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Communication strategies of English majors in Philippine classroom discourses: Basis for an enhancement module on strategic competence

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ABSTRACT

Both high and low language proficiency learners encounter communication issues, so they use verbal and nonverbal communication techniques to make up for communication failures brought on by performance factors or a lack of competence. This study described the communication strategies employed in the utterances of Filipino students in their classroom discourses as a basis for an enhancement module on strategic competence. Furthermore, it utilized a descriptive-quantitative approach. Third-year college students under the Bachelor in Secondary Education major in English program of four purposively selected higher education institutions in Region XII, the Philippines were the participants of the study, who were observed with video recordings. Transcription of students' utterances provided the data for analysis through the use of the taxonomy of communication strategies. Based on the results, English majors possess strategic competence as evidenced by their use of varied communication strategies, with *fillers* being the most lavishly employed. However, the analysis also conveyed that students incline to overuse three communication strategies *(use of fillers/hesitation devices, self-repetition, mumbling)* which resulted in observable message distortions, unsuccessful information transfers, and even total communication breakdowns. The results of this study became the basis to come up with an enhancement module on the strategic competence of English majors. The findings suggest that the proposed enhancement module on strategic competence be implemented in the selected higher education institutions in the Philippines and further studies on other aspects of communicative competence (linguistic, socio-linguistic, and discourse) be conducted with a more significant sample of students taking other courses and coming from various groups and ages.

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INTRODUCTION

Language learners are trained to apply fundamental conversational techniques in everyday conversations. However, the communicative competence of students cannot even meet the standards of their respective institutions (Kayad, 2015). Hence, this has become a challenge to countries aspiring to become developed nations and key players in the global economy. Their governments and educational landscapes must seek to develop the English communicative competence of their citizens (Kayad, 2015).

According to Ama (2022), this conundrum in the growth of communicative competence might be grounded in the idea that learning a second language is never simple, and that learning English as a second language is significantly more difficult. Because English is not the national language of many African nations, English language learners in these nations encounter several difficulties. The difficulties encountered while learning English as a second language are similar to those encountered when studying English as a foreign language. Likewise, Rahayu (2015) conducted research in Indonesia based on the observation that despite being urged to use English every day, students nevertheless occasionally have difficulty speaking it. It was discovered that they still do not recognize erroneous pronunciation and grammatical patterns. Additionally, they have little opportunity to practice, little motivation, a fear of making mistakes, and environmental variables.

The study by Lasala (2014) in the Philippines concluded that students who had little to no instruction in reading and classroom interaction became less skilled in English. In addition, Sandigan (2018) argues that even though English is regarded as a second language in the nation, Filipino college students still struggle with it. According to Reyes et al. (2021), many Filipino students still struggle to use the language for conversational purposes. Their research showed that among the difficulties indigenous students face conversing in English is their perception that they lack certain language skills, such as a limited vocabulary. Their difficulties also stem from their uncertainty and insecurity. All these situations suggest that one of the factors driving the ongoing need for English language instruction and learning is the development of communicative competence.

According to Canale (1983), in his fundamental work, one must consider the four competence areas (grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence) to achieve the growth of one's communicative competence. Since each of the aforementioned competence areas is "important" and interconnected, an improvement in one area will result in interactions with other components that will result in an improvement in total communicative competence (Savignon, 2002). Albeit the four competence areas are reasonably “interconnected” with one another, Canale (1983) himself stressed the importance of giving attention to this area as it is hugely an essential component in the development of second language learners’ communicative competence in general. Moreover, Anil (2015) and Malasit and Sarobol (2013) claim that to be globally competitive and to build a strong ground for total communicative competence, one must be primarily strategic in communication. The emphasis of communication strategies (CSs), according to Abunawas (2012), is on boosting learners' capacity to communicate effectively in real-world circumstances, where both high language proficiency learners and those with poor language proficiency encounter communication issues. Students tend to prioritize developing their strategic competence above the other three competence domains (grammatical, discourse, and sociocultural) to address language weaknesses in the target language and ultimately improve communicative competence as a whole (Bialystok, 2001; Malasit & Sarobol, 2013). Likewise, strategic competence in speaking has remained unclear concerning its definition since several definitions have been offered and varied greatly across different theoretical models and empirical studies (Seong, 2014), thus research attention on this is needed.

From this perspective comes the perplexity about what communication strategies to manifest strategic communicative competence are being employed by students in the classroom, and how often second language learners apply CSs in the classroom communicative context to ascertain the success in the communication process. There have been several researchers who dealt with strategic competence by looking into the employment of communication strategies (Tiono & Sylvia, 2004; Ya-ni, 2007; Malasit & Sarobol, 2013; Hmaid, 2014; etc.), but none have been conducted yet focusing on the strategic competence of future English teachers in the locale of this

study. For that reason, the researcher was driven to pursue this research endeavour, on top of his vast interest in conceiving realities of situations concerning communication. The results of this study could provide him and other English language gurus with the current status of the usage of communication strategies since the English majors, the future language teachers who will be role models of the target language, are concerned. It could also move teachers to introduce or employ varied communicative activities to promote practices for the improvement of students' strategic competence. The same study could also make students understand that errors are inevitable in language acquisition. However, with communication strategies that showcase their strategic competence, they would be able to avoid communication breakdowns, convey successfully their message to their interlocutors, and thus build high self-esteem themselves. In general, the results of this study became a basis for a proposed enhancement of strategic competence to address their needs in preparation for the vast demands of the teaching profession ahead.

OBJECTIVES

The study aimed to describe the communication strategies used by students in their classroom discourses. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What communication strategies are employed by English majors students in their classroom discourses?
2. Based on the results, what enhancement module can be proposed for the enhancement of the students' strategic competence?

METHODS

Design

This research study was descriptive-quantitative in nature that made use of statistics. The chosen method was deemed appropriate as the study involved collecting data to answer questions concerning the use of communication strategies of English majors in selected higher education institutions in the Philippines. It determined and reported the most frequently employed strategies and led to the proposal of an enhancement module on strategic competence.

Locales and participants

The study was conducted in the second semester of S.Y. 2017 – 2018 at four selected higher education institutions (HEIs) in Region XII, the Philippines. The participants constituted 22 third-year college students from HEI 1, 24 from HEI 2, 27 from HEI 3, and 33 from HEI 4, with a total of 106 third-year college students taking up a Bachelor in Secondary Education major in English (BSEd- English) program.

Instrument

The researcher used an observation guide adopted from the taxonomy of communication strategies of Tarone (1980), Faerch and Kasper (1983), and Dornyei and Scott (1997) as used in the study of Malasit and Sarobol (2013). The study also made use of video recordings which were transcribed for analysis. Under avoidance strategies, a student showcases topic avoidance (TA), if he/she avoids talking about a concept; message abandonment (MA), if he/she stops in mid-utterances. Under compensatory strategies, intra-actional and interactional strategies may be observed. Furthermore, for intra-actional strategies, a student may be seen possessing word coinage (WC), if he/she makes up a non-existing new word to communicate; code-switching (CS), if he/she switches the language to L1 without bothering to translate; foreignizing (For), if he/she adjusts L1 to L2 phonologically and/or morphologically; use of non-linguistic means (Uon), if he/she replaces a word with non-verbal cues; self-repair (SR), if he/she makes a self - correction of his or her own speech; mumbling (Mum), if he/she mumbles with inaudible voice; use of all-purpose words (UA), if he/she extends a general, empty item to the

exact word; approximation (App), if he/she substitutes the L2 term with the item which shares the same meaning; circumlocution (Cir), if he/she describes the properties of the object instead of the exact target item; literal translation (LT), if he/she translates word for word from L1 to L2; use of fillers/hesitation devices (UF), if he/she uses filling words to gain time to think; self- repetition (SR), if he/she repeats words or phrases of his or her own speech; other –repetition (OR), if he/she repeats something the interlocutor said to gain time; and/or omission (Omi), if he/she leaves a gap when not knowing a word or continue as if it was understandable. On the other hand, for interactional strategies a student may be seen possessing asking for repetition (AR), if he/she asks for repetition when having comprehension difficulty; appeal for help (AH), if he/she requests direct or indirect help from the interlocutor; clarification request (CR), if he/she requests for more explanation to solve a comprehension difficulty; asking for confirmation (AC), if he/she requests confirmation that something is understood correctly; comprehension check (CC), if he/she asks questions to check interlocutor's understanding; and/or expressing non-understanding (EN), if he/she shows one's own inability to understand messages.

Ethical consideration

The researcher sought approval from the presidents of selected HEIs in Region XII for the conduct of the study. Upon the approval of the letter of request, the researcher presented it to the deans of the colleges. The deans then identified the names of the English teachers whose classes were subjected to the researcher's observation. The researcher next went to the identified instructors to inform them about the study's data requirements for analysis. The researcher assured each participant per class that their names would be kept private before beginning any observation. Additionally, the researcher obtained the participants' written agreement to show their voluntary involvement and use of their recorded interviews.

Data collection

The researcher requested the teacher to strategize activities that could make the students speak and discuss in class. Before the start of any class observation, the researcher made sure that a digital video camera was in great functionality. The researcher did not orient the students on his purpose to observe their communication strategies but rather asked them to be as natural as they could during the entire duration of an hour and a half of class observation so as not to spoil the data for the study. A schedule of classroom observation, as per agreed upon by both the identified teachers and the researcher, was followed. Finally, after all the classes were observed, video recordings were analysed using the observation guide adopted by the researcher.

Data analysis

The researcher counted the communication techniques and used descriptive statistics, such as frequency and percentage (taken by dividing the number of total occurrences of each strategy by the total number of communication strategies employed) to report on the use of communication strategies. For a number of times, the researcher watched the video recordings and read the transcripts of the classroom discussions to ensure that the data were accurate. He was guided in his analysis of the communicative strategies by the significant indicators that each strategy exhibited by the taxonomy of communication strategies developed by Tarone (1980), Faerch and Kasper (1983), and Dornyei and Scott (1997) and used in the study of Malasit and Sarobol (2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

There were two (2) major types of communication strategies (CSs) named in this study: *avoidance strategies* [covering *topic avoidance* (TA) and *message abandonment* (MA)] and *compensatory strategies* [covering *intra-actional strategies* and *interactional strategies*]. The following data show the communications strategies of English majors, arranged from the most employed to the least employed.

Communication Strategies Used by English majors

Based on the findings of the study, it was evident that English majors have strategic competence through the communication strategies that they employed when communicating during the whole duration of their respective class sessions. These communication strategies were seen to have helped avoid total breakdowns in communication, but they were also observed as a majority to have been used *inappropriately*, that is, structures have been found problematic several times in students' discourses.Out of 835 employed CSs, *using fillers (UF)* topped the list with a total of 380 occurrences or 45.51%. The most common fillers were *ahh* and *amm*. For instance, a student was observed to have repeated *amm* five times, and one *ahh* all in one same sentence. She even opted to start her statement with an *amm* as she shared her points of view regarding the discussion. For example:

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 1	"... *ammm* the people in Marawi *amm* decided to move on and *amm* face new new beginning for them to *amm* to to stand up again…without without without fears because *amm* now I think...military *amm* are there to protect and… *amm* as we we saw the news *amm* in the past few months *amm* the Marawi is *amm* ..."

Considering this, English majors are considered strategic while communicating through the use of fillers that helped them gain more time to construct and finish their sentences. However, English majors, upon the use of *fillers*, were observed to be uneasy via the shaking of head and hands, rolling of eyes, and stamping of feet just to fill pauses between words and sentences constructed. Asher (2014) asserts that fillers are an obvious sign of a speaker's slow and unsure delivery. He advised removing as many of these filler words from speech as you can. He continued by saying that a person might sound more certain simply by avoiding fillers. The use of filler words should be avoided, or at least minimized, according to Asher (2014). Whatever the cause, preparedness is the best treatment for filler words. Through preparation and practice, a speaker of the English language must lower anxiety and choose the appropriate ways to express thoughts. *Self-repetition (SF)* follows with a total 205 occurrences or 24.55% from all four observed classroom sessions. According to the videos, students tended to speak with words or phrases being repeated and to employ some hand and head gestures alongside the repetitions incurred.

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 2	"*Line* 4…*line* 4, ahhh, *line* 4 contains ahhh, four ahhh nouns ahh the half ahh first half is about the ahhh the line 1 and then *thethe*…"

Statements made by English majors during classroom discourse manifest that they have the tendency of repeating words and phrases when speaking. These statements of students, therefore, confirm they repeat themselves because there are issues with planning, there is inadequate activation of the next element, or there is extended activation of one part. Repetition is a type of speech disfluency, according to Tree (2005), that can negatively impact how well a message is understood and cause the brain to work harder while processing a new message. With 93 occurrences or 11.14%, *mumbling (Mum)* appears to be the third most maximized communication strategy. Students were observed to have a tendency to mutter inaudibly words or phrases whose correct form the speaker is uncertain about. There were students observed to have mumbled more than three times in their whole speeches.

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 3	"… So for me, (*mumbles*) my English language… yes it is improving because (*mumbles*) ammm studied it, I did amm a better but not that best job (*mumbles*) but then amm I have of course… to become successful English teacher (*mumbles*)…"

English majors were observed to have employed *mumbling*, as a communication strategy, to prolong the time for thinking and self-evaluation, but it appeared that anxiousness on their part was present. Alden (2008) in the Wisconsin State Journal claims that people mumble to lengthen the time to think; the presence of which also indicates sloppy language skills, social anxiety, or a medical problem. She continues, "Unless the listener understands why the speaker is not talking clearly, the situation is ripe for misinterpretation." Marshal (2013) attests that mumbling is a bad habit, particularly in a professional or educational environment. She continued that mumbling can instantly lose credibility when one does not speak clearly and plainly. This claim is supported by Morris (2019) asserts that mumbling can make it harder for others to understand the words and meaning of a speaker's message by giving listeners the impression that the speaker does not genuinely believe what they are saying. As a result, their message is likely not worth hearing, according to Morris (2019). Additionally, for her, the purpose of communication is to get an idea across or to motivate somebody to do something, thus clarity is important to have an impact. The next most maximized CS observed is *self-repair (SR)* with 93 occurrences or 11.14%. This is the strategy in which the subjects clarify what they had said before so that the audience might grasp what they meant; for example: "This sentence, ma'am, is *syntec- syntactically* correct but ammm pragmatically wrong." The example shows that the student mispronounced the second syllable of the word *syntactically*, but right away employed *SR*.

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 4	"…generally girls are ahhhamm *geni-generally* girls loves shopping, giggling and to shop."

Self-repair (SR) was seen in students at four HEIs because they may have been too anxious to speak in front of the class, causing them to construct sentences incorrectly quite a few times. They fixed their errors as soon as they discovered they had made them after producing the words or sentences. According to the data, the majority of the errors in this self-repair method are pronunciation errors (*the teachers are appru--approachable as well),* pronoun mistakes *(the one who is not revised--which is not revised),* and grammatical mistakes *(for a 60-year old man to to bore-- to bear).* This demonstrated that the students were knowledgeable of the appropriate forms that they were supposed to develop. The students' use of the *self-repair* technique also resulted from their need to clarify their earlier statements, which led them to believe that a word modifier was required. From what was observed, one example is "*talk to any living person- famous living person, I will talk to Pope Francis*". It might be because the students would have time to prepare their next sentence if they did this. Self-repair, as defined by Schegloff et al. (1977), is a process that takes effect during a conversation to address issues with speaking, hearing, and comprehending the discourse. It is a remedy for difficulties that arise during interactive language usage. A replacement or correction on audible errors or blunders is included, as well as methods for mutual comprehension like word searches. Additionally, Drew (1997) contends that one way to correct inadvertent verbal errors in communication is by self-repair. Thus, it is definitely important to provide English language learners with solid repair knowledge so they can develop their spoken engagement abilities in the event of communication failures. The next communication strategy is code-switching (CS) with 50 occurrences or 5.99%. Students were observed to have employed such a communication strategy by speaking in languages like Hiligaynon and Filipino. In one instance, a student started his sentence using Hiligaynon. *"Tama man si Jeric (mumbles) hindi siya parallel in that sense ma'am kay dreaming, talking, hugging. Sorry ma'am, ammm, Jeric in his own perspective ma'am is correct in the sense that …"* Notice that in the middle, he said sorry, for his teacher told him to speak in English. He then continued his speech in English without any other proceeding code-switching. It means that he does not have any difficulty speaking both languages.

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 5	"the news must be timely or *napapanahon*."

Students were observed to change their medium of communication from the target language to their mother language. They were able to express more of what they wanted to convey through the use of code-switching as a

communication strategy. This goes to show that students are well-versed, well-educated, and competent in terms of the languages employed. According to Suleiman (1999), code-switching is regarded as an honorable phenomena and a mark of education and multilingualism. This is designed to demonstrate that he is a well-educated individual who is proficient in at least two languages. According to Shabt (2007), some people code-switch to appear sophisticated and snobbish. Additionally, during a speaking event, participants may code switch to talk about a certain subject. A multilingual person may like talking about a certain subject in one language over another in specific circumstances. Similar to this, a speaker may choose to communicate in more than one language, depending on the subject. Here, code-switching, as employed by English majors from four various HEIS, is a flexible tactic that may be used to suit the complicated communication needs of the interlocutors or between them. The next most used communication strategy is the *use of non-linguistic means (Uon).* Students were observed to have replaced a word or phrase with non-verbal cues like hand gestures. This CS was used fourteen times (1.68%). As an example:

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 6	"amm for me, yes, ma'am, because amm (*rolls hand*) ahh because it re- it affects it affects **(***widens eyes***)** to the especially to the here in Mindanao.

In these situations, students persuaded their teachers by making eye contact, smiling, and moving their hands. They valued the technique of using nonlinguistic means greatly since it allowed them to communicate their ideas. Additionally, non-linguistic methods techniques have made it simple for the teacher to comprehend them. A crucial point to keep in mind, according to Syamsudin (2016), is that second language learners may employ non-linguistic means strategies or some expressions like hand gestures, eye contact, and smiles during the conversation because doing so may make them feel more at ease and enable them to speak fluently. With a total of 10 occurrences each or 1.20%, *use of all-purpose words (UA) and other repetition (OR)* end up tie next. It was observed ten times that students expanded a broad, meaningless item to the precise term, thus manifesting the use of UA. For instance, one student made use of the term "something" in his speech:

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 7	"...we have English for speci-some specific pur-purposes then I think that theee (rolls hands) *something* the difference of our previous English..."

Another student also used another example of UA which is "what do you call it". The following example shows it:

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 8	"... talking about successful or yes successful *what do you call that* of becoming a successful professional…"

The aforementioned claims demonstrate that learners are able to fill in lexical gaps in contexts where specific terms are missing through the usage of all-purpose words by English majors. Language speakers may be heard employing terms like "thing," "something," "what-do-you-call-it," and "what-is-it" in a variety of communication situations, according to Tiono and Sylvia (2004). Additionally, they assert that the interlocutors' excessive usage of this CS may be equivalent to a vocabulary deficit. Another communication strategy observed during classroom observations is other–repetition *(OR)*. Students were observed to repeat a word or the sentence per se their interlocutor said to gain time, or at least clarify the interlocutor's spoken statement.

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 9	*"(The teacher asks: Why do you need to study English?) Why do you need to* **study**

	English? So amm as my answer I put a check in front of the number 2 option which is Success for Future Profession…"

These statements prove that using *other –repetition (OR)* manifests that the English majors are strategic in communication. Tiono and Silvia (2004) express that though OR is employed because speakers forget words or structures they actually know well due to their nervousness, they still find ways to prevent silence while considering the suitable wording to make it appear like the conversation is going well. Umar (2011) supports this claim when he said that to negotiate meaning as well as to avoid communication breakdowns, speakers of the language may opt to use *OR*. According to him, employment of such CS shows commitment to completing the task, and a sort of feedback given by the speaker in response to their interlocutor's expressions as a means of maintaining the flow of interaction. Following is *Omission (Omi)* with a total of seven occurrences or just 0.84% out of 835 employed communication strategies. *Omi* is the strategy used by students who left a pause when they couldn't think of a word to say or how to continue in a way that made sense.

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 10	"...it ahhh represents the ahhh word can be found or (*silence*) **_____.** Yes, and then enemy and foe…"

It can be noted that students who employed *Omi* as a communication strategy lacked the needed word, thus showing insufficient vocabulary. On the other hand, it may also show that they are strategic in finishing their sentence, while not opting of abandoning their sentences despite the fact that they do not know, or at least have forgotten, the exact word/s needed. It then resulted in the senselessness of some parts of the constructed sentences. A second language speaker's conscious intentional omission—where the speaker is aware of the omission and made it on purpose—contributes to the loss of meaningful information when the speaker does not understand a particular lexical item or concept or is unable to come up with an appropriate translation in the target language, according to Omar et al. (2009). Next in line is one of the avoidance strategies: *message abandonment (MA)*. There were six occurrences observed, thus creating 0.72% of the total CSs. This CS was observed when the learner stops in the mid-utterance because s/he is unable to continue. In one case, one student was sharing her views in class. She was near the end, unfortunately despite thinking and trying hard, as shown in the video, she was not able to finish the thought of her statement. Hence, it was observed that her desired message was not completely conveyed. The following example indicates this:

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 11	"…if I'm going to vote… it depends on how he will will….to his program, or the platform that he has…. ammm or deserve as that position…ammm.. I mean vote him or her because it's not being it's not **_____."**

The interaction is negatively impacted by students' usage of MA. By using avoidance techniques like MA, students stay away from uncharted territory, put off dealing with communication issues, and digress from the point they were trying to make (Huang, 2010). According to Brown (2000), a student who has phonological trouble and cannot think of a term or grammatical structure wants to avoid using it. When asked a specific question, students who find the response difficult to articulate will remain mute, which results in message avoidance (Ya-ni, 2007). Notwithstanding, results show that English majors from four selected HEIs show negligible number (0.72%) of incurred message abandonment as a communication strategy. The result shows that the majority of students did not shy away from explaining challenging words or sentences. Instead, they persisted in attempting to explain them or communicate their ideas. Now following are *asking for help (AH)* and *clarification request (CR)*. Both with two occurrences or 0.24%. *Appeal for help (AH)* was seen to have been used by two students who requested direct or

indirect help from the interlocutor, while *clarification request (CR)* was observed in two students who requested more explanations to solve a comprehension difficulty.

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 12	"…I believe, we don't memorize everything about our own own, ano 'yan, yung mga words *(looks at the teacher) (the teacher says "parts of speech")*, yes the parts of speech…"

In this example, a student employed *AH* by indirectly asking for reinforcement from the teacher. She was explaining her thought when suddenly she could not remember something she was trying to drive at. She then looked at her teacher, as if asking for the right term. The teacher understood the eye contact, hence she said *"parts of speech"*—the term which the speaker was exactly wanting to remember.

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 13	"…so maybe in my perspective so so (mumbles) *(asks seatmates)* there's something wrong the order of …"

In the above example, a student employed *CR* by trying to clarify something from his seatmate. After asking, he was then able to speak well about his thoughts, and evidently showed a deeper understanding of the topic. According to certain experts, interactional methods have a significant impact (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991; Ellis 1994). Interactional communication techniques that are frequently used in the negotiation of meaning include asking for assistance (AH) and requesting clarification (CR). They provide students the chance to converse in L2, assist them increase their understanding, and acquire new terminology. The responsibilities of participants in encounters that result in meaning negotiation, according to Yule and Tarone (1991), may be adequately characterized within a communication strategy framework that emphasizes cooperative moves by both speakers. Meanwhile, *word coinage (WC)* and *circumlocution (Cir)* follow. They both have one (1) occurrence with an equivalent of 0.12%. A student was found to have exhibited *WC* when she made up a non-existing new word to communicate. In the statement, "… make it safer for the people and their *safetiness*", it is obvious that the term "safetiness" does not exist in any English dictionary, however, the student opted to use it to, at the very least, just to finish her sentence. Consequently, according to the video, no one in the class reacted to the term "safetiness". It implies that students understood the point of the speaker, despite the non-existence of such a term in the dictionary. Language proficiency is the most important predictor of the usage of a certain communication technique, according to Bialystok (1997). Ellis (1984) discovered through his longitudinal research that high proficiency learners were more likely to use language-based methods or compensatory tactics, such as word coinage. *Circumlocution (Cir)* was also employed once by a student. She uttered more than she needed to in order to get her point through. She modified preverbal messages involving many chunks more specifically. As soon as the speaker became aware that there was a communication barrier with the listener, he avoided utilizing the suitable target language item or structure by describing the characteristics of the object or activity. She could have at least used minimal words and headed straight to the point.

Extract No.	Sample Extract
Extract 34	"…It doesn't mean that we become a professional, you are already successful. You still have to look for a job. Of course, ammm *becoming a professional when you're graduated you are already a professional but without having the job I think you will you cannot proceed to yourself as a successful one…*

Circumlocution is particularly helpful for filling up communication gaps so that the dialogue may continue. Additionally, circumlocution serves as a strategy to deal with problematic language by facilitating the involvement

of compensatory measures, yet it would always be best if a language speaker has a vast range of vocabulary of the target language to avoid circumlocution, if possible (Campillo, 2008). Meanwhile, eight (8) communication strategies got 0%. No occurrence was recorded or no student showcased the following communication strategies: *topic avoidance (TA), foreignizing (For), approximation (App), literal translation (LT), asking for repetition (AR), asking for confirmation (AC), comprehension check (CC),* and *expressing non-understanding (EN).*

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, salient findings were found showing that third-year English majors used varied communication strategies that projected their strategic competence. In line with that, nevertheless, this study came up with the findings that BSEd- English III students from the aforesaid HEIs have the inclination to overuse three communication strategies i.e., *use of fillers/hesitation devices, self-repetition,* and *mumbling* which resulted in message distortions, unsuccessful information transfers, and even total communication breakdowns. While the use of these three communication strategies could manifest one's strategic competence, it does not necessarily follow that they are communicatively competent or able to successfully deliver the intended message. Despite the presence of these communication strategies in one's statement, they may just end up overusing the said strategies and thus promote communication breakdowns, e.g., misunderstandings and distractions. This then pointed out the glaring call for action to address the current status of the usage of communicative strategies in the classroom setting. As a result, the researcher concluded that there was an undeniable need for higher education institutions in the region to develop strategic competence among English majors. Hence, as an output based on this study, a module on the enhancement of strategic competence is presented. Such a module envisions selected higher education institutions (HEIs) in Region XII to become competent English-speaking communities manned with highly commendable English language learners whose competencies in communication, particularly on strategic competence, are above-averagely creditable. Being such, these institutions shall eventually be renowned generators of knowledge and skills useful for meaningful communication and efficient language instruction for the whole country and its people. Furthermore, it is designed generally for the empowerment of language learners to develop more meaningful and effective voices in this communal conversation and specifically for the development of strategic competence among English majors through the application of communication principles and praxes in order to prepare them to become proficient and exceptional English language experts in the future, professionals with corresponding roles in a fast-paced society, and productive citizens of the competitive world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's results and inferences made therefrom, the researcher recommends that (1) the enhancement module on strategic competence from this study be implemented in the four higher education institutions as mentioned in this study, and a continuous evaluation and monitoring system be put in place to ensure real success as expected, and (2) related studies, not just on strategic competence but all also on other areas of communicative competence (discourse, socio-linguistic, and grammatical), be conducted and explored not only among English majors but also among students from other disciplines. Providing a novel contribution to the body of knowledge, the study showed the current status of learners' usage of communication strategies in classroom discourse to move teachers to introduce or employ varied communicative activities to promote practices for the improvement of students' strategic competence. Correspondingly, with the study's proposed enhancement module on strategic competence, teachers could be guided on what and how to teach communication strategies. Furthermore, this study could allow English language learners to understand that errors are inevitable in language acquisition and that with communication strategies that showcase their strategic competence, they will be able to avoid communication breakdowns, convey successfully their message to their interlocutors, and thus build high self-esteem in themselves towards reaching communicative competence.

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