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An Analysis of Social-Interaction Strategies in Job Interviews amongst Fresh Graduates

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Abstract

The study investigated the use of social-interaction strategies among fresh graduates in job interviews. Fifty candidates and twenty hiring managers participated in the study. The job interview data were analysed qualitatively using the ATLAS.ti data analysis software. It was found that successful candidates attempted five social interaction strategies, reserved candidates attempted two social interaction strategies and unsuccessful candidates did not attempt any of the social-interaction strategies. The findings further revealed that the use of social-interaction strategies by successful candidates enables them to understand and answer the interview questions with good proficiency, coherence, cohesion besides maintaining the flow. It is hoped that the findings of the present study would be helpful for fresh graduates and undergraduates to use social-interaction strategies to have a smooth interaction. These strategies also provide more confidence to respond as candidates are able to better comprehend the interview questions.

Keywords: Social-Interaction Strategies, Job Interviews, Fresh Graduates

Introduction

Having face-to-face interactions provide a more meaningful interaction between two speakers, as in job interviews. The interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee is an essential aspect of a job interview (Roulston, 2013). There should be an uninterrupted and smooth interaction between them. According to Rahman (2015), successful candidates of job interviews try to maintain a meaningful, smooth and productive interaction with the interviewer, and this depends on the level of English language proficiency (henceforth proficiency).

Rachel et al (2017) emphasised that to achieve the aims of the interactions in a professional context, the quality of interaction is important. One of the ways to improve the quality of interaction in job interviews is by enhancing proficiency. Rachel et al.'s (2017) view is supported by Selvaratnam (2018) who posits that to carry out an effective interaction, proficiency is essential to gauge the meaningfulness of the interactions between two interactants with a specific objective.

However, Ranjit (2009) reported that the interviewer and the interviewee were not able to have smooth interactions due to poor interaction skills. In addition, Roulston (2013)

reported that most of the candidates struggled to understand the questions asked by the interviewer due to their poor proficiency. Darmi and Albion (2014) and Rahman (2015) further put forth that fresh graduates were not able to understand the questions and provide comprehensive answers due to poor proficiency. Therefore, the interviewer had to ask the same question a few times, either reiterating or rephrasing them. The hiring managers did not want to make efforts to continue the interview due to poor responses from candidates, resulting in employers refusing these applications. Therefore, the present study aims to evaluate how fresh graduates have used social-interaction strategies in job interviews to denote their proficiency.

Literature Review

Views of Linguists on the use of Interaction Strategies

Kramsch (1986, p. 369) noted that the use of interaction strategies was based on ones' interaction competence to avoid any breakdown. Johnson and Johnson (1987, p.206) mentioned that interaction strategies would be helpful for both speakers. Hall et al (2004, p.81) further asserted that successful interactions were based on the willingness to cooperate in interactions proficiently. Similarly, May (2009, p.398) noted that cooperation, coordination and collaboration were essential in an interaction process, especially in comprehending and responding to the questions that showed a speaker's proficiency. Similarly, Masuda (2011, p. 520) noted that interaction strategies should be sustained and based on a speaker's proficiency.

Social-Interaction Strategies

The use of social-interaction strategies between two or more speakers in a particular setting can lead to successful interactions based on the language (Seliger, 1983). Doughty and Pica (1986) noted that social-interaction strategies can be utilised for an effective interaction that enables active participation. Similarly, Johnson and Johnson (1987) also noted that social-interaction strategies enable the speakers to acquire better attention and participation in any communicative settings in any language.

Social-interaction strategies are necessary to maintain the flow of "cohesive and coherent interactions" (Johnson & Johnson, 1987. p.206). The interlocutors react and relate to what is said, rather than deliver their own independent or unrelated short speeches, that involve more than two people such as role-play, pair work and group work, or collaborative/cooperative work (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). The views of Johnson and Johnson (1987) are supported by Naughton (2006) who postulates that two or more speakers always contribute to language performance and meaningful interaction. Table 1 provides the definitions of social-interaction strategies and the sample occurrences of social-interaction strategies.

(Insert Table 1)

Table 1 shows five types of social-interaction strategies. Cohesive and coherent strategies are required to have meaningful interactions (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). These social-interaction strategies enable speakers to be better interactants. Samples of social-interaction strategies are also provided in the present study.

Past Studies on Social-Interaction Strategies

Several studies have been conducted on social interaction strategies. Bejarano et al. (1997) reported that social-interaction strategies are essential to show proficiency in any

communicative context. A similar study by Basturkmen and Shackelford (2015) has shown that when two-speakers are engaged, their social-interaction strategies would help to comprehend the content.

There are studies that reported two-pair and small-group interaction had a facilitative effect on second language (L2) acquisition. These studies are further supported theoretically and empirically by sociolinguistic researchers like Lantolf (2000) and cognitive experts like Ellis (2008). Their studies revealed that students were not able to interact well because they did not use interaction strategies in ESL classes,.

Similarly, Broady (2006) found empirical evidence in three types of relationships: group interaction, language performance and traditional interactionist that depended on interactive talks and the competence of the speakers. Besides, Brown (2014) found that corrective feedback showed 57%, prompts comprised 30% and grammar errors were the highest with 43% due to poor proficiency. On the contrary, Obiefuna et al (2015) found that most of teachers could use interactive strategies due to good proficiency. These studies indicated that those with good proficiency used interactive strategies to have smooth interactions while those with limited proficiency were unable to do so.

These findings suggest that interaction strategies are essential in all types of interactions. For Lennon, (1990) proficient speakers are able to talk fluently without pauses and hesitations in any communicative setting. Similarly, Ellis (2003) pointed that interaction means “the part of the interaction that happens when there is a cooperation of at least two interactants to reach a common comprehension of their expressions with error-free speech, fluency and ability native speakers” (p. 340).

Similarly, Mustafa et al (2017) found that students using effective interaction strategies such as repetition, rephrase, modification and clarification were able to maintain interaction. The study concluded that non-native speakers had difficulties in interactions and the adoption of various interaction strategies made interactions smooth and speakers displaying proficiency. Van Batenburg et al (2019) found that the strategies used in interactions positively affected the learners as they were based on the competence of the language and self-confidence. Further, Jian (2020) noted that when turn-taking happens in any interaction, it shows a speaker encouraging another speaker to respond and also reveals the latter's character and proficiency.

The above studies were conducted through classroom interactions like role-plays, oral interactions, two or small groups. However, each study has its significance that determines a speaker having smooth, productive and meaningful interactions. This is also highlighted by Johnson and Johnson (1987) who note that to have meaningful interactions, the flow should be maintained with cohesive and coherent qualities as in job interviews. To sum up, the above studies reported that social-interaction strategies are pertinent in assisiting smooth interactions, and eventually portrays one's proficiency, as in job interviews.

Methods

Setting

The data were collected from a recruitment organisation. Consents were obtained from the organisation and participants. Fifty student candidates from public universities in various disciplines and twenty hiring managers participated in the study. The candidates were between 23 and 26 years and were of mixed backgrounds. They were shortlisted according to the English placement test based on grammar and writing that was provided by the organisation. The hiring managers had more than 23 years of work experience, especially in

conducting job interviews. The above sample was chosen based on the view that “more than twenty-five participants for qualitative studies would be adequate for spoken data, especially interview data” (Green, 2009, p.120).

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty hiring managers. A briefing on the purpose of the study was undertaken before the interviews via Google Meet due to Covid-19 restrictions. The interview questions were adopted and modified from the studies of (Krishnan et al., 2017; Zainuddin et al., 2019).

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The job interview data and perceptions of hiring managers were recorded and transcribed. The data were analysed qualitatively using the ATLAS.ti software and Johnson and Johnson’s (1987) social-interaction theory. The data was analysed based on the chosen theme of “How do you handle problems”. Minichiello et al. (1990) noted that a theme can be used to set the expression of ideas in a qualitative analysis. Accurate excerpts were chosen for the analysis based on the objectives of the study. Li (2002) and Wodak (2003) noted that even one or two spoken excerpts are sufficient for a qualitative study. These excerpts were verified by experts in languages and linguistics. Pseudonyms were used for the candidates and interviewer. Candidate 1 was abbreviated as C1, the Interviewer was abbreviated as IR, and the hiring manager was abbreviated as HM.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of social-interaction strategies was categorised according to responses from successful, reserved, and unsuccessful candidates. Table 2 shows the social-interaction strategies attempted by the successful, reserved, and unsuccessful candidates.

(Insert Table 2)

Table 2 shows the successful candidates attempted five, reserved candidates attempted two and the unsuccessful candidates did not attempt any social-interaction strategies as they failed to carry out meaningful interaction due to poor proficiency (Bejarano et al., 1997). The sample utterances are below.

Successful Candidates

Five social-interaction strategies were attempted by the successful candidates as stated in Table.

Excerpt 1-Elaboration

- IR well, I would like to ask you...how do you handle problems?
C1 well problems
IR ya problems
C1 what do you mean?
IR I mean how do you handle problems in your office?
C1 Oh ok...well... I usually listen to my customers calmly and find solutions

IR started the question ‘how you handle problems’ to C1. However, there were two turn-takings by C1 by asking ‘what do you mean’. The interviewer had elaborated ‘how you handle

problems in your office' that helped C1 to answer 'oh ok...well... that reflected the proficiency to understand the question after the elaboration by the interviewer.

Excerpt 2-Facilitating the flow of conversation

- IR do you handle work stress/problems?
C2 well, try not to have problems
IR ...you did not answer my question
C2 really... I am sorry but why did you say so?
IR in a working place, there would some problem and how do you handle them?
C2 alright...I will take note their problem and try my level best to settle ...if I can't settle immediately... I will refer to my superior.

C2 was asked 'do you handle work stress/problems'. Sternly, C2 uttered 'try... problems'. However, C2's response was not favourable but C2 made an effort to say 'I am sorry... say so'. Then, the interviewer expanded the question 'in a working...them'. C2 uttered 'alright...to my superior' that indicated C2 was able to facilitate interaction with the interviewer.

Excerpt 3- Responding

- IR in a workplace, there is always a problem. How do you handle it?
C3 usually...I would like to spare my time and truly listen to them...hmmm.... I will take immediate action to settle and the same time, my attentive listening will be a priority for them

C3 was able to respond to the interviewer that showed C3 answered the question and was able to utter lengthy utterances 'usually...for them'.

Excerpt 4- Seeking information or an opinion

- IR how do you handle issues or problem?
C4 you mean problems in a working which brought by customers?
IR yes how do handle issues if the customers' complaints
C4 well...I am dedicated staff and I would like to solve my customers' problem as customers are always right no matter what...moreover, we should take care of them and find an amicable solution with immediate effect.
IR I admire your answer

C4 was able to seek further information before answering the question 'you mean...customers'. After getting further information from the interviewer like 'yes... complaints'. C4 was able to answer the question and the interviewer uttered 'I admire your answer'.

Excerpt 5-Rephrase/Paraphrasing

- IR laugh)...okay (.) what major challenges and problems did you face
C5 ...you mean...sorry correct me if I am wrong...how I handle the issue in working place as well as customer and staff mr...
IR Yes
C5 I went there for an internship. I did my level best over there but too much politics (.) actually the senior staff should be an example for us but they were not...anyway leave it sir

This is followed by C5, to the interviewer's question; 'what... faced' Firstly, C5 rephrased and responded by describing the significant challenges and problems, or, if C5 did not understand 'major' as related to challenges and problems, C5 could have simply described any challenge or problem, either major or minor ones. If C5 had not encountered problems, then C5 might not have respond to the question. However, C5 made an effort to confirm saying 'correct me if I am wrong' before answering the question. The answer was not convincing, C5 tried to answer the question.

The above finding agrees with the study by Basturkmen and Shackleford (2015) that mentions when two speakers are engaged in interactions, the social-interaction strategies can help to comprehend the questions. This happens when another speaker has good proficiency as in Cs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

This reduces misunderstanding as the candidates want to reassure as the interviewer is genuinely interested and has attempted to understand what they are saying to have a smooth interaction. The findings are in agreement with Johnson and Johnson (1987) that social-interaction strategies can be used by speakers who have good proficiency to avoid problems during interactions.

Reserved Candidates

The reserved candidates made two attempts to use social-interaction strategies:

- (i) elaboration and
- (ii) rephrase/paraphrasing.

The excerpts are shown below.

Excerpt 6- Elaboration

- IR how do you handle problems?
 C6 hmmm...mr...can you say that again? you mean handle staff issues?
 IR hmmm...ya sort of...
 C6 ok...I have to handle staffs and coordinate the daily routines and some projects (.)but depends ya...(laugh)
 IR hmmm so what do you mean handle staffs (.) means what? What is your work? what do you do there and how do you help them to solve problems?
 C6 hhm...like supervisor la. okay so (.) I have to plan job for them...
 IR Hmmm
 C6 every morning what they should do and for many projects la
 IR you...okay you said daily what do they do? You said daily you plan for the management...right...(laugh)
 C6 yes...
 IR what are you trying to say?
 C6 okay sometimes my manager (.) they request us to be there on time
 IR Hmmm
 C6 okay sometimes cannot perform...so we have to plan for that la
 IR okay...

The interaction started with 'how do you handle problems'.

. C6 was not able to understand the question to 'say it again'. Again, C6 tried to ask 'you mean handle staff issues' that showed C6 understood the question as the interviewer replied 'ya sort of'. C6 attempted to elaborate the answers after being prompted by the interviewer

a few times. C6 answered the question, but the interviewer was expecting more. Therefore, the interviewer asked 'what do you mean handle staff', 'means what', 'what is your work', and 'what do you do there and how do you help them to solve problems'. The questions were asked simultaneously that led to one ultimate goal towards the description of the job and responsibilities of C6. C6 was still struggling to find the right words and expressions to answer the question appropriately. Expressions like, 'hmm...likes supervisor la', 'so...I have to plan job for them' were elaborations and were still incomprehensible to the interviewer.

Excerpt 7-Rephrase/Paraphrasing

- C7 last time I am (was) working as a production supervisor in XXX for two months after my studies. Then I stopped...
- IR okay...may I know the cause of leaving? If you...
- C7 Sir...cause...what?
- IR yes...cause of leaving
- C7 reason...you mean reason
- IR Yes...
- C7 well (.) I do not know what to say...sorry (laughs) ...
- IR okay...
- IR what...is your current designation in Telecom?
- C7 sir...designation? What is that?
- IR what are you working as?
- C7 oh...my position?
- IR yes=yes (.)
- C7 okay okay...I am dealing with customer service
- IR are are...you enjoying there? (.) Hopefully...yes
- IR and how...would you manage your angry clients
- C7 you mean customers
- IR yes (.) clients customers are the same (laughs)
- C7 as I mentioned above (.) I would like to listen what exactly the customers need and I think it is my duty and ya my responsible too (laughs)
- IR well (.) and please give me a few reasons why should we hire you?

The interviewer started the interaction with 'may I know the cause of leaving' to C7. It appeared that C7 did not understand the meaning of 'cause'. The interviewer repeated 'cause of leaving'. In the second attempt, C7 understood and rephrased by uttering 'you mean reason' as C7 was quite familiar with the word 'reason'.

C7 was not able to comprehend the word 'designation' by uttering 'what is that'. The interviewer rephrased it to 'what are you working as'. C7 understood and replied 'oh my position'. This demonstrated poor proficiency. The responses of C7 concurs with Ellis's (2003) finding that some speakers have in-depth knowledge of the interaction but they may not be able to comprehend unfamiliar words which denotes poor proficiency. The study indicated that a listener who was able to comprehend immediately and respond to questions promptly showed good proficiency and was able to tackle various communicative events.

C7 response to the interviewer's question indicated that C7 was not sure of the meaning of the word 'clients'. To solve this ambiguity, C7 attempted to rephrase that part of

the question, by using the word 'customers' as a possible synonym. C7's rephrasing was a confirmation-seeking statement (you mean customers), that required the interviewer to confirm that C7 had correctly understood the word 'client'. At the same time, the interviewer provided the confirmation with an affirmative 'yes', explicitly stating the words 'client' and 'customer' had the same meaning. After receiving this confirmation, C7 responded to the interviewer's original question that is managing angry clients. The rephrasing by C7 had clearly assisted in the interaction. Nevertheless, due to unfamiliarity as well as C7's level of vocabulary, the interviewer was not able to comprehend C7 further. Therefore, C7 was not exposed to new words.

C7 attempted to rephrase by using common words such as 'what' or 'what do you mean' in the interactions with the interviewer. C7 expected the interviewer to rephrase the question at a simpler level. The finding agrees with Obiefuna et al. (2015) who assert that rephrasing/paraphrasing may be needed for non-native speakers to understand the content of the message. As mentioned earlier by Canale and Swain (1980: 1983) speakers with poor proficiency may not be familiar with certain words in job interviews.

Unsuccessful Candidates

The findings show that the unsuccessful candidates failed to cover any social interaction strategy.

Excerpt 8

- IR Okay...how about the remuneration
- C19 Huh? (laugh) I don't know mr.
- IR what? (Laugh) well...what major challenges and problems did you face? How did you handle them?
- C19 huh mr...hmmm...miscommunication between me and the parents but it was solved by talking to the manager and asking him what he thinks...yes
- IR I am sorry...your answer is not in my page... okay...tell us something about
- IR it...and what do you do basically? (.) What do you know about our operation...?
- hmmm really...okay then...what else do you do then...and how did you know about the vacancy
- C19 hmm...as I checked the computer last month...that is how I got...sir
- IR do you know how to create a good conversation?
- C19 no...I don't play
- IR I mean...how to start a good conversation
- C19 Hmmm...change the question...sir
- IR (laughs)
- IR have you had any difficulties during your working hours or during your internship?
- C19 ...I cannot... yes tell me about it
- IR what to tell...I mean during your internship...
- C19 hmmm...I am not here
- IR no...I mean tough time during your part time job or what ...
- C19 I don't
- IR what ...how come
- C19 I don't now sir

IR it is okay

The interjection 'huh', by C19 indicated he did not know, or it was difficult to infer C19's response. Firstly, the interjection 'huh' might have been used to express surprise or a request to repeat. Moreover, C19's statement, 'I don't know Mr', might be a direct response to the question where he did not know what remuneration to expect. It could also mean that C19 refrained from discussing the topic or did not understand the question.

The interviewer was surprised by C19's response, as he was expecting IE19 to state the anticipated salary. Perhaps, the interviewer assumed that the word 'remuneration' was understood by fresh graduates who are typically anxious when applying for jobs. From the interviewer's perspective, C19 expressed 'huh' which indicated that he was unsure of the word 'remuneration'. It is difficult to conclude that C19 did not comprehend the word 'remuneration'. The utterance of 'hmmm' appeared to show either C19 failed to think about the question or lacked the proficiency to adequately express himself as mentioned earlier by Bejarano et al (1997). Another assumption that can be drawn from the hesitation marker was that C19's poor proficiency had caused confusion as two questions were asked simultaneously.

In another example, C19 failed to completely comprehend the question. When asked by the interviewer on how to create a good conversation, C19 uttered 'no...I don't play' which was completely irrelevant to the question. The interaction was further extended when the interviewer asked 'I mean...how to start a good conversation' and C19 requested a change of question as he obviously could not comprehend the question. This clearly reflected C19's lack of proficiency. Bejarano et al (1997) noted that a speaker with poor proficiency is unable to use the social-interaction strategies to help carry out interactions in a smooth manner. This also concurred with Mustafa et al (2017) who argue that those with poor proficiency are unable to use social-interaction strategies.

The first question was on C19's working experiences, whilst the second question was on creating a good conversation. However, with the lack of proficiency, the input received was incomprehensible as C19 was unable to internalise the question, and this led to the utterance of 'hmm'. According to Bejarano et al (1997), the use of the hesitation marker signified that thinking was in progress and the unwillingness to give up the opportunity to respond.

However, the interviewer attempted to help C19 a few times to understand the question and inform the difficulties during work or internship, yet C19 was unable to comprehend. The interaction ended with 'it is okay' by the interviewer. C19 could have possibly used those social-interaction strategies to interact well with the interviewer. As mentioned earlier by Bejarano et al (1997), those speakers who are unable to carry out interactions by using social-interaction strategies usually display poor proficiency.

Based on the evidence obtained from the interview, the utterances provided by C19 were perceived as an inability to comprehend the message and the interviewer decided to move on to a new topic. This could also be due to the earlier interaction that was held between the interviewer and C19 that showed a lack of proficiency in answering the questions.

Analysis on the Perception of HMs on the use of Social-Interaction Strategies

This study also sought to establish the HMs' perceptions towards the use of social-interaction strategies by candidates in job interviews. The responses of HMs are summarised below:

Excerpt 9

'...a poor interaction is one of the issues for not getting jobs among fresh graduates, and till today there is no amicable solution is taken. Perhaps, I think social-interaction strategies would help them if this is taught in colleges or universities. If they know how to use the social-interaction strategies in job interviews, the job interview interaction would be effective and appropriate. And also, it is possible to have smooth interaction. Therefore, the interaction issues can be solved...'

Excerpt 10

"...we mainly ask five standard interview questions to fresh graduates such as self-introduction, strengths and weakness, why should we hire you and how do handle stress/problems or issues in a workplace. These are very basic questions yet they did not understand the questions. We also discovered that most of the fresh graduates were not able to understand, how do you handle problems/issues in a workplace question. We are surprised that why these fresh graduates do not want to take efforts to ask us to explain or elaborate the questions. If the candidates could cooperate, coordinate and collaborate, the job interviews would be smooth, successful interaction, and ease us to select the best candidates. If the candidates would be able to use the social-interaction strategies, pretty sure the interaction issues can be resolved..."

Excerpt 11

"and what we have noticed is, due to poor proficiency, fresh graduates unable to carry out interaction, unable to understand the questions, unable to respond to the questions and causes miscommunication and the interviewer has to rephrase or repeat the question. What we are trying to say is, it is nothing wrong with us rephrasing or repeating but this has happened many times which is not good and reflecting the poor proficiency of fresh graduates. If interviewer and can have miscommunications or interaction breakdown, social-interaction strategies would be helpful between them provide if the candidates have a good proficiency to withstand, manage the question and stick to the objective of the interaction"

Based on Excerpt 9, the HMs emphasised that social-interaction strategies should be taught in colleges and universities, so that interaction issues could be solved and these strategies can be effectively and appropriately used in job interviews. Their perceptions are similar to Hellermann (2007) that the use of strategies that help a speaker to contribute in an interaction effectively and appropriately relies on the proficiency of speakers.

In Excerpt 10, the HMs pointed out that candidates still did not understand and respond to the interview questions. The candidates did not make any efforts to explain or elaborate the questions. There was no cooperation, coordination and collaboration during the job interviews. They also mentioned that if the candidate practised social-interaction strategies, the interaction would be smooth and easy for HMs to select the best candidates. The perception of HMs is in line with May (2009) that cooperation, coordination and collaboration are essential in an interaction especially in comprehending and responding to

questions that highlight a speaker's proficiency. In line with May (2009), Hall et al. (2004) noted that successful interaction is also based on the willingness to cooperate in interactions with good proficiency.

Excerpt 11 indicated that poor proficiency was one of the reasons for poor interactions. Fresh graduates were not able to understand and respond to the questions that led to miscommunication or interaction breakdown. Repeating and rephrasing the questions were not an issue but if done multiple times, they reflected the poor proficiency of fresh graduates. The HMs emphasised that social-interaction strategies should be used throughout job interviews and would be helpful for the interviewers and candidates to have meaningful interactions. The HMs pointed out that to sustain the use of social-interaction strategies, proficiency is essential. The finding is in consensus with the view of Kramsch (1986) that the use of interaction strategies can be helpful when communications breaks down between two speakers. In line with Kramsch's view (1986); Masuda (2011) noted that the interaction strategies should be sustained in the interaction which was based on a speaker's proficiency.

Based on the perception of HMs, the findings further revealed that the interaction issues had not been mitigated as mentioned by Ranjit (2009); Roulston (2013) as poor interactions lead to unemployment for fresh graduates were not able to comprehend the questions. Further, as highlighted by Darmi and Albion (2014); Rahman (2015) and Rachel et al (2017), poor interaction was due to lack of proficiency. As mentioned by Johnson and Johnson (1987) cohesive and coherent strategies should be applied to encourage meaningful interactions, in job interviews.

Discussion

The findings revealed that there were five social-interaction strategies attempted by successful, reserved and unsuccessful candidates as can be seen in Table 2. The use of social-interaction strategies by successful candidates were more pre-emptive in job interviews compared to the reserved candidates. After realising, they had failed to answer the questions appropriately, they would ask the interviewers to elaborate and rephrase/paraphrase the questions due to lack of proficiency. The unsuccessful candidates did not attempt to use any social interaction strategies and their interactions were misleading besides being unable to communicate clearly and failing to comprehend the interview questions. They constantly failed to deliver precise responses that made the interviewer to shift topics as the interaction was not smooth.

The above findings on successful interviews were similar to the findings of Mustafa et al. (2017) where a speaker with good proficiency usually would be able to use these social - interaction strategies in any communicative context. This is because the speaker could comprehend the question and answer accordingly in the second attempt.

However, some candidates may not be able to understand the questions. Therefore, a few turn-takings occurred in the interactions. The candidates uttered 'what do you mean'; and this reflected the incomprehensibility of the message due to poor proficiency. The phrase 'you mean' is often used by non-native speakers (Johnson, 1986; Johnson & Johnson, 1987) to get better clarification. As mentioned by Bejarano et al. (1997) social-interaction strategies help to develop a smooth interaction and to avoid any problems as can be seen in successful candidates.

Another important finding was that the reserved candidates used elaboration and rephrasing/paraphrasing. They also made several attempts to comprehend the question. The finding is similar to Brown (2014) who postulated that speakers who have limited proficiency

may make several attempts to comprehend the question. In comparison to unsuccessful candidates, the reserved candidates used rephrasing and elaboration that indicated poor proficiency, and resulted in miscommunication. This was because they were unable to comprehend the question and were less focused. The finding is similar to Obiefuna et al. (2015) that speakers with limited proficiency are unable to interact or to progress further until the objective of the interaction is achieved. This shows that social-interaction strategies can develop proficiency in any professional context and communicative event including job interviews.

Social-interaction strategies can greatly benefit speakers in enhancing proficiency (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). As rationalised by Bejarano et al. (1997), the present social-interaction strategies like face-to-face helps to enhance proficiency. Social-interaction strategies are evolving to become a pattern as they provide the procedures that maintain connections between both speakers. Lennon (1990) and Ellis (2003) have mentioned earlier that speakers with good proficiency speak fluently without errors (Johnson and Johnson, 1987).

Using social-interaction strategies help both speakers when they anticipate or perceive difficulty in understating each other's message that are hindered by proficiency. Hence, good interaction can avoid any miscommunication and proves that speakers deserve to be employed. Additionally, speakers should attempt to rephrase their viewpoints briefly and clearly during the interaction. Before they rephrase their viewpoints, they need to understand the situation in context at that time. It is extremely important to listen carefully and respond promptly but calmly to manage the interaction effectively. In order to achieve a desirable outcome, it is useful to follow the ideas that relate to interactions. Therefore, speakers should attempt to rephrase their viewpoints carefully based on the progress of the interaction to show that they can handle the situation (Bejarano et al. (1997). As for the present study, fresh graduates should improve and develop their social-interaction strategies to have meaningful interactions. Speakers have to listen to the interviewer's questions, to ensure that they understand before they interact appropriately (Seliger, 1983). Similarly, speakers should interact effectively to achieve their own goals so that both parties can cooperate to seek mutual outcomes (Doughty & Pica, 1986). The speakers' proficiency can normally be detected by the listener during the interactions, as in job interviews.

Based on the perception of HMs, it was found that the use of social-interaction strategies would help to create successful job interviews. The candidates should have good proficiency to use social-interaction strategies that would assist communication breakdown between two speakers as mentioned by Kramsch (1986). HMs also mentioned the use of social-interaction strategies would be helpful to answer standard job interview questions. HMs also stated the 'how you handle problems/ issue questions' was one of the difficult questions to comprehend and answer among fresh graduates as shown by the sample responses of successful, reserved and unsuccessful candidates. The finding also shows that the social-interaction strategies would help the speaker to participate in an interaction effectively and appropriately (Hellermann, 2007). Having effective and appropriate interactions also depends on the speaker's proficiency (Masuda, 2011). Masuda's (2011) view is similar to Johnson and Johnson (1987) that the flow of cohesion and coherence should be maintained in interactions, as in job interviews

The Implications of the Study

The use of social-interaction strategies theory of Johnson and Johnson's (1987) in the present study had revealed its importance in a professional context. This theory has not only been widely used by researchers, mainly in the classroom context and task-based learning but also in job interviews. The use of social-interaction strategies by the candidates varied among the successful, reserved and unsuccessful candidates. The strong significant impact of social-interaction strategies during job interviews are important in linguistics as they can be used to evaluate spoken forms of a particular genre, in this case being professional interaction. Social-interaction strategies could be integrated in course module as these strategies need a certain threshold of proficiency as highlighted by the hiring managers and these strategies should be taught in colleges and universities. Undergraduates would have more confidence to interact when they are able to comprehend interview questions. The result of acquiring these social-interaction strategies will turn speakers into better interactants in any settings. The finding is also beneficial for interviewers, hiring managers, language instructors, recruitments organisations, and training providers for social-interaction strategies to be included in training modules. These strategies will be helpful to them to conduct job interviews as well as train undergraduates. The sampling of the present study was also limited by the number of candidates who were involved due to the organisation's private and confidential terms.

Conclusion

The present study confirms that the social-interaction strategies are important in job interviews. It shows that candidates benefited from the use of social-interaction strategies with their speakers during job interviews. The major findings of the study includes the use of the social-interaction strategies attempted by successful candidates. Johnson and Johnson (1987) noted that meaningful interactions contribute to enhance proficiency in one language as it is the medium by which the speaker can understand as in job interviews. They also noted that social-interaction strategies could contribute significantly to the development of non-native-speakers' (NNS) proficiency. Employers in Malaysia are hiring employees who are not only qualified in various fields of studies but also those who are proficient. Further studies can be conducted by using communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; 1983) on grammar and pragmatics associated with career development and systems theory framework (Patton & McMahon, 1999; 2006)

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Table 1***Definitions of Social-Interaction Strategies and Sample occurrences***

No	Social-Interaction	Definitions and Sample Occurrences
1	Elaboration	Refers to provide more details, add more information to or explain something you have said clearly with examples by adding sentences or order to expand the discourse unit. Speaker 1: ...grandmother's house some more... Speaker 2: ...right before leaving? Speaker 1: ...yeah...somewhere she grew up and every... Speaker 2: ...so grandma's place it is then...
2	Facilitating the flow of conversation	Refers to an interlocutor uses promoters that encourage the continuation of the interaction. Speaker 1: ... I think you are wrong because... Speaker 2: ...you really think so? Why do you say that?
3	Responding	Refers to a speaker responding to a content-related question asked by an interlocutor or another. Such responses can include expressions of agreement or disagreement. Speaker 1: ...I have a kibbutz with a lot of money, so I stay. But in the other kibbutz... Speaker 2: ... I do not agree with you. I think...
4	Seeking information or an opinion	Refers an interlocutor asks for the speaker's opinion or seeks relevant or more detailed information. Speaker 1: ... I think that...there are no values today... Speaker 2: ... what do you mean by "values"?
5	Rephrasing/Paraphrase	Refers to efforts to rearticulate by highlighting favourable facets of an interlocutor's interaction where to strengthen them in an unconstructive interaction the hearer might regard this as an effort to evade interaction and disrespect of the validity of the dialogue to form a constructive impression of the interaction. Speaker 1: ... we can introduce our famous breakfast... Speaker 2: ...you mean our nasi lemak? Speaker 1: ... yeah...nasi lemak... Speaker 2: ...ok....

Source: *Social-Interaction Strategies* (Johnson & Johnson, 1987)

Table 2

Attempted Social-Interaction Strategies by Successful, Reserved, and Unsuccessful Candidates

Social-Interaction Strategies	Successful	Reserved	Unsuccessful
Elaboration	✓	✓	x
Facilitating flow of conversation	✓	x	x
Responding	✓	x	x
Seeking information or an opinion	✓	x	x
Rephrasing/Paraphrasing	✓	✓	x