



# Linking Discourse Strategies to Academic Performance

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Received: 11.03.2026 | Accepted: 03.04.2026 | Published: 08.04.2026

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.19468923](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19468923)

Abstract		Review Article
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This study examined the relationship between communication strategies and academic performance among students in an English as a Second Language (ESL) context. Specifically, it investigated the frequency of communication strategy use in speaking and listening and determined their association with students' performance in Purposive Communication. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design and involved 290 undergraduate students selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using an adapted version of the Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. Findings revealed that students demonstrated a very satisfactory level of academic performance and frequently used communication strategies in both speaking and listening. Strategies related to negotiation for meaning, fluency, and non-verbal communication were most commonly employed, indicating active engagement in communication. Correlation analysis showed a statistically significant but very weak relationship between communication strategies and academic performance in both speaking and listening. Strategies involving interaction and comprehension were positively associated with performance, while passive and avoidance strategies showed no significant relationship. The study highlights the importance of developing interactive and strategic communication skills in language instruction and recommends a more holistic approach to enhancing academic performance. These findings contribute to the understanding of communication strategies in ESL contexts and their role in higher education learning.

Keywords: communication strategies, academic performance, ESL learners, speaking strategies, listening strategies, discourse competence, purposive communication.

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## Introduction

Effective communication is fundamental to language proficiency, particularly among learners of English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL). In navigating the complexities of English, learners employ various communication strategies (CSs) such as paraphrasing, code-switching, and the use of

fillers to overcome linguistic limitations and sustain interaction (Yang et al., 2022). These strategies enable learners to convey meaning despite constraints in vocabulary and grammar, making them essential components of communicative competence.

Recent studies have examined the types and



determinants of communication strategies among language learners. For example, Pratama and Zainil (2020) found that pause fillers and hesitation devices were the most frequently used strategies among English majors, with language competence and communication apprehension influencing their use. Similarly, Wigati and Indriani (2021) identified appeal for assistance as a dominant strategy. In conversational contexts, Susilowati and Kusumaningtyas (2023) reported that stalling or time-gaining strategies were most prevalent, influenced by factors such as limited vocabulary and cognitive demands. In classroom settings, Azis et al. (2023) observed the use of strategies such as message abandonment, non-linguistic means, and clarification requests, often driven by comprehension difficulties. Moreover, Chou (2024) highlighted that limited lexical resources lead learners to adopt message reduction strategies, while communication confidence supports the use of social-affective strategies.

In the Philippine context, research on communication strategies remains limited. Ogayon et al. (2020) demonstrated that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) significantly enhances speaking competence, while Ancheta (2022) emphasized the role of digital tools in facilitating language learning strategies. Despite these contributions, most studies have focused on EFL contexts, with minimal attention to ESL settings where English is used more frequently in everyday communication.

This gap becomes more pronounced in light of recent educational reforms. With the implementation of the K–12 curriculum and CHED Memorandum Order No. 20, Series of 2013, the General Education Curriculum in Philippine higher education was restructured, reducing multiple English subjects into courses such as Purposive Communication. This shift assumes that students have already developed foundational communication skills in senior high school and are prepared to apply them in academic contexts. However, many learners continue to experience difficulties in speaking and listening, suggesting a gap between expected competencies and actual performance.

Given this context, communication strategies play a critical role in helping learners manage communication breakdowns, sustain interaction, and enhance comprehension. Thus, there is a need to examine how students utilize communication strategies in an ESL setting and how these relate to their academic performance. This study aims to explore the communication strategies employed by learners in speaking and listening and to determine their relationship with academic performance, thereby contributing to the improvement of language instruction in higher education.

## Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between communication strategies and academic performance, as well as differences in strategy use across selected profile variables. The respondents consisted of 290 undergraduate students enrolled in Purposive Communication at Quirino State University – Diffun Campus during the academic year 2025–2026. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across different academic programs.

Data were collected using a survey questionnaire adapted from the Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) developed by Nakatani (2006), a validated instrument designed to measure communication strategies in oral interaction. The questionnaire included two components: communication strategies in speaking (e.g., social affective, fluency-oriented, negotiation for meaning, and non-verbal strategies) and listening (e.g., negotiation for meaning, fluency-maintaining, scanning, and word-oriented strategies). The instrument was pilot tested and yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.862 for speaking and 0.915 for listening, indicating excellent internal consistency.

Data analysis involved the use of frequency and percentage for the respondents' profile, mean and standard deviation to determine the level of communication strategies, and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson  $r$ ) to determine the relationship between communication

strategies and academic performance. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including informed consent, voluntary participation,

confidentiality, and anonymity. The data collected were used solely for research purposes and reported objectively.

## Results and Discussions

Table 1. Academic Performance in Purposive Communication

Mean Grade	Std. Deviation	Description
1.94	0.447	Very Satisfactory

Legend: 1.0 – 1.62 *Excellent*  
 1.63 – 2.12 *Very Satisfactory*  
 2.13 – 2.37 *Satisfactory*  
 2.38 – 3.12 *Fair*

The respondents obtained a mean grade of 1.94 (SD = 0.447), interpreted as very satisfactory, indicating generally strong and consistent performance in Purposive Communication. The low standard deviation suggests minimal variability, implying that

most students achieved comparable levels of academic performance. This reflects that the respondents possess adequate communication competence expected in the course.

Table 2. Communication Strategies in Speaking

Strategies	Mean	SD	Description
1. Social Affective Strategies	2.89	.515	Often
2. Fluency-oriented Strategies	3.10	.581	Often
3. 'Negotiation for Meaning while Speaking' Strategies	3.24	.647	Often
4. Accuracy-oriented Strategies	2.96	.593	Often
5. 'Message Reduction and Alteration Strategies	3.04	.571	Often
6. Non-verbal Strategies while Speaking	3.12	.720	Often
7. 'Message Abandonment' Strategies	2.59	.653	Often
8. 'Attempt to Think in English' Strategies	2.90	.672	Often
Grand Mean	2.96	.449	Often

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 *Always*  
 2.50 – 3.24 *Often*  
 1.75 – 2.49 *Sometimes*  
 1.00 – 1.74 *Never*

Respondents frequently used communication strategies in speaking (M = 2.96). Strategies related to interaction and meaning negotiation were most prominent, particularly negotiation for meaning and non-verbal strategies, indicating that learners actively monitor understanding and sustain communication. In contrast, message abandonment

was least used, suggesting that learners tend to persist in communication rather than withdraw. These findings align with previous studies highlighting that learners prefer interactive strategies to maintain communication flow and overcome linguistic limitations (Zhou & Wei, 2021; Pratama & Zainil, 2020).

Table 3. Communication Strategies in Listening

Strategies	Mean	SD	Description
1. 'Negotiation for Meaning while Listening' Strategies	2.98	.609	Often
2. Fluency-maintaining Strategies	2.99	.538	Often
3. Scanning strategies	3.03	.576	Often
4. 'Getting-the-gist' Strategies	2.59	.607	Often
5. Non-verbal Strategies while Listening	3.07	.590	Often
6. 'Less-active-listener' Strategies	2.82	.666	Often
7. Word-oriented Strategies	3.01	.598	Often
Grand Mean	2.93	.448	Often

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Always  
 2.50 – 3.24 Often  
 1.75 – 2.49 Sometimes  
 1.00 – 1.74 Never

Similarly, respondents reported frequent use of listening strategies (M = 2.93). Non-verbal and scanning strategies were most commonly used, indicating reliance on contextual cues and key information processing. In contrast, getting-the-gist

strategies were less emphasized, suggesting that learners focus more on detailed understanding than general meaning. This reflects active engagement in listening, which is essential for comprehension in academic contexts (Wang & Treffers-Daller, 2022).

Table 4. Correlation Between Academic Performance and Speaking Strategies

Domain	r-value	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
1. Social Affective Strategies	0.232	< .001*	Weak	Reject Ho
2. Fluency-oriented Strategies	0.186	.001*	Very weak	Reject Ho
3. 'Negotiation for Meaning while Speaking' Strategies	0.188	.001*	Very weak	Reject Ho
4. Accuracy-oriented Strategies	0.080	.176	Very weak	Fail to reject Ho
5. 'Message Reduction and Alteration Strategies	0.169	.004*	Very weak	Reject Ho
6. Non-verbal Strategies while Speaking	0.151	.010*	Very weak	Reject Ho
7. 'Message Abandonment' Strategies	-0.083	.157	Very weak	Fail to reject Ho
8. 'Attempt to Think in English' Strategies	0.104	.077	Very weak	Fail to reject Ho
Overall	0.185	.002*	Very weak	Reject Ho

Legend: ±0.80 – ±1.00 Very strong correlation  
 ±0.60 – ±0.79 Strong correlation  
 ±0.40 – ±0.59 Moderate correlation  
 ±0.20 – ±0.39 Weak correlation  
 ±0.00 – ±0.19 Very weak correlation

A significant but very weak relationship was found between speaking strategies and academic performance (r = 0.185). Strategies related to interaction and communication flow, such as negotiation for meaning, fluency-oriented, and non-

verbal strategies, showed significant associations with performance. This suggests that learners who actively engage in communication tend to perform slightly better academically. However, strategies focused on accuracy or avoidance were not

significantly related, indicating that communicative effectiveness may be more critical than grammatical precision. These findings are consistent with studies showing that interaction-based strategies contribute

positively to academic outcomes, although their impact remains modest (Zhou & Wei, 2021; Zhang & Qin, 2022).

Table 5. Correlation between Academic Performance and Listening Strategies

Domain	r-value	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
1. 'Negotiation for Meaning while Listening' Strategies	0.116	.048*	Very weak	Reject Ho
2. Fluency-maintaining Strategies	0.211	< .001*	Weak	Reject Ho
3. Scanning strategies	0.172	.003*	Very weak	Reject Ho
4. 'Getting-the-gist' Strategies	0.026	.656	Very weak	Fail to reject Ho
5. Non-verbal Strategies while Listening	0.147	.012*	Very weak	Reject Ho
6. 'Less-active-listener' Strategies	0.079	.182	Very weak	Fail to reject Ho
7. Word-oriented Strategies	0.166	.005*	Very weak	Reject Ho
Overall	0.176	.003*	Very weak	Reject Ho

Legend:  $\pm 0.80 - \pm 1.00$  Very strong correlation  
 $\pm 0.60 - \pm 0.79$  Strong correlation  
 $\pm 0.40 - \pm 0.59$  Moderate correlation  
 $\pm 0.20 - \pm 0.39$  Weak correlation  
 $\pm 0.00 - \pm 0.19$  Very weak correlation

Similarly, listening strategies showed a significant but very weak relationship with academic performance ( $r = 0.176$ ). Strategies involving active comprehension and information processing, such as fluency-maintaining and scanning strategies, were significantly associated with performance. In contrast, passive strategies such as less-active listening and reliance on general understanding were not significant. This supports previous research indicating that active listening strategies, particularly those involving comprehension monitoring and attention to key information, are associated with better academic outcomes (Wang & Treffers-Daller, 2022; Zhang, 2021).

Overall, the findings indicate that while students frequently employ communication strategies, their relationship with academic performance is statistically significant but weak. This suggests that communication strategies support learning, particularly those involving active engagement, interaction, and comprehension, but they are not the sole determinants of academic success. These results reinforce the idea that

academic performance is influenced by multiple factors beyond communication strategies alone (Zhang & Qin, 2022).

In light of the findings, it is recommended that language teachers integrate activities that enhance communication strategies, particularly those related to negotiation for meaning, fluency, and non-verbal communication, while also promoting active listening practices such as focusing on key information and interpreting contextual cues. Instructional approaches should encourage persistence in communication rather than message abandonment and provide opportunities for interactive tasks such as discussions, role-playing, and presentations to strengthen communicative competence. Furthermore, given the weak relationship between communication strategies and academic performance, educators should also consider other factors influencing learning, including motivation, study habits, and learning environment. Future research is likewise recommended to explore this area further using larger samples, additional



variables, or qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into communication strategies in learning.

### Acknowledgement

The author would like to express her sincere and heartfelt gratitude to her thesis adviser, Dr. Ma. Theresa B. Valerio, for her invaluable expertise, insightful guidance, and unwavering support throughout the conduct of this research. The author also extends her deep appreciation to the faculty members of Quirino State University – Graduate School for their academic guidance, encouragement, and assistance, which greatly contributed to the completion of this study. Special acknowledgment is likewise given to Dr. Nelson D. Guray, statistician, for his technical expertise and invaluable assistance in the statistical analysis of the data.

Gratitude is also extended to the respondents whose cooperation and active participation were essential to the success of this research. Finally, the author expresses her deepest appreciation to her family and friends for their constant encouragement, patience, and understanding throughout this academic endeavor. This study would not have been completed without the collective support and contributions of these individuals.

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