

**EFL STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN ESP CLASS AT  
UNIVERSITAS PGRI RONGGOLawe TUBAN**

Arbella Yulia Ardhita

Christina I.T.Panggabean

English Language Education Faculty of Teacher Training and Education

University of PGRI Ronggolawe Tuban [arbeella96@gmail.com](mailto:arbeella96@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT**

In the process of communicating using English, when EFL students do not know how to say a word in English, nervous, and feel anxiety to speak, they can communicate by using their hands, imitating sounds, inventing new words, or describing what they mean to deliver their ideas and to overcome the problems. These ways of communicating are communication strategies (CSs). The objectives of the study in this research are to identify communication strategy used by EFL students, describe the most communication strategy used EFL students, and the reasons of applying communication strategy.

This study is designed as a qualitative research. The subjects of the study were the eighth semester students of English Language Education at Unirow Tuban representing high, medium, and low proficient students in their classes. The data are the communication strategies employed by the students when they had oral presentation for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. In this research, the researcher used three instruments: observation, interview, and document.

The results of the research reveal that high proficient students used nine types of communication strategies, medium proficient students also used nine types of communication strategies, and low proficient students used eleven types of communication strategies. The most frequently strategies used by the students from all levels of proficiency were fillers and repetition strategy. It is also found that the high and medium proficient students used more linguistic means, while the low students used achievement or compensatory strategy. Finally, the students' reasons of using communication strategies were feeling nervous, hesitating, lacking of vocabularies, forgetting the words, and feeling afraid of making mistakes. In conclusion, communication strategies help the students to overcome their problems in communicating using L2.

**Keywords : Communication strategies, oral communication, EFL students**

**INTRODUCTION**

Communication is a skill which involves systematic and continuous process of speaking, listening and understanding. English is acknowledged passport to better education and employment opportunities. English has a status of a second language in almost all the countries where it is not the first language. To acquire simple language for day to day communication is main aim of learning any language. —English plays an eminent role in

higher education all over the world. There has been a worldwide growth in demand for English for Academics courses (Jordan, 1997). —English, the lingua franca of all sciences, has come out in non-English speaking countries as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Ghanbari, 2010).

The term "specific" in ESP refers to the specific purpose for learning English. ESP assesses needs and integrates motivation, subject matter and content for the teaching of relevant skills. ESP is a major activity around the world today. Robinson (1991: p.1) stated that —The full name of ESP is generally given as ‘English for Specific Purposes’, and this would imply that what is specific and appropriate in one part of the globe may well not be elsewhere. In addition, Robinson, Pauline C., ed. Hywel Coleman, (1989: 398) describes ESP as a type of ELT (English Language Teaching) and defines it as: —Goal-oriented language learning that means a student has a specific goal that is going to be attained.

In the process of developing expertise in their communication, EFL students usually have some problems that they face. Harmer (2007: 96) states that students will not always use correct English. The students will face problems and make mistakes when writing or speaking more freely. Talking about mistakes or problems. Another scholar, Harmer in his book (2002:345) also gives statement about speaking problems —Students are often reluctant to speak because they are shy and are not predisposed to expressing themselves in front of other people, especially when they are being asked to give personal information or opinion. From some statements above, in facing those speaking problems sometimes EFL students do some strategies like message abandonment or leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties, for example —he took the wrong way in mmm... and also avoiding certain topic areas or concepts that cause language difficulties.

The strategies that are used by English Foreign Learners (EFL) to overcome the breakdowns during oral communication are known as communication strategies (CSs). Communication strategies help students to keep in communication and so provide them more input and chances to develop their interlanguage systems. Besides, communication strategies lead students to more successful performance and the success will bring positive impact. Corder (in Dornyei, 1995; Faerch and Kasper, 1984) defines Communication strategy as —a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his or her meaning when faced with some difficulties.

Some early Studies on communication strategies have contributed significantly to later research since the theories from the early studies have been adopted by other researchers. The similar research about communication strategy had been done by Tiono & Agatha (2004) in their studies —The Types of Communication Strategies Used by Speaking Class Students with Different Communication Apprehension Levels in English Department of Petra Christian University, Surabaya. It stated that there were twelve (12) types of Communication Strategies found in this section: message abandonment, topic avoidance, circumlocution, approximation, using nonlinguistic means, literal translation, code switching, appealing for help, using fillers, using wrong terms, self correction, and repetition. Repetition got the highest percentage number, approximation and using fillers was the third strategy mostly used by the subjects. Another studies that had been done in the same institution, Panggabean and Wardhono (2017) in their research study entitled —Communication Strategies used by EFL Students in Their Presentation found that the more proficient students used eleven (11) types of communication strategies and the less proficient students used thirteen (13) types of communication strategies. There were three types of communication strategies which were the most frequently used by the students from the two levels of proficiency. They were use of fillers or time-gaining strategy, repetition, and code switching.

The aims of the study are to identify communication strategies used by EFL students in ESP class, describe the most communication strategy used by the students in ESP class, and describe the students' reasons of using Communication Strategies in ESP class. This paper reported the result of the research on communication strategy employed by EFL Students in their presentation in ESP Class at Universitas PGRI Ronggolawe Tuban. It is expected that this study will give useful information for the students and the teachers about communication strategies that can be used in L2 communication in order to make them ready and do not find any difficulties while delivering their speech in front of audiences using foreign language. In addition, the result of this study hopefully can help the students of UNIROW Tuban to be aware of their communication strategies they used so they can improve their confidence in communicating English and to be a good speaker.

## METHOD

This study applies qualitative analysis. This research describes the type of communication strategy used by EFL students in ESP class, the most strategy they used, and the reason about why they use communication strategy during their speaking. Subjects in a study are required to get the needed information.

The subject of the study were from two classes of the eighth semester of 2014 English Language Education Program in ESP class which consisted of 44 students. The subject taking ESP course were assumed to be used to having oral presentation. In ESP course the students were assigned to have presentation about telephoning, meeting, and presenting the graphic. The subjects chosen to be observed were six students representing students who were high, medium, and low proficient students. The decision on proficiency was made by their speaking score in the 4<sup>th</sup> semester. The subject were video recorded while they were doing presentation, and were interviewed after the class ended. The recorded data were transcribed for analysis. The types of communication strategy and the most communication strategy used by the students were identified, coded, classified, described and interpreted. The data from interview was analyzed to describe about the students' reasons of applying the strategies.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION Findings

The findings of the study are divided into three parts: the types of communication strategies used by EFL students (high, medium, and low proficient students), the most communication strategy used by the students, and the students' reasons of using communication strategies in ESP class.

### *EFL Students' Communication Strategies in ESP Class 1. High Proficient Students*

There are nine (9) types of Communication Strategies used by proficient students :Circumlocution, approximation, use all purpose word,Stalling or time gaining, non-linguistic mean, code switching, appeal for help, self-correction, and repetition. The first strategy used by the students is fillers. The students used this strategy to gain time to think when they forget about the words that they want to say. The examples of using fillers are : *well, I think, let me see, ah, ok, hm..., mm..., fill pause, etc.* The following example showed the use of fillers are —*yea **hmm..** but I think there is something out of the plan and we **mm...***

*must change the date of the reservation.*”; —*Okay... well..* here as you can see on the graphic, the graphic is stated in million ...

The second strategy used by the students is non-linguistic mean. The students used mime to express their communication. Mime is one of communication strategies that is by using facial expression, body movement and any relevant gestures. For the example, “*I will reserve may be on twenty nine. Could I reserve for that day?*” (*her right hand stick on the table and her eyes look down*).

The next strategy used is appeal for help. The students used this strategy to get help to their partner indirectly like rising intonation, eye contact or look at their note. The examples of appeal for help are : —*Can you serve in two more portion?* (*look at her partner*); —*Oh yea, Could I speak to the manager?* (*look at her partner and waiting for the respond and rise her voice*)

Circumlocution also used by the students. In this strategy the students paraphrased the target object or action. For the examples of circumlocution : When student said the word —*healthy* instead of saying *less sugar and something sweet*, the student said, —*Do you have any healthy for the dessert menu?*

Self-correction is included as the communication strategy used by the students. In this strategy the students corrected directly the utterance when they realized that they made mistakes. For example of self correction used by high proficient students when delivered their presentation is, —*I’m speaking to confirm about my dinner reservation on Saturday nine. Oh..I mean on Saturday night*.

The sixth strategy used by the students is repetition. The students repeated the same word or words to gain time to think of certain word, phrases or structures because they forgot words or structure they actually knew. For example, When the student explained the graph about 3D television, she said, —*The product has a... has a big screen*

Code switching, approximation, and all purpose words strategy also used by the high proficient students. The students used code switching strategy when they had difficulty to get the English word, or when she knew the meaning but she thought that it would be easier for his/her classmates to understand what he/she meant. The student said

“*Mudik lebaran*” which mean the activity where migrants or workers return to their hometown or village during or before major holiday especially Lebaran (Eid al-fitri). The students also employed approximation, this strategy is used as an alternative to express meaning of the target lexical items as closely as possible. For example, —*Before mudik*

lebaran many companies offer a program named —mudik gratis. They *shared* the tickets freely so people interested on it .. In this situation, the student seemed like to say the word —shared instead of using the word —give. The last strategy used by the high proficient students is all purpose words. This strategy is used by the students to extend a general empty lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking. For example a student said, —Motorcycle become favorite transportation for the people to.. to.. *what is it..* to ride when went to their hometown.

## 2. Medium Proficient Students

The medium proficient students conducted nine (9) types of CSs, they are : stalling or gaining time, non-linguistic mean, appeal for help, self-correction, repetition, message abandonment, approximation, literal translation, and code switching.

The first strategy used by the students is fillers. For the example, —**Ok mm... now.. aaa.. let me see...** three tickets for business class.; —So you will be here on December 30, **right?** In this situation when the students in the middle of their speaking, they found difficulty to express idea of forgot about the next words.

The second strategy is repetition. For example, when the student might had difficulty in memorizing the price of Air Asia's ticket. So, she used repetition strategy to help her memorized the ticket's price, —If you go to Malaysia by *Air Asia... Air Asia..* is about ten million Rupiah.

The next strategy used by the students is self correction. The students used this strategy when they realized that they made a mistake, for example, , —*How people... How long people.. How long will you stay?.* ”

The following strategy was used is non-linguistic mean. The students express their idea easily by using gesture or mime. The writer found that the students when deliver their presentation they often to use gesture like holding their hands, fold their arms, write down something on her/his book.

The following types of communication strategy used by medium proficiency students is Appeal for help. It seemed the students might had difficulties in delivering their presentation like forgot the words and sentence, or need their partner's respond to help them in their presentation.

Approximation also used by the medium proficient students. This strategy also used by middle proficiency students. This strategy is an alternative term to express the meaning as

closely as possible. For example, —I don't agree with your opinion and 3D TV the material must *wear* TV glasses. The student applied this strategy seemed that she felt nervous and even thought that the function of the word is same.

The next strategy is literal translation. In this strategy the students tried to use English as far as they could by translating the L1 words into English. For example of using this strategy is, instead of saying *fashion demand* she said *request fashion* for permintaan pakaian.

Message abandonment and Code switching also employed by the medium proficient students. The students used message abandonment because she seemed difficult to express or forgot the word that she would say, and didn't want to think too long. So, she just left her unfinished sentence. And The students used code switching when they had difficulty to get the English word, or when she knew the meaning but she thought that it would be easier for his/her classmates to understand what he/she meant.

### 3. Low Proficient Students

There are eleven (11) Communication Strategies used by low proficient students, such as : Non-linguistic mean, stalling or gaining time, message abandonment, appeal for help, repetition, message abandonment, circumlocution, use all purpose words, word coinage, and literal translation.

Use fillers, use fillers as the students' strategy to fill the time if she or he forgets about ideas. The examples of use fillers used by low proficient students is, when the student wanted to say kind of western food but she forget about the words and used fillers

—What do you want to have **aaa...** for western **aa..western food aa...**”

The second strategy used by low proficient student is Repetition. The following examples presenting the use of Repetition used by low proficient students is, the student tried to give an argument but she still thought what the next word —**I can... I can** promote aa..our product in social media

The next strategy used is Appeal for help. The students sometimes look at her/his partner to get the answer and look at the note to see the next sentences that she/he should says.

The fourth strategy similar with the others, non-linguistic mean also used by low proficient students. The low proficient students used gesture when they delivered their presentation, it seemed that they felt so nervous, less preparation, didn't know how to express it in the word. So, they used gesture to solve their problems.

Another strategy is message abandonment. The students used this strategy because of language difficulty. Beside that, The students tried to use word coinage strategy to keep the presentation going on even though they said or created a non-exist words. For example, a student when in the middle of graphic presentation about the month sales, she said, — *The month of March*, the sell aa... *rise decrease*.|

The students also employed all purpose word. This strategy is used by the students to extend a general empty lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking. Circumlocution employed by the low proficient students. The students used this strategy to help them describing or exemplifying the target object or action. In this strategy the students paraphrased the target object or action.

The next following strategy are literal translation. This strategy the students tried to use English as far as they could by translating the L1 words into English, for example instead of saying *e-commerce* for *situs jual online*. Code switching also employed by the low proficient students because sometimes they found some difficult words to speak. The last strategy used by the students is self-correction. The students may had slipped tongue and wrong structure when communicate using English, so in order to make the other friends or the audiences understand what they mean, the students corrected their wrong words directly.

### ***The Most Communication Used by the Students***

From the data analysis, the writer found two types of communication mostly used by the students in ESP course. The high proficiency students employed fillers strategy which got 50.6% (see on table 4.2.1), this strategy is the mostly strategy used by the high proficient students. Similar with the high proficient students, the medium proficient students also employed fillers strategy as the communication strategy mostly used, which got 51.4% (table 4.2.2). While for the low proficient students, repetition strategy is the most communication strategy used by the percentage 24% (table 4.2.3). In conclusion, the communication strategy mostly used by the students in ESP course were fillers and repetition strategy.

### ***Students' Reasons of Using Communication Strategies***

Most of the students responded the reasons of using communication strategy because they feel nervous, feel anxiety, afraid of making mistakes, forget the word or sentence, lack of vocabularies, and difficult to express what they want to express, it is stated from, —*Yea*,



*I the strategies because I feel nervous, forget the words and do not know the English, and feel afraid of making mistakes when saying.”*

## DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of the research, there were nine (9) types of Communication strategies employed by the high proficient student : circumlocution, approximation, all purpose words, non-linguistic mean, code switching, appeal for help, fillers, selfcorrection, and repetition. For medium proficient students there were also nine (9) types of communication strategy they used, they were : message abandonment, approximation, use non-linguistic mean, literal translation, code switching, appeal for help, use fillers, self correction, and repetition. While the low proficient students used eleven (11) types of communication strategies: message abandonment, circumlocution, use all purpose word, word coinage, use non-linguistic word, literal translation, code switching, appeal for help, use fillers, self-correction, and repetition.

According to Dornyei’s typology of Communication Strategy (1995), he found that there were twelve (12) types of communication strategies: Message Abandonment, topic avoidance, circumlocution, approximation, all purpose words, word coinage, non-linguistic means, literal translation, foreignizing, code switching, appeal for help, and fillers. Moreover, Faerch and Kasper (1984) affirm that there were two types of CSs; the first is Achievement strategies and the second is reduction strategies. Based on Dornyei’s theories above, the findings of the present researcher found that there were two types of CSs which did not employ by the students, they were; topic avoidance and foreignizing. The students didn’t employ these strategies because they still tried to explained and pronounce the word properly.

The most strategy used by the students when they had oral communication were stalling time strategy or fillers and repetition. The high and medium proficient students through using fillers, tried to maintain the control of the conversation and to gain more time to think. The high proficient students employed stalling time strategy or using fillers frequently (50.6%), while for the medium proficient students employed fillers (51.40%) when they had oral communication and presented the presentation using English. Beside that, the low proficient students employed repetition as the most strategy used, they employed this strategy frequently 29 times or about 24%. In addition, the use of those strategies could also be caused by the students’ affective factors such as nervousness and forget the words.

The result of the study is also supported by previous study related to the influence of the students' language proficiency to the communication strategies applied by them. Panggabean dan Wardhono (2017) entitled —Communication Strategies used by EFL Students in Their Presentation found that the more proficient students used eleven (11) types of communication strategies and the less proficient students used thirteen (13) types of communication strategies. There were three types of communication strategies which were the most frequently used by the students from the two levels of proficiency. They were use of fillers or time-gaining strategy, repetition, and code switching. Based on the previous study, the research that the researcher did has a tendency with the previous researcher in conducting the communication strategy. The tendency from two previous studies above with this study is the similarity of strategies that mostly students employed were time gaining, and repetition strategy.

The finding was also supported by the result of the interview. The students responded that the reasons they used fillers and repetition strategy mostly because when they talked in front of the audience sometimes they feel nervous, feel anxiety, afraid of making mistakes, forget the word or sentence, lack of vocabularies, and difficult to express what they want to express, so they need some strategies to gain time to think and release their nervous. This finding related to the researcher study from Susilawati (2007) cited that in an oral discussion, she reported that shyness, nervousness, feeling afraid of making mistakes, not knowing the way how to pronounce certain words, are the potential problems that can hinder the students to speak.

Based on the finding above, it was found that different levels of students' oral proficiency affect the use of CSs from two aspect: first, the type of selected CSs, and the second is the frequency of use the communication strategy. The result of this study which were displayed in tables 4.2.1, 4.2.2, and 4.2.3 showed that the total number CSs employed by the low proficient students was more than the CSs employed by the students with high and medium levels of oral proficiency. This statement is also supported by some studies conducted by Liskin Gasparro (1996) and Nakatani (2006), have shown that language proficiency can affect learners' choice of CSs. The finding of Nakatani (2006) indicated that use of socio-affective and (oral) fluency-oriented strategies during speaking and fluency-maintaining strategies during listening was pervasive among learners with higher proficiency. Liskin Gasparro (1996) found that more proficient students had a higher tendency towards using L2-based strategies such as paraphrasing while less proficient students usually

relied on first language (L1) and third language (L3) based strategies such as borrowing from L1 or L3 or foreignizing L1 or L3 words.

## CONCLUSION

The total number of communication strategies used by the students from high proficient students was nine (9) types of communication strategies, the total number of communication strategies used by medium proficient students was also nine (9) CSs, while the total number of communication strategies used by low proficient students was eleven (11) types of CSs.

There were types of communication strategies which were the most frequently used by high, medium, and low proficient students. They used fillers, and repetition strategy. Since the EFL Students do not use English more in their everyday life's function and since they could not master all foreign language words, they tend to use these strategies more. These strategies help to overcome the problems faced by the students during communication, because of their lack of vocabularies or feel nervous and afraid of making mistakes. .

Furthermore, the students' reasons of using communication strategies in their presentation because they lack of vocabularies, feel nervous, hesitate, forget the words, afraid of making a mistake, and do not feel confident. By using communication strategies, the students can overcome their problems in communicating using their L2 effectively and efficiently.

The study shows that the employment of communication strategies had enabled the students to achieve their communication goal despite their insufficient linguistic resources. For the teachers, the teachers are suggested to introduce the communication strategies to EFL learners. The teacher may teach and encourage the students their students to use them appropriately.

## REFERENCES

- Dornyei, Z. (1995). *On the teachability of communication strategies*. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(1): 55-84. doi:10.2307/3587805
- Faerch, C. & G. Kasper. (1984). *Two ways of defining communication strategies*. *Language Learning* 34 (1), 45-47
- Ghanbari, B. (2010). *ESP Practitioner Professionalization through Apprenticeship of*

*Practice: The Case of Two Iranian ESP practitioners.* English Language Teaching, 5(2), 112-122.

Harmer, Jeremy. 2002. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Longman:

Harmer, Jeremy. 2007. *How to Teach English (New Edition)*. New York: Pearson Education Limited.

Jordan, R.R. (1997). *English for academic purposes: a guide and resource book for teachers*. Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press.

LiskinGasparro, J.E. (1996). Circumlocution, communication strategies, and the ACTFL proficiency guidelines: An analysis of student discourse. *Foreign Language Annals*,29(3),317-330.

Nakatani, Y. (2006). Developing an oral communication strategy inventory. *The ModernLanguage Journal*, 90, 151-168.

Robinson, P. (1991) *ESP Today: a Practitioner's Guide*. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall International.

Robinson, Pauline C, ed. Hywel Coleman. *Working with Language: A Multidisciplinary Consideration of Language Use in Work Contexts*. New York:Mouton de Gruyter.

Tiono, Nani I, Sylvia, Agatha. (2004). *The Types of Communication Strategies Used by Speaking Class Students with Different Communication Apprehension Levels in English Department of Petra Christian University, Surabaya*.

Wardhono, Agus and Panggabean, Christina I.T. (2017). *Communication Strategies Used by EFL Students in Their Presentation*.

<http://ejournal.kopertais4.or.id/mataraman/index.php/efi/article/view/3228>

## APPENDIX

**Table 4.2.1**

Table of Communication Strategies employed by EFL students with high level proficiency.

CS consistently employed	Frequency of employed CS in each student		Percentage (%)
	1 <sup>st</sup> student	2 <sup>nd</sup> student	
Use fillers	20	19	50.6
Use non-linguistic mean	12	10	28.57
Repetition	2	2	5.2

Circumlocution	2	1	3.9
Self-correction	2	1	3.9
Code switching	-	2	2.6
Appeal for help	1	1	2.6
Approximation	-	1	1.3
Use purpose words	-	1	1.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>77</b>		<b>100%</b>

**Table 4.2.2**

Table of Communication Strategies employed by EFL students with medium level proficiency.

CS consistently employed	Frequency of employed CS in each student		Percentage (%)
	1 <sup>st</sup> student	2 <sup>nd</sup> student	
Use fillers	30	22	51.40
Repetition	10	11	19.62
Use non-linguistic mean	8	9	15.89
Self-correction	3	2	4.67
Appeal for help	1	3	2.80
Approximation	2	2	2.80
Literal translation	1	-	0.93
Code switching	1	-	0.93
Message abandonment	-	1	0.93
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>107</b>		<b>100%</b>

**Table 4.2.3**

Table of Communication Strategies employed by EFL students with low level proficiency.

CS consistently employed	Frequency of employed CS in each student		Percentage (%)
	1 <sup>st</sup> student	2 <sup>nd</sup> student	
Repetition	17	12	24
Use fillers	13	10	19
Appeal for help	11	9	16.53
Use non-linguistic means	9	5	11.57
Self-correction	6	4	8.26
Code switching	7	3	8.26
Word coinage	5	2	5.78
Circumlocution	2	2	3.3
Use purpose words	2	2	1.65
Message Abandonment	1	1	0.82
Literal translation	1	1	0.82

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100%</b>
--------------	------------	-------------