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ABANDONMENT AMONG TESL TRAINEES IN SABAH**

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**Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers, Vol.16 (6)**

**<https://jett.labosfor.com/>**

**Date of reception: 12 Sep 2024**

**Date of revision: 05 Oct 2025**

**Date of Publication: 26 Oct 2025**

**S Dr. Megawati Soekarno, Chong Shin Yue (2025). ACHIEVING CEFR  
COMPETENCY BY REDUCING MESSAGE ABANDONMENT AMONG TESL  
TRAINEES IN SABAH. *Journal for Educators, Teachers and Trainers*, Vol.16 (6) 261-278**



## **ACHIEVING CEFR COMPETENCY BY REDUCING MESSAGE ABANDONMENT AMONG TESL TRAINEES IN SABAH**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Soft skills represent a very subjective business item that has been utilised as a strategic competence in the form of communication strategy. Communication strategies involve the vast range of linguistic and paralinguistic techniques such as the use of both achievement and reduction strategies. Despite being highly human based, the use of communication strategies needs to be learned and developed. Although one of the primary factors of communication strategy is the independence from linguistic rules, a rampant use of strategies such as topic fronting and message abandonment strategy among ESL learners might affect them adversely especially in academic discourse. This study looked into this strategy among the TESL trainees from Universiti Malaysia Sabah and how this affected their microteaching. It further analysed the relationship of the microteaching practice with the attainment of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in rural classrooms taught by the TESL trainees during their practicum. This study used descriptive statistics analysis and a one-sample t-test to determine if TESL trainees' microteaching performance has a statistically significant impact on their practicum performance. The t-value of 32.010 indicates that the sample mean (83.78) is significantly higher than the population mean (76.68). These results are validated with 5 themes obtained from an interview among 11 TESL trainees after the microteaching that revealed that they would use alternative communication strategies to replace message abandonment. This quantifies the improvement, showing that students who underwent microteaching performed significantly better during practicum observations.

**KEYWORDS:** communication strategies, message replacement, CEFR attainment in rural schools

## **Introduction**

Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) trainees in Malaysia need to conduct trainings in alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to ensure a quality education. TESL trainees should have a thorough understanding of the CEFR, which provides a framework for describing language ability and proficiency in various contexts. This necessitates the use of Communication Strategy Training with English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) content. EOP falls under English for Specific Purposes (ESP) whereas with most branches of TESOL and applied linguistics, ESP is often divided into various categories usually where the primary ones are English for Academic Purpose (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) (Dudley-Evans, 2001). The context of ESP often exists through the purposes or needs into EAP and EOP (Brown, 2016).

Attaining CEFR competency in rural areas in Sabah requires addressing several unique challenges faced by TESL trainees. One critical issue is message abandonment, which occurs when teachers fail to complete their communicative messages due to various factors such as lack of confidence, insufficient language skills, or inadequate teaching resources. In identifying the task difficulty for adult learners, other researchers also used interactive tasks such as group discussion (Zhu, Liao, & Cheong, 2019), and giving instructions (Ngang, et.al, 2015, Shakir, 2009, Tang & Tan, 2015) and exchanging opinions (Paramasivam, 2009). In the present study, the task difficulty was even higher because of the technical content in a specialised discipline (Khalip & Kee, 2023; Soekarno, Othman, Ab Aziz & Nik Mohamed, 2021; Soekarno & Ting, 2021).

Student-related challenges like low exposure to English as students in rural areas may have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, making it harder for them to practice and improve their language skills. Without regular exposure to English in everyday contexts, learners may struggle to develop the listening and speaking skills necessary for fluency (Wang & Liu, 2021). Significant variations in students' English proficiency levels can make it challenging for teachers to maintain a consistent level of instruction and prevent message abandonment and the use of topic fronting which was cited as a Malaysian communication strategy by Benson (1990). Without immersive English experiences, it is challenging for both teachers and students to practice and improve their language proficiency effectively (Khalip & Kee, 2023).

## **Research Objectives**

**RO1:** To investigate the impacts of TESL trainees' Microteaching performance on the attainment of CEFR in rural classrooms.

**RO2:** To examine the influence of message abandonment among TESL trainees during Microteaching on the attainment of CEFR in rural classrooms.

RO3: To overcome the use of message abandonment among TESL trainees during practicum to ensure the attainment of CEFR in rural classrooms.

## Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the impact of TESL trainees' microteaching performance on the attainment of CEFR in rural classrooms?

Research Question 2: How does the reduction of the use of message abandonment among TESL trainees during Microteaching influence the attainment of CEFR in rural classrooms?

Research Question 3: How to overcome the use of message abandonment among TESL trainees during practicum to ensure the attainment of CEFR in rural classrooms?

## Research Methods

### Participants

This study looked into participants representing one of the bigger states with a higher rural education in Malaysia. This population is represented by the TESL students from Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu. The number of participants chosen for the study was based on the suggestion provided by Morse (1994) of six respondents for qualitative studies. From this group 11 TESL trainees were selected to be interviewed through purposive sampling. The researcher has observed from her participation in the TESL programme that this group of participants would provide similar level of English proficiency as well as areas of specialization (Morgan, 1996) which is in linguistics and pedagogy for microteaching.

### Instruments

Microteaching sessions were observed in this study prior to the macroteaching. The 2 sessions focused on the set induction and closure contexts. These sessions were assessed against the CEFR C1 and C2 benchmarks. The set induction refers to the process of using interesting facts, an audio-visual stimulus or a thought-provoking statement in the initial part of teaching to engage learners (Narayanan, Shankar, & Ananthi, 2019). Based on their learners feedback, it could also serve as a memory aid and ease the learning experience. A very significant part of the microteaching also involves reflection among the participants. Reflection is a staple of contemporary writing pedagogy and writing assessment (Morgan, 1996; Ratto Parks, 2023).

The primary instrument is a microteaching that focused on the reflection of the set induction and closure. The most recent microteachings were conducted in January 2025.

|                                                                                                                                                                                            |          |             |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| <b>INSTRUCTION:</b>                                                                                                                                                                        |          |             |          |
| 1. Present your 5 MINUTES lesson plan in a group of 3 to 5. Each element carries 10 marks and exceeding the time allocated will be penalised. Submit your peer reviews after each session. |          |             |          |
| 2. MICROTEACHING: SET INDUCTION                                                                                                                                                            |          |             |          |
| Presentation: 6 - 10 JANUARY 2025                                                                                                                                                          |          |             |          |
| 3. MICROTEACHING: CLOSURE                                                                                                                                                                  |          |             |          |
| Presentation: 13 - 17 JANUARY 2025                                                                                                                                                         |          |             |          |
| <b>FORMAT AND SCORING:</b>                                                                                                                                                                 |          |             |          |
| Set Induction                                                                                                                                                                              | 10 marks | Closure     | 10 marks |
| Lesson Plan                                                                                                                                                                                | 5 marks  | Lesson Plan | 5 marks  |
| Performance                                                                                                                                                                                | 5 marks  | Performance | 5 marks  |

In this research, SPSS V.29 was utilized as the primary tool for analyzing the collected data. Through SPSS, various statistical procedures were conducted, including descriptive statistics to summarize the data and the one-sample t-test to compare the scores against established benchmarks.

This research also used the qualitative approach that were used for participants to report their communication strategies (ref: Table 1) by extracting the reduction strategies for interview following the 103 Macroteaching at the end of the academic session. These interview findings were then transcribed and analysed thematically. Thematic analysis as summarised by Caulfield (2020) is a deductive method that involves approaching the data with some predetermined themes one expects to find reflected there, based on existing theories or knowledge thus attaining the study confirmability. The utilisation of the opinionnaire from Soekarno's (2019) study, the Oral Communication Strategies Inventory (OCSI) serves as a supporting instrument in the analysis of the reduction strategies used by TESL trainees.

Table 1. Extracts from Revised OCSI (Soekarno, 2019)

| No. | Speaking Strategies in English                                                   | Source       | Strategy            |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| 1.  | I translate directly from another language when I can't communicate well.        | Research     | Literal translation |
| 2.  | I mix words from another language when I can't communicate well.                 | Research     | Code switch         |
| 3.  | I use words which are familiar to me.                                            | Nakatani:3   | Approximation       |
| 4.  | I reduce the message and use simple expressions.                                 | Nakatani:4   | Message reduction   |
| 5.  | I replace the original message with another when I can't say what I have to say. | 5/6 (mR/pph) | Message replacement |

|    |                                                                   |               |                     |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 6. | I leave a message unfinished because of language difficulty.      | Nakatani:24   | Message abandonment |
| 7. | I give up when I can't make myself be understood.                 | Nakatani:32   | Message abandonment |
| 8. | I ask other people to help when I can't communicate well.         | 31 (mA)       | Appeal for help     |
| 9. | I use fillers (well, let me see...) to give myself time to think. | 23 (rephrase) | Maintenance         |

The analysis in this study utilized the well-established Thematic Analysis framework by Braun and Clarke (2006). According to Caulfield (2019), this analytical method typically employed when working with a collection of texts, such as interviews or transcripts. The recorded presentations were transcribed as close to the speakers' articulation as possible to identify any subtle changes. Thematic analysis is chosen for this research since it is suitable to present clearly all the data collected.

## Procedures

The qualitative design utilised the online platform and adapt the procedure from Beltis' (2019) procedure for conducting online interviews. This study used a focus group that have higher, homogeneous proficiency and awareness of Native English speech pattern. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in verbatim for the thematic analysis of the participants' response, opinion and perception (Poland, 1995).

The quantitative data were collected using the microteaching results. To answer research questions 1, the quantitative data obtained from the pre-tests and post-tests were analysed and tabulated using SPSS V.20. A paired sample t-test was conducted to identify if there is a statistically significant difference between the means of set induction and closure groups.

## Results

To answer RQ1, the quantitative data obtained from the pre-tests and post-tests were analysed and tabulated using SPSS V.20; A paired sample t-test was conducted to identify if there is a statistically significant difference between the means of set induction and closure groups. The interview findings were used to reveal salient features, and emerging themes. The transcripts were analysed to draw assumptions, and conclusions of the attainment of CEFR in rural classrooms. The findings from Question 4 will provide the answer to RQ2, while the remaining interviews were used to collate a response to RQ3.

### Research Question 1

| Descriptive Statistics for Sample Data |    |         |         |         |                |          |
|----------------------------------------|----|---------|---------|---------|----------------|----------|
|                                        | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean    | Std. Deviation | Variance |
| Observation 1                          | 23 | 77.00   | 84.00   | 81.3043 | 1.96410        | 3.858    |
| Observation 2                          | 23 | 84.00   | 90.00   | 86.2609 | 1.38883        | 1.929    |
| Valid N (listwise)                     | 23 |         |         |         |                |          |

According to the descriptive statistics for 23 trainees' practicum performance, it is shown that in Observation 1, the scores range from a minimum of 77.00 to a maximum of 84.00, with a mean score of 81.3043. This indicates that participants scored slightly above 81. The standard deviation of 1.96410 indicates a moderate amount of variability around the mean score, with a variance of 3.858 suggesting that the scores are somewhat spread out, though still within a narrow range.

On the other hand, Observation 2 shows a higher range of scores, starting at a minimum of 84.00 and reaching a maximum of 90.00. Improved performance is also noticed with a higher mean score, 86.2609. The standard deviation for Observation 2 is lower at 1.38883, suggesting that the scores are more tightly clustered around the mean. The variance of 1.929 further supports this observation, indicating less spread in the scores compared to Observation 1.

| One-Sample Test       |        |              |             |                 |                                           |        |
|-----------------------|--------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------|--------|
| Test Value = 76.68    |        |              |             |                 |                                           |        |
|                       | t      | Significance |             | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |        |
|                       |        | One-Sided p  | Two-Sided p |                 | Lower                                     | Upper  |
| Practicum Performance | 32.010 | <.001        | <.001       | 7.10261         | 6.6424                                    | 7.5628 |

A one-sample t-test was conducted to determine if TESL trainees' microteaching performance have a statistically significant impact on their practicum performance. According to the table, the t-value of 32.010 indicates that the sample mean (83.78) is significantly higher than the population mean (76.68). Both one-sided and two-sided p-values are less than 0.001, which further confirm the results are statistically significant. The mean difference of 7.10261 demonstrates a clear positive impact of microteaching on practicum performance. This quantifies the improvement, showing that trainees who underwent microteaching performed significantly better during practicum observations. The confidence interval further supports the reliability of this finding, suggesting that the true mean difference is very likely to lie within the range of 6.6424 to 7.5628. The analysis suggests that microteaching has a positive impact on practicum performance, as evidenced by the higher scores observed in the sample group.

## Research Question 2

According to the interview findings to Question 4, “Do you leave a message unfinished because of language difficulty?” the analysis showed that almost all the interviewees would not leave a message unfinished despite language difficulty. P09 and P10 for instance would attempt to explain the problems in simpler terms and think of other ways to express the meaning.

Interview Excerpts:

P09: No, I try my best to explain in simple terms when I encounter this problem.

P10: Not that I remember. If I have difficulty in delivering a message due to the language, I will take a few moments to think of other ways to express the meaning.

As the first theme on this study showed that TESL trainees did not use message abandonment during Microteaching, the findings show that CEFR is attained with C2 Coherence where they can “create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.”

### **Research Question 3**

These trainees recognize the importance of developing strong communication skills. Practicum trains teachers to give clear, concise instructions and to check for understanding to avoid confusion. Theme 2 in response to Question 5 (Do you ask other people to help when you can't communicate well?) shows that TESL trainees would ask other people to help when they can't communicate well. 3 out of 11 interviewees would not ask other people to help when they can't communicate well. Participants P01 and P9 for instance would create spontaneous activities and self-relaxation for learning engagement. Those who think they would ask for help remarked that claimed that they queried on how they would deliver certain messages, “I did ask my teammates how I should deliver certain messages to get their idea of how they would do it.” (P06).

Another positive response is Theme 5 where TESL trainees would replace an original message as long as the meaning of the expression has been maintained. This is collated from Question 8 which asked “Do you replace the original message with another when you can't say what you have to say?” The analysis showed that 7 out of 11 participants revealed that they would replace an original message as long as the meaning of the expression has been maintained. On the other hand, those who responded negatively such as Participant P01 claimed that he would deliver the teaching in a different way for the fear that the whole lesson might be affected by the message replacement.

Other responses presented negative themes such as Themes 3 and 4. Theme 3 showed that TESL trainees would not mix words from another language when they

can't communicate well. This was the response to Question 6, which involved mixing words from another language. 7 out of 11 interviewees would not mix words from another language when they can't communicate well. As a part of the compensatory strategies for interaction repairs such as restructuring, circumlocution and approximation (Soekarno, 2019), Participants P01 and P06 would use synonyms that reflected the TESL trainees' linguistics proficiency (ref. Soekarno et.al., 2021) well. Participant P11 for instance would use related explanations and exemplification which is a mode of symbolisation as characterised by the relation between a sample and what it refers to.

Theme 4 stated that TESL trainees would not translate directly from another language when they can't communicate well. This was in response to Question 7 (Do you translate directly from another language when you can't communicate well?). This final analysis showed 6 interviewees who declined the use of direct translation as it causes misunderstandings (P05 & P07) and every language has different syntactical arrangements (P07 & P09). There were also similarities to the use of simplification as proposed by Soekarno's et.al. (2021) study who discovered that to inculcate the TESL trainees' awareness of their use of reduction communication strategies, "they need to be involved in active FGDs and be provided with communication strategy trainings on alternative strategies, specifically strategies like simplification, clarification and paraphrasing (p.25)".

## **Discussion**

### **Impact of microteaching performance on the attainment of CEFR in rural classrooms**

Many second learners regard speaking ability as the measure of knowing a language and value ability to converse more than the ability to read write or comprehend oral language. A study employed by the Polish and Czech speakers when communicating with each other in their native languages, in particular, refers to receptive intercultural communication. The findings prove how significant pragmatic aspects are when it comes to successful receptive intercultural communication Urszula Majdańska-Wachowicz, Magdalena Steciąg, Lukáš Zábranský (2021).

According to the one-sample t-test conducted, the observation scores reflected an improvement over time, suggesting that as the trainees gain more experience and receive feedback, their teaching effectiveness increases. This improvement is likely to translate into better student outcomes, as more effective teaching strategies and classroom management skills directly contribute to higher student achievement levels.

The descriptive statistics from the microteaching sessions indicate that TESL trainees perform consistently well in both initiating and concluding lessons, the balanced skill set is crucial for maintaining student engagement and ensuring effective lesson delivery in rural classrooms. A stable performance in these key teaching components can significantly enhance the learning experience, thereby

supporting the attainment of CEFR standards.

The analysis suggests that consistent and improving performance in microteaching is positively correlated with the attainment of CEFR standards in rural classrooms. Effective set induction and closure, coupled with overall teaching improvements, can create a more conducive learning environment. This environment helps learners better achieve language proficiency as outlined by the CEFR, highlighting the critical role of high-quality preparation and ongoing professional development.

In the 21st century, learning is increasingly collaborative. Communication tools like video conferencing, shared documents, and instant messaging enable students to work together regardless of geographical barriers. This prepares students for the collaborative nature of modern workplaces and helps develop crucial teamwork skills. Communication strategies that leverage technology can make learning more accessible to a wider audience (Shofiya & Basuni, 2023; Soekarno, et.al. 2021, 2022). Online learning platforms, recorded lectures, and digital resources enable students with disabilities or those in remote areas to access educational content. Inclusive communication practices ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate and succeed (Soekarno & Said, 2022; Zhu, Liao, & Cheong, 2019). Many TESL trainees believe that message abandonment can negatively impact student engagement and motivation. Incomplete or abandoned messages may cause students to lose interest or feel disconnected from the lesson.

### **Influence of the reduction of message abandonment during microteaching on the attainment of CEFR in rural classrooms**

The first theme in this study shows that TESL trainees did not use message abandonment during Microteaching. The high results among Practicum reflected that limiting the use of message abandonment among TESL trainees during Microteaching ensure the attainment of CEFR in rural classrooms. Message abandonment may not effectively prepare students for real-world English usage, leading to a gap between their academic knowledge and practical communication abilities (Wang & Zhang, 2020). Furthermore, the lack of a natural English-speaking environment also plays a crucial role. The trainees were able to attain the highest form of CEFR C2 Coherence i.e. Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.

Soft skills are a combination of people skills, social skills, communication skills, right to social intelligence and emotional intelligence quotients, among others, that enable people to navigate their environment, engage with others, and achieve their goals with complementing hard skills. Due to their rising importance, the need to teach soft skills such as communication skills has become a major concern for educators and employers all over the world. As it is a poorly defined set of skills, teaching them is more challenging, compared to classical skills.

With this in mind, teaching the use of communication strategies would also need to change. One of the aspects that is in need of change is the acceptance towards

an obsolete norm, the use of topic fronting which was cited as a characteristic of the Malaysian variety of English by Benson (1990). This is derived from Clennell's (1995) Discourse-Based communication strategies which is a deviation from acceptable Native speaker use of English. The students may encounter problems in communicating ideas and thus, it ends in a communication breakdown (Soekarno, et.al. 2021, 2022).

Vettorel (2019) stated that research into communication strategies and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is a thriving area of investigation, superseding the initial impression of innovation. ELF interactions have been shown to be characterized by the speakers' mutual cooperation in the co-construction of meaning. Repetition, paraphrasing, as well as self- and other-repair and pre-emptive moves have emerged as important strategies, together with the exploitation of multilingual resources and repertoires. Communication strategies, rather than a mere compensation device, are thus to be considered an essential element in the process of effective communication, in that they are strategically used by speakers as part of "communicative capability."

The Bachman's Model of Communicative Competence or a "theoretical framework of communicative language ability" as he puts it, is the one proposed by Bachman (1990), which has been presented for measurement purposes. This framework includes grammatical and textual abilities or competences, which are involved in producing and comprehending language (Eghtsadi, 2017). Early studies show the usefulness of lexical repetition in conveying a variety of meanings (Soekarno & Ting, 2016; Ting & Kho, 2009; Ting, Musa, & Sim, 2013; Ting & Phan, 2008; Ting & Sim, 2013). Other studies that also looked into elements of communication strategies such as Zhu, Liao, and Cheong (2019), had found that the high-performing students used the clarification strategy significantly more frequently than the medium-performing students. In another study conducted on Taiwanese EFL college students, Tsai (2018) found that in terms of their speaking anxiety and strategy use, the lower proficiency group responded better to the communication strategy training than the intermediate and higher proficiency groups. Some studies were also conducted specifically on the topic fronting (Benson, 1990; Soekarno, et.al., 2022, 2021; Ting & Kho, 2008; Ting & Phan, 2008) reflected on the adversity of topic fronting.

### **Influence of the reduction of message abandonment during practicum to ensure the attainment of CEFR in rural classrooms**

Effective communication strategies foster a more engaging and interactive learning environment. With the integration of digital tools such as online forums, social media, and collaborative platforms, students can participate in discussions, share ideas, and receive feedback in real-time. This level of engagement encourages active learning and helps maintain student interest. Effective communication strategies foster a more engaging and interactive learning environment. With the integration of digital tools such as online forums, social media, and collaborative platforms, students can participate in discussions, share ideas, and receive feedback in real-time. This level of engagement encourages active learning and helps maintain student interest. Such can be seen from Question 5: Do you ask

other people to help when you can't communicate well?

Interview Excerpts:

P06: Yes. I did ask my teammates how I should deliver certain messages to get their idea of how they would do it.

P07: Yes, I do. I believe seeking assistance from others is a valuable way to improve.

P11: Yes. Like picking students to give examples for themselves.

These responses fulfill the theme: TESL trainees would ask other people to help when they can't communicate well. These reflect that seeking assistance provides an opportunity to respond to research question 3.

In Question 8, which focused on message replacement, 7 participants revealed that they would replace an original message as long as the meaning of the expression has been maintained. P06 stated that "Yes. I did paraphrase my original message during the micro teaching. I believe it is okay to do so as long as it holds the same meaning with original the message." This was opposed by P07 who claimed that "Instead of replacing the original message entirely, I prefer to modify it to make it more understandable. For instance, if I'm struggling to find the right words in a conversation, I might rephrase my thoughts to convey the same meaning more clearly." Collie and Martin (2016) stated that the characteristic that sets teaching apart from other occupations is the everyday exposure to unexpectedness, change, and uncertainty.

With Theme 5: TESL trainees would replace an original message as long as the meaning of the expression has been maintained, this study shows that this adaptability is the capacity to deal with this change in an efficient manner. These reflect that message replacement answer research question 3. Other studies that also looked into elements of communication strategies such as Zhu, Liao, and Cheong (2019), had found that the high-performing students used the clarification strategy significantly more frequently than the medium-performing students.

When a communicative difficulty crops up in a conversation, interactional modifications are utilised to bridge the gap and continue the conversation. Among the most prevalent of these interactional modification or communication strategies used among Malaysians are the use of fillers (Soekarno & Ting, 2014), code switching (David, 2013; Then & Ting, 2010) and topic fronting (Benson, 1990; Soekarno, et.al., 2022, 2021; Soekarno; 2019; Ting & Kho, 2008; Ting & Phan, 2008).

When utilised in dialogues, topic fronting allows the speaker to place the focus at the beginning of a sentence to make a story more dramatic. Topic fronting generally refers to any construction in which a word group that customarily follows the verb is placed at the beginning of a sentence under the English grammar (Nordquist, 2020). However, fronting can also trigger something called inverted

subject-verb order (Pearce, 2007) and is not suitable for technical utterances and second language teaching as this will create confusion especially among limited proficiency learners and absolute beginners (Wolcott & Vinciguerra, 2011). Cited as a characteristic of the Malaysian variety of English by Benson (1990), topic fronting is a deviation from acceptable native speaker use of English, but in the context of communication strategy use, topic fronting was viewed positively as it facilitated information transfer (Ting & Kho, 2009). Soekarno et. al (2022, 2021) identified the necessity to remove topic fronting from the academic environment in Malaysia. This is aligned to Soekarno and Ting's (2016) report that since proficient speakers are better at using discourse strategies for meaning enhancement (Ting & Phan, 2008), it is more beneficial to train less proficient speakers to develop collaborative discourse skills (Clennell, 1995).

Similarly, strategies like message abandonment and fillers were used to foster engagement during classroom interaction in (Shofiya & Basuni, 2023). Message abandonment, a communication strategy where speakers stop or alter their message due to perceived difficulties. Malaysia is a multilingual country where the complexity of navigating between multiple languages can lead to message abandonment, especially when speakers struggle to find the right words or phrases in the language they are using and switch to another language or abandon the message altogether. In most cases, language learners need to process the verbal message at a speed determined by the native speakers, which is generally quite fast (Osada, 2004).

This study investigates message replacement strategies, such as substitution of problematic messages with more positive or constructive ones, as highly effective in promoting student learning and fostering a positive classroom environment. They may believe that replacing negative messages with positive ones can enhance students' self-esteem, motivation, and engagement with learning (Vidhya & Phil, 2022). Toro et al (2018) mentioned that communicative competence encompasses the understanding of how to apply language in diverse situations, adapting language usage based on contexts and trainees should be able to avoid the use of message abandonment.

## **Conclusion**

Achieving CEFR standards in rural areas of Sabah by reducing message abandonment among TESL trainees requires a multi-faceted approach. By enhancing training sessions that fosters supportive learning environments and leveraging technology that ensures a continuous assessment, it is possible to significantly improve English proficiency among these trainees. In conclusion, the impact of communication strategy in 21st-century learning is multifaceted, enhancing engagement, personalization, and inclusivity in education. This study is not attempting to create mechanical communication which learners will attempt to mimic. By engaging modern communication practices, educators can create dynamic and learning experiences that prepare trainees for the complexities of the modern world.

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