



## **Exploring Communicative Strategies in ESL Classroom: Perspective of ESL Learners in Focus**

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DOI: 10.53103/cjlls.v4i1.147

### **Abstract**

This qualitative study aimed to investigate the different strategies employed by ESL learners in developing their communicative competence. Linguistic corpora were gathered through in depth interview and focus group discussion. Fifteen (15) participants were purposely selected as it deemed essential to provide rich elaboration of the topic under scrutiny. These learners Themes emerged are interaction with peers, engaging in multimodal discourse, role of self esteem for language development, active learning through task-based approach. Students to attain communicative competence should have various strategic investments of effort and time as well resources. The use of engaging activities in a language classroom essentially helps learners to practice with their peers and learn from more knowledgeable individuals.

Keywords: Communicative Strategies, ESL Classroom, ESL Learners

### **Introduction**

Communication is required for social participation (Yorkston & Baylor, 2010). People with speech, language, voice, and/or hearing problems face challenges to participation daily due to communication issues. Regardless of cause, all these communication issues are known to have a significant impact on a person's ability to participate in life, with several studies revealing serious negative repercussions (e.g., Eadie et al., 2006). These constraints differ depending on the nature and severity of the communication difficulty, as well as personal and environmental circumstances (Baylor & Darling-White, 2020; Eadie et al., 2006; Hughes & Orange, 2007; Threats, 2007; Yorkston & Baylor, 2010).

Students' participation in classroom discussions is critical for building their communicative competence. With the spread and development of the English language (Fang, 2010), it is now widely utilized as a language of instruction around the world (Gladday, 2011). The term communicative competence first appeared in discussions of second/foreign language ability in the early 1970s. Although the phrase itself was novel,

the fundamental notion it represented was simple: if the goal of language study is language usage, then language competency development should be led and evaluated by the learner's capacity to communicate (Savignon, 2017). Canale and Swain's (1980, 1981) theoretical framework/model originally featured three components, namely three domains of knowledge and skills: grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. Canale (1983, 1984) shifted some of the elements of sociolinguistic competence to an additional, fourth component of the framework, which he dubbed "discourse of competence" in the modified version of that framework. Grammatical competence, according to Canale and Swain (1980, 1981) and Canale (1983, 1984), refers to mastering the (verbal or nonverbal) linguistic code, which includes knowledge of morphological and syntactic rules, vocabulary, semantic rules, and phonological and orthographic rules. Possession of this competency allows the use of information and abilities required for interpreting and pronouncing the utterance's literal meaning. The definition of sociolinguistic competence in Canale and Swain's theoretical framework is based on Hymes' reflections on the appropriateness of language use in various social situations, so it is defined as knowledge of social rules and conventions that underpin the appropriate understanding and use of language in various sociolinguistic and sociocultural contexts. Canale (1983, 1984) defined discourse competence as the ability to connect and interpret forms and meanings to create meaningful integrity in spoken or written texts of various genres. Strategic competence is the knowledge of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that are used to compensate for communication interruptions caused by limitations in the actual communication event or insufficient competence in one or more components of communication competence (Bagariy & Djigunoviĭ, 2007).

Many studies are currently being conducted to investigate the communicative competence among students, but failed to discuss several points especially those that involve First year BSED-English students. Since there were only a limited number of researchers who did the same study, this study gave important and unique information about the research subject. The researcher hopes to provide information that other similar research lacks, as well as a comprehensive understanding of the communication competence of the students. This study is necessary considering that communication is a vital part in how students learn. It can be a resource for them as they investigate the communicative competence of the learners. This research is considered important because it will help numerous people and organizations address the main issue it is trying to address. Society is anticipated to gain knowledge and information from this qualitative study on how communicative competence affects how students gain knowledge. This research also provides a foundation for understanding how students manage to attain information based on how they communicate.

### Related Literature

**Grammatical Competence:** The nature of both form-focused and meaning-focused classroom activity's impact to language development is still being researched. The best balance of these activities in any given instructional situation is undoubtedly determined by learner age, the nature and length of the instructional sequence, opportunities for language contact outside of the classroom, teacher preparation, and other considerations. However, data strongly support the coupling of form-focused exercises with meaning-focused experience for the development of communicative competence. Grammar is crucial, and students appear to pay close attention to grammar when it connects to their communicative needs and experiences. Explicit attention to form should not be restricted to sentence-level morphosyntactic elements. Broader discourse aspects, sociolinguistic laws of appropriation, and communication techniques themselves should all be considered (Savignon, 2017).

**Sociolinguistic Competence:** Berns (1990; as cited in Savignon, 2017), a sociolinguist who has focused on norms in the teaching of English as an international language, emphasizes that knowing the sociocultural settings of language usage is required for the definition of communicative competence appropriate for learners. Furthermore, selecting a methodology fit for achieving communicative competence necessitates an appreciation of sociocultural differences in learning styles.

**Discourse Competence:** Oral discourse practices are characterized as multi-unit turns that are dynamically co-constructed, contextualized, and functionally oriented towards genres such as narration, explanation, or debate (Bergmann & Luckmann, 1995; as cited in Erath et al., 2018). As a result, discourse practices rely on patterns available in the knowledge of speech communities to handle communication-related problems such as imparting or building knowledge (explanations) or negotiating divergent validity claims (argumentation). This definition provides a means of distinguishing distinct discourse patterns and so provides an opportunity for further clarifying the linguistic demands of classroom speaking.

**Strategical Competence:** Tarone (1983; as referenced in Alem, 2020) defines strategic competency as the ability to transfer information to a listener and accurately analyze information received; it also includes the use of communication strategies to handle difficulties that develop during the process of delivering this information. Paraphrasing, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance (words, structure, theme), guessing, changes in register and style, message modification, and Dr. Canale (1983; as cited in Bagari & Djigunovi, 2007) added that strategic competence can also be used to improve communication effectiveness. This component of communication competence differs from the others in that it is not a sort of stored knowledge, and it also contains non-cognitive qualities such as self-confidence, willingness to take chances, and so on. Nonetheless, it is in a mutually beneficial connection with all the components, allowing

students to successfully address any weaknesses in any of the remaining three domains of competency in communicative engagement. A lack of strategic competence may explain for situations in which students with strong grammar and a diverse vocabulary become trapped and unable to carry out their communication aim (Alem, 2020).

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Participants**

The study's key participants mainly include the Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English. In this study, data were collected from fifteen (15) students who were subjected for in-depth interview and focus group discussion.

#### **Research Design**

This study utilized qualitative design as it explores on the world's reality specifically the experiences of ESL learners in developing their communicative competence (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Additionally, the study applied descriptive qualitative research, which aim to comprehend the phenomenon and derive meaning from the occurrence by looking into the participants' stories. This approach is often oriented around the goal of imparting significance to individuals' lives as told through their own personal narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Additionally, one of the precepts underlying all qualitative investigations are the participants' awareness of themselves as source of the studied phenomenon.

A qualitative approach suits this study since it only wanted to look at and analyze the stories of the people who are various strategies to develop their communicative competence.

#### **Research Instrument**

Linguistic corpora were acquired through interview and focus group discussion. Creswell (2007) argued that data sources are often obtained using a variety of methods, including interviews, observation, and documentation. Additionally, Creswell (2013) noted that qualitative researchers engage in a sequence of activities to gather the data necessary for this investigation. The data sources for this project were First Year BSED-English students of UMTC as research participants. Boyce and Neale (2006) claimed that in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that entails conducting in-depth individual interviews with a small number of participants to ascertain their perspectives on a certain idea, program, or issue.

These participants were purposely selected to ensure that all the key participants held the authentic experiences of being ESL learners in developing communicative

competence were gathered.

### Data Analysis

The transcribed responses from the participants were categorized and grouped according to themes and core ideas are provided as elaboration of the identified themes. Data analysis implies logical and systematic process of stating the key points of the gathered data. This is to address the research purpose and identify the patterns, the connections and themes generated from the data source. Bruscia (2005) states that a good data analysis is dependent on upholding firm deliberation on the research fundamental issues.

### Result And Discussion

This section provides the themes and core ideas based from the gathered responses of the participants. Table shows the essential themes and core ideas of students' strategies in developing their communicative competence.

Table 1. Students' strategies in developing their communicative competence

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Social Interaction with Peers	<p>Encourages students to interact and allows them to learn from peers.</p> <p>Interacting and sharing ideas to peers help students attain fluency</p> <p>As students ask for assistance, and seek for answers, they get the knowledge that they want.</p> <p>Through collaborating with peers, students can effectively communicate and comprehend deeply.</p>
Employing various communicative styles	<p>Developing different types of communication strategies that is useful to be an effective communicator.</p> <p>Making connections, sharing different perspectives, and build strong social relationships.</p> <p>Enhances language and writing skills that enables students to expand their knowledge.</p>
Use of self-talk and private speech	<p>Private speech as form of practice helps attain fluency.</p> <p>Self talks allow students to correct themselves</p>

Self-esteem and Self-Development	<p>Comfortable to speak in an audience</p> <p>Students with self esteem engaged more in communicative activities.</p> <p>Sense of awareness of what should be the skill to develop</p>
Task-based learning as curriculum design	<p>Various activities build students language skills. Real world tasks help students communicate with fluency.</p> <p>The curriculum assists in providing actual settings for students to hone their abilities.</p> <p>Activities allow students to go out of their comfort zone</p>

### Social Interaction with Peers

Most students find it efficient to socialize with the people around them to develop their communicative competence. When students were asked about how they think communicative competence develop their social skills as students, key informant no. 13 replied, *“this competence hones our communication abilities, and you can only practice your communication skills by socializing with other individuals so communicative competence can develop your social skills.”*

This is in accordance with Slavin (2003; Jeong, 2018) educators have worked to improve students' communicative skills by explaining the value of meaningful social interaction, active communication, the search for meaning, shared learning environments, and peer cooperation as they learn the English language.

Active learning classrooms that encourage peer interaction have been developed. Given the cost of building active learning classrooms, it is vital to investigate student opinions of these learning spaces. The implications for developing learning environments and encouraging students to embrace active learning are emphasized (Clinton & Wilson, 2019).

When learners have the potential to learn anything, it is a gift; when they can learn something, it is a skill. However, it is the learners' choice if they are willing to learn. When students learn in groups, they feel more at ease, share their expertise with one another, and learn a lot from their peers. Even students who are behind in their studies can do well when they work in groups (Rao, 2019).

### **Enrichment of Self-talk**

Students also need to communicate privately with themselves, they need to practice making their own communication goals, adjust with their environment, and reflect from their own decisions. When students were asked about how they can develop their communicative competence as a first year BSED-English student, key informant o. 8 replied, *“My communicative competence can be developed through practicing and talking to myself as it helps me widen my vocabulary and can now talk in right communicative competence.”*

This is in line with positive self-talk, is described as self-talk in the form of praise that aids in the maintenance of focus or attention and is goal- and future-oriented (Karamitrou et al., 2017). When an individual uses positive self-talk on a regular basis, the work at hand becomes more achievable (Winsler, 2009; Feeney, 2021).

Once students demonstrate mastery of goal creation, reflection, and adjustment, they can begin evaluating their progress throughout the day to ensure they are on pace to reach their goal (Graham & Harris, 2018; Root et al., 2017). Explicitly teaching students these cognitive skills and giving them time in class to practice them enhances their decision-making ability, decreases impulsivity, and promotes self-awareness (Feeney, 2019).

### **Role of Self-esteem**

Self-esteem is instrumental in communication because it helps an individual to convey his/her message with clarity and conviction. When students were asked about what communicative competence require, key informant no. 11 replied, *“Confidence, and a combination of skills, including effective listening, clear expression, empathy, cultural awareness, adaptability, and the ability to tailor communication to different audiences and contexts.”*

The individual's high self-esteem shows that he has a favorable opinion of himself. High self-esteem may have a good effect on an individual's life satisfaction (Ceçen, 2008). People with high self-esteem claim to be more personable and attractive, to have better relationships, and to make a better impression on others than those with low self-esteem, yet objective metrics contradict the most of these claims. Narcissists are charming at first, but they soon alienate people. It has not been demonstrated that self-esteem predicts the quality or length of partnerships. People with high self-esteem are more likely to speak up in groups and critique the group's approach (Arshad et al., 2015). Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, (2003), investigated that Self-esteem has become a household word. Teachers, parents, therapists, and others have focused efforts on boosting self-esteem, on the assumption that high self-esteem will cause many positive outcomes and benefits—an assumption that is critically evaluated.

### **Multimodal Communication to Enhance Relationship**

Good communication is an essential tool in achieving productivity and maintaining strong relationships with other people. When asked how communicative competence can contribute to daily life, key informant no. 13 answered, *“As a student, my day-to-day life involves me having to communicate with people, whether it be family members, classmates, or me simply asking questions to my instructor, one this is clear, I am constantly communicating with other individuals, which is why communicative competence is essential in my day-to-day life.”*

Productive communication encompasses many different types of communication. Traditional kinds of literacy, such as writing or reading print texts on paper or on computer, may be included. It can include speech replies like participating in a discussion or answering questions, but it can also encompass multimodal communication (Shanahan et al., 2017). Students must have high language skills to optimize communication skills, which include the capacity to listen, speak, read, and write (Kastriti et al., 2022). It is critical to master multiple communication processes to communicate effectively. The interlocutor is led to clarify the discourse or his thoughts by asking questions during the engagement. This indicates to the other person that he is being actively listened to. The significance of the conveyed information is kept by reformulating the material, and the interlocutor receives positive or negative feedback on the interpretation of the transmitted information. Monitoring the emotional states of the interlocutors reveals that the intensity of the transmitted information, as well as the motives for communication, are better comprehended (Gladoie, 2020).

### **Self-Development**

Communicatively inept individuals tend to engage themselves in self-talk as this is a way of improving their communication skills. When asked what your motivation is to learn communicative competence, key informant no. 5 replied, *“The fact that I have more to develop especially in the way that I communicate.”*

Self-development is a synthesis of all the major processes of personal formation, including self-possession, conscious self-regulation, self-education, self-improvement, increasing productivity, spiritual self-strengthening, self-affirmation, self-determination, self-actualization, and self-realization (Kulikova, 2007; Madina et al., 2022).

So, according to Bailuk (2016), professional self-growth can be productive, positive, but also detrimental, or it can mix both positive and negative development. Bailuk (2016) defines productive professional self-development as an activity that "is determined by the true values of the community, the true needs and abilities of a person that is, on a positive value-conscious basis, and thus meets the requirements of this type of society's activity, and the desires of its subject" (Tursynay, 2021).



### Task Based Approach of the Curriculum

The program builds up students' potential in language and communication by facilitating diverse activities and trainings. When asked what role your program plays in improving communicative competence, key informant no. 10 replied, *"The English program plays a crucial role in improving communication competence by providing a comprehensive curriculum that focuses on language skills, literature analysis, and writing proficiency. It offers courses and activities that aim to enhance reading comprehension, writing clarity, critical thinking, and oral communication skills. Through literature analysis, language practice, and writing assignments, the program helps students develop a deeper understanding of language and effective communication strategies, enabling us to express ourselves articulately and confidently in various professional and personal settings."*

This is supported with Al Jardani (2012) education is evolving at a rapid pace, there is ongoing reform in various places, including the development of teaching styles and methods, curriculum design, and a deeper understanding of the learning process. Educationalists plan to improve several aspects of education, including curriculum development.

Classic language teaching methods were used to teach English, including the classic grammar translation approach and the audio-lingual method. As a result, students become habituated to memorizing and drill recitation rather than communicating and interacting with language (Altaieb, 2013). Language, contrary to popular belief, is not an educational subject in and of itself; it is a resource that humans employ for decision-making in all parts of their life. Language must be transformed into curriculum content to be taught and learned in a classroom (Graves, 2016).

Active class participation shapes students better understanding and engagement. When students ask questions or share their opinions, they might clarify concepts that were previously unclear to them. When students were asked what their task as a student is to help their program enhance their communicative competence, key informant no. 10 replied, *"As a student aiming to enhance my communicative competence, I would actively engage in the English program by participating in class discussions, asking questions, and seeking clarification when needed. I would also dedicate time to reading extensively, both literary works and non-fiction texts, to expand my vocabulary and improve my understanding of language usage. Additionally, I would practice writing regularly, seeking feedback from instructors and peers to refine my writing skills. Finally, I would take advantage of opportunities to engage in public speaking or presentations to build confidence and improve my oral communication abilities."*

Active participation is a method in which the student creates his or her own knowledge by interacting with the learning environment created by the teacher. This occurs

because of the teacher's deliberate and conscious effort to encourage active engagement in the classroom environment (Pratton & Hales, 1986; Saglam et al., 2022). Outdoor environmental educators and regular classroom teachers are constantly looking for new and innovative ways to increase student participation and engagement. Participation and engagement are vital for students because they serve as a behavior pathway that contributes to greater learning and development (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Joen, & Barch, 2004).

The most recent paradigm shift, in which instruction is transformed into learning forces students to actively participate in the learning process to foster inquiry and increase problem-solving and analytical skills (Emaliana, 2017). Students should take more responsibility for their learning because of this transition (Lee & Hines, 2012; Aflah & Rahmani, 2022). Furthermore, students should take an active role in shaping how they learn.

### Conclusion

The study reveals that the communicative competence of first year BSED-English students is significantly influenced by social interaction with peers, effective communication, self-talk enrichment, self-esteem, productive communication, self-actualization, offering a comprehensive curriculum to improve communication skills, aids in active participation, and applying skills taught by the program.

Social interaction with peers is an important influence because it helps learners to practice their communication abilities in real-life circumstances. Another important factor is effective communication, which allows pupils to express their ideas and views effectively and respectfully. Self-talk enrichment is also important since it promotes self-reflection and improves communication skills. Furthermore, a good sense of self-esteem can substantially aid in effective communication by allowing students to express themselves boldly. The study also underlines the significance of productive communication, which entails actively participating in debates and negotiations. Furthermore, the implementation of a complete curriculum designed to increase communication skills is useful because it provides students with the tools, they need to flourish in a variety of communication scenarios. Active engagement and the application of learning skills improve students' communicative competency, helping them to successfully navigate the program's demands.

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