Seidlhofer 2005). As Walker (2001) proposed, since accent is in relation to several different issues ranging from sociopolitical power to a sense of identity felt by individuals, non-native speakers should be given the choice to retain their identities.

For the mindset aspect, the data indicated that both Thai and Cambodian students expected the interlocutors to have native-like proficiency. Thai and Cambodian students had studied English as a foreign language in the past. It could not be denied that standard norm plays a vital role for them. They learned to speak or act like native performance and proficiency. It was not surprising that the students' mindset related to the native norm, and they expected native-like proficiency from the interlocutors. The quotes below illustrate the responses.

"I think my interlocutors have his Khmer accent in their pronunciation" (Thai student, interview)

"My Thai interlocutor does not have a good accent. It is tough to interpret the meaning" (Cambodian student, interview)

The above quotes showed that standard norms are still rooted in students' mindsets. Moreover, it was found that the norm affected their language use. It can be concluded that both Thai students and Cambodian students expect that the interlocutor should have native-like proficiency. Generally, both Thai students and Cambodian students are non-native English speakers. They could not perform as native-like.

According to the students' mindset. It shows that norms still affect to their language use. Canagarajah (200st in contrast to this, believed that the students need to change their attitude to the term of ELF that norm is not necessary. The ELF potential is that they can negotiate meaning with interlocutors or reach their communication purposes. Sifakis (2014) claims for changing students' mindset that teachers need to replace a "normative mindset" with an understanding that norms are "continually shifting and changing" (Seidlhofer, 2 p., pp. 33–34). According to Canagarajah (2005) and Sifakis (2014), ELF focused on negotiation of meaning and the diversity of English was accepted. Moreover, Dang (2016) states that communication between culture is likely to be less effective because of the violation of cultural norms; in fact, people are unlikely to know if they are expected to follow others' cultural norms or behave according to their regular culture.

Discussion

This study investigated common communication ne be encountered in an ELF academic context. This study paid more attention to learners' real needs. Before designing the training instruction, it is necessary to consider learners' since it can help researchers solve the real communicative needs and select appropriate communication strategies for each context. The study's findings discovered two main themes of communication needs of Thai and Cambodian studets; limited linguistic requirements and

sociocultural bias. This study investigated in the ELF context, the diversity of English was accepted, and negotiation of meaning was more focused than norms. Therefore, this study emphasized only limited linguistic needs. According to the study's findings, three aspects of communication needs were foun. -: 1) listening comprehension, 2) grammatical errors, and 3) inadequate vocabulary. The first aspect involve to listening comprehension. Both Thai students and Cambodian students lacked comprehension skills in order to help them for negotiating meaning to interlocutors. To solve this problem and assist ELF students to reach their communicative goals, Kohn (2020) recommends that students should practice comprehension skills with special attention to unfamiliar pronunciation and sentence structures, unclear utterance meanings, or weak discourse coherence. Moreover, Dornyei and Scott (1995) proposed that confirmation checks strategy or clarification requests strategy can assist students to achieve the communication goals. They define comprehension check as being that the learners can use this strategy for asking questions to check if they understand the message correctly. Long (1983a) claimed that confirmation check strategies provide learners with opportunities to resolve their comprehension difficulties and therefore make negotiation of meaning possible. Another strategy is clarification requests. Dornyei and Scott (1995) define this strategy as the learner can use it when he/she wants to request the explanation

of unfamiliar meaning structures. Lloyd (1991) cited in Kasper and Kellerman (1997) claimed that clarification requests can also help learners develop their ability as independent communicators. As mentioned above, it could be concluded that both Thai and Cambodian students need to enhance confirmation checks and clarification requests, which could assist in solving this problem and help students to reach their communicative goals. The second aspect related to grammatical error. Since, Thai and Cambodian students are not native speakers. They may have problems with grammatical errors. However, this study focused on the ELF situation, which emphasizes negotiating meaning, rather than form (Cogo & Dewey, 2006). Similarly, Seidlhofer (2001) proposed that the main feature of ELF is to promote communication in an international setting among non-native speakers of different mother tongues. It does not necessarily mean acquiring a native-like proficiency, which focuses on correct form. Moreover, Cogo and Dewey (2006) also stated that grammar patterns do not affect intelligibility and can instead increase clarity of meaning. Hence, this aspect may need to be needed for ELF interactants. The third aspect involved the inadequate vocabulary. From this problem Dornyei and Kormos (1998) recommended that ELF interactants should use communication strategies to avoid lexical problems in conversation. These strategies are employed when resource deficits hinder the planning and encoding of the preverbal plan. This means that learners needed to resort to these

strategies because of their limited command or lack of linguistic resources in the L2 such as circumlocution (Exemplifying, illustrating, or describing the properties of the target object or action) and approximation to Canagarajah (2005). Stated that ELF interactants may be faced with negotiation problems. Therefore, communication strategies the significant devices to help them to reach their communicative goal. Since, it can assist ELF speakers to understand each other in negotiating meaning. ELF interactants need to learn communication strategies. In this study, communication strategies (circumlocution, approximation, confirmation checks and comprehension checks) were needed to solve the communication problems. However, this current study focused on ELF situation, which emphasizes negotiating meaning rather than form. Hence, grammatical accuracy may not have received much attention. The findings of this study were similar to Wiriyajitra (2002). She states that ELF students had experienced difficulties in limited linguistic needs. Moreover, Boonkit (2010) investigated the development and enhancement of speaking skills for non-native English speakers; the findings revealed that the primary needs among non-native speaking English were pronunciation and grammatical errors. Khamkeaw (2009) conducted a study to explore the markets in English listening and speaking skills of Thai Metropolitan Police officers. He also reported that the main problem of non-native speakers was listening failure and not understanding the various tourist accents. Moreover, Thai

Metropolitan Police officers cannot perform essential expressions because they have limited vocabulary. However, the previous studies were conducted in EFL and ELF workplace contexts. This study emphasised on the academic context, which is quite limited.

In addition, this study presented communication strategies for student-student communication (Thai students and Cambodian students) in the ELF context, which is quite limited in Thailand. The above discussion showed that the students lacked communication skills such as listening comprehension skills and inadequate vocabulary needs. Communication strategies are the necessities that learners have to know to function effectively in communication since they can help students fulfill their knowledge and overcome language difficulties. Dornyei (1995) proposes that the cause of communication problems comes from the students. They do not know how to manage the difficulties when facing a communication situation. To assist non-native speakers in achieving mutual understanding, Canale (1983) states that teaching

communication strategies should help students solve some of their problems in English and provide them with the necessary tools for coping with complex linguistic difficulties situations.

Conclusion

The findings from this study present ELF communication needs in an academic context, which students and Cambodian students reported. It was found that the students reported two primary communication needs; limited linguistic knowledge and sociocultural linguistic, it consisted of three requirements 1) listening comprehension, 2) grammatical errors, and 3) inadequate vocabulary. The sociocultural bias aspect consisted of two needs; cultural differences and mindset. It was clear that the students did not have communication strategies to engage and carry on a conversation in the ELF academic context. Moreover, communication strategies were suggested for maintaining and solving communication needs or problems.

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