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The Influence of Gender and Study Duration on EFL Learners' Speaking Strategies Use

Mitiku Tasisa Dinsa
Jimma University, Ethiopia
Email: mitiku1tasisa@gmail.com

Getachew Seyoum
Jimma University, Ethiopia
Email: getachews2004@gmail.com

Dagne Tiruneh Dinsa
Jimma University, Ethiopia
Email: haaraandagne2004@gmail.com

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Abstract
The speaking strategy use of students is perceived to be successful in L2 learning and competent English users. The aim of this study was to pinpoint the influence of gender differences on students' speaking strategies use. It also intended to identify the influence of study duration on students' speaking strategies use to learn speaking skill at Wolaita Sodo University, Ethiopia. The participants of the current study were 70 (34 female and 36 male) English major students in the Academic Year of 2020. A descriptive comparison design was utilized for this study. The data were collected from the targeted population using a questionnaire and interview whether gender and study duration influence students' speaking strategies use or not. The results denoted that there were significant relationships between females and males in employing speaking strategies to learn speaking skill. Gender has no an influence on students' speaking strategies use to exercise oral communication. However, the finding denoted that there was statistically a significant difference between second year and third year EFL students in using speaking strategies to promote their speaking proficiency. Study duration has an influence on students' speaking strategies use to train oral communication. Therefore, this study recommends learners should use appropriate speaking strategies based on their interest to promote their speaking proficiency; they must be trained and supported to employ different strategies develop their oral communication skills.

Keywords: speaking strategies; speaking proficiency; oral communication; gender; study duration

Introduction

Language Learning Strategy (LLS) has received more attention, especially from both researchers and educators' in the fields of education including applied linguistics since in the 1970s. It is the most widely researched area of teaching and learning process. The findings of the study in line with Oxford (1990) indicated that the application of appropriate LLS develops learner

autonomy and self-directed participation to use the target language. Oxford highlights that the shift from instructing to learning enhances students to develop their thinking, memorizing, practicing and reflecting on the language in more advanced ways. However, the findings of many studies denoted that the majority of the EFL learners are not proficient speakers of the target language; they have a low learning environment exposure and practice in the target language because the priority has not been given to oral communication skill (Gani et al., 2015; Khamkhien, 2010; Kustati, 2012; Weyers, 2010). This is because teachers may not train their students on how to use different strategies in an efficient way; learners inability to use appropriate strategies to overcome their speaking problems.

Speaking strategy is the backbone of students' speaking proficiency. Speaking strategy is not something inherited from teachers or someone as a gift (Yunus, 2014). It is the techniques or actions that an individual use to solve his/her oral communication skill. Learning speaking skill requires individual's interest to use various strategies to become proficient English speaker. Zhou and Shen (2020) suggested that people should develop the awareness of using speaking strategies to become competent English users. As further stated by Kustati (2012), speaking strategy is a technique or an act which comes from an individual as a result of his/her intrinsic motivation to develop his/her oral skills. Therefore, the speaking strategies that consider the students' interest and capacity of the language is an evidence as well as a cornerstone for the development of their speaking proficiency.

Moreover, some scholars find out that gender and study duration are the independent variable influence students' speaking strategies use (Chou, 2018; Marisa, 2016; Mistar & Umamah, 2014; Najafabadi, 2014; Razmjoo & Ardekani, 2011). Marisa highlights that gender has an impact on students' speaking strategies use. This finding revealed that memory, metacognitive and cognitive strategies are preferable to males than females. The finding of the study Mistar and Umamah (2014) also reported that gender can determine the students' opportunity to use different speaking strategies to solve their speaking problems. On the other hand, the findings of the studies by Chou (2018) and Yaman and Ozcan (2015) indicated that students' speaking strategies use can determined by study duration. These studies demonstrated that gender differences and study duration in using speaking strategies require individuals memorizing, practicing, repeating, analyzing and reasoning, planning, thinking and reflecting on the language in more advanced ways.

In the survey of the views of English teachers in Ethiopia with regard to the difficulties of teaching speaking skill, Zerihun (2009) states that English has been taught for a long time, but still, the student's speaking proficiency is very low. The finding showed that authentic tasks are not employed to teach speaking skills. The students have no common background knowledge at lower grades. The majority of the students are being learned English language by unqualified teachers with inaccessible material resources while a few students are being learned by qualified and proficient teachers with accessible material resources. Abda (2017) argues that speaking is a neglected skill to be measured using different tasks and the right techniques. For the reason that speaking is very difficult skill, it is not easy to train and to assess through oral performance in an actual classroom.

From my own observation, university students face some problems to learn speaking skill in English. They hesitate to interact even with one another and instructor orally in an actual classroom. During oral presentations, introductions, group discussions, debate and public speech, they are not interested to express their opinions, ideas and feelings orally. Students' speaking proficiency is still a matter of alarm needs special consideration to solve it. It can be seen that the

majority of the students are reluctant and self-conscious to practice in the target language; they have a fear of making mistakes as well as ridicule to speak in English although they have a great interest to speak English fluently and autonomously inside and outside a classroom. Furthermore, they do not use the right words in the right places to convey information. Therefore, learners are very poor to negotiate the intended meanings to the listener in the target language.

As discussed above, students are less proficient speakers of the target language and this may be due to some basic reasons. For example, teachers may not train them on how to use different speaking strategies to practice speaking in English; many students may not use appropriate speaking strategies to improve their speaking proficiency.

In Ethiopia, some local researchers have studied oral communication or speaking strategies use of students. For example, the finding of the study in line with Tsegaye (1995) showed that although students use affective and social speaking strategies, they are incompetent English users. Finally, the study suggests that students should be encouraged to employ different strategies to promote their speaking skills. As further stated by Bizuayehu and Getachew (2015), students most frequently use memory, cognitive and compensation speaking strategies to improve their speaking ability. The results of the study denoted that students are not aware of speaking strategies helping them to develop their speaking skills. The finding also indicated that there is a problem of using appropriate speaking strategies to train oral communication.

As stated above, local researchers addressed only the speaking strategies use of students to improve their speaking proficiency. They described the speaking strategies related to the activities that promote students' speaking proficiency. The designs of the two studies were descriptive design; the targeted population of the two studies were college students. However, the present study is completely different from the previous studies in some ways. It spotlights on the influence of gender and study duration on students' strategies use to learn speaking. The participants of this study are public university students; they have taken advanced courses related to speaking skill. Moreover, the sample size of this study would be large enough to generalize the findings since it is a descriptive comparison design. In our understanding, no study has been conducted on the influence of gender and study duration on students' speaking strategies use to learn speaking skill. Therefore, the current study attempts to fill this gap.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Determine the influence of gender differences on students' speaking strategies use
2. To find out the influence of study durations on students' speaking strategy use

Literature review

What is speaking?

Speaking is a tool of communication which is employed to exchange information orally. Speaking is the skill (Bouaassria, 2016) through which peoples can communicate with one another for specific purposes; it is an oral skill employed to convey their feelings, opinions, ideas, hope and so on in everyday activities (Bahrani et al., 2020). According to Campos (2013), speaking is a skill used to shape, modify, extend and organize ideas to transfer messages to the targeted audience orally. Campos denoted that speaking is used to exchange information in a face-to-face interaction or telephone conversation. It is not just making sound of words, but it is how to organize ideas and communicate, send and receive messages in spoken language. Thus, speaking is an oral

skill which is used to negotiate the intended meanings through in a more systematic verbal utterances.

Speaking is the most eminent skill that students use to become proficient speakers of the target language (Gudu, 2015). Learners can talk sensibly when they understand what they are told. If we fail to be aware of the spoken language, they may miss the required information and respond it in a wrong direction. More importantly, speaking is a means of providing students with an understanding input to transfer messages orally. Furthermore, Ur stated that:

Of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as speakers of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing; and many if not most foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak (Ur, 1996, p. 120).

The study shows that we are able to talk sensibly when we understand what we are told. If we fail to understand the spoken language, we may miss the required information and respond it in a wrong direction. It is a means of providing students with an understanding input to transfer messages orally.

The present study suggests learners should employ the right words in the right orders with the right sound of words and understand about the sociolinguistic competences to produce utterances in a wider context. Therefore, a person, who is able to speak the target language, can understand and transfer his/her messages orally.

Speaking strategies

Speaking strategy is the technique or action that students consciously use to promote their speaking skills. If students wanted to improve their speaking proficiency, they should use different speaking strategies to exercise oral communication (Mendez, 2011). Mendez states that although the majority of the students want to talk English fluently, they are afraid of speaking English in front of the people. Speaking strategy is the technique which needs learner's mind readiness and physical involvement to promote their speaking proficiency (Bouaassria, 2016). Bouaassria depicts that revising, analyzing and evaluating, practicing and repeating techniques enable students to learn speaking skills. This develops the students' confidence to use the target language in a real life communication.

Bizuayehu and Getachew (2014) argue that speaking strategies are the techniques or actions used to overcome a single language problem like resource deficits considered as the gaps in speaker's knowledge preventing him/her from verbalizing messages. This implied that speaking strategy is the individuals' tactics and abilities employed to improve their oral communication skills. Sanchez (2015) suggests that speakers should first anticipate and produce the expected patterns of the spoken discourse to learn the language. He also highlights that vocabulary, rate of speech and grammar as well as turn-taking and providing feedback are the indispensable aspects used in the success of interaction with one another. Learners' interaction with one another motivates them to use their expressions or words in the target language.

The discussions above realized that the application of different speaking strategies is the assurance of students' oral communication skills. Proficient speakers use strategies for keeping the conversation flow and maintaining their interaction through negotiation meanings. This indicates that it is linked to practicing, imitating the speakers and reflecting on the language. It is not something inherited from a teacher or someone rather it is the individual's effort and exercise to be proficient speaker of the language. Therefore, speaking strategy is the technique or an action

that students consciously take to apply the linguistic knowledge and spoken discourse. It is the technique or an action that develops learner autonomy to use the target language in a practical way.

Factors influencing students' speaking strategies use.

Gender

Gender is the most important variable may influence students' speaking strategies use even though many scholars have different views. Some studies carried out on the influence of 'gender' on students' speaking strategies use. For instance, Marisa (2016) carried out a study on "Learning strategies used by male and female in learning speaking of English." The study intended to examine male and female students' speaking strategies use to promote their speaking proficiency. The results depicted that females used affective, metacognitive and compensation speaking strategies to solve their oral skills than males. The finding denoted that gender has no an impact on students using speaking strategies ($p=0.04$, $p<0.05$). Similarly, Mistar and Umamah (2014) studied on learning speaking strategies utilized to solve their speaking problems. Females are active and risk-taking than males to promote their speaking proficiency. The finding indicated that females used various speaking strategies to exercise oral communication. Additionally, Sayed (2020) carried out a study entitled "Identifying Speaking Strategies Used by EFL Students at the Northern Border University." The study intended to identify the speaking strategies used by EFL female and male students. Female students devote their time and energy to use different speaking strategies than males. The results showed that there were mean score differences between males ($X=64.36$) and females ($X=76.52$) in using speaking strategies. Besides, statistically there were significant differences between both groups in employing speaking strategies ($t=24.077$, $p=0.001$, $p<0.05$). In general, the findings of the studies depicted that gender influenced students' speaking strategies use to train oral communication.

On the contrary, some studies indicate that gender has no an impact on students' speaking strategies use to learn speaking skill. For example, Razmjoo and Ghasemi (2011) indicated that all students should get equal opportunity to use different speaking strategies develop their speaking skills. The study intended to describe the influence of gender differences on EFL students' speaking strategies use. The results indicated that there was no a mean difference found between males ($X=76.08$) and females ($X=74.96$) in using speaking strategies. Besides, the finding indicated that statistically there was no a significant difference between females and males in using speaking strategies ($t=-1.5$, $p=0.29$, $p>0.05$). As further stated by Wahyuni (2013), gender difference has no an effect on EFL students' speaking strategies use. The finding of the study reported that there is a significant correlation between male and female students ($t=-0.896$, $p=0.063$, $p>0.05$). The results of the study realize that both groups employ different oral communication strategies to develop their oral skills. Both groups have an equal opportunity to use different speaking strategies to train oral communication. The findings of studies substantiated that gender has an influence on students' speaking strategies to develop their speaking proficiency.

Study duration

Study duration is one of the independent variables that can be used to determine the students' speaking ability to use various strategies in everyday activities. For example, Chou (2018) carried out a study on "Speaking anxiety and strategy use for learning English as a foreign language in full-time and partial English-medium instruction contexts." The results of the study denoted that full time students used compensation and social speaking strategies than partial students to promote their oral skills. The finding also showed that there was no a good correlation between

full time and partial time students in their use of speaking strategies (β=-0.491, t=-14.501, p=0.000, p<0.05). This implied that study duration is not recognized as a determinant factor influence students' speaking strategies choices and uses. As further stated by Yaman and Ozcan (2015), students used different speaking strategies to solve their speaking problems. Senior students most frequently employ various strategies to improve their speaking ability than junior students. The finding denoted that there was a significant difference between senior and junior students in terms of their speaking strategies use (p=0.047, p<0.05). Therefore, results showed that the use of speaking strategy is affected by learners' grade levels.

In contrast, some scholars find out that study duration has no an influence on students' speaking strategies use to develop their speaking proficiency. For example, Razmjoo and Ghasemi (2011) carried out a study entitled "A model of speaking strategies for EFL learners" The results demonstrated that there are no mean score differences between elementary (M=76.74) and advanced level (M=76.68) students. Additionally, the finding of the study indicated that there were no significant differences between elementary and advanced groups (p=0.0.31, p<0.05) in using speaking strategies. Furthermore, Weyers (2010) conducted on a study entitled "Speaking Strategies: Meeting NCATE Oral Proficiency Standards." The application of speaking strategy can be determined by learners actual oral performances of the language. The courses given in an actual classroom may help learners to get feedback and practice with one another. The finding denoted that grade level has an influence on students' students speaking strategies use.

As the previous studies conducted and reviewed, the findings related to the influence of gender differences and study duration on students' speaking strategies are not yet conclusive. The studies indicated that there were inadequate studies conducted on the influence of the two variables on students' speaking strategies use. Furthermore, this motivates the researchers to investigate the influence of gender and study duration on students' speaking strategies use.

Methodology

Design of the study

A descriptive comparison design was utilized to explore students' speaking strategies use vis-a-vis their speaking proficiency.

Participants

The participants were second year and third year English major students at Wolaita Sodo University (WSU). More specifically, 70 WSU consisting 36 male and 34 female English majoring students were selected comprehensively in the current study.

Instruments

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was the eminent instrument utilized to collect adequate information in the present study. It was employed to pinpoint students' speaking strategies use to learn speaking skill in English. To ensure this, the questionnaire was developed by adapting Nakatani's (2006) Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) to pinpoint EFL students' speaking strategies use to learn speaking skill.

The OCSI was originated by Nakatani (2006); it intended to measure EFL learners' strategies use related to learning speaking and listening skills. It has two main parts such as listening and speaking strategies. In the current study, only speaking part was employed to measure students' speaking strategies use.

The adapted OCSI is a self-report questionnaire which supports students to answer honestly and accurately the questions. More importantly, the questionnaire mainly focused on the speaking strategies use of students to exercise oral communication or conversation. It became a self-reporting questionnaire that enables EFL students to answer how often they employ the strategies to solve their speaking problems. The questionnaire contained 54 closed-ended items which consisted of six categories. These include metacognitive (item 1-10), affective (item 11-18), cognitive (item 19-29), social (item 30-40), memory (item 41-47) and compensation (item 49-54). In this part, all students expressed the degree of their use of speaking strategies on 5 point Likert scale from 1-5 the frequency of strategy use (i.e., 1='never 'or 'almost never true of me', 2='generally not true of me', 3='somewhat true of me', 4='generally true of me', and 5='always' or 'almost always true of me'). The average scores for the groups of the strategies were interpreted based on the reporting scales adapted. The items related to learners' speaking strategies were also adapted to scrutinize the types of speaking strategies use (Nakatani, 2006).

Interview

Semi-structured interview was utilized to collect adequate information. This interview spotlighted on the speaking strategies that students most frequently use to develop their speaking proficiency. Also, it supported the researchers to get the required information from the interviewees to get the information which may not gain through a questionnaire.

Of the 70 respondents in the current study, 17 (i.e., 10 females and 7 males) students were purposely selected based on their oral performances (those relatively proficient speakers). This supported the researchers to create a clear understanding between students and them. The interviewees were advised to give constructive ideas related to their speaking strategies use and speaking proficiency. The interview took 5-11 minutes duration to be lasted for each interviewee. Then, all interviewees' were coded and recorded their sound using smart hand-phones recorder and some additional notes were taken during an interview. At the end, the data obtained were transcribed verbatim.

Validity and reliability of instruments

Before the main data were collected, the items of each tool were validated as follows. The items of instruments were validated by the researchers' supervisors'. Then, each tool content and face validity and the significance of the items were reviewed by two experts (PhD in TEFL instructors) who are working at WKU and Kotobe Metropolitan University. They are instructors who have 14 and 16 working experiences in teaching English language at Ethiopian public universities and conducted many studies on language learning strategies. The pilot study was carried out to try out the instruments of the data collection and to check the reliability of items. Finally, based on the feedback given, some items were modified and rewritten for the main study.

The Cronbach alpha was utilized to check the trustworthiness of the items on the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha for 54 items was 0.889. This also realized that they are better at pinpointing students' speaking strategies use.

To check the reliability of an interview, the participants were interviewed in a face-to-face by the researchers. The semi-structured interview was utilized to get relevant information from students. At last, interviewees' responses recorded and transcribed qualitatively.

Data analysis

The statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 23.0 was utilized to analyze the quantitative data. The questionnaire items were analyzed using descriptive statistics, i.e. mean and standard deviation and inferential statistic like independent samples t-test to examine whether gender and study duration influence EFL learners' speaking strategies use or not.

The qualitative data were collected through an interview. The interviewees' were coded (S1-S17) and their responses were transcribed verbatim. This helped to identify the researchers' and interviewees' sound. Finally, the coded data were grouped by emerging themes. Finally, the responses were analyzed qualitatively.

Results

In response to the research question: Does gender influence students' speaking strategies use?

Table 1. The male and female students' speaking strategies use

Strategies	Females		Males	
	Mean (x)	SD	Mean (x)	SD
Meta cognitive	3.23	1.139	3.01	1.178
Affective	3.29	1.269	3.13	1.293
Social	3.90	1.162	3.84	1.248
Cognitive	3.76	1.128	3.61	1.127
Memory	3.33	1.275	2.94	1.356
Compensation	3.10	1.337	2.97	1.362
Total	3.44	1.218	3.25	1.261

Table 1 depicted that both male (3.44) and female (3.44) students used speaking strategies at moderate level. As shown in Table 2, social (X=3.84 and 3.90), cognitive (X=3.61 and 3.75), affective (X=2.94 and 3.29), memory (X=2.94 and 3.34), metacognitive (X=3.06 and 3.26) and compensation strategies (X=2.97 and 3.10) were used by female and male students respectively.

Table 2. The relationships between gender and students' strategies use

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean difference
Equal variances assumed	.321	.573	-.028	68	.978	-.00355
Equal variances not assumed			-.027	66.022	.978	-.00355

As displayed in Table 2, the t value is -.028 (p=.978, p>0.05). These results showed that there was no a correlation between females and males in using speaking strategies to exercise oral communication.

In response to the research question: Does students' grade level show difference in strategies use?

Table 3. The second and third year students' speaking strategies use

Strategies	Second Year Mean (X)	Third Year Mean (X)
Meta cognitive	3.06	3.20
Affective	3.00	3.31
Social	3.65	3.71
Cognitive	3.81	3.93
Memory	3.09	3.16
Compensation	3.10	2.97
Total	3.29	3.38

As can be seen in Table 3, the mean scores of second year and third year students were (3.06 and X=3.20 respectively in using metacognitive speaking strategies. Related to affective speaking strategies, second year and third year students were 3.31 and 3.00 respectively. Besides, the mean scores of the third year and second year students' memory strategies were 3.16 and 3.09 respectively.

Table 3 depicted that the mean scores of the second and third year students social strategies were 3.65 and 3.71 and while the cognitive speaking strategies were 3.81 and 3.93 respectively. Also, the mean score of compensation speaking strategies use of second year and third year students were 3.10 and 2.97 respectively.

Table 4. The relationships between second and third year students in using strategies

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean difference
Equal variances assumed	4.353	.041	3.157	68	.002	0.12031
Equal variances not assumed			3.210	66.022	.002	0.11834

Table 4 showed that the t value is 3.157 (P=0.002, $p<0.05$). These results indicated that there was a significant difference between third year and second year students in using speaking strategies to learn speaking skill.

Interview data analysis and findings

The results of the data collected using interview were presented. This interview intended to find out the interviewees' attitude, opinions and ideas towards their speaking strategies use and speaking proficiency. Therefore, 17 students were interviewed for this study; they were coded consecutively from S1-S17.

The influence of gender on students' speaking strategies use

Gender is the variable that may influence students' speaking strategies use. In this section, 7 males and 10 females were interviewed to explain their views related to using different speaking

strategies. S5 reflected that: "Females are more active in exercising oral communication to improve their speaking proficiency than males." Likewise, four informants said:

> *Males are shy and fear of making mistakes to express their ideas, opinions and feelings orally. So for me, female students perform better in learning speaking skill than male students. (S8)*

> *I think females use various strategies than males because most of the time they like watching movies and sounding words. They are very careful and confident than males in using different strategies to solve their speaking problems. Therefore, females not only use strategies but also proficient speakers of the target language. (S2 and S7)*

Opposite to this, a few interviewees responded that males use different techniques or actions to develop their linguistic knowledge as well as their knowledge of how to use the language. They are more enthusiastic and successful in using different strategies to exercise oral communication. Besides, informants S1 and S15 stated that:

> *Most of the time males dominantly use cooperating with one another and practicing orally. They are self-confident and risk-taking in their oral skills while practicing with their peers and asking questions for clarification than females.*

> *Males actively use exercise oral communication to improve their speaking proficiency than females. They have adequate time after a classroom for playing computer games, reading fictions, watching TV shows and practicing with their peers at dormitory and cafeteria.*

These responses showed that males surpassed females in using various speaking strategies to learn speaking in English than females. Therefore, males are more careful and responsive than females.

However, the majority of the learners explained that there were no differences between males and females in using speaking strategies to overcome their speaking problems. As some respondents' perceptions, both groups almost use similar strategies. In their responses, three students, S1, S4 and S6 reported that both males and females have an equal opportunity to use various speaking strategies to train oral communication inside and outside a classroom. Besides, S6 explained that there are no differences between the two groups in using speaking strategies except the exam result. Likewise, informant S9 reflected that:

> *There is no a difference between males and females because both of them are not proficient speakers. As I observed, both of them have adequate time and opportunity to use different strategies and practice with one another inside and outside a classroom without gender difference.*

Furthermore, S3, S10, S11, S14, S16 and S17 reported that both males and females almost employ similar speaking strategies. From the responses given, the respondents suggest that learning speaking strategies should depend on an individual's interest and motivation.

The influence of study duration on students' speaking strategies use

Study duration is another variable may influence students' speaking strategies use. Second year and third year English major students demonstrated their views, ideas or feelings in relation to employing various strategies (S1-S17). S3 stated that: "There is no a difference between third year and second year students in using different strategies." Similarly, two informants stated that:

> *I am an incompetent English user because I do not use appropriate strategies to exercise oral communication from lower grade up to university level. Moreover, I always use similar strategies to learn speaking skill. Therefore, study duration has no an effect on my strategies use to learn speaking skill in English. (S5 and S12)*

In contrast, most students stated that when students moved to advanced level, they develop their awareness of using various strategies to promote their speaking proficiency. As S2, S4, S11, S14 and S16 moving to advanced level, it enhances learners to use appropriate strategies to use the target language. They reflected almost similar ideas related to the influence of study duration on their use of speaking strategies. Similarly, S7 and S9 responded that students develop their linguistic knowledge as well as their sociolinguistic and spoken discourse in a real communication. Besides, informant S10 reflected that:

> *There is a big difference between second and third year students because at advanced level, learners have an opportunity how to practice, analyze and reflect on the language. Therefore, there is a difference between the two groups.*

In their responses, S1, S8, S13, S15 and S17 reported that both males and females employ similar speaking strategies. There is no difference between the two groups. The responses suggest learners should develop the awareness of using various strategies to develop their speaking ability. These responses revealed that study duration has an impact on students' speaking strategies use.

Discussion

Do gender differences influence students' speaking strategies use?

The finding denoted that both females and males used speaking strategies at moderate level although females surpassed males in using the overall speaking strategies. As displayed in Table 1, both females (X=3.44) and males (X=3.25) employ speaking strategies to exercise oral communication at moderate level. These results indicated that there was no a mean difference between the two groups in employing learning strategies for speaking skills. Table 2 showed that the t value is-0.028 ($p=0.978$, $p>0.05$). These results substantiated that there were no significant differences between the two groups in their use of speaking strategies. Besides, the data gathered through an interview indicated that both groups have an equal opportunity to use various speaking strategies even though females surpassed males. This demonstrated that gender has no an influence on students' speaking strategies use.

Moreover, the finding of this study is congruent with the findings of the previous researches (Griffiths, 2003; Wharton, 2000) reported that there is no a difference between males and females in using language learning strategies. Griffiths's finding indicated that gender has no an impact on students' language learning strategies use. Likewise, Razmjoo and Ghasemi (2011) reported that both males and females have an equal opportunity to exercise oral communication to solve their speaking skills. The application of speaking strategies should depend on an individual's interest than gender difference (Najafabadi, 2014) Najafabadi 's finding showed that the use of speaking strategy is not influenced by gender differences. The study substantiated that there was a significant correlation between females and males in using speaking strategies. As further stated by Taheri and Davoudi (2016), gender is not recognized as a determinant factor influencing the choice and use of learners speaking strategies. The finding indicated that gender affected students'

speaking strategies use ($p=0.960$, $p>0.05$). This implied that statistically there were no significant differences between females and males in using speaking strategies to learn speaking skill. To conclude that the finding of the present study is consistent with the findings of the previous studies.

Does students' study duration show difference in speaking strategy use?

The results of this study depicted that there was a difference between second and third year English major students in using speaking strategies. As Table 3, the mean score of the third year students ($X=3.38$) surpassed second year students ($X=3.29$). Moreover, as shown in Table 4, the independent samples t-test results depicted that the p value is below 0.05 ($p=0.002$, $p<0.05$). These results ensured that there were no significant relationships between the two groups in using speaking strategies. What is more, the data obtained using an interview indicated that third year students can express themselves and be understood than second year students. The responses depicted that third year students employ different speaking strategies than second year students to train oral communication than second year students. To conclude that study duration has an impact on students' speaking strategies use.

Furthermore, the finding of the present study corresponds with the findings of the previous studies (Razmjoo & Ghasemi, 2011;Wahyuni, 2018) which confirmed that study duration has an effect on students' speaking strategies use. Zhou (2010) reported that when students move from lower grade to more advanced level, they become more aware of appropriate speaking strategies helping them to exercise oral communication. According to Celjo and Asotic (2017), the independent sample t-test results showed that there was a significant difference between study duration and students' LLSs use ($p=0.004$, $p<0.05$). As stated by Erarslan and Hol (2014), there was no a significant relationship between study duration and students' strategies use. The finding of the study indicated that more advanced level students use more appropriate strategies than lower level students. This implied that grade level has an effect on students' speaking strategies use to train oral communication. Thus, the finding of the current study is associated with the findings of the previous studies related to the influence of study duration on students' speaking strategies use. The finding of the current study also may have some implications for teachers on how to train students in using different speaking strategies to learn and use the target language

Conclusion

The findings denoted that both females and males have an equal opportunity to employ different speaking strategies. Although females surpassed males in overall speaking strategies use, the two groups were medium users of the speaking strategies to exercise oral communication. Table 2 depicted that there was no a mean score difference between males and females in using speaking strategies. Moreover, the independent sample t-test outcomes showed that there was no a significant difference between females and males in their use of speaking strategies ($p=0.978$, $p>0.05$).

According to the data from Table 4, there was no a significant relationship between second year and third year students in using speaking strategies ($p=0.002$, $p<0.05$). This indicated that third year students used various speaking strategies than second year students. Thus, study duration has an influence on students' speaking strategies use.

In using speaking strategies, gender has a pedagogical implications for students' speaking proficiency. Although both females and males used speaking strategies at moderate level, they needed to develop the awareness of different speaking strategies contribute to train oral communication. What is more, both groups should use affective, metacognitive, memory and

compensation speaking strategies in everyday activities to be proficient speakers of the target language.

The current study was only conducted on students' speaking strategies use vis-a-vis their speaking proficiency at WSU, Ethiopia. Therefore, further studies should be conducted on students' speaking strategies use with respect to the variables like students' academic achievement, background experience, learning styles, learner's interest, motivation and their speaking proficiency.

The current study was carried out only at WSU. Therefore, this study leads to the need of an extended study in terms of the large scale investigation and the sample size in a wider context to get further detailed information in different universities so as to see the generazability of the findings.

Declaration of conflicting interest

The researchers declare that there is no any conflict interest regarding the publication of this study.

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