

STUDENTS' STRATEGIES IN LEARNING SPEAKING

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ABSTRACT

The study seeks to investigate the strategies used by university students in learning speaking. Questioner and interview were used to collect the data needed from nine students of eighth semester of an English Department at a university in West Java. The data interpreted qualitatively shows that high achiever students dominantly used compensation and social strategies. In the meantime, middle achiever students mostly used compensation and affective strategies and those lower achievers mostly used memory strategy. Their reasons for choosing such strategies vary but depend on their learning styles. Possible problem in students' use of certain strategies might be another interesting topic to be investigated in the future.

Keywords: strategies, learning, speaking

INTRODUCTION

Being able to speak in English is a dream of every English learner. It is because English is an international language used worldwide. However, very often, a learner finds it difficult to speak in English when it comes to or deal with an effective production of the language (Brown & Yule cited in Tuan and Mai, 2015). Not to mention the other aspects like linguistic competence and mastery of target language syntax which so far remain as a complicated matter for some learners to master (Shabir., M, 2016).

In the context of learning, the strategies used may vary which depend on interest and personality. Messick (1994) notes that underlying personality traits may be responsible for and create consistency in information processing, which, in turn, is measurable as a learning characteristic. Bidjerano and Dai's study (2007) shows that learning strategies, which typically employed in learning situations, co-vary with personality dimensions to a certain extent.

Rubin (1987) says that learning strategies refer to the technique or device which a learner may use to acquire

knowledge. Abbas (2014) defined learning strategies as specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques, such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle the difficult language task used by students to enhance their own learning. Narmeen (2014) classifies these strategies into six major groups. They are memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of new language. Strategies are tools for self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability.

Based on the information above, the study aims to investigate the strategies of senior students of an English Department in learning speaking. A relevant study indicated that memory, cognitive, metacognitive compensation, social, and affective strategies were the strategies used by students in learning speaking Abbas (2014).

Significance of the Study

Understanding students' various strategies in learning might be useful, especially when it comes to the considerations and practices to be brought into the class. In term of speaking, this information could be helpful for teachers as a guideline prior to their teaching of speaking in the class.

Research Questions

The study seeks to investigate "What are the strategies used by students in learning speaking and their reasons in applying those strategies?"

Aims of the Study

Based on the research question formulated above, the present research aims to investigate students' learning strategies in learning speaking and their reasons in applying those strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nature, elements, problems, and affecting factors in speaking

In English, speaking is one of the four major skills a student has to learn. Being able to speak effectively is usually perceived as a barometer of a successful language learner. It is very important since the main goal of learning a language is to communicate well and fluently. Ur (cited in Tuan and Mai, 2015) argues that speaking seems to be the most important skills of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) because people who know a language are usually referred to as speakers of that language. Nunan (cited in Leong and Ahmadi, 2017) says that learning speaking skill is the most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language and success is measured based on the ability to perform a conversation in the language. It is true that people usually don't see the successful language learner from his or her knowledge of grammar or

vocabulary, but based on he or she speaks the language.

Chaney (in Ahmed, 2016) said that speaking is the process of making and sharing meaning by using verbal and non-verbal symbols in different contexts. Brown and Burns and Joyce (cited in Leong and Ahmadi, 2017) also defined speaking as an interactive process of making meaning that includes producing, receiving, and processing information. Bygate (cited in Leong and Ahmadi, 2017) defined speaking as the production of auditory signals to produce different verbal responses in listeners. To conclude, speaking is an interactive process of making meaning and sharing information by using verbal and non-verbal symbols. Socheath (2010) states that speaking skill is a productive skill that requires students/learners to produce words or language or to express ideas orally. It is used to communicate between one to another by speech or saying.

Dobson (1989) states that there are some elements involved in speaking; they are vocabulary, functional grammar, and frequency of practice, motivation, appropriate topics, self-confidence and situation. In other words, an effective should be built on these elements. However, people sometimes encounter some problems when they speak. There are various problems in speaking, such as they don't have enough vocabulary, inadequate grammar, wrong pronunciation and feeling shy. Tuan and Mai (2015) states that the problems are inhibition, lack of topical knowledge and low participation. When people are inhibited, they are worried about making mistakes and fear of criticism of others. Those facts can be found anywhere either in the language classroom or outside classroom. Another researcher, Leong and Ahmadi (2017) claim that the other problems that people encounter are that they cannot remember anything to say and do not have any motivation. Rivers

(cited Leong and Ahmadi, 2017) also adds that people often have nothing to say probably because they do not have a knowledge of a particular topic or they do not have enough information about it. In addition, Rababa'h (cited in Ahmed, 2016) pointed out that some factors that cause difficulties in speaking English among EFL learners. Some of these factors are related to the learners themselves, the teaching strategies, the curriculum, and the environment. For example, many learners lack the necessary vocabulary to get their meaning across, and consequently, they cannot keep the interaction going. Inadequate strategic competence and communication competence can be another reason as well for not being able to keep the interaction going. Some learners also lack the motivation to speak English. They do not see a real need to learn or speak English.

From those experts, the common speaking problems are inhibition, lack of topical knowledge, low participation, cannot remember anything to say, not having any motivation, lack of vocabulary, inadequate strategic competence and communication competence.

Another important point to deal are some factors that affect someone's speaking competence that we should know. Those factors are performance conditions, affective factors, listening ability and topical knowledge. Nation and Newton (cited in Tuan and Mai, 2015) believes that performance conditions can affect speaking competence. They are four types of performance conditions that they Nation and Newton suggest. Those includes time pressure, planning, the standard of performance and the amount of support. Affective also plays its role in affecting speaking competence. Oxford (cited in Leong and Ahmadi, 2017) said that learner's affective side probably influence the language learning success

or failure. Krashen (cited in Tuan and Mai, 2015) adds that some affective variables have been confirmed to be related to success in second language acquisition. Those variables are motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. The third factor that affects speaking competence is listening ability. Doff (cited in Leong and Ahmadi, 2017) states that speaking skills cannot be developed unless we develop listening skills. It can be concluded speaking and listening skill are interconnected.

Sometimes the problem lies on the topical knowledge of the speaker itself. Tuan and Mai (2015) say that topical knowledge is the speakers' knowledge of relevant topical information. The information that topical knowledge provides enables learners to use language with reference to the world in which they live. Bachman and Palmer (cited in Leong and Ahmadi, 2017) adds that topical knowledge is defined as knowledge structures in long-term memory.

From the explanation above, the factors that affect speaking competence are speaker's performance condition, affective, listening ability and topical knowledge.

Learning Strategies

Student centered approaches encourage the learners to take an active role in their own learning. They emphasize the use of strategies that give the students power and choice in learning the language and as Benson (cited in Hashemi and Hadavi, 2015) points out "take charge of their own learning."

Rubin (1987) says that learning strategies refer to the technique or device which a learner may use to acquire knowledge. Oxford (cited in Abbas, 2014) defined learning strategies as "specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques, such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle the difficult

language task used by students to enhance their own learning". When the learner consciously chooses strategies that fit his or her learning style and the foreign language task at hand, these strategies become a useful toolkit for active, conscious, and purposeful self-regulation of learning.

Oxford & Nyikos (cited in Hashemi and Hadavi, 2015) said that strategies are to foster autonomy, independence and self-direction. Peterson (as cited in Eckstein, 2007) holds that learning strategies have had their greatest impact in language learning on the four major skill areas of second language learning: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Brown (cited in Hashemi and Hadavi, 2015) describes strategies as those specific attacks that we make on a given problem that vary considerably within each individual. Chamot (cited in Hashemi and Hadavi, 2015) defines strategies as procedures that facilitate a learning task. She believes that strategies are conscious and goal driven. Cohen (cited in Hashemi and Hadavi, 2015) states that strategies can be very different in nature, ranging from planning the organization of one's learning (a meta cognitive learning strategy) through using mnemonic devices (methods used to help one remember information that is otherwise difficult to recall) to learn vocabulary (cognitive learning strategies) and rehearsing what one expects to say (a performance strategy) to bolstering one's self-confidence for a language task by means of "self-talk" (an affective strategy).

To put it simply, learning strategy are technique or way that a person uses to acquire knowledge. It has major impact in language learning on four major skill of language learning.

Classification of Learning Strategies

Oxford (cited in Abbas, 2014) classified learning strategies into six groups; they

are memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. Those six groups then classified into two categories, they are direct strategies (memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies) and indirect strategies: (metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies). The following is the explanation of classification of learning strategies provided by Oxford.

Direct strategies

Language learning strategies that directly involved the target language are called direct strategies. All direct strategies require mental processing of the language, but the three groups (memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies) of direct strategies do this processing differently and for different purpose.

Memory strategies

Memory strategies help learner link one target language item or concept with another but do not necessarily involve deep understanding. Memory strategies reflect very simple principles, such as arranging things in order, making associations, and reviewing.

Cognitive strategies

Cognitive strategies enable the learner to manipulate the language material in direct ways, e.g., through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing, synthesizing, outlining, reorganizing information to develop stronger schemas (knowledge structures), practicing in naturalistic settings, and practicing structures and sounds formally.

Compensation strategies

Compensation strategies (e.g., guessing from the context in listening and reading; using synonyms and "talking around" the missing word to aid speaking and

writing; and strictly for speaking, using gestures or pause words) help the learner make up for missing knowledge.

Indirect strategies

Indirect strategies are divided into metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. All these strategies are called as 'indirect' because they support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language. Indirect strategies are useful in virtually all language learning situations and are applicable to all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive strategies (e.g., identifying one's own learning style preferences and needs, planning for a target language task, gathering and organizing material, arranging a study space and a schedule, monitoring mistakes, and evaluating task success, and evaluating the success of any type of learning strategy) are employed for managing the learning process overall.

Affective strategies

The term of affective refers to emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values. Affective strategies included anxiety reduction, self-encouragement, emotional self-awareness. It is associated with learners' attention and effort. to control psychological barriers such as feeling shame of using English, afraid of making mistake, nervous, etc.

Social strategies

Social strategies (e.g., asking questions to get verification, asking for clarification of a confusing point, asking for help in doing a language task, talking with a native-speaking conversation partner, and exploring cultural and social norms) help the learner work with others and understand the target culture as well as the language. It is associated with the

learners' learning behavior characteristically requiring involvement of other people either peer friends as co-learners or teachers English speakers as reference.

In conclusion, Oxford classifies learning strategies into two main categories and each category has 3 strategies. The main strategies are direct strategies which directly involved with the target language itself and indirect strategies which only support and manage language learning without directly involving the target language. The direct strategies consist of memory, cognitive and compensation strategies, while the indirect strategies consist of meta-cognitive, affective and social strategies.

Previous Studies

In this section, some studies pertinent to the students' learning strategy in mastering speaking skill are reviewed. Agung (2014) investigated the strategies for developing speaking skill used by students of English education department. Three students participated in this research. The result of this research shows that the students applied almost all of the strategies proposed by O'Malley et al including meta-cognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies in mastering their speaking skill.

Aswin Abbas (2014) carried out an investigation of students' language learning strategies used in mastering speaking skill. The result of this study showed that students' language learning strategies used in mastering speaking skill were (1) memorizing vocabularies and using picture categorized as *memory strategies* (2) listening to the music, watching English video, watching English movie, watching English TV program, listing difficult vocabularies, using dictionary, practicing, reading English text, speaking alone, repeating, guessing, doing conversation, repeating

were categorized as *cognitive strategies* (3) Joining the club meeting and getting course, were categorized as *metacognitive strategies* (4) using similar word was categorized as compensation strategies. (5) Speaking with their friend and speaking alone or herself were categorized as *social strategies* and (6) discussing problem was categorized as *affective strategies*.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This is a qualitative case study used when the researcher wants to fully understand a particular bounded unit that must be explained, described, illustrated, or explored (Yin, 2016). The purpose was to find the deep investigation about the strategies used by students in learning English.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at one University in Bogor for several reasons. First reason is that the university is located near the researchers' place. This gives ease to the researcher in term of time management in running research. Second, the place is really accessible for the researcher to conduct the research. The participants of this research were the senior English education students. They were chosen because they might have used various learning strategies to master speaking skill.

Instrument

The instrument used in this research is questionnaire adapted from strategy inventory for language learning (SILL) employed by Rebecca Oxford. The questionnaire consisted of 27 items related to the students' strategies in mastering speaking. The students are advised to answer each item based on a 5 point Likert style frequency scale as: 1) I never or almost never do this, 2) I don't usually do this, 3) I sometimes do this, 4) I usually do this and, 5) I always or

almost always do this.

Method for Collecting Data

In conducting this study, some data collections were used to collect the data, there were interview and a set of questionnaire. Details about the procedure of data collection are described below:

Questionnaire

A set questionnaire was used in this study. It was given to the participants since the study was limited to only investigate the senior students of English education' learning strategies in mastering speaking skill. The questionnaires were contained of questions to reveal the strategies of the senior students of English education' learning strategies in mastering speaking skill. The questionnaire is adapted from SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) developed by Rebecca Oxford.

Interview

Interview was conducted to gain data from nine final year students at English language study program. Conducting interview is valuable to gain the data. Maxwell (2013) says that 'interviewing can be a valuable way of finding a description of actions and events. It can give supplementary information that is missed in observation and could be used to check the accuracy of the observations.

Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaires will be analyzed in accordance with the students' choices. The data will be analyzed, interpreted and explained in relation to the theories in Chapter II. This is aimed to gain the data of the students' learning strategies in mastering speaking skill. The data from interview will be in the form of voice recording. The voice recording will be analyzed and categorized to gain information related to the research question about the students'

learning strategies in mastering speaking skill. The interview was used to strengthen the data taken from the questionnaire.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Through questionnaires that consist of questions of strategies in learning, the data gained are presented below.

Table 1: Strategies used by High achievement students

P	S1		S2								S3		
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13
P1	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	2	3	4	4	3	3
P2	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	2	4	4
P3	4	3	4	2	2	3	4	4	4	3	5	3	5
Total	20		82								33		
Average	3.33		3.42								3.67		

*P = Participant; S1 = Memory strategies; S2 = Cognitive strategies; S3 = Compensation strategies.

P	S4							S5	S6						
	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	
P1	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	
P2	4	3	4	4	2	4	3	3	3	2	4	2	4	3	
P3	5	1	4	4	3	3	3	2	4	4	4	3	3	2	
Total	83							10	47						
Average	3.46							3.3	3.13						

*P = Participant; S4 = Metacognitive strategies; S5 = Affective strategies; S6 = Social Strategies.

Table 1 shows the strategies used by three high achiever students. It found out that the most strategies used by this category are compensation strategies, which can be seen from the average score (3.67). Then it is followed by metacognitive

strategies (3.46), cognitive strategies (3.42), memory and affective strategies (3.33). Meanwhile, the least strategies used are social strategies which can be seen from the average score (3.13).

Table 2: Strategies used by middle achiever students

P	S1		S2								S3		
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13
P4	3	2	4	4	2	3	4	3	1	1	3	4	2
P5	5	3	5	4	4	3	4	5	4	5	5	5	5
P6	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	5	3	4
Total	21		84								36		
Average	3.50		3.50								4.00		

*P = Participant; S1 = Memory strategies; S2 = Cognitive strategies; S3 = Compensation strategies.

P	S4								S5	S6				
	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2
	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
P4	4	5	4	4	2	2	3	3	4	5	5	4	3	2
P5	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	4	3	4
P6	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	3	3
Total	89								12	58				
Average	3.71								4.00	3.87				

*P = Participant; S4 = Metacognitive strategies; S5 = Affective strategies; S6 = Social Strategies.

Table 2 shows the strategies used by three mid achievement students of English. It found out that the most strategies used by the mid achievement students are compensation and affective strategies. It can be seen from both average scores (4.00). Then, they are

followed by social strategies (3.87) and metacognitive strategies (3.71). Meanwhile, the least strategies used by the mid achievement students are memory and cognitive strategies which can be seen from both average score (3.50).

Table 3: Strategies used by low achiever students

P	S1		S2								S3		
	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q1
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3
P7	4	5	5	3	3	4	1	5	2	4	3	5	4
P8	4	5	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	5
P9	4	3	4	4	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	4	3
Total	25		81								35		
Average	4.17		3.38								3.89		

*P = Participant; S1 = Memory strategies; S2 = Cognitive strategies; S3 = Compensation strategies.

P	S4								S5	S6				
	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q1	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2	Q2
	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
P7	4	5	4	5	5	2	2	5	4	4	3	4	4	4
P8	4	5	5	5	4	3	3	4	4	5	3	4	3	3
P9	4	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	3
Total	92								11	54				
Average	3.83								3.67	3.60				

*P = Participant; S4 = Metacognitive strategies; S5 = Affective strategies; S6 = Social Strategies.

Table 3 shows the strategies used by three low achiever students of English. It found out that the most strategies used are memory strategies.

It can be seen from the average scores (4.17). Then it is followed by compensation strategies (3.89), metacognitive strategies (3.83) and

affective strategies (3.67).
 Meanwhile, the least strategies used
 are cognitive strategies which can be
 seen from the average score (3.38).

In the meantime, from
 interview toward nine students, the
 data are explained below.

Table 4: Interview Results

Participants	Strategies Used	Reasons
P1	Social media to improve pronunciation, grammar and speaking. YouTube to make speaking fluent and improve vocabulary. Reading English books like novel. Watching English movie. Speaking to self in front of mirror. Communicating with friends using video call or voice notes.	Don't have to go out to improve English by using YouTube/Instagram/book. Speaking to self because she doesn't have someone who wants to teach her speaking
P2	Watching YouTube video. Watching a movie. Talking to self. Practicing with my speaking skill with my students. Writing new vocabulary on a small book.	They are easy to be done.
P3	Watching video and film in English. Using mobile phone to learn English, like using app to practice speaking and talk with phone.	Like using technology.
P4	Watching movie. Listening to music. Having conversation with people	Easy to be done.
P5	Listening to the music. Watching movie Reading journals. Practicing speaking in front of the mirror Chatting with people even if they don't understand. Reviewing some lesson from class.	Love to do so.
P6	Talking with friends. Watching movie. Listening to songs. Singing.	Easy to be done.
P7	Watching video. Listening to music.	Love the activities

	Writing new word and practice that word in daily life with friends.	
P8	Listening to people. Talking to friends. Listening to the music to get many vocabularies.	Those are hobbies
P9	Mastering vocabulary by memorizing vocabulary. Learning to speak every time with confident. Listening to native speaker.	Easy to do

*P = Participant; P1-3: High achiever students; P4-6: Mid achiever students; P7-9: Low achiever students

From the interview session, the researcher has found the strategies used by each group as follow. High achiever students used strategies like using social media such as Instagram and YouTube, reading English books, watching English movies and videos, speaking to themselves, communicating with friends, writing new vocabularies and using mobile application. Meanwhile, the mid achiever students used strategies such as watching movies, listening to music, having conversation with people, reading journals, speaking with themselves and reviewing lesson. On the other hand, the low achiever students used strategies like watching videos, listening to music, writing new words, talking to friends, memorizing vocabularies and listening to native speakers.

The researcher also found some reasons why they use those strategies. The high achiever students use their strategies because of the ease of use, not having someone to talk, and like using it. For the mid achiever students, they use their strategies because of it is easy to use and love to do it. The reasons why

low achiever students use their strategies are because of loving the strategies, it is a hobby and because it is easy to do.

Based on the findings above, it was shown that the students used all learning strategies differently; which are memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies. They used their strategies based their own specific reasons. Compensation strategies becomes the most depending learning strategies that used by high achiever students. Compensation strategies and affective strategies become the most used strategies by mid achievement students. In addition, the result also shows that memory strategies become the most preferred strategies used by low achievement students.

From the interview session, the researcher has found the strategies used by each group as follow. High achievement students used strategies like using social media such as Instagram and YouTube, reading English books, watching English movies and videos, speaking to themselves, communicating with friends, writing

new vocabularies and using mobile application. Related to the strategies above, it can be concluded that the language learning strategy used by the high achievement students in mastering speaking skill connected with the Oxford theory of learning strategies are: (1) using social media such as Instagram and YouTube, reading English books, watching English movies and videos, and writing new vocabularies are categorized as cognitive strategies. Agung (2014) stated that cognitive strategies are more limited to specific learning tasks and they involve more direct manipulation of the learning material itself. The high achievement students used resourcing which can be seen that they used various materials from internet, movies and books. (2) speaking to themselves and using mobile application are categorized as metacognitive strategies. As Oxford (cited in Abbas, 2014) stated that metacognitive strategies are identifying one's own learning style preferences and gathering material. (3) communicating with friends is categorized as social strategies. Talking with a conversation partner is considered as social strategies employed by Oxford (cited in Abbas, 2014).

Meanwhile, middle achiever students used strategies such as watching movies, listening to music (cognitive), having conversation with people (social), and reading journals, speaking with themselves, and reviewing lesson (metacognitive). On the other hand, low achiever students prefer watching videos, listening to music, writing new words which are categorized as

cognitive strategies. They also talk to friends which is categorized as social strategy, and memorize vocabularies as memory strategy.

To conclude, the high achiever students tend to use more strategies in their learning of speaking. In the meantime, those with moderate and low learning achievement tend use lesser strategies in their learning of speaking.

CONCLUSION

Students apply memory, cognitive, compensation, meta-cognitive, affective, and social strategies in learning speaking. The number of strategy used varies which depend on the level of learning achievement of the students. However, a similar strategy used by multiple students does not necessitate the student to perform similar activities. The activity may differ. The last, the students' reason for using such strategy is merely the matter of simplicity and practicality.

It is suggested that the similar future study to investigate a larger scale of participants. Possible problems in using certain strategies might be another interesting focus to be investigated.

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