

# A Qualitative Study of Thai University Students' Reliance on Verbal Communication Strategies in Intercultural English Interactions

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study, conducted at an international university in Thailand, investigates the intercultural communication strategies Thai students use when interacting in English with foreign visitors. In such encounters, students informally act as cultural representatives, making effective communication central to successful cross-cultural exchange. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with ten Thai undergraduates who regularly interact with international visitors, the study explores how students manage communication difficulties and negotiate meaning. The findings show a strong preference for verbal strategies, such as message reduction, message replacement, and paraphrasing, while non-verbal (e.g., gestures, facial expressions) and interactive strategies (e.g., comprehension checks, direct appeals for help) are used less consistently and often less consciously. Rather than claiming to identify a wholly new pattern, the study extends existing work on communication strategies in EFL contexts by providing context-specific insight into how Thai students understand, select, and rationalise their strategy use in real intercultural encounters. The small sample size and single institutional setting limit the generalizability of the findings; however, the study highlights a need for EFL pedagogy in Thailand to systematically integrate training in non-verbal and interactive strategies as part of a more holistic approach to intercultural communicative competence.

**KEYWORDS:** Intercultural communication; Intercultural communication strategies; Intercultural University; Thai students

## INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalised world, the ability to communicate effectively across diverse cultural and linguistic boundaries has become a fundamental skill, particularly in higher education and international exchange (Griffith et al., 2016). For Thailand, a nation heavily reliant on tourism and international trade, English serves as the primary *lingua franca*, making young people's proficiency in intercultural communication a matter of national significance (Sangnark, 2025). University students in Thailand frequently engage with a steady stream of foreign visitors, from exchange students and international faculty to tourists and business delegates (Theerasak & Pookkaman, 2023). In these interactions, Thai students are not merely practising a second language; they are acting as cultural representatives, where the success of the exchange profoundly influences international perceptions and relationships. This

context highlights the critical need for Thai English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction to extend beyond purely linguistic competence and embrace a holistic Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) (Byram, 1997).

## The Challenge of Communication Strategies in the Thai Context

Despite decades of compulsory English education, Thai students often face considerable challenges in spontaneous, real-world English interaction. A key issue lies in the traditional pedagogical focus, which has historically prioritised reading, writing, and grammatical accuracy over oral fluency and strategic interaction (Hussanee & Ismiatun, 2023). When faced with communication breakdowns or challenges, such as unfamiliar accents or cultural misunderstandings, successful communication relies heavily on the strategic deployment of communication strategies—conscious or unconscious attempts to bridge the gap

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between their linguistic knowledge and the demands of the situation (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). Research into this area is vital for bridging the gap between classroom theory and practical application.

A recent qualitative study at an International University in Thailand investigated the intercultural communication strategies Thai students used during English interactions with foreign visitors. Using in-depth interviews with ten participants, the research provided crucial insight into the students' real-time negotiation of meaning. The findings indicated a clear preference among the students for verbal strategies, such as rephrasing, message replacement, or simple confirmation, to resolve communicative issues (Syaharani, 2025). Conversely, the study found significantly less reliance on non-verbal strategies (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, or silence) and interactive tactics (e.g., actively requesting clarification or using comprehension checks) than on verbal means. This is particularly salient given that Thai culture is often categorised as a high-context culture where non-verbal cues carry considerable meaning, suggesting that the students' communication might be less effective than intended in a cross-cultural setting (Muir et al., 2018).

### **Research Gap**

This observed imbalance, the overt prioritisation of verbal over non-verbal and interactive strategies, suggests that while students possess the linguistic tools to say something, they may lack the strategic dexterity to manage the full, complex dynamic of an intercultural dialogue. This presents a critical gap: by neglecting non-verbal and interactive strategies, students may miss opportunities to clarify their message and confirm the listener's understanding, reducing the holistic effectiveness of communication and potentially leading to misunderstandings despite verbal accuracy. Therefore, this study calls on educators to integrate specific training in non-verbal and interactive strategies into the EFL curriculum to better equip future Thai graduates for their roles as global citizens and cultural ambassadors.

### **Research Objectives**

The study aims to investigate the intercultural communication strategies employed by Thai students when interacting in English with foreign visitors, a context where students effectively serve as cultural representatives.

### **THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The analysis of intercultural communication strategies (ICSs) among Thai students in this study

was guided by the key theoretical model in this study. In Thailand, Thai student often faces significant obstacles when communicating with international visitors due to language limitations, cultural differences, and social (pragmatic) challenges. To bridge these divides and improve engagement, implementing Intercultural Communication Strategies (ICS) is necessary. Key researchers laid the academic foundation for ICS development. Tarone (1980) defined these strategies as collaborative, problem-solving interactions, while Faerch and Kasper (1983) emphasized their conscious, deliberate application to overcome communication breakdowns, particularly in cross-cultural settings.

Dörnyei and Scott's (1997) useful, comprehensive framework categorises ICS into verbal and non-verbal approaches. This dual focus is vital for Thai students because their interactions rely heavily on both spoken English and specific non-verbal cues (such as cultural gestures, posture, and eye contact) that carry profound meaning in religious contexts but can be easily misinterpreted by foreigners (Chuanchaisit & Prapphal, 2009). Therefore, mastering both verbal and non-verbal strategies is essential for Thai students to effectively share religious teachings with visitors from diverse backgrounds.

In conclusion, mastering ICS, drawing on the foundational work of scholars like Tarone, Faerch and Kasper, and Dörnyei and Scott, is crucial for enabling Buddhist monks to overcome linguistic and cultural hurdles, effectively communicate religious values globally, and build meaningful relationships with international guests.

### **Types of IC strategies**

The challenges Thai students face in communicating with foreign visitors, including linguistic limitations, cultural disparities, and practical difficulties, require effective use of Intercultural Communication Strategies (ICS). These strategies, widely studied in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, provide a systematic way to overcome misunderstandings and facilitate clear communication across diverse backgrounds.

The theoretical foundation for ICS stems from seminal works in the field: Tarone (1980) first defined these strategies as interactive, problem-solving efforts aimed at cooperatively bridging gaps in meaning. Faerch and Kasper (1983) refined this view, emphasising the conscious and deliberate nature of ICS as purposeful actions speakers use to achieve specific communication goals when faced with a

challenge. The most comprehensive framework, provided by Dörnyei and Scott (1997), categorises these crucial tactics into verbal (like rephrasing or using synonyms), non-verbal (including gestures or eye contact), and interactive (such as asking for clarification or checking for comprehension) approaches, underscoring that effective cross-cultural communication is a complex, multifaceted act involving far more than just language. Therefore, for Thai students, mastering this full range of strategies is critical not only for basic interaction but also for accurately conveying the nuances of religions and rituals to a global audience.

As detailed in Table 1, Thai students utilise a range of verbal strategies to effectively bridge linguistic divides when explaining complex concepts to foreign listeners. To navigate vocabulary limits, they may resort to message abandonment, leaving a discussion unfinished when terms prove too

complex, or message reduction, simplifying intricate ideas or substituting them with easier, related phrases, such as replacing "enlightenment" with "inner peace." They also employ message replacement, substituting complicated terms (e.g., "karma") with simpler phrases ("actions and consequences"), and approximation, using a familiar word like "peace" for a more complex idea. Furthermore, techniques like circumlocution and paraphrase help them describe unknown terms (explaining "monastic discipline" as "the rules they follow every day"), while all-purpose words (like "thing" or "place") simplify discussion of specific objects or locations. Finally, Thai students creatively adapt language through word coinage (such as inventing "meditator") and foreignising (adjusting terms from Thai or Pali for English grammar), ensuring their essential ideas remain accessible and comprehensible.

**Table 1:** Types of Intercultural Communication Strategies, adapted from Dornyei and Scott (1997)

| Strategy Type         | Sub-Strategy                          | Description                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Verbal Strategies     | Message reduction                     | Message reduction is a communication strategy involving simplifying or abandoning an intended message due to difficulty.                                        |
|                       | Code Switching                        | Code-switching is the practice of alternating between two or more languages, dialects, or language varieties within a single conversation, sentence, or phrase. |
|                       | Literal Translation                   | Literal translation is a speaker's strategy of directly transferring L1 phrases into L2, often causing unnatural speech.                                        |
|                       | Use of all-purpose Words              | All-purpose words (e.g., stuff, thing, really) are vague and can weaken the clarity of writing.                                                                 |
|                       | Approximation                         | When you don't know the exact word, use a similar or more general term instead.                                                                                 |
|                       | Circumlocution/ Paraphrase            | When you don't know the exact term for a concept, you can still communicate it effectively by explaining what it is, what it does, or how it works              |
|                       | Message replacement                   | Simplify the message by replacing it with a clearer, easier version.                                                                                            |
|                       | Message Abandonment                   | Stopping a message because of difficulty finding the right words.                                                                                               |
|                       | Word coinage / Foreignising           | Borrowing or adapting a word using rules from a different language.                                                                                             |
|                       | Self-Rephrasing / Self-Repair         | Using a word that sounds similar to the correct one when you are unsure of its exact form                                                                       |
|                       | Asking for Repetition / Clarification | Ask the other person to repeat or clarify what they said.                                                                                                       |
| Non-Verbal Strategies | Over-Explicitness                     | Using extra words (talking around the point) to make up for language trouble.                                                                                   |
|                       | Use of Fillers / Self-Repetition      | Using pauses (like "um") or repeating words to gain time and keep the conversation going.                                                                       |
|                       | Mumbling / Omission                   | If you don't know the word, mumble or just leave it out.                                                                                                        |
|                       | Mime (Non-Verbal Strategies)          | Using body language, gestures, or facial expressions to communicate the meaning.                                                                                |
|                       | Use of Similar Sounding Words         | Using a word that sounds right even if it might be incorrect.                                                                                                   |

| Strategy Type          | Sub-Strategy                              | Description                                                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interactive Strategies | Interpretive Summary/ Comprehension Check | Summarising or checking back to confirm the conversation was understood.  |
|                        | Direct Appeal for Help                    | Directly asking the other person for help or to explain something.        |
|                        | Own-Accuracy Check                        | Checking or repeating your own speech to ensure it was correct and clear. |
|                        | Guessing / Expressing Non-Understanding   | Guessing the meaning or openly saying you didn't understand.              |

In addition to verbal strategies, Thai students rely on crucial non-verbal and conversational manoeuvres to support communication and overcome both linguistic and cultural challenges. Mime is a key technique, using gestures, facial expressions, and body language to convey meaning when words are insufficient, which is highly effective for explaining physical actions like meditation postures, as non-verbal cues support second-language communication (Gregersen et al., 2014). Students also use tactics to manage conversational flow: they use fillers or self-repetition to buy time while searching for appropriate words, or resort to mumbling or omission to skip difficult terminology while continuing the dialogue. Over-explicitness, providing excessively detailed explanations, is utilised to ensure complex doctrines are fully grasped, aligning with the need to tailor communication to the listener's level (Zhu, 2020). Finally, the accidental use of similar-sounding words may occur when vocabulary is lacking, a risk being taken to sustain the conversation despite the possibility of confusion.

Lastly, Thai students utilise interactive strategies to enhance engagement and ensure mutual understanding when communicating with foreign listeners. These tactics actively involve the listener in the conversation, starting with a direct appeal for help where the student explicitly asks for assistance with specific vocabulary or concepts (e.g., "What's the word for...?"), a method crucial for maintaining effective intercultural communication (Gass and Varonis, 1991). Students may also use guessing or expressing non-understanding (e.g., asking, "So, 'suffering' means life's challenges?") to confirm their grasp of the visitor's message or openly admit confusion to prompt further clarification. Additionally, they perform interpretive summary and comprehension checks by summarising the visitor's statements to ensure alignment, which is vital for confirming understanding when language proficiency is unequal (Swain, 2000). Finally, own-accuracy checks involve the student verifying the clarity and correctness of their own language (e.g., asking, "Did I

say 'meditation' correctly?"), all of which are essential steps to avoid miscommunication, especially when discussing nuanced ideas.

In conclusion, ICS are essential for Thai students to navigate the linguistic, cultural, and practical challenges they encounter when interacting with foreign visitors. These strategies, broadly classified into verbal, non-verbal, and interactive categories, enable students to dynamically adapt to varying communicative contexts. Verbal approaches, such as message abandonment, reduction, and replacement, serve to simplify complex concepts. Meanwhile, non-verbal techniques, including mime and fillers, mitigate cultural misunderstandings and regulate conversational flow. Furthermore, interactive strategies, such as requesting clarification and verifying mutual understanding, actively facilitate accurate dialogue. Integrating this repertoire of strategies into educational training will significantly enhance Thai students' intercultural communicative competence, ensuring their discourse resonates effectively with a global audience.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore Thai students' self-reported communication strategies in intercultural encounters. Qualitative methods are particularly suited to examining how participants interpret and make sense of their own communicative behaviour (Aspers & Corte, 2019) and to capturing the nuances of strategy use that may not be easily quantifiable. The study was conducted at an international university in Thailand that hosts a substantial population of foreign students and visiting scholars. This setting provides frequent opportunities for informal intercultural interactions in English, both on campus and in nearby tourist and community spaces.

Ten Thai undergraduate students (6 female, 4 male), aged between 19 and 23, participated in the study. All were enrolled in degree programs that required regular use of English (e.g., international programs or English-medium courses) and self-reported frequent

interactions with foreign visitors, exchange students, or international faculty. Participants were recruited through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling, with the inclusion criteria being (a) Thai nationality, (b) regular engagement in English interactions with foreigners, and (c) willingness to reflect on their experiences.

To gather a comprehensive, multi-dimensional view of the students' interactions, the researchers primarily employed qualitative data collection through semi-structured interviews. This involved interviewing 10 Thai students who were actively engaged in IC. This in-depth, exploratory method yielded rich and detailed information about the students' experiences, including the challenges they faced and the strategies they used to cope, such as cultural sensitivity and adaptation (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The flexible nature of the semi-structured format allowed the researchers to investigate emerging topics and establish rapport with participants.

### Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in either English or Thai, depending on participant preference, with clarifying questions posed to ensure depth and accuracy of responses. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes and focused on:

- Participants' typical interactions with foreign visitors (contexts, frequency, topics).
- Instances of communication difficulty (e.g., vocabulary gaps, misunderstandings, cultural differences).
- Strategies used to manage these difficulties, including specific examples.
- Participants' own perceptions of effective and less effective strategies.

Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and subsequently transcribed. Where interviews were conducted in Thai, the relevant excerpts on strategy use were translated into English for analysis, with attention to preserving the pragmatic meaning of students' descriptions.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The interview transcripts were subjected to a thematic analysis informed by Dörnyei and Scott's (1997) framework. The analysis involved several stages:

- **Initial coding:** The first round of coding focused on instances where students explicitly described how they handled communication problems. These segments were coded using provisional labels drawn from the strategy taxonomy (e.g.,

*message reduction, paraphrase, gesture, clarification request*).

- **Refinement of codes:** Codes were iteratively refined to ensure conceptual clarity and alignment with the original framework, while also allowing for context-specific nuances (e.g., the use of translation apps was treated as a form of visual/technological aid supporting verbal strategies).
- **Theme development:** Codes were then grouped into broader themes capturing patterns in strategy use, such as (a) preference for simplification and rephrasing, (b) limited but functional use of non-verbal resources, and (c) cautious approach to interactive strategies.
- **Cross-case comparison:** Patterns were compared across participants to identify convergences and divergences in strategy use and in the rationales students provided for their choices.

Although the study focuses primarily on qualitative interpretation, basic counts (e.g., how many participants reported using a particular type of strategy) were used descriptively to indicate relative prominence. Claims about frequency are therefore indicative rather than statistically generalizable.

### RESEARCH RESULTS

The analysis revealed that Thai students draw on a range of verbal, non-verbal, and interactive strategies when communicating with foreign visitors in English. However, there was a clear pattern: verbal strategies were most salient in students' accounts, while non-verbal and interactive strategies were described as secondary or supportive.

#### Reliance on Verbal Strategies

Across interviews, participants frequently reported simplifying vocabulary, replacing difficult words with easier ones, and paraphrasing complex ideas. These strategies align with message reduction, message replacement, approximation and circumlocution/paraphrase in Dörnyei and Scott's (1997) taxonomy.

- Student 9: "When I talk about something difficult, I try to change to easy words. I don't use the exact academic word, but something simpler so they can understand."
- Student 6: "If I cannot remember one word, I just choose another word that is close in meaning. It's easier than stopping or checking a dictionary all the time."
- Student 10: "Sometimes the idea is long and complicated, so I break it into short sentences. I

explain in simple steps instead of using one difficult sentence.”

These examples illustrate how students actively reshape their messages to fit what they perceive as the interlocutor’s level of English. For many participants, success was equated primarily with being able to “say it in English,” even if this meant sacrificing precision for simplicity. Verbal strategies were thus central to their sense of communicative competence.

### **Supportive Use of Non-verbal Strategies**

Students also described using non-verbal resources, particularly when verbal explanation reached its limits. They mentioned gestures, facial expressions, pointing, and the use of objects or phone screens as ways to reinforce or clarify meaning.

- Student 1: “If they still don’t understand my words, I use my hands, show with my body, or point to something. It helps them to see what I mean.”
- Student 2: “Sometimes I show pictures on my phone or point to the place on the map. It’s easier than explaining only by speaking.”
- Student 3: “When I really don’t know how to say the word, I use a translator app and then show the word or picture to them. Body language and the app together make it clearer.”

While these strategies were acknowledged as useful, they were generally described as backup options rather than central, planned components of communication. Students tended to frame non-verbal behaviour as something they “naturally” do when words fail, rather than as a deliberate aspect of intercultural strategy use.

### **Cautious Engagement with Interactive Strategies**

Interactive strategies, such as asking for clarification, checking comprehension, or directly appealing for help, were present but more restricted. Several students described asking follow-up questions or checking whether their interlocutor understood, but they sometimes hesitated to do so too explicitly.

- Student 4: “If I am not sure I understand them, I ask some small questions, like asking them to explain more. It helps me check if I really get the meaning.”
- Student 5: “Sometimes I repeat my sentence or ask, ‘Is it correct?’ because I want to know if my English is okay. But I don’t want to do this too often, or they may think my English is poor.”

These comments suggest that students recognise the value of interactive strategies for ensuring mutual

understanding, yet they balance this against concerns about face and perceived proficiency. Expressing non-understanding directly was described as potentially embarrassing, especially with more proficient or higher-status interlocutors (e.g., teachers, older foreigners).

### **Summary of Strategy Patterns**

Overall, the findings indicate that:

- Verbal strategies (particularly simplification, message replacement and paraphrasing) are highly salient and consciously used by most participants.
- Non-verbal strategies (gestures, pointing, visual aids, translation apps) are used as complementary tools, particularly when verbal explanation is insufficient, but are rarely framed as intentional “strategies.”
- Interactive strategies (e.g., comprehension checks, clarification requests, direct appeals for help) are recognised as useful yet are employed cautiously, often moderated by concerns about politeness and self-presentation.

These patterns resonate with previous research on Thai learners’ emphasis on linguistic expression and face-saving communicative behaviour, while also highlighting the particular ways in which students in this international university context navigate these tensions.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Interpreting the Predominance of Verbal Strategies**

The strong emphasis on verbal strategies in students’ accounts is consistent with SLA research highlighting approximation, paraphrase, and message reduction as central tools for managing lexical gaps (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997). In the Thai context, this emphasis can also be linked to the educational culture, where “good English” is often associated with grammatical correctness and lexical accuracy (Padermprach, 2017; Hussanee & Ismiatun, 2023).

Students in this study appeared to internalise a view of successful communication as producing fluent, comprehensible English output. Consequently, their strategic focus lies primarily in reshaping what they say, rather than in actively managing the interaction (through co-constructed checks and clarification) or systematically exploiting non-verbal resources. This helps explain why verbal strategies are consciously foregrounded, whereas non-verbal and interactive strategies are used more tentatively or taken for granted.

## **Underuse and Under-Acknowledgement of Non-verbal and Interactive Strategies**

The relatively limited and less self-conscious use of non-verbal and interactive strategies is notable in a context often characterised as high-context and relationally oriented (Muir et al., 2018). One possible explanation is that students implicitly separate “speaking English” from the broader communicative repertoire they employ in Thai. In English, they may feel pressure to conform to perceived norms of explicit verbal expression, while seeing gestures, facial expressions, and direct clarification requests as peripheral or even as signs of inadequacy.

At the same time, when students do use gestures or translation apps, they perceive clear benefits in terms of intelligibility and shared understanding. This suggests not an absolute absence of non-verbal and interactive strategies, but rather a lack of explicit recognition and pedagogical reinforcement of these strategies as legitimate components of intercultural communicative competence.

## **Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications**

The findings align with prior work that emphasises the importance of strategic competence and interactional management in intercultural settings (Byram, 1997; Griffith et al., 2016; Chouinard & Cousins, 2009). This study adds a context-specific perspective by illustrating how Thai university students, in an international campus environment, selectively draw on the available strategy repertoire.

Theoretically, the study supports the argument that communication strategies cannot be understood purely as cognitive problem-solving devices; they are also shaped by cultural norms, face concerns and local definitions of what counts as “good communication”. Students’ cautious use of interactive strategies underscores the need to interpret strategy choice within broader sociocultural and institutional contexts.

Pedagogically, the results suggest that Thai EFL curricula, particularly in universities with strong international engagement, would benefit from:

- Explicit strategy instruction that includes not only verbal tactics (e.g., paraphrasing, approximation) but also non-verbal and interactive strategies, framed as legitimate and valuable rather than as last-resort measures.
- Classroom activities (e.g., role-plays, simulations, intercultural projects) that encourage students to practice clarification requests, comprehension checks, and the

strategic use of gesture and visual aids in low-stakes environments.

- Reflection tasks that prompt learners to analyse real intercultural encounters, identify strategies they used or avoided, and consider how alternative strategy choices might have affected the interaction.

## **Limitations**

The study’s small and institutionally bounded sample limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised to all Thai university students. Furthermore, reliance on self-reported data means that some strategies may be under- or over-represented, and actual behaviour in real-time intercultural interactions might be more complex than reported. Future research could:

- Include larger and more diverse samples from different regions of Thailand (e.g., Northeastern and Southern provinces) where local cultural and linguistic dynamics differ.
- Combine interview data with classroom or naturalistic observations, or with audio/video recordings of real or simulated interactions, to capture strategy use as it unfolds.
- Explore in more depth how factors such as proficiency level, digital literacy, and prior international experience shape students’ strategy repertoires and comfort with non-verbal and interactive tactics.

Such work would help build a more comprehensive picture of Thai students’ intercultural communication strategies across varied educational and regional contexts.

## **CONCLUSION**

This qualitative study examined the communication strategies used by Thai university students when interacting in English with foreign visitors at an international university in Thailand. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with ten students, the study found that participants relied primarily on verbal strategies, such as simplification, message replacement, and paraphrasing, to manage communication difficulties. Non-verbal strategies (e.g., gesture, pointing, visual aids) and interactive strategies (e.g., clarification requests, comprehension checks) were present but generally used in a more limited and less deliberate way.

These patterns suggest that, while Thai students possess a diverse repertoire of potential strategies, their strategic behaviour is strongly shaped by educational experiences that foreground linguistic

accuracy and by cultural norms related to face and politeness. As a result, they may underexploit the full range of resources available to them for effective intercultural communication.

Within the limitations of its small sample and single-site design, the study underscores the importance of integrating strategy training, especially in non-verbal and interactive dimensions, into Thai EFL curricula. By helping students to recognise, value and practise a broader set of communication strategies, educators can better support the development of intercultural communicative competence in ways that align with the realities of Thailand's increasingly internationalised educational and social landscape.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Integrate strategy-focused training into EFL curricula:** University programmes should explicitly incorporate communication strategy instruction that includes verbal, non-verbal and interactive strategies, with a particular emphasis on their role in intercultural encounters.
- **Emphasise experiential learning and intercultural practice:** Role-plays, conversation clubs, and exchange programmes can provide structured opportunities for students to practice clarification requests, comprehension checks, and the strategic use of gesture and visual aids.
- **Include digital tools and digital literacy:** Translation apps and online resources can support communication if students are trained to use them critically and effectively. Integrate digital literacy components into language courses so technology enhances, rather than replaces, communicative engagement.
- **Develop assessment frameworks that value strategic competence:** Formal assessments should not only test grammar and vocabulary but also recognise students' ability to manage breakdowns, negotiate meaning, and draw on multiple modes of communication.

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