

Received: July 2017	Accepted: Agustus 2017	Published: October 2017
Article DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.24903/sj.v2i2.111		

Ways For Tertiary Level Students In Building English Speaking Performance

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Abstract: This study aims to find out the strategies used by tertiary level students in performing English communication. This research was a descriptive study involving English Education Study Program students. Data analysis included in-depth transcribing on the students' speaking performance and the result of interview. The findings show that the communication strategies used in the conversation consisted of avoidance, paraphrase, borrowing, appeal for assistance, and mime. The common strategy lied on mime, while avoidance and paraphrase strategies were not frequently applied. The results show communication strategies were effective in helping the first language students in learning English as their foreign language. Communication strategies give solution to cope with difficulties in learning English. Communication strategies are highly suggested to be socialized to EFL learners as an alternative way to improve speaking performance.

Keywords: communication strategies, speaking, English.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of learning, English is one of the compulsory subjects in both the educational curriculum of school and university level in all departments. One of the skills that must be mastered is the ability to speak. Speaking skills is an interesting topic to be discussed. People believe that students can build English communication if they can speak the target language with the teacher, friends, or others confidently and fluently. However, this is not something easy to realize for both English instructors and learners. To produce effective speaking ability, communication strategy plays an important role in order to avoid misunderstanding or problems that may appear in the conversation.

Some research about communication strategy has been carried out in different countries and at different levels of education. Communication strategy is one of the important issues in the teaching English. This issue cannot be separated from the history of Communicative Language Teaching method in 1970s. This approach has features such as 1) meaning plays an important role in communication, 2) goal to be achieved is the communicative competence, 3) learners are expected to be able to communicate effectively (Finocchiaro and Brumfit, 1983). The results of the various studies show that strategies used also depend on the problems. The researchers argued the communication strategy is a very important thing to know in order to improve students speaking performance and the quality of learning process. It is proven that the learners who get materials about communication strategy explicitly have better competence in their language skills compared with the learners who do not get communication strategy (Nakatani, 2005).

Several theories used as reference for the data analysis are described in this section. Tarone (1983) expands the definition of communication strategy as mutual efforts of the speakers in understanding the meaning. This definition expresses the nature of the communication strategy used as a cooperative effort to achieve the goal of communication. After giving a definition of the communication strategy, she outlines some criteria of communication strategy. First, a speaker tries to deliver a message. Second, speakers consider that the structure of linguistics or sociolinguistics is needed to communicate a message. Third, speakers selected to avoid, try to change the way to deliver a message and stop looking for alternatives when the message can be understood.

Furthermore, Tarone (1983) divides communication strategy into five major parts, namely avoidance, paraphrase, borrowing, appeal for assistance, and mime strategies. Avoidance can be divided into two, namely topics avoidance and message abandonment strategies. The avoidance of the topic is the learners avoid talking about one topic when the

learner is not mastering the structure of language. Message abandonment is the learner started talking about one topic then cannot continue and stop talking.

Paraphrase has three strategies; they are approximation, creating new words and circumlocution. Approximation is the learners use vocabulary by searching for the closest meaning. Creating a new word means that the learners are trying to create a new vocabulary that corresponds to the concept that wants to talk about. The third, circumlocution, the learners try to explain vocabulary indirectly.

Borrowing consists of literally translation and interpreting. The literally translation occurs when the learners translate each word, while interpreting is a strategy used by the learners through changing the target language to the first language.

Appeal for assistance is used in communication when the learners ask for help about the unknown vocabulary to the instructors or others. Finally, when the learners use non verbal communication by using gestures, they apply mime strategy.

Communication strategy needs to be taught in learning a second language. Mitchel and Myles (1998) say that the communication strategy plays an important role in learning a second language and maximize their learning opportunities. This view has implications that the communication strategy need not be taught because naturally this competence will arise with increasing language proficiency of the learner.

There are several factors that influence effective communication strategy implementation, including English language proficiency and the frequency of target language use outside the classroom. Nakatani (2006) agrees that the factors influencing the use of the communication strategy which emphasizes on the English speaking proficiency. The more advanced the learners speak the language, the more effective they negotiate meaning. In addition, the use of English as a means of communication used outside the classroom will help the learner to apply appropriate communication strategy. This is in line with the opinion of Clément (1986). He states that the learner who has many chances to use the language outside the class will improve the way of communication with people who have diverse culture.

Some of the communication strategies research that can be used as a reference were done at various levels of education. First, research conducted on students at the elementary school level. Based on the research of Zhang (2005), the results show that in Taiwan elementary schools, the students often used four communication strategies. At the university level, Teng (2011) examined the communication strategy on students based on the level of his expertise in view of the courses taken. Students from English Department considered

more fluent compared to the students from other majors. There is significant difference between students of English Department and non-English Department. For those students from English Department apply five English language strategies. Conversely, students who are not from Department of English only apply two communication strategies.

Furthermore, the research about communication strategy was conducted by Purbaningrum (2011) that discusses about the relationship between the use of communication strategies with the level of experience in using English by ESL learners. The subjects were twenty freshman students. The results of this research show that there are three types of communication strategies used by the learners. In addition, the study also found that there is a tendency that learners who have more experiences in using English used less communication strategy. On the other hand, the learners with less experience in speaking English applied more strategies.

From the theoretical framework above, it shows that communication strategy gives positive effects on the students' English learning to build their speaking performance. Therefore, the researchers are interested in discussing communication strategy focusing on the tertiary level students to know the kind of strategies used in English communication and the effectiveness of the strategy used.

METHOD

Numeric data collected in a research can be analyzed quantitatively using statistical tools in two different ways, descriptive analysis and inferencial analysis. Descriptive analysis refers to statistically describing and presenting the constructs of interest or associations between these constructs. Hence, according to the background and objectives, a quantitative approach using a descriptive design is proposed for this study.

This research was conducted in March 2016 at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo. The population in this research is the fifth semester English Education Study Program students of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, and the sampling technique was a purposive sampling, a technique used to determine student deliberately. Purposive sampling technique was a way of sampling based on specific characteristics that are owned a sample in accordance with the research objectives, taking samples based on research necessities (Soewarno, 1987:17).

Based on the opinion above, the determination of a sample was taken from the student's specific characteristics and particular purpose, selecting the fifth semester students

who have followed speaking 1 to speaking 4 course. The number of students involved in these studies were 17 students.

Dealing with the instruments, this research used observation, structured interview, and questionnaire. Observation was conducted by recording the students' conversation about certain topic. Structured interview and questionnaire consisted of questions related to the students' opinion about the effectiveness of using communication strategy to overcome students' speaking problems. The data was analyzed by transcribing the recording of students' conversation and interview. In addition, the questionnaire was analyzed by using Likert Scaling method.

FINDINGS

This research was conducted to know kinds of communication strategies done by the students in English communication. The results show that the communication strategy frequently used was mime. Although the students often used mime, they also used borrowing, avoidance, appeal for assistance and paraphrasing. For detailed information, Table 1 gives the frequency and the percentage of each strategy.

Communication Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Appeal	4	5,6%
Mime	50	70,4 %
Borrowing	15	21,12 %
Avoidance	1	1,4 %
Paraphrasing	1	1,4 %

Table 1 The Frequency of Communication Strategy Used by the Students

To know the real activity consisted of communication strategies used, Table 2 explains some examples of expression taken from the students' conversation.

Types of Communication Strategy	Examples
Avoidance	V*** : <i>Maybe we can talk about something else? Oh, I am sorry I want to go to library, I have to search book. Do you know Mr. Rizal assignment? (Avoidance → Topic avoidance)</i>
Paraphrase	D**** : <i>I think I have already got it in Senior High School maybe.</i> F*** : <i>Senior High School?</i> Dimas : <i>I mean private class.</i> (Paraphrasing → Word coinage)
Borrowing	D*** : <i>Ok, what is your favorite food?</i> L****: <i>My favorite food is bakso.</i>

Types of Communication Strategy	Examples
	<i>D*** : Bakso, meat ball. (Borrowing → Language mix)</i>
<i>Mime</i>	<i>D**** : Hey, I have an idea for our next holiday. So, I say let's go to Bali. What do you think? (Pointing Amri) (Mime or Gesture)</i>
<i>Appeal of assistance</i>	<i>L**** : Yes, I know that. Actually I like rawon. Why I like rawon because there is meat. And then I like (thinking) how to say "kuah"? (Appeal for Assistance)</i>

Table 2 The example of communication strategy used in conversation

The effectiveness of communication strategies through the result of questionnaire answers is elaborated in Table 3.

No	Questions	Results					Total	%	conclusion
		<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>			
		(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)			
1	<i>I ever get difficulties in communicating my ideas when I speak in English</i>	25	40	0	4	0	69	81	SA
2	<i>Avoidance is the communication strategy that I use in speaking English</i>	10	20	21	4	1	56	66	A
3	<i>Paraphrase is the communication strategy that I use in speaking English</i>	5	32	18	4	0	59	69	A
4	<i>Borrowing is the communication strategy that I use in speaking English</i>	10	32	9	6	1	58	68	A
5	<i>Asking for help is the communication strategy that I use in speaking English</i>	20	36	6	4	0	66	78	A
6	<i>Gestures are the communication strategy that I use in speaking English</i>	30	44	0	0	0	74	87	SA
Total		100	204	54	22	2	382		

Table 3 The Result of The Students' Opinion about the Effectiveness of Communication Strategies

DISCUSSION

From the results, the data in Table 1 show that the whole communication strategies proposed by Tarone were found in the students' conversation. From the five communication strategies, mime is the commonly used strategy that reaches 50 times (70.4%), followed by borrowing that appears 15 times (21%). The middle position is the appeal for assistance. The students performed it four times (5.6%). Avoidance and paraphrase are at the lowest frequency of communication strategy used. Both of them have been presented once (1.4%) during the conversation.

The result of this study is different from Hua et.al, (2012) research. It showed that borrowing was the highest strategy used by the students. They used this strategy because they did not have enough vocabularies in target language. So, when they wanted to speak up in English, they need extra time to think. Besides, their interlocutor was not native English. Then, they often used their mother language to speak up their argument. In term of interlocutor, both of the studies have the same result. The students rarely used English because they rarely found the interlocutors who are able in mastering English. That is why, the students faced some difficulties in learning English as their L2. Another study was conducted by Astutik (2016). In her research on communication strategies, it showed that both passive and moderate students often used borrowing in their communication. For the active learner, they used paraphrase strategy in their speaking.

From the table 2, the information that can be inferred is that the students applied mime strategy in their speaking activities. They felt communication strategies were effective way to help them in preventing the difficulties in their speaking class. They did not worry anymore when they wanted to speak up in speaking class because of their lack of competencies. They also found some ways in preventing their difficulties in speaking by self asking for their interlocutors to solve their problems. Therefore, the communication kept going on. All these statements were concluded from the interview between the researcher and students.

The result about the effectiveness of communication strategies mentioned in Table 3 is in line with Rodríguez et.al, (2012). They found that communication strategies were effective enough in helping the Spanish students in learning English. This effectiveness was similar with the successful of communication strategies for Indonesia students in learning and preventing the difficulties of English. Rodríguez et.al, (2012) also explained some factors in influencing the success of communication strategies in the classroom. One of them was seat setting. The students always sit in the same place and group. They choose their close friends

to hold the conversation. It made the students did the interaction only with certain people and did not encourage themselves to speak with others. When they speak with their certain friends, they often speak in Spanish and rarely to use English in their speaking. That was why, this research found that the students often used language switch strategies to keep the conversation and enjoyed it. Another factor was classroom size. Rodríguez et.al, (2012) found that small class with crowded students influenced interaction. Because of this crowded situation, the teacher often applied the comprehension check and paraphrase in teaching English. In contrast, in this research, the researchers were able to handle the class well. The class was under the researchers' control. The students were designed in small group, but they would have different members every meeting during this the treatment. Therefore, she rarely used paraphrase strategies in conducting her research.

The next discussion is found by Hua et.al, (2012). They found that the effectiveness of communication strategies depend on the level of students' proficiency. The language learners have to train themselves to speak up to achieve the fluency and accuracy in speaking skill. If they found some barriers that hamper their speaking skill, they are able to apply communication strategies in their speaking. This is in line with this study. When the students with low English proficiency level speak, they tended to have difficulty in selecting appropriate vocabulary items so that it made them use communication strategy to deliver the intended meaning. Similar with Hua et.al, (2012), Astutik (2016) found that communication strategies was effective way to help the students to cope with their difficulties in speaking class. These strategies helped them to give the solution when they did not have any ideas to express their argument because of their lack of vocabularies. She concluded that all the students in three levels needed to apply communication strategies in their speaking skill because it could help them to solve the breakdown of conversation during the communication occurred.

CONCLUSION

Communication strategies used in the conversation consisted of avoidance, paraphrase, borrowing, appeal for assistance, and mime. The common strategy lied on mime, while avoidance and paraphrase strategies were not frequently applied. Additionally, the results show communication strategies were effective in helping the students in learning English as their foreign language. Communication strategies gave many easy ways to cope with difficulties in learning English. This is very useful because the strategies can reduce misunderstandings and clarify meaning between speakers. For future researchers, it is

suggested to develop more instruments to examine the language learners' communication strategies as the effort to enhance the communication competence with more updated theories.

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