



## The Influence of Gender on Oral Communication Strategy Preferences: A Focus on First-Year University Students

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### Abstract

*Oral interaction techniques play a decisive part in bridging communication breakdowns. The motivation for this study arose from our recognition of a lack of clarity regarding male and female students' oral communication strategy preferences among first-year university students during our experience of teaching communicative English skills at Ethiopian universities. The study intended to examine the influence of gender on preferences for oral communication strategies. First-year students from two universities, Wolkite and Wachemo, were selected as participants in the study. One hundred and twenty-five (70 male and 55 female) students were randomly selected to collect quantitative data, and seventeen (ten male and seven female) were purposively selected to gather qualitative data from the first-year batch of the 2024/25 academic year. A descriptive-comparative framework within a convergent-parallel mixed-method design guided the study. The raw data were gathered through questionnaires, observations, and interviews. SPSS version 27 and thematic analysis were used to analyze quantitative and qualitative data, respectively. The findings indicated that gender slightly influences the learners' oral communication strategy preferences. The study recommends that gender-based oral communication strategies should be identified and included in the communicative English skills courses to address gender-related gaps in communication strategies and enhance message delivery.*

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## INTRODUCTION

More than at any other time, in this era of globalization, effective communication in English has played a vital role in the success of academic, commercial, diplomatic, social, religious, marital, medical, agricultural, touristic, technological, and recreational affairs in the global arena. In connection to this, oral interaction is basically one of the pivotal factors for academic achievement,

especially for first-year Ethiopian public university students, where English is utilized as the medium of instruction. The learners at Ethiopian universities, who usually come from diversified linguistic, social, and economic backgrounds, confront many challenges in oral communication as they shift from high school to university. In this context, oral communication strategies, which are

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the intentional techniques learners use to surmount obstacles in speaking, are vital instruments that empower students to express themselves and handle communication breakdowns. Awareness of what strategies male and female students prefer is critical for designating gender-inclusive pedagogical approaches.

Besides, oral communication has some features. For example, it can be easily successful if the speaker and listener negotiate meaning by using their first language. However, there may be a problem if they communicate by using a second language (SL) or foreign language (FL); consequently, a communication gap can often be created due to differences in their mother tongue and foreign/second language. Besides, verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication can be utilized in oral communication. Moreover, affective entities such as a positive attitude toward the interlocutor and/or the language, a lack of apprehension, and ample motivation can facilitate it (Mistar & Umamah, 2014).

Communication strategies can be defined differently by different scholars, even though they are widely recognized as techniques or procedures that language users employ to overcome difficulties in communication due to limited linguistic resources. For example, for Antonello (2023), CSs are not only compensatory tools but also mediating practices that sustain interaction and facilitate mutual understanding in intercultural settings. Su (2025) highlights that communication strategies are shaped by multiple factors, including learner characteristics, cultural background, and the technological environment, which influence how strategies are selected and implemented. These definitions collectively suggest that communication strategies function as dynamic tools enabling interlocutors to manage interactional challenges, negotiate meaning, and achieve communicative goals across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts (Antonello, 2023).

Besides, this study employed Nakatani's (2006) oral communication strategies inventories, as the researchers checked that the inventories contained adequate components to collect enough information

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. –March, 2026, 15(1), 77-88* to answer research questions. Besides, the inventories have been widely applied. He defined speaking techniques that focus on the behavior that students use when dealing with communication problems during interactional tasks. He also attempted to reduce aggravating perplexity, so the term "communication strategy" was replaced with "oral communication strategies" (OCSs). Nakatani (2006) found eight categories of oral communication strategies to cope with communication breakdowns in EFL learners. These were social-affective strategies, fluency-oriented strategies, negotiation for meaning while speaking, accuracy-oriented strategies, message reduction and alteration strategies, non-verbal strategies while speaking, the attempt to think in English, and abandonment strategies.

In addition to types of oral communication strategies, Sato and Ballinger (2016) state that despite communication strategies' paramount importance, they didn't receive focus before the 1970s; comparatively, it is a young field of study in SLA/FLA. The studies conducted before the 1970s in relation to language strategies targeted facilitating learning rather than the strategies to be used to cope with difficulties of communication. On the one hand, the issue of communication strategies was newly brought about and encompassed as one of Mao's (2023) procedures of the inter-language system of second language learners. On the other hand, Arfin et al. (2025) proposed several communication strategies and stated the investigation of strategic competence as one of the most crucial follow-up research directions. Their notion of strategic competence was employed as the latest turning point to clarify and classify studies of communication strategies.

In relation to this, practical experience, which the researchers gained from teaching English in Ethiopian public universities, reveals that both male and female students face difficulties when they are engaged in speaking tasks in English. However, a big question is whether or not male and female students use similar oral communication strategies.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Practical experience, which the researchers gained from teaching English in Ethiopian public universities, reveals that both male and female students face difficulties when they are required to perform oral communication in English. A large number of factors may be held responsible for the students' deficiency of oral communication skills. The students' lack of oral communication strategies or their inappropriate use of the few strategies that are familiar to them may have a fair share to play in making the students' oral communication skills deficient. Besides this, the researcher has been questioned by the OCSs preferred by the male and female first-year university students. To answer this question, a thorough investigation was conducted.

A large body of related literature disclosed a lack of studies on the issues of communication strategies at large and oral communication strategies in particular in relation to male and female students' preferences, locally and globally, in addressing the target population of the study. [Haile et al. \(2024\)](#) conducted a study on communication strategies employed by EFL instructors in higher education. The study concludes that although multiple communication strategies are present, the heavy reliance on instructor-dominated communication strategies and inadequate facilitation of student interaction limit reflective learning and communicative engagement in Ethiopian EFL classrooms. Moreover, [Dinsa et al. \(2022\)](#) studied the role of gender and study duration in EFL learners' speaking strategy development. The specific purpose of the study was to identify the impact of gender differences on learning oral communication techniques, not on the preference for communication strategies. The findings stated that gender has no influence on strategies to learn speaking. Furthermore, [Tasisa and Teshome \(2025\)](#) found that female students showed higher speaking anxiety than male students at three Ethiopian public universities. This study did not focus significantly on gender differences in oral communication strategy preferences. In the global context, [Mistar and Umamah \(2014\)](#)

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. –March, 2026, 15(1), 77-88* conducted a study on learning oral communication strategies employed by male and female learners to tackle their difficulties in oral interaction. The result of the study revealed that female students are more active and risk-taking than male students in promoting their speaking performance in high school. The study aimed at speaking strategies, not communication strategies, at the high school level. Moreover, [Irsyad and Ratmanida \(2022\)](#) carried out a study on EFL learners' communication strategy use in speaking performance. The study attempted to examine the strategies most frequently employed by male and female English language students, and the speaking strategies that affected their speaking performance in the context of Indonesia. The participants of the study were engineering trainees in their final year of the undergraduate program. Moreover, the study involved an exploratory design and was qualitative in approach. Dialogues were the task types used as data sources. The findings revealed that both male and female trainees used fillers; however, females more often used gestures than males. Beyond that, [Wahyuni \(2023\)](#), in the study of Indonesian university students, found that female students tended to choose metacognitive strategies, whereas male students preferred compensation strategies. A study by [Loureiro et al. \(2020\)](#) found that female students manifested significantly higher levels of oral communication anxiety than males. This alludes to the fact that female students may be attracted to strategies that reduce anxiety, such as rehearsing or avoiding difficult speaking situations, while male students may be more attracted to engaging in spontaneous and high-risk strategies.

There are many gaps in the current body of literature. First, very few studies focus specifically on first-year students, who are often less experienced and more anxious about speaking in English. Most existing studies focus on second- or third-year students, whose strategy use may differ significantly from that of newcomers. Second, a considerable number of international studies show that gender influences oral strategy preferences, but Ethiopian findings are more uneven. Lastly, several studies depend on quantitative methods,

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particularly self-report questionnaires. These may not supply adequate information about students' actual communicative behavior; qualitative data, such as interviews or observation, could provide deep insight.

Lack of context-specific and gender-sensitive evidence makes it difficult for educators to design effective instructional interventions that address learners' strategic needs in oral communication. Therefore, investigating the influence of gender on oral communication strategy preferences among first-year university students is essential to deepen understanding in this area and to foster pedagogy, curriculum design, and learner support practices.

In addition to this, first-year university students usually face difficulties in expressing themselves properly during instructional interactions. To handle these hurdles, the students apply different oral communication strategies. Despite earlier researchers' maximal focus on language learning strategies, minimal attention has been given to how gender influences students' preferences for oral communication strategies, chiefly among first-year university students.

Furthermore, irregularities in study results concerning gender disparities in communication strategy deployment show the need for further research. In the absence of compelling and clear evidence on whether and how gender influences oral communication strategy preferences, instructors may not sufficiently respond to students' diverse needs. Consequently, students may confront challenges in achieving learning outcomes. Thus, this study aims to examine the influence of gender on oral communication strategy preferences among first-year university students.

Hence, based on the understanding constructed from the related literature and the researchers' teaching experience, an empirical study was required to bridge the gap in the research. This study, therefore, investigates whether male and female first-year university students employ similar or different oral communication strategies.

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## **Research questions**

1. What oral communication strategies are most frequently preferred by male and female first-year university students?
2. Are there statistically significant differences between male and female first-year university students in their preference for specific oral communication strategies?
3. How does gender influence the choice and frequency of oral communication strategy use among first-year university students in academic speaking contexts?

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Design of the study**

A descriptive-comparative design was employed to describe and compare, not manipulate variables, the preferences of interactive techniques between male and female first-year university students. A mixed approach was applied, as it has the possibility of providing the study with triangulation of data. A convergent-parallel model was utilized, as data gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data occurred simultaneously, but they were analyzed separately. The results were merged to compare, interrelate, or validate them. In terms of interpretation, equal emphasis was given to both data forms.

### **Participants**

The participants of this study were the first-year students of Wolkite and Wachemo Universities, Ethiopia, in the year 2024/25. One hundred twenty-five students (70 males and 55 females) were involved in this study to obtain quantitative data. They were selected by using a stratified random sampling technique. Seventeen students (seven female and ten male) were selected to obtain trustworthy qualitative data based on [Enworo's \(2023\)](#) guides: purposive sampling, saturation, and information richness. This study involved purposive sampling of both male and female students, which was sufficient to provide deep insights into the phenomenon under study. In both male and female students' sampling, the sampling continued until saturation was achieved. Moreover,

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seven female and ten male students were rich enough in information to compare their oral communication strategy preferences.

### **Tools for data collection**

Three data-gathering tools, namely, a questionnaire, an interview, and observation, were used in this study.

### **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was the major data-gathering tool used to gather data for this study. The questionnaire was adapted from Nakatani's (2006) Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI). The Oral Communication Strategy Inventory was primarily developed by Nakatani (2006). It was aimed at rating EFL learners' use of strategies in speaking and listening. It contains two main components, namely, listening and speaking strategies. In the present study, the speaking part was utilized to identify learners' oral communication strategy preferences.

The adapted OCSI contains detailed items of a questionnaire that can help learners make decisions about each of the main and sub-strategies. It enables first-year public university students to respond to what strategy they prefer to deal with their speaking breakdown. The questionnaire consisted of 34 sub-strategies under the umbrella of eight main strategies. These are social-affective strategies (items 1-6), fluency-oriented strategies (7-12), negotiation for meaning (13-16), accuracy-oriented strategies (17-21), message reduction and alteration strategies (22-26), non-verbal strategies (27-29), message abandonment strategies (30-32), and the attempt to think in English strategy (33-34). The participants of the study were asked to decide their preference for oral communication techniques on a five-point Likert scale from 1 to 5 to indicate gender differences in oral communication strategy preference. The five-point Likert scale, i.e., 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=not sure, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree, was employed. The mean scores for the groups of strategies were interpreted based on the adapted reporting scales. The questionnaire items connected to oral

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. –March, 2026, 15(1), 77-88* communication techniques were adapted to look into the kinds of oral communication techniques used by the study participants.

### **Interview**

A semi-structured interview was utilized to triangulate the information gathered using the questionnaire and task performance observation. Interviews permit us to address issues such as identifying males' and females' oral communication strategies and preferences. The questions of the interview used in the study were, thus, developed based on the objectives of the research.

### **Observation**

Essentially, male and female first-year university students' choice of oral communication strategies was crucial to check whether or not people actually do what they claim to do in response to items in the questionnaire. The observation was achieved using oral tasks such as oral presentations, picture descriptions, group discussions, and debates. During the observation, the researchers wrote down the data, which helped to answer the research questions. At the same time, a smartphone was used to audio-video record the students' performances of the tasks. The audio-video recorded data was later transcribed verbatim and made ready for analysis. Moreover, more than one turn of observations of each student's performance of tasks was made to check the consistency of the participants' actions. Seventeen students (10 males and 7 females) participated in oral presentation, group discussion, picture description, and debating guided by adapted Nakatani's (2006) Oral Communication Strategies Inventories.

### **Findings**

The statistical analysis of quantitative data was carried out using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0. Data obtained from the questionnaire items were analyzed using descriptive statistics, i.e., mean and standard deviation, and inferential statistics, like independent samples t-tests, to examine the influence of gender on oral communication strategy preferences.

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On the other hand, for analyzing the qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) guide: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Study participants were coded using (M-1...M-10) for males and (F-1...F-7) for females. Then, the coded data was grouped on the basis of emerging themes. Thereafter, their significance was interpreted.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

As indicated in Table 1, the mean value of the social-affective strategy was 3.47 for female

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. –March, 2026, 15(1), 77-88* students and 3.625 for male students. The mean difference between the two values was 0.155. The mean values of the fluency-oriented strategy were 3.77 and 2.85 for females and males, respectively. The mean difference was 0.92. The mean values of negotiation for meaning were 3.877 and 3.74 for females and males, respectively. The mean difference between them was 0.137. In the accuracy-oriented strategy, the mean values for females and males were 3.464 and 3.628, respectively. The mean difference was 0.164. In message reduction and alteration, the mean values for females and males were 3.528 and 3.506, respectively.

**Table 1**

*The Male and Female Learners' Oral Communication Strategy Preferences*

Strategies	Females		Males	
	Mean(x)	SD	Mean(x)	SD
Social-affective	3.470	0.111	3.625	0.192
Fluency oriented	3.770	1.170	2.850	0.080
Negotiation for meaning	3.877	0.065	3.740	0.089
Accuracy-oriented	3.464	0.093	3.628	0.089
Message reduction and alteration	3.528	0.171	3.506	0.041
Nonverbal strategies	3.640	0.069	3.643	0.096
Message abandonment	3.010	0.095	2.916	0.029
Attempt to think in English.	3.785	0.040	3.645	0.015
Overall	3.568	0.226	3.444	0.078

Source: Survey result, 2025

The mean difference between these values is 0.164. In non-verbal strategies, the mean values for females and males were 3.64 and 3.6433, respectively. The mean difference was 0.0033. In message abandonment, the mean values for females and males were 3.01 and 2.916, respectively. The mean difference was 0.094. In attempting to think in English as a strategy, the mean values for females and males were 3.785 and 3.645, respectively. The mean difference was 0.14. The overall mean for female and male learners' oral communication strategy preference was 3.568 and 3.4441625, respectively. Hence, fluency-oriented strategies

show substantively meaningful differences, but non-verbal strategies indicate negligible differences.

As demonstrated in Table 2, the t-value is -0.172 ( $p=0.863$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). The results of the independent sample t-test indicated that there was no significant difference between female and male students' oral communication strategy preferences.

### Qualitative Data Analyses and Findings

The interview was intended to explore the participants' opinions on their oral communication strategy preferences. Besides, the observation was intended to identify the preferred speaking

*Temesgen et al.*, techniques of male and female students when they performed oral tasks: oral presentation, picture description, debating, and group discussion. The participants who provided qualitative data were 17

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. –March, 2026, 15(1), 77-88* (10 males and 7 females). They were coded M-1 to M-10 for male students and F-1 to F-7 for female students.

**Table 2**

*The Relationships Between Gender and the Learners' Oral Communication Strategy Preferences*

Equal Variances	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for equality of means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal Variances assumed	.752	.387	-.172	123	.863	-.01077	.06245	-.13438	.11284
Equal variances are not assumed.	-	-	-.175	121.06	.861	-.01077	.06157	-.13267	.11113

\*Significant difference at  $p < 0.05$

### **The Influence of Gender on Students' Oral Communication Strategy Preferences**

Gender is the variable that may influence learners' oral communication strategy preferences. Below is the thematic analysis, which contains eight themes (main oral communication strategies).

#### **Theme One: Preference of Social-Affective Strategies**

Female students surpassed male students in preferring social techniques, asking for help (clarification), and cooperation in group or pair tasks. But they reflected that they got shy (anxious), particularly in mixed-gender settings. These were similarly manifested during the observed female students' oral task performance. However, male students tended to avoid asking for help, and they tended to appear more confident during their oral task performances.

In relation to this, F-3 and F-7 reflected that they didn't hesitate to ask others for help when they had difficulty communicating. They also kept their

turn until others finished to maintain the conversation. But they feared speaking English, especially when there were males. Similarly, F-1 and F-4 indicated that they were shy of speaking English, especially in the classroom with the male domination, but they were good at asking others for help. Likewise, the rest of the three participants informed that they asked others or they didn't speak when they were not sure about the words they wanted to speak because they didn't want to be laughed at.

In contrast, M-2, M-4, and M-5 informed that they didn't worry about making mistakes and being laughed at when they spoke; instead, they spoke out whether it was right or wrong. Similarly, M-1, M-3, M-6, and M-10 reflected that males were expected to be outspoken, confident, and independent, and they acted accordingly. The rest of the three male participants stated that they didn't like to be dependent on others to speak, and they didn't evoke fear toward them when they spoke. They were not fearful about making mistakes, and

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they attempted to speak English confidently with domination.

### **Theme Two: Fluency-Oriented Strategies**

First-year female students in selected Ethiopian public universities prefer a wider range of fluency-oriented oral communication strategies than males. This trend is very compatible with global trends despite differences in various reasons, such as social expectations about communication behavior, classroom environment, and teaching methods. In relation to this, F-1, F-2, and F-7 reported that they usually restated their ideas with similar words when they couldn't use the original one; they also used repairing expressions like "you know", "I mean", etc. Likewise, F-3, F-4, F-5, and F-6 reflected that they were very tactful to maintain communication and avoid breakdown; for example, they paraphrased, rephrased, re-planned, cooperated, and repaired, etc. In short, they exerted their best effort to enhance the smooth flow of ideas.

In contrast, M-4, M-5, M-8, M-9, and M-10 informed that they mainly focused on accomplishing their speech; they didn't worry much about the process of speaking to maintain clarity and a smooth flow of ideas. Similarly, M-1, M-2, M-3, M-6, and M-7 reflected that they didn't want to correct their mistakes once they made them. They usually considered that what they said should be correct.

### **Theme Three: Negotiation for Meaning While Speaking**

Female students preferred negotiating for meaning while speaking more than males, particularly in clarifying, confirming, exemplifying, and repeating. In relation to this, during the interview, F-1, F-2, and F-7 indicated that they carefully examined the listener's reaction toward their speech so as to approach themselves accordingly. When they were sure that the listener did not understand their speech, they repeated and used examples to clarify the message.

Similarly, F-3, F-4, F-5, and F-6 reported that they needed to collaborate with the listener when they spoke. Also, they liked to be polite toward the

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listeners to make meaning together. They extremely favored watching the listener's reaction to their speech to adjust themselves accordingly. Consequently, they thought that they best achieved their objectives of talking. Depending on the researcher's overall observation during debate, discussion, presentation, and description, they attempted more negotiation for meaning.

From the males' perspective, during the interview, M-1, M-6, M-7, and M-9 said that even though attending to the listener's reaction might be necessary, they tended to give more focus directly on expressing their thoughts. Besides, they rarely used examples to make their ideas clear to the listeners. Moreover, sometimes they attempted to check whether the listener understood their speech or not.

In aggregate, the rest of the male participants articulated that they were interested in highly focusing on their speech through worrying less about the listener's reaction to their speech. Moreover, repeating ideas was boring to them; consequently, they rarely repeated their words to the listener. They didn't like to ask the listener about what they talked about, as they thought asking a question might make the listener stressed.

In connection to this, the researcher observed their performance of the tasks until the male participants didn't attempt to negotiate for mutual meaning; however, some male participants occasionally used repetition and exemplification during debating.

### **Theme Four: Accuracy-Oriented Strategies**

Accuracy-oriented strategies were more commonly used by males than females based on the following evidence. The researchers observed the learners very cautiously when they performed oral presentations, group discussions, picture descriptions, and debating. The researchers found out that males were more accuracy-dominated than females. Moreover, all male interviewees reflected that males usually tended to speak correct language elements in a correct manner. However, all female interviewees revealed that they didn't focus more on speaking mistake-free English; instead, they

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focused less on expressing ideas without worrying about mistakes.

### **Theme Five: Message Reduction and Alteration Strategies**

Females preferred this strategy slightly more than males. In order to justify this, during the interview, both male and female students asserted that they usually tried to use simple expressions. Moreover, the researchers observed the male and female participants while they performed oral tasks, and they confirmed that both genders used simple expressions in a slightly similar fashion.

Similarly, during the interview, all males and females emphasized that they attempted to simplify the message. Moreover, the researchers verified that males and females tried to narrow the messages when they performed oral presentations, group discussions, picture descriptions, and debates.

With respect to using words that are familiar to them, a slightly greater tendency to choose this strategy was reported by male students than by female students during the interview. When the researchers observed the performance of the speaking tasks, they verified that female students used this strategy in nearly the same fashion as the male students.

With regard to replacing the original message with another one when they feel the original fails to express their intent, in a similar sense, all male respondents preferred this strategy, but six female respondents preferred it. During the observation of the speaking tasks, the researchers thoroughly checked that male and female students used this strategy through circumlocution, synonym, etc., in a similar fashion.

In consideration of paraphrasing a word when they forget it, all the female participants indicated that they usually used this strategy; however, eight male respondents replied that they used this strategy. In relation to this, the researchers observed the performance of the speaking tasks, and they assured that both female and male students used the strategy in a similar fashion.

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### **Theme Six: Non-verbal Strategies While Speaking**

According to the researchers' observation during performance of speaking tasks, both female and male students used non-verbal strategies in a nearly similar fashion, despite a slight difference in terms of the kinds of non-verbal strategies they used. For example, females were more dominant in facial expressions like smiling and nodding, perhaps to signal rapport and encouragement, whereas males were more dominant in eye contact, perhaps to manifest confidence and control. During the interview, data compatible with observation were obtained.

### **Theme Seven: Message Abandonment Strategies**

F-1, F-4, F-6, and F-7 said that they usually abandoned producing ideas when their ideas were incorrect or unclear. The rest of the female students stated that they felt ashamed to continue speaking incorrectly. Similarly, the researchers observed female students during their oral task performance, and they saw that the students stopped speaking or shifted from one idea to another when they encountered difficulty in completing their thoughts in English. However, male students attempted confidently to communicate with limited abandonment of information, nearly in the same fashion, when they were observed during their performance of speaking tasks. In the same manner, all male interviewees assured that they persisted in attempting not to abandon the intended message regardless of the quality of their language.

### **Theme Eight: Attempt to Think in English Strategies**

F-3, F-4, F-6, and F-7 articulated that they didn't often depend on direct translation from their mother tongue before talking; instead, they frequently attempted their best to think in English before speaking. Likewise, F-1, F-2, and F-5 stressed that they consistently and deliberately tried to rehearse in English about what they talked about. In contrast to this, M-1, M-2, M-4, M, and M-9 accentuated

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that they tried to think in English less frequently; instead, they depended more on their mother tongue translation. Similarly, the rest of the male participants said that they often thought in their first language, then translated it into English.

### **Discussions**

The result of the study indicated that female students exceeded male students in overall speaking technique preferences. As shown in [Table 1](#), both females ( $x=3.568$ ) and males ( $x=3.4441625$ ) used oral communication strategies. These findings revealed that there was a small overall mean difference between the two groups in utilizing oral communication techniques. [Table 2](#) depicts that the t-value is  $-0.172(p=0.863, p>0.05)$ . The results of the independent sample t-test outcome indicated that there was a slight difference between the two groups in their preference for oral communication techniques. Similar to quantitative data, data collected by interview and observation lucidly depicted that female students slightly exceeded their male counterparts in the frequency of using oral communication strategies. Moreover, small differences were recognized between males and females in using types of oral communication strategies. For example, females were more cooperative but less confident than males. Females used smiling and nodding, whereas males used eye contact, though both used hand movements. Both used repairers, but females focused more on the smooth flow of ideas and paraphrasing than males. Females made more of an attempt than males in making mutual meanings. Males attempted to use correct language elements more than females. Using their familiar words and replacing the original message were more commonly used by males, but paraphrasing was more commonly used by females. However, both used simple expressions in a similar fashion. Female students tended to abandon messages more than male students. Regarding research question one, female students most frequently preferred fluency-oriented and negotiation for meaning strategies, while males leaned towards accuracy-oriented strategies. For research question two, significant gender

*Sci. Technol. Arts Res. J., Jan. –March, 2026, 15(1), 77-88* differences were found in fluency-oriented strategies, but not in most other categories. For the third research question, slight tendencies, but not significant overall gender, influence the choice of the strategies. To conclude, though there are some specific differences in strategy preferences, gender differences in strategy preferences were minimal. The results of this study and the prior ones are nearly similar. [Nakatani \(2006\)](#) reported that both genders used paraphrasing, clarification requests, and repair strategies in a similar fashion in structured speaking tasks. Additionally, [Khan et al \(2023\)](#) revealed that there was no significant gender disparity in the overall frequency of interaction techniques. Moreover, the shared environment and objectives seem to reduce gender-linked preferences in academic and professional discussions; men and women equally prioritize message clarity and task completion (Oxford, 2011). In a nutshell, the results of prior studies and the present one reveal some differences.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Although female students exceeded male students in overall oral communication strategies use, the two groups had slight differences in employing some strategies. As shown in [Table 1](#), a slight gender disparity was recognized in the mean score when utilizing oral communication techniques. On the basis of independent sample t-test outcomes ( $p=0.863, p>0.05$ ), a slight gender-disparity in oral communication technique preferences was recognized. Moreover, a few differences were identified during the interviews and task performance. From this, one can conclude that despite a minimal overall difference, there was a specific difference in preference for each strategy.

### **Recommendations**

Rooted in findings, some pedagogical implications can be extracted. Although both females and males do not exhibit significant differences in preferring oral communication strategies, they need to have awareness about gender-based deficiencies in oral communication strategies to bridge their respective gaps. Besides, teachers should integrate strategy

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awareness into classroom practice; curriculum designers need to ensure gender-balanced representation of strategies; course material developers ought to develop teaching-learning materials through thorough consideration of gender differences in strategy choices, and policy makers should develop gender-sensitive language education policies. Furthermore, appropriate training should be given by experts with adequate awareness about the issue for English teachers at the university and first-year university students. Provide confidence-building activities for female students and fluency-focused practice for male students; encourage reflective practice to help students analyze their preferences and gaps.

Additionally, studies need to be conducted on gender differences in oral proficiency, the impact of oral communication strategies training on speaking proficiency, longitudinal studies to track changes in strategy use over time, digital learning contexts in relation to strategy-choice of female and male students, and gender differences in challenges and motivation of using oral communication strategies. Moreover, the study was conducted in the setting of only two universities (Wolkite and Wachemo universities). Thus, this study recommends the need for an extended study in terms of the larger-scale research with a larger sample size. Moreover, it should be conducted in a wider setting to obtain wider information from more universities to check the generalizability.

#### **CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement**

**Temesgen Erabo:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, and Writing-Original Draft.

**Tamene Kitila:** Supervision and Resources.

**Meshesha Make:** Validation and Writing-Reviewing and Editing.

#### **Declaration of Competing Interest**

There was no conflict of interest among the authors.

#### **Ethical Approval**

Wolaita Sodo University, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, and the Department of

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English Language and Literature approved before we gathered data with Ref. No: Doc/2037/6 on 25/5/2024. Additionally, participants' consent was obtained prior to data collection; their anonymity and confidentiality were maintained; no deceptive or coercive methods were employed.

#### **Data Availability Statement**

Data were obtained, and they can be submitted to the journal when required.

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