



Learning Strategies Used by the Fifth Semester Students to Increase Their Speaking Proficiency at English Study Program in Jambi University

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to discover the learning strategies that the students of English study program used to increase their speaking proficiency. This study involved six selected students at English study program who were studying in the fifth semester as the participants. They were selected based on their speaking achievement, it was getting scores “A” for three semesters in speaking class. The data were collected from interview with the participants. The study had found out that these students used many learning strategies frequently. In particular, cognitive strategies were found as the most frequently strategies used by the students, followed by metacognitive strategies, interpersonal strategies, affective strategies, social strategies and communicative – experiential strategies.

Key words: Learning Strategies, the Fifth Semester Students, Speaking Proficiency, English Study Program

Introduction

In the process of learning English as a foreign language, the students are required to construct the language instruction through mastering two kinds of the skills: receptive and productive skills. The receptive skills include listening and reading while productive ones include speaking and writing. One of the most important skills is speaking since learning English aims to have the students able to express thoughts, ideas, and feeling. Richards (2002) reinforced that the prominent purpose of learning English is to develop the students' speaking proficiency. Speaking is also categorized as the hardest skill since students have to master at least five aspects of effective speaking: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Therefore, students need to employ learning strategies to master these aspects in order to increase their speaking proficiency. Based on the background of the study, the researcher formulates the problem as follows: What kinds of learning strategies are used by the fifth semester students to increase their speaking proficiency at English study program in Jambi University?

Through the formulation of the study above, the researcher expects that this study can discover the students' learning strategies to increase their speaking proficiency. In this study, the researcher only focuses on investigating the learning strategies that can be used to increase students' speaking proficiency. Moreover, the subject in this research is the fifth semester students of English study program at Jambi University in the academic year 2016/2017. This study applies qualitative research design. The researcher conducts the interview section to find out the learning strategies that commonly used by the students to increase their speaking proficiency.

Theoretically, the findings can be used by the future researchers. It will give some useful information related to the learning strategies for increasing students' speaking proficiency. Then it can also be used as the reference for the further or deeper studies on the same topic. Practically, this study is expected to solve the students' speaking difficulties through providing the selected strategies to increase speaking proficiency. Furthermore, the English teachers are expected to give more attention to the students' learning difficulties and willingly to support the students in selecting the appropriate learning strategies.

Speaking is a process of expressing the meaning orally. It is produced by systematic verbal utterances. In broad, Brown and Yule (1983) suggested two functions of speaking; interactional function and transactional function. Kingen (2000) has combined these two dimensions to categorize the purposes of speaking as listed below:

Table 2.1: The Purposes of Speaking

No.	Categories	Purposes of Speaking
1	Personal	Conveying or expressing subjective thoughts and feelings
2	Descriptive	Describing someone or something, fiction or

		non-fiction
3	Narrative	Telling a kind of chronological stories
4	Instructive	Giving instruction or providing directions to produce an outcome
5	Comparative	Comparing two or more objects (people, ideas, or opinions) and making a judgment about them
6	Imaginative	Expressing mental pictures of particular objects (people, places, events, etc.)
7	Questioning	Asking questions to get an information
8	Predictive	Predicting about possible future events
9	Interpretative	Exploring the new things, and interpreting the deductions, and considering the inferences
10	Persuasive	Influencing someone to change the opinions, attitudes, behaviors, and point of view
11	Explanatory	Explaining, clarifying, and supporting ideas and opinions
12	Informative	Sharing the new things with others

Among the four main skills in English study, speaking is the most difficult skill to be assessed by the observers. As a spontaneous activity, the observers probably confront the complex problems in assessing students' speaking ability. Lado (1977) divided the speaking aspects into five essential components:

According to AMEP Research Centre (2002), pronunciation refers to the sounds production which is used to make meaning. Grammar is the structural foundation of the ability to express the meaning of a language (Crystal, 2004). Vocabulary means the diction which is used in oral or written communication. In oral communication, the understanding within the topic is necessary since it requires a speaker to respond the conversation appropriately to the context of the discussion without making any misconception. Fluency is defined as the ability to deliver meaning fluently and accurately. It is needed to take a lot of time in searching the appropriate words to express the message without undue pausing or hesitation during the conversation (Brown, 1997). Learning strategies have been classified by many researchers (O'Malley & Chamot, 1985; Rubin, 1987; Oxford, 1990; Stern, 1992).

They are defined as the strategies which are applied to plan for learning and thinking about the learning process, monitoring production and comprehension as well as evaluation after the completion of an activity. Cognitive strategies are "more directly related to individual learning tasks and entail direct manipulation of transformation of the learning material" (p. 8).

These strategies deal with the social transaction and activities which consist of cooperation (working with one or more peers to obtain feedback, pool information or

model a language activity) and question for clarification (asking a teacher or other native speaker for repetition, explanation, paraphrasing).

It focuses on the process of participating in a conversation and getting meaning across or clarifying what speakers intended. Memory strategies are the techniques used for entering information into memory and retrieving it. Compensation strategies are behaviors used to compensate for missing knowledge. The activities of these strategies such as circumlocution, gesturing, paraphrase, or asking for repetition and explanation are techniques used by students to keep conversation going. These strategies require the students to monitor and evaluate their own performance.

Research Method

This study applied qualitative research design. The site for this study was in English study program of teacher training and education faculty at Jambi University. In this study, the population covered the fifth semester students of English Study Program at Jambi University in the academic year 2016/2017. The researcher only chose the students in the regular program who got scores “A” for these three semesters in speaking I, II, and III. Purposive sampling was chosen to be conducted in this study. In this study, the researcher used the interview protocol to find out the learning strategies that the students used to increase their speaking proficiency.

Finding and Discussion

Based on the results which were collected from the interview with the six participants, the researcher had found out the findings which answered the research question in this study. It is *what kinds of learning strategies are used by the fifth semester students to increase their speaking proficiency at English study program in Jambi University?*

The findings showed that the selected participants used many strategies to support them to learn English speaking effectively. The researcher analyzed the data from the transcription of interview. It was found that they used 21 strategies which were categorized into six main learning strategies. They were classified within the table below:

Table 4.1 Classifications of Learning Strategies to Increase Speaking Proficiency Used by the Fifth Semester Students at English Study Program in Jambi University

No.	Learning Strategies	Participants					
		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Metacognitive Strategies							
1.	Setting a set of reasonable goals to learn English speaking.	√	√	√	√	√	√
2.	Monitoring the learning progress.	√				√	
3.	Doing self – evaluation.				√		√

4.	Planning the concepts of the material.	√		√	√		√
Cognitive Strategies							
5.	Translating the language.	√	√		√	√	√
6.	Repeating the words/phrases.	√	√	√	√	√	√
7.	Finding the meaning of new vocabulary by looking up dictionary.	√	√	√	√	√	√
8.	Memorizing the new vocabulary.	√	√	√	√	√	√
9.	Guessing the meaning.				√		
10.	Writing down the key words.		√	√		√	√
Social Strategies							
11.	Working together with friends to solve the problems.	√	√	√	√	√	√
12.	Asking clarification to friends.	√	√			√	√
13.	Practicing how to speak alone in front of the mirror.	√			√		
Interpersonal Strategies							
14.	Asking suggestion to other people.	√	√	√	√	√	√
15.	Keeping on to practice every time.	√		√	√	√	√
16.	Starting an English conversation with native speakers.	√	√	√	√	√	√
Affective Strategies							
17.	Practicing how to pronounce the words correctly.	√	√	√	√	√	√
18.	Sharing feeling and experiences.	√	√	√			√
19.	Controlling of the nervous.	√	√	√	√	√	√
Communicative – Experiential Strategies							
20.	Using gestures.	√	√	√			√
21.	Paraphrasing the words to clarify the ideas.	√	√	√	√	√	√

Metacognitive Strategies

In this study, the findings showed that the participants used four strategies. They were setting a set of reasonable goals to learn English speaking, monitoring their learning progress, doing self – evaluation and planning the concepts of the material. The first strategy was setting a set of reasonable goals. All of the participants revealed that they were motivated to learn English speaking because they had some purposes such as, for helping their career as an English teacher in the future, getting the privilege knowledge about how to speak English fluently, and helping them to communicate or share the information by using English. The second strategy was monitoring the learning process. In the learning process, the participants had their own techniques to monitor their learning process. There were only two participants who believed that by monitoring their speaking performance, they could

improve their speaking ability. The third strategy was doing self – evaluation. There were also two participants who applied this technique. They preferred to do self – evaluation rather than monitor their learning process. The fourth strategy was planning the concepts of the material. There were four participants who stated that they also used to plan the concepts of the material that they were going to be learned.

Cognitive Strategies

In this study, the findings showed that the participants used six strategies. There were translating the language, repeating the words or phrases, finding the meaning of the new vocabulary by looking up dictionary, memorizing the new vocabulary, guessing the meaning and writing down the key words. The first strategy was translating the language. All the participants except one confessed that Bahasa Indonesia as their first language helped them in learning speaking. The other strategy was repeating the words or phrases. All of the participants agreed that repetition was the best way to increase their speaking proficiency. The next strategy was finding the meaning of new vocabulary by looking up dictionary. The inclination of all participants was curious with the new words that they found. Firstly, they liked to know the meaning by asking with their friends, but they agreed that checking the meaning directly in the dictionary was more accurate. The other strategy was memorizing the new English words. All of the participants agreed that this strategy was very useful to increase their speaking performance. The other strategy was guessing the meaning. In this study, there was only one participant who stated that she used this strategy. She confessed that she was not really good in memorization. She often guessed the meaning of the new words by looking at the sentence which was followed by those unfamiliar words. Then she could predict the ideas or the information that speakers intended. The last strategy was writing down the key words. Making the key words would avoid the blanks during the speaking performance.

Social Strategies

In this study, the researcher found the data which showed that the participants used three strategies such as cooperation, questioning for clarification, and self talk. The first strategy was cooperation. This strategy aimed to make the students be more active to use the language in their society. All of the participants argued that cooperation was the effective technique and it was easy to be applied. They usually made a short conversation to get feedback. The second strategy was questioning for clarification. It was eliciting from a teacher or peer more additional explanations, rephrasing, examples, or verification. The third strategy was called as self – talk. In this study, there were only two participants who used self – talking. They used this strategy when preparing themselves in public speaking for instance, in a presentation or a speech.

Interpersonal Strategies

In this study, the researcher found that the participants used three strategies such as asking suggestion to other people, keeping on to practice every time and everywhere, and starting an English conversation with native speakers. The first

strategy was asking suggestion to other people. All of the students revealed that asking suggestion was important since it helped them to evaluate their performance. The other strategy was keeping on practice to every time. There were five participants who used this strategy. They stated that if they often used the language, they would master the language faster. The other strategy was applied by all the participants. That was starting an English conversation with native speakers. From the data result, the six participants showed that they ever started an English conversation with natives. They confessed that the conversation was only about the general information even only the general greetings.

Affective Strategies

In this study, the researcher found that the participants used three strategies such as practicing how to pronounce the words correctly, sharing feeling and experiences, and controlling the nervous. The first strategy was practicing how to pronounce the words correctly. By training the pronunciation, the students could build their self – confidence to talk in English. The second strategy was sharing feeling and experiences. Four participants stated that sharing feeling and experiences in learning speaking was also having a big contribution in increasing their speaking proficiency. They agreed that by sharing feeling and experiences about learning, they could motivate each other, make they feel free and comfortable, get positive feedback from others, and even have a new friend. The last strategy was controlling the nervous. All of the participants also confessed that they sometimes got nervous when talking in English. They usually worried to speak and lost their self – confidence, but they believed in themselves that they could do it. They stated that although they still faced the feeling of nervous when speaking English, they had their own techniques to control their emotional problem such as take a deep breath, motivate themselves, manage their emotion from inside, build up their confidence, relax the thoughts, and do physical gestures.

Communicative - Experiential Strategies

In this study, the researcher found that the participants used these strategies to emphasize the meaning of the statements. The techniques that they usually used were gesturing and paraphrasing. There were only four participants who used gesturing strategy. These participants revealed that gesturing was very useful to be used in the process of speaking because it helped the interlocutors to understand the missing information just by looking at the speakers' body language. The other one was paraphrasing strategy or using the synonym to clarify the ideas. All of the participants used this technique. Synonym helped them to re-explain the meaning that they want to deliver, so the meaning can be conveyed clearly.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Referring to the result of the study, it can be concluded that the good speaking proficiency is achieved by conducting various learning strategies. From the analysis of data above, the researcher have already known that the students who are good at speaking skill employed more than one strategy. Through the findings, the study

found that the selected students had been applied six strategies including 21 sub-strategies. By employing those selected strategies, they could enrich the main aspects of effective speaking such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency. These aspects were important possessed when the students were insisted to be proficient in speaking. In the process of the study, the researcher found a lot of interesting findings in the field. From the data, the researcher found that there were many students who got unsatisfied scores in speaking class. It should be better for the future researchers to go deep into this problem by investigating the causes of this phenomenon and compare the strategies between the students who are unsatisfied with their speaking performance with the strategies that used by the students who are good at speaking. Either those certain strategies really influence students' speaking performance or there are another things which influence their speaking capability.

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