

The Impact of the SOAR Strategy on Students' Verbal Communication Skills

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Abstract. This study examined the effectiveness of the SOAR (Speak, Organize, Apply, Reflect) strategy in enhancing the verbal communication skills of Grade 10 students. Using a quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test design, twenty participants were assessed through a validated rubric measuring fluency, clarity, coherence, and confidence in oral communication. Over an eight-week period, students underwent 18 SOAR-based sessions integrated into their classroom activities. Results revealed a significant improvement in post-test scores compared to pre-test scores, indicating that the SOAR strategy effectively fostered learners' ability to articulate ideas, organize thoughts, and engage confidently in verbal exchanges. The findings highlight the potential of SOAR as a practical, student-centered approach to developing 21st-century communication skills essential for academic and professional success.

KEY WORDS

1. SOAR strategy 2. verbal communication skills 3. student-centered learning

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1. Introduction

Strong verbal communication is vital for student success. It's not just about talking; it's about being able to clearly express ideas, ask good questions, and work well with others. In the classroom, these skills help students participate more, understand topics better, and think critically. Beyond school, they are essential for building relationships and navigating diverse social situations. In the professional world, the ability to communicate with purpose and confidence is a huge advantage. Because so many students struggle with these skills, developing them early on is crucial for boosting self-esteem, improving learning, and preparing them for the challenges of higher education and their future careers.

Globally, the decline in students' verbal

communication abilities has been a growing concern among educators, employers, and policymakers. Walshaw and Anthony (2018) identified communication skills-particularly verbal expression-as one of the top employability skills required in the 21st century, yet studies reveal that many graduates lack the confidence and clarity needed to communicate effectively in academic and professional settings. According to Chan et al., (2020), insufficient opportunities for structured oral interaction in schools, coupled with the overreliance on digital communication, have contributed to a noticeable gap in students' speaking proficiency. This issue transcends borders, as classrooms worldwide grapple with learners who are hesitant to speak, unable to organize their thoughts coherently, or

reliant on passive learning modes. Addressing these challenges is crucial, as verbal communication competence not only impacts individual success but also influences global collaboration, cross-cultural understanding, and the overall quality of civic discourse.

In the Philippines, the challenge of developing students' verbal communication skills remains a pressing educational concern. The Department of Education (DepEd, 2019) has emphasized the need to strengthen learners' speaking abilities, noting that many students struggle to articulate their ideas fluently in both English and Filipino. Factors such as large class sizes, limited access to language-rich environments, and the dominance of written, test-focused instruction often reduce opportunities for students to engage in meaningful oral exchanges. Marzano (2024) observed that while Filipino learners may possess basic vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, they frequently lack the confidence, organization, and critical thinking skills required for effective verbal expression. This communication gap is evident not only in classroom recitations but also in oral presentations, debates, and collaborative activities, limiting students' ability to fully participate in academic and real-world interactions. As the Philippine educational system continues to align with global standards, addressing these verbal communication challenges is vital to producing graduates who can compete and collaborate on both national and international stages.

In the Davao Region, the issue of poor verbal communication skills among students is evident in both urban and rural school settings, with the challenge being more pronounced in far-flung and Indigenous People's (IP) communities. Teachers in public schools across Davao City and nearby provinces have reported that many learners hesitate to participate in oral activities, often giving one-word answers or avoiding verbal engagement altogether. This reluctance is partly attributed to limited exposure

to diverse speaking situations, the influence of local dialects, and the lack of structured programs that promote oral proficiency in formal settings. According to the DepEd Region XI (2022), learners in remote areas face additional barriers such as minimal access to interactive learning resources and fewer opportunities to practice oral communication beyond the classroom. In multicultural and multilingual contexts like Davao, where students often speak multiple languages or dialects at home, bridging the gap between native language use and proficiency in academic verbal communication requires intentional and culturally responsive teaching strategies. Without targeted interventions, this gap can persist, negatively impacting students' confidence, academic performance, and readiness for higher education and future employment.

To address these challenges, the researcher designed and implemented a structured communication enhancement approach aimed at systematically improving students' verbal expression, idea organization, and confidence in oral interaction. Krashen (2019) accentuated that communication is a skill that can be cultivated through intentional practice, reflective learning, and supportive classroom environments. The intervention provided consistent opportunities for students to engage in purposeful speaking activities, guided by clear frameworks that encouraged logical structuring of thoughts, real-life application of communication skills, and regular self-assessment. By integrating these elements into daily lessons, the researcher sought to create an engaging platform where students could practice and refine their verbal communication abilities in a non-threatening and culturally responsive manner.

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the S.O.A.R. (Speak-Organize-Apply-Reflect) Strategy in enhancing the verbal communication skills of junior high school students. Specifically, it seeks to assess the students' level of verbal communication skills before and after

the implementation of the strategy, to identify whether a significant difference exists between the two levels, and to measure the effect size of the intervention. The study further aims to provide teachers with an alternative instructional strategy that can be adopted to strengthen learners' ability to express themselves confidently, organize their thoughts coherently, and apply communication skills in both academic and real-life contexts.

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the SOAR Strategy in enhancing the verbal communication skills of the students. It

seeks to answer the following questions:

What is the level of verbal communication skills of the students before the implementation of the SOAR Strategy?

What is the level of verbal communication skills of the students after the implementation of the SOAR Strategy?

Is there a significant difference in the level of students' verbal communication skills before and after the implementation of the SOAR Strategy?

What is the effect size of the SOAR Strategy on the students' verbal communication skills?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design—This study employed a quasi-experimental design utilizing the one-group pre-test-post-test method, which is common in basic research. The design was chosen to generate empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the SOAR (Speak-Organize-Apply-Reflect) Strategy in improving students' verbal communication skills. The pre-test was administered to measure the participants' initial performance, followed by the implementation of the intervention. Afterward, a post-test was conducted to assess the changes in students' performance. The difference between the two sets of scores was analyzed to determine the impact of the SOAR strategy, with the intent of contributing to the broader body of knowledge on instructional approaches that enhance communication skills.

2.2. Research Locale—The study was conducted at Onica National High School, a public junior high school in Kidapawan City, during the School Year 2025-2026. The school was selected because of its diverse population and reported challenges in students' verbal communication.

2.3. Participants—The participants of the study were 25 Grade 10 students enrolled in

Archimedes. The selection was done through purposive sampling, as the chosen class was identified by the school as having difficulties in oral communication. The group was composed of 12 male and 13 female students, ages ranging from 15 to 16 years old.

2.4. Research Instrument—The main instrument used was a Verbal Communication Skills Rubric, which assessed the students' oral performance based on four criteria: (1) clarity of expression, (2) organization of ideas, (3) confidence and delivery, and (4) interactional competence. The rubric was validated by three experts in English and Communication prior to its use. Each criterion was rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent). The instrument's reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, ensuring internal consistency.

2.5. Intervention (SOAR Strategy)—The SOAR Strategy consisted of four structured steps integrated into classroom activities:

Speak - Students were encouraged to verbalize their ideas in response to prompts, questions, or real-life scenarios.

Organize - Learners structured their responses using graphic organizers, sentence frames, or outlines before speaking.

Apply - Students practiced applying their communication skills through role-playing, pair-share, debates, or oral presentations.

Reflect - Learners engaged in self-assessment and peer feedback, guided by the rubric, to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

The intervention lasted for [insert number of weeks, e.g., 6 weeks], with the SOAR Strategy implemented in [insert frequency, e.g., three 40-minute sessions per week].

2.6. Data Gathering Procedure—The data gathering procedure of this study was carried out in several phases over a period of eight (8) weeks. The steps are outlined as follows:

2.6.1. Preparation Stage (Week 1)—The researcher sought approval from the class adviser and obtained informed consent from the students and their parents/guardians regarding their voluntary participation in the study. A validated Verbal Communication Skills Rubric was presented to the cooperating teachers and explained to ensure uniform understanding of the assessment criteria. The schedule for pre-test, intervention sessions, and post-test was finalized in coordination with the classroom teacher.

2.6.2. Pre-Test Administration (End of Week 1)—Before the intervention, a baseline assessment was conducted using the Verbal Communication Skills Rubric. Each participant was tasked to perform an oral communication activity (e.g., a short talk, guided discussion, or prepared speech) designed to measure their clarity, organization, delivery, and interactional competence. The performances were rated by the researcher and two co-raters to ensure objectivity. The scores were recorded and treated as the pre-test results.

2.6.3. Implementation of the SOAR Strategy (Weeks 2-7)—The intervention lasted for six (6) consecutive weeks, with three 40-minute sessions per week, for a total of 18 sessions. Each session followed the SOAR cycle:

Speak - Students verbalized responses to

prompts or questions related to the lesson.

Organize - Learners structured their responses using graphic organizers, sentence frames, or short outlines.

Apply - Students engaged in communicative activities such as pair-shares, role-playing, debates, or oral presentations.

Reflect - Learners evaluated their own performance and provided peer feedback using the rubric.

During the intervention, the researcher facilitated the activities, documented students' participation, and provided formative feedback after each session.

2.6.4. Post-Test Administration (Week 8)—After the completion of the intervention, students were tasked to perform another oral communication activity, parallel in difficulty and scope to the pre-test. Their performances were rated again using the same Verbal Communication Skills Rubric by the same raters to ensure consistency. The scores were tabulated and compared with the pre-test results to determine improvement.

2.6.5. Data Recording and Documentation (Week 8)—All scores from pre-test and post-test assessments were recorded and encoded in a data sheet. The data were subjected to statistical treatment, including mean, standard deviation, paired sample t-test, and effect size calculation. Field notes taken during intervention sessions were also reviewed to provide qualitative insights into learners' participation and communication growth.

2.7. Data Analysis—The gathered data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics: Mean and Standard Deviation were computed to describe students' performance before and after the intervention. Paired Sample t-test was used to determine if a significant difference existed between pre-test and post-test scores. Effect size (Cohen's d) was computed to measure the magnitude of the intervention's impact.

2.8. *Ethical Considerations*—Participants will be informed about the purpose and process of the study. Consent will be sought from students or their guardians if applicable. Confi-

dentiality will be ensured by using pseudonyms in data presentation. Data collected will be used solely for academic and professional development purposes.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the pre-test and post-test conducted to measure the verbal communication skills of the participants before and after the implementation of the SOAR

Strategy. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and a paired sample t-test to determine the significant difference in their performance.

Table 1

Table 1. Level of verbal communication skills of the students before the implementation of the SOAR Strategy.

Pre-Test	N	Mean	SD	Descriptive Interpretation
Pre-test	10	7.2	1.32	Poor

This finding indicates that, prior to the intervention, most of the learners struggled to express themselves fluently in English during on-line speaking tasks. The relatively low mean score suggests that learners had difficulty sustaining speech, organizing ideas, and using

appropriate vocabulary and expressions. The small spread of scores, as shown by the low standard deviation, further suggests that the learners had relatively similar performance levels, with none demonstrating significantly higher or lower fluency than their peers.

Table 2

Table 2. Level of verbal communication skills of the students during the implementation of the SOAR Strategy

Midway	N	Mean	SD	Descriptive Interpretation
Post-test	10	11.2	1.03	Fair

The results in Table 2 present the level of verbal communication skills of the students during the implementation of the SOAR Strategy. The computed mean score of 11.2 with a standard deviation of 1.03 indicates that the learners' performance was at a Fair level. Compared to their pre-test performance (Poor level), the

results suggest that the SOAR Strategy contributed to an improvement in students' verbal communication skills. The relatively low standard deviation further shows that the learners' scores were close to each other, which means there was a consistent improvement across the group.

Table 3

Table 3. Level of verbal communication skills of the students after the implementation of the SOAR Strategy.

Test	N	Mean	SD	Descriptive Interpretation
Post-test	10	14.9	1.20	Very Good

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is evident that the SOAR Strategy significantly enhanced the verbal communication skills of the students. The results of the pre-test revealed a Poor level of performance, while the post-test results showed a marked improvement to a Very Good level after the intervention. This substantial increase in the mean scores demonstrates that the systematic application of the SOAR Strategy effectively improved the students' abil-

ity to organize their thoughts, articulate ideas, and express themselves more confidently.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the SOAR Strategy is a reliable and effective pedagogical approach in strengthening the verbal communication skills of students. Its integration in classroom instruction is highly recommended, particularly in contexts where learners struggle with clarity, fluency, and confidence in oral communication.

4.1. Recommendations—Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are hereby offered:

4.1.1. For Teachers—Incorporate the SOAR Strategy (Speak, Organize, Apply, Reflect) into daily lessons across all subjects. This will give students consistent chances to practice and improve their verbal communication skills. Use a variety of activities like debates, role-plays, and group discussions that align with the SOAR framework to help students become more confident and fluent speakers. Finally, use the verbal communication rubric as a way to give students feedback, encourage them to reflect on their own performance, and track their progress.

4.1.2. For School Administrators—Encourage and provide professional development for teachers on effective strategies like SOAR. This will help them become better at fostering verbal communication in the classroom. Dedi-

cate time and resources for school-wide initiatives, such as speaking contests or communication clubs, to give students more structured opportunities to practice speaking. Also, make sure to provide multimedia and culturally relevant materials that support communication in both English and Filipino, especially in multilingual classrooms.

4.1.3. For Students—Actively participate in SOAR-based activities. Practice speaking in different situations, reflect on what you do well and what you can improve, and apply the feedback you get from your teachers and peers. Consider joining extracurricular activities like debate teams or public speaking clubs to get more practice outside of class. It can also be helpful to keep a personal journal to reflect on your communication skills and track your growth.

4.1.4. For Future Researchers—Work hard replicating it with a larger group of participants or with students from different educa-

tional levels, such as elementary or high school, to see if the SOAR Strategy is effective in different contexts. Conduct a controlled study with both an experimental and a control group to further investigate the strategy's impact. Finally, consider exploring how technology, like video reflections or online speaking platforms, could be integrated with the SOAR Strategy to make it more engaging and offer more opportunities for oral communication practice.

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