Enhancing EFL Students' Communication Strategies: The Role of Academic Experience

Nguyen Diep Nhu Duyen[1], Nguyen Thi Thuy Linh[2]

[1,2]School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, Vietnam

ABSTRACT: This study aims to examine how academic experience influences the development and application of communication strategies among EFL university students. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative data from questionnaires and qualitative insights from interviews. The results show that senior students (third- and fourth-year) apply communication strategies more effectively than junior students (first- and second-year), particularly in fluency, negotiation, and accuracy-focused strategies. Interviews reveal that academic experience enhances strategy awareness, confidence, and negotiation skills. These findings suggest that as students' progress academically, their exposure to language tasks strengthens their ability to use communication strategies effectively. The study highlights the importance of incorporating strategy training early in EFL instruction. However, limitations including the limited sample size and dependence on self-reported data need bigger and more varied participant groups in future studies.

KEYWORDS: communication strategies, strategy awareness, negotiation skills, EFL university students

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, communication strategies (CS) have become more and more important in language acquisition, especially when it comes to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) (Chou, 2024). Communication strategies are techniques that learners employ to overcome challenges in language use, facilitate understanding, and maintain the flow of conversation (Tarone, 1980; Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Dagarin, 2004; Vettorel, 2018; Chou, 2024). These strategies include the use of fillers, fluency-oriented techniques, negotiation tactics, accuracy-focused methods, non-verbal communication, and thinking in the target language, etc (Fitriati et al., 2021; Zamani et al., 2022; Chou, 2024). Their efficient use not only improves language skills but also gives EFL students more self-assurance and independence (Oxford, 1990; Chen, 2009; Liu, 2018; Chou, 2023).

University students' language skills and communication requirements change as they advance through various academic levels (Ellis, 2008). In the early years of university, students may rely more on communication techniques to make up for their lack of language expertise because they are frequently still getting used to the demands of higher education (Macaro, 2001; Sukying, 2021). As they progress, however, students in later academic years might acquire more advanced language abilities, which could lead to them using more sophisticated techniques for communication or relying less on certain strategies (Zhang & Goh, 2006; Aziz & Kashinathan, 2021). Nevertheless, understanding how academic experience affects the use of communication techniques by university EFL learners is still lacking, despite the increased interest in these strategies (Rabab'ah, 2005; Sokhanvar & Sokhanvar, 2021).

Prior research has demonstrated the value of communication strategies in fostering language acquisition and enhancing classroom engagement (Nakatani, 2006; Lam, 2009; Lv et al., 2022). Notwithstanding these conclusions, little study has examined the ways in which these tactics alter among academic levels (Huang, 2010). To better help students at different phases of their language learning journey, language educators can adjust their instructional techniques by gaining a greater awareness of these variances (Cohen, 2014).

The purpose of this study is to examine how first- and second-year students and third- and fourth-year students employ communication strategies differently in an EFL context. Additionally, it looks at how academic experience affects the generation and utilization of diverse communication techniques, emphasizing how particular techniques advance language competency at distinct academic levels.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition of Communication Strategies

According to Ahmed and Pawar (2018), communication strategies have defined the strategies that compensate for the insufficiency of speakers in both linguistic and non-linguistic strategies while communicating and Communication Strategies (CS) refer to language learners' problem-solving behaviors during process of communication and language learners utilized Communication Strategies to offset their shortcoming of linguistic competence and assist language learners in achieving particular communicative goals (Huang, 2010; Noviyenty, 2022; Khenat, 2023). Therefore, this serves as a bridge to bridge the gap between the target language interlocutor's and the language learner's proficiency in the language, and CSs assist language learners in avoiding communication interruptions (Buzzanell, 2017; Servaes, 2022).

2.2. Types of communication strategies

Communication strategies (CSs) are essential tools that language learners use to overcome gaps in their linguistic knowledge and effectively convey meaning during interactions (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Tarone, 1980; Noviyenty, 2022; Khenat, 2023). These techniques are especially crucial for second language learners since they allow them to keep up the conversation and make up for their inadequate language skills (Essien, 2022). Research on communicative strategies has identified various classifications, focusing on how learners negotiate meaning and manage communication breakdowns (Faerch & Kasper, 1983; Nakatani, 2006; Essien, 2022).

The EFL learning environment includes different strategies for effective communication. One common strategy is fluency-oriented techniques. These techniques involve using fillers to keep the conversation smooth. They also give students time to organize their thoughts (Dörnyei, 1995; Awang, 2022). Another important strategy is negotiation. Learners use it to clarify meaning and confirm information during discussions. This helps prevent misunderstandings (Long, 1996; Antonello, 2023). Accuracy-focused strategies also play a role in improving language use. Learners apply self-correction and ask for confirmation to refine their communication (Nakatani, 2006; Chou, 2023). Besides verbal strategies, nonverbal techniques also support communication. Gestures, body language, and facial expressions help express meaning more effectively (Gullberg, 2006; Gou et al., 2022).

2.3. Factors Influencing Communication Strategy Use

Several elements, including a student's academic history, language exposure, and the instructions given to the students, have an impact on how students use communication strategies (CS) (Bandura, 1971; Zakaria et al., 2019). It has been proven that higher year students use these tactics more successfully as they have had longer to develop and hone their skills over time (Nakatani, 2006; Zhang, 2019). Communication ease is facilitated by greater practice opportunities and linguistic input, which improves student confidence when facing difficulties while communicating (Chou, 2023).

Furthermore, learners' adoption of strategies is greatly influenced by the instructional guidance they get (Chung, 2018; Kumar et al., 2023). Often, learners are more likely to employ these strategies during real-life situations if they have been instructed on these specifically during speaking and listening-centered classes (Dörnyei, 1995; Oxford, 2017). In particular, EFL programs with organized speaking and listening classes have been observed to greatly enhance learners' understanding and use of accomplishment strategies such as paraphrase, negotiation, and non-verbal communication (Mulyadi et al., 2021; Chou, 2023). Moreover, the enhancement of these skills seems to be facilitated by practice-oriented settings that engage learners in authentic communicative situations (Tarone, 1980; Zhang, 2019; Tui et al., 2023). As noted by Rahmon (2024), students who are given greater exposure to real-world language tasks are often more adaptable and confident in using various strategies to maintain fluency and coherence in conversation. By examining the ways in which exposure, academic year, and instructional assistance affect students' use of accomplishment strategies, this study sheds light on the communicative competence growth trajectory of EFL learners.

Research Questions

To achieve these aims, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the differences in the use of communication strategies between first- and second-year students and third- and fourth-year students in an EFL context?
2. How does academic experience influence the development and application of communication strategies among EFL students?

3. METHODS

3.1. Design of the study

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the use of communicative strategies among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students across different academic years. The study primarily aimed to examine whether students' use of communicative strategies varied according to their academic

experience and exposure to language learning courses. A comparative analysis was performed between two groups: first- and second-year students (Group 1) and third- and fourth-year students (Group 2).

The data was collected by administering a structured questionnaire adopted from prior studies (Dörnyei, 1995; Nakatani, 2006) and it focused on that five types of communication strategies, non-verbal, negotiation, fillers, fluency-oriented, and accuracy-oriented methods. The sample comprises individuals who volunteered to take part in the research, using the convenience sampling method of administering a questionnaire (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To support the survey results, several respondents were invited to a succeeding interview to be able to explain how they use communication strategically in various academic settings. This qualitative data from the interviews helped supplement the quantitative results by providing a holistic understanding of the students' communication practices.

The study used standardized data collection procedures for internal validity and reliability, and descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the replies. To clarify, the means of the two groups were compared using independent samples t-tests to see whether or not there were significant differences in how the communication strategies were applied (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2020). As a result, this approach was ideal for examining how different study levels employed different strategies.

Moreover, this research design was chosen for its efficacy in identifying patterns and differences among student cohorts within an authentic academic setting. Specifically, the adoption of a cross-sectional approach enabled the collection of data at a single point in time, thus providing a clear snapshot of students' communicative strategy use based on their exposure to language courses within the EFL curriculum (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.2. Participants

The participants in this study were EFL university students majoring in English at a university in Vietnam. Convenience sampling was used to choose 228 students, comprising 74 first-year students, 51 second-year students, 64 third-year students, and 39 fourth-year students. Despite attempts to distribute participants evenly over academic years, differences in availability and accessibility resulted in an uneven distribution. Since the final years are involved in internships off campus, the first and second year students are easier to reach.

To ensure that participants had prior exposure to communicative strategies, they were selected based on the requirement that they had completed at least two speaking and listening courses. In the highly specialized English program, students are required to complete a total of five speaking and listening courses to progressively enhance their communicative competence. Among the participants, 228 had completed Listening and Speaking 1–2, 156 had finished Listening and Speaking 3, 125 had taken Listening and Speaking 4, and 105 had completed Listening and Speaking 5. This selection criterion ensured that all participants had a foundational understanding of communication strategies, making them suitable for assessing strategic use in various academic contexts.

Table 1. Demographic Features of Participants

Feature	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Academic Year	Year 1	74	32.5%
	Year 2	53	22.4%
	Year 3	64	28.1%
	Year 4	39	17.1%
Completed Courses	Listening and Speaking 1–2	228	100%
	Listening and Speaking 3	156	68.4%
	Listening and Speaking 4	125	54.8%
	Listening and Speaking 5	105	46.1%

3.3. Instruments

The Questionnaire

The primary tool for research in this study was a questionnaire developed based on the works of Dörnyei (1995), Cohen (1998), and Nakatani (2006) on communicative strategies. It aimed at assessing the application of five important communicative strategies as a students in a foreign language classroom. These are (1) Fillers, (2) fluency oriented strategies, (3) Negotiation, (4) Accuracy oriented, and (5) Non verbal (Tarone, 1980; Faerch & Kasper, 1983). The adaptation process worked to ensure the items were relevant to the learning environment of the participants while also ensuring validity and reliability. In order to evaluate the students' strategy use, each item was scored against a Likert scale which the respondents used to describe how often the employed the given strategies in the process of learning the language.

To measure reliability of the questionnaires, Cronbach's Alpha, which is normally used to measure internal consistency, was calculated. Based on standardized components, the 34 items demonstrated high reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.904.

According to Bernstein and Nunnally (1994), a score of 0.90 indicates remarkable dependability, while a score of 0.70 is considered sufficient. Considering these outcomes, the equipment employed in this research is presumed to have high internal consistency, which implies the instrument measures the intended communication strategies appropriately. **Table 2** shows the Reliability Statistics of the Questionnaire.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.904	.905	34

Interviews

This study employed several tools, one of which was interviews meant to capture detailed aspects of the participants' attitudes and behaviors towards communicative strategies in language learning. Actually, interviews were selected as a key method for data collection due to their potential to yield qualitative data that captures the finer details of people's experiences and views (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Consequently, this approach enables researchers to investigate intricate issues in greater depth, thus enabling better comprehension of students' perceived and actual use of communicative strategies in language learning (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

The interview guide comprised two main parts. To help interpret the students' remarks, the first section collected demographic data such as their age, academic year, and prior experiences with language learning. The second part dealt with the students' applying five vital communication techniques most often employed in language learning. These were: (1) fillers, which keep the conversation shifting; (2) fluency-oriented strategies which enhance the smoothness of speech; (3) negotiation strategies which enable people to clarify and understand what is being said; (4) accuracy-oriented strategies which check the proper use of language; and (5) non-verbal strategies which use gestures and other body movements to aid verbal communication. With this organized approach, it was possible to assess how learners employ the specific strategies with their language learning processes.

3.4. Data Collection

Data was collected through an online predefined questionnaire that was sent out to eligible EFL learners. The questionnaire had both closed-ended and open-ended questions which enabled the researcher to analyze the learners' use of communicative strategies deeply. Participants were provided with information regarding the purpose of the research, their voluntary participation, and the confidentiality of their answers prior to answering the questionnaire which made them informed of the ethical aspects of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and their rights.

To reach students of different academic years, the survey was held over a period of four weeks. This was important as not all students in their third and fourth years were able to complete the questionnaire due to other practical commitments such as internships or practical courses. Reminders were sent periodically to encourage students to fill in the questionnaire and help improve the response rate.

Follow-up interviews were performed with a subset of participants in addition to the online questionnaire in order to learn more about their experiences and the particular communication techniques they used. In these interviews, participants were given the opportunity to go into further detail about their questionnaire answers, yielding deeper qualitative information that enhanced the quantitative results. Consistent with the study's mixed-methods methodology, the online questionnaire and interviews together offered a more nuanced understanding of students' communicative behaviors in language learning.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were applied to the questionnaire data (Field, 2013). Group statistics were calculated to compare the use of communicative strategies between two groups: first- and second-year students (Group 1) and third- and fourth-year students (Group 2). Means, standard deviations, and standard errors were computed for each communicative strategy category. The division of first- and second-year students into one group and third- and fourth-year students into another was based on differences in academic experience and exposure to language learning opportunities. Early-year students typically focus on foundational language skills and have limited experience with advanced communicative tasks, while senior students engage in more complex language activities and have greater exposure to real-life communication scenarios (Oxford, 1990). This distinction allowed for a clearer analysis of how academic progression influences the development and use of communication strategies in an EFL context (Dörnyei, 1995).

Inferential analysis was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in strategy use between the two groups (Pallant, 2020). This analysis aimed to reveal patterns related to academic experience and exposure to communication training. The results provided insights into the influence of academic year and learning experience on students' application of communicative strategies.

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For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed to examine interview responses, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework: familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and final reporting. Students' descriptions of their communicative strategy use, difficulties, and perceived efficacy in various academic and social contexts were analyzed using thematic coding to find recurrent trends. Deeper understanding of the rationale behind students' strategy selections and adaption to various communication contexts was made possible by this qualitative method. Through the combination of statistical and thematic analysis, the study made sure that a thorough grasp of how students create and use communication strategies across their academic careers was obtained.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Differences in the use of communication strategies across academic years

The ANOVA test was conducted to examine differences in the use of communication strategies across academic years. The results revealed statistically significant differences in all six strategy categories: fillers, fluency-oriented, negotiation, accuracy-oriented, nonverbal, and thinking-oriented strategies. The significance values for all categories were below *0.05*, indicating that academic experience influences students' use of communication strategies.

The independent samples t-test revealed statistically significant differences between third- and fourth-year students (Group 1) and first- and second-year students (Group 2) across all dimensions of communicative strategies. For *fillers*, Group 1 reported a higher mean score (M = 4.09, SD = 0.52) compared to Group 2 (M = 3.82, SD = 0.64). Similarly, for *fluency-oriented strategies*, Group 1 showed a mean score of 4.10 (SD = 0.54), while Group 2 scored lower (M = 3.72, SD = 0.77). In terms of *negotiation strategies*, Group 1 scored higher (M = 4.12, SD = 0.55) compared to Group 2 (M = 3.80, SD = 0.61).

For *accuracy strategies*, Group 1's mean score was 3.88 (SD = 0.69), while Group 2 scored 3.51 (SD = 0.73). Regarding *non-verbal strategies*, Group 1 had a significantly higher mean (M = 4.23, SD = 0.69) than Group 2 (M = 3.82, SD = 0.74). Lastly, for *thinking-related strategies*, Group 1 also outperformed Group 2, with a mean of 3.83 (SD = 0.68) compared to 3.45 (SD = 0.70). The details are shown in **Table 3** below.

Table 3. Differences in the use of communication strategies across academic years

	Group	N	Mean	SD
Fillers	1.00	103	4.09	0.52
	2.00	125	3.82	0.64
Fluency-oriented	1.00	103	4.10	0.54
	2.00	125	3.72	0.77
Negociation	1.00	103	4.12	0.55
	2.00	125	3.80	0.61
Accuracy-oriented	1.00	103	3.88	0.69
	2.00	125	3.51	0.73
Nonverbal Strategies	1.00	103	4.23	0.69
	2.00	125	3.82	0.74
Think in English	1.00	103	3.83	0.68
	2.00	125	3.45	0.70

Overall, these findings suggest that third- and fourth-year students employed all strategies more frequently than first- and second-year students, indicating a potential relationship between academic experience and strategy use.

4.2. The influence of academic experience on the development and application of communication strategies among EFL students

The findings from the Independent Samples T-test reveal that academic experience significantly influences the development and application of communication strategies among EFL students. Specifically, senior students (third- and fourth-year) demonstrated higher use of strategies such as fluency-oriented strategies, negotiation, and accuracy-focused strategies compared to junior students (first- and second-year). This suggests that as students progress through their academic journey, they develop a stronger ability to apply communication strategies effectively, likely due to increased exposure to language use and academic interactions.

The interview data revealed several key themes regarding the influence of academic experience on the development and application of communication strategies among EFL students. The findings suggest that academic experience plays a significant role in shaping students' ability to use and refine various communication strategies.

Increased Strategy Awareness with Academic Progression

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Participants consistently indicated that students with more academic experience demonstrated a higher awareness of communication strategies. Fourth-year students highlighted their improved ability to recognize and apply strategies such as fillers, negotiation, and accuracy-focused approaches.

> *"As I moved to higher academic levels, I became more aware of how to use strategies to keep the conversation going, especially when I struggled with vocabulary."* (Participant 4, Fourth-year student)

> *"At first, I didn't even realize I was using strategies. But after attending more classes and doing presentations, I started noticing patterns and learned how to apply them more effectively."* (Participant 3, Third-year student)

Enhanced Confidence and Fluency

Students with greater academic exposure displayed higher levels of confidence and fluency in using English. Many fourth-year participants indicated that their ability to apply fluency-oriented strategies had significantly improved over time due to increased practice and exposure to real-life communication tasks.

> *"The more presentations and group discussions I had, the more confident I became in using strategies like fillers or paraphrasing."* (Participant 4, Fourth-year student)

> *"In my second year, I had more practice in class, and it really helped me practice using strategies like rephrasing when I didn't know a word."* (Participant 2, Second-year student)

Development of Complex Negotiation Skills

Advanced students reported using more sophisticated negotiation strategies compared to their junior counterparts. They were better able to clarify misunderstandings and request repetition effectively during interactions.

> *"By my third year, I learned how to ask for clarification naturally without feeling embarrassed, which helped me maintain conversations even when I didn't understand everything."* (Participant 4, Third-year student)

> *"I usually confirm the meaning of words by rephrasing what the speaker says—it's something I learned from my advanced speaking classes."* (Participant 4, Fourth-year student)

Emphasis on Accuracy in Senior Years

Senior students demonstrated a stronger focus on accuracy, particularly in academic contexts. They reported actively applying strategies aimed at ensuring grammatical correctness and vocabulary precision during formal presentations or written tasks.

> *"In my final year, I paid more attention to grammar and vocabulary choice because my professors emphasized academic accuracy."* (Participant 4, Fourth-year student)

> *"I now spend more time proofreading and practicing correct sentence structures, especially before presentations."* (Participant 3, Third-year student)

Limited Strategy Use Among Junior Students

In contrast, first- and second-year students showed limited application of communication strategies. They often relied on basic strategies, such as pauses or simple gestures, when facing communication breakdowns.

> *"When I don't know what to say, I usually just stop or use body language."* (Participant 1, First-year student)

> *"I feel nervous when I can't find the right words, so I just smile and hope the other person understands."* (Participant 2, Second-year student)

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Differences in the use of communication strategies across academic years

The results suggest that third- and fourth-year students exhibit stronger *Communicative Strategies* across all evaluated categories compared to first- and second-year students. This aligns with previous research indicating that greater academic experience and exposure to practical learning environments enhance language proficiency and strategic communication skills (Brown & Lee, 2015; Johnson, 2017; Zhang, 2019). The higher scores among senior students could be attributed to their extended engagement with academic content, participation in advanced courses, and increased opportunities for real-world communication practice (Crosthwaite, 2019; Chou, 2023).

However, this study offers new insights by specifically linking academic progression to the refinement and sophistication of communication strategies over time. Junior students tend to rely on basic strategies like pauses and gestures while senior students show advanced use of negotiation, fluency-oriented strategies, and a stronger focus on accuracy. These results add credence to the idea that language acquisition is a slow process that gets stronger with exposure and consistent practice.(Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Chou, 2023). Moreover, the results highlight the need for more targeted support for first- and second-year students, particularly in areas like *fluency-oriented strategies* and *thinking-related strategies*. Integrating authentic materials and providing opportunities for practical application could enhance early-year students' communicative strategies, as suggested by Crosthwaite (2019), Fitriati et al., 2021, Zamani et al., 2022, Chou, 2024).

5.2. The influence of academic experience on the development and application of communication strategies among EFL students

The results show that EFL students' academic experiences have a significant impact on how they create and use communication techniques. Specifically, this aligns with previous research suggesting that language learners' strategic competence improves with increased exposure to academic activities and language practice (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Cohen, 2014; Zhang, 2019; Tui et al., 2023). Moreover, the quantitative results, supported by interview insights, suggest that as students progress through their academic journey, they become more adept at employing a variety of communication strategies. Indeed, senior students, particularly those in their third and fourth years, demonstrated a higher frequency and sophistication in using strategies such as fluency-oriented techniques, negotiation, and accuracy-focused methods compared to their junior counterparts (Oxford, 1990; Khusniddinova & Abdullayeva, 2025). This development can be attributed to students being exposed to more academic assignments and communication opportunities, which push them to hone their language skills (Ellis, 2008). Consequently, senior students' enhanced strategy use likely results from accumulated experiences in presentations, group discussions, and academic writing—activities that encourage the use of advanced communication strategies (Cohen, 2014). Furthermore, the qualitative data also highlighted the growing awareness of communication strategies among senior students, who reported becoming more conscious of their strategic choices as they advanced through their studies (Dörnyei, 2005; Mulyadi et al., 2021; Chou, 2023).

Additionally, academic experience appeared to foster greater confidence and fluency. Specifically, senior students expressed a higher comfort level when applying strategies, such as fillers, paraphrasing, and clarification requests, which helped them navigate communication breakdowns more effectively (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Cohen, 2014; Zhang, 2019; Tui et al., 2023). Conversely, junior students often relied on basic strategies, such as pausing or using non-verbal cues, due to their limited practice and lower confidence levels (Oxford, 1990; Gullberg, 2006; Gou et al., 2022).

Moreover, the findings also highlight a noticeable shift toward accuracy-focused strategies among senior students, particularly in formal academic contexts. This shift aligns with previous studies suggesting that advanced language learners tend to prioritize grammatical accuracy and vocabulary precision as their language proficiency increases (Swain, 2005; Ellis, 2008; Cogen, 2014, Chou, 2024). Indeed, as students progress, they tend to focus more on ensuring grammatical accuracy and lexical appropriateness, reflecting the increasing academic demands and expectations placed on them in higher academic years (Nikouee, 2021).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This study investigated how academic experience affected EFL students' communication strategy formulation and use. In particular, the results of the quantitative and qualitative data showed that senior students (third and fourth years) consistently used more communication strategies, such as negotiation, accuracy-focused approaches, and fluency-oriented strategies, than their junior counterparts (first and second years). This implies that academic advancement greatly enhances students' capacity to employ communication techniques successfully, most likely as a result of greater exposure to language use, academic assignments, and practical communication situations.

Furthermore, the interview results further highlighted how academic experience fosters greater strategy awareness, boosts confidence and fluency, enhances negotiation skills, and promotes a stronger focus on accuracy among senior students. Conversely, junior students were found to rely more on basic strategies due to limited language exposure and lower confidence levels. Finally, by showing how students' academic achievement in EFL scenarios is intimately related to the steady development of strategies for communication, this study provides fresh insights. These findings thus demonstrate the need of providing junior students with targeted support and strategy training so they can develop more advanced communication abilities early in their academic careers.

The results of this study have several practical applications in curriculum design and EFL instruction. Firstly, the significant impact of academic experience on the formation of communication strategies suggests that early language programs should integrate targeted strategy instruction. Specifically, students in their first and second years can be better equipped to manage communication challenges in real-world contexts if they receive explicit instruction in fluency-oriented, negotiation-oriented, and accuracy-focused techniques. Secondly, language instructors should incorporate more interactive and experiential learning activities, such as role-plays, group discussions, and presentations, to facilitate the practical application of these strategies. Such exercises can enhance students' confidence and fluency as they progress academically. Finally, the results underscore the importance of tailoring instruction to students' academic levels. To this end, educators can design assignments that align with the evolving needs of both junior and senior students, ensuring that their strategic competence develops progressively.

There are limits to this study. Results may not be as broadly applicable outside of the population under study due to the limited sample size and scholarly environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since participants were from a single institution, the results may not fully represent EFL learners in different educational settings. Furthermore, using self-reported information from surveys and interviews may result in response bias since individuals may overstate or misinterpret the strategies they employ (Dörnyei, 2007). Self-reports are subjective and may not always reflect actual communication behaviors (Brown, 2014). To provide a more objective evaluation of the usage of communicative strategies, future research should include observational techniques such

classroom recordings or stimulated recollection along with a bigger, more diverse sample (Mackey & Gass, 2021). Despite these limitations, this study offers valuable insights into students' strategic communication practices, contributing to the understanding of EFL learning in academic contexts.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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