

WHAT SPEAKING STRATEGIES ARE USED BY HIGH-PROFICIENT EFL STUDENTS? A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: Extensive research on language learning strategies has been performed. However, little has been known about the strategy implemented by students with high proficiency situated at a private university. Using a case study design, this research aimed to investigate the speaking strategies used by high-proficient EFL students. The study was carried out in the English Education department of a private university in Malang. It involved three university students recruited based on two criteria such as having the highest achievement scores in speaking classes and having actively participated in debating championships. Using semi-structured interviews, the participating students were asked what strategies they use and how the strategies help improve their speaking skills. To analyze the data, the researcher used thematic analysis following the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) that provides a six-phase guide such as (1) Getting acquainted with the information, (2) creating coding categories, (3) taking a glance for topics, (4) evaluation topics (5) Create topics and (6) Write up, to ensure the study's credibility. The analysis reveals that students dominantly used two kinds of strategies such as memory strategy and social strategy. The memory strategies were used to practice individually to remember, memorize, and understand the material by recording important information, frequently reviewing information, and taking note of the important points, and social strategy was used to interact with others. By knowing this, English teachers could transform and teach the strategies effectively to low-proficient students.

Keywords: speaking strategies, high-proficient student, private university

INTRODUCTION

There is an expanding body of literature that acknowledges the benefit of communication. It appears to be the most crucial of the four basic language skills (Bailey and Savage, 1994; El-Sakka, 2016; Shabani, 2013). This is also claimed by Goh and Burns (2012), speaking can improve other skills. They revealed that speaking is often used in exploration when you hear something effectively. Talking about speaking skills being the most important language, through speaking we can express our expressions, our self-image, our knowledge, and our perception of our environment. Besides, many successful careers depend on how competently and effectively you use speaking. Students who really can communicate directly could indeed create strong social interactions (Hargie, 2011).

Universities are agents of change for Indonesian people to become more educated citizens. The role of universities is very necessary existence. English Education will create bachelors of education who can compete in the world market and can develop their knowledge, namely English education to put into practice to society. Mark Robson, Director of English and Exams at the British Council (2013), refers to English as just the "operating system" of intercultural language. People who believe they can learn and speak English better than anyone else continue to listen to business leaders and policymakers. English is currently the most widely used language in world commerce, mass news & culture, international communication, magazine, book publishing, and, in specific internationalization of academic achievement (Rao, 2019; Rahman and Singh, 2021). Because language has its status as a lingua franca, efficient communication in English is extremely crucial in this globalization era (Jenkins, 2007). Speaking, according to Nunan (1991), is the act of explaining or reporting something to someone. This communication can have an impact on someone's life.

Speaking is indeed one of the communication techniques that people use to interact with others. It happens in some places and it has become a part of daily routines. Speaking is occasionally employed to give guidance or resolve issues. To begin writing regarding something or someone, to inquire about someone else's problem, and to request and also provide assistance, among other things. However, speaking a foreign language is a challenging skill for students, even

younger generations. Many students consider that speaking is the most difficult skill because the Indonesian nation does not use English as a daily language. While most people think that speaking takes a long time and is difficult for students to adapt. Brown (2004) presents five components of speaking such as grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, and pronunciation. Before speaking, students should be mindful of this component and fully comprehend what they are trying to communicate. They undoubtedly encounter obstacles that make clear communication difficult. Poor vocabulary, simply wrong or poor pronunciation, and others (Heriansyah, 2012). In reality, many students feel nervous to communicate with other people and have difficulty in speaking English because they have limited vocabulary, pronunciation trouble, and less of practicing, it showed that those are the student's problems in speaking. The growth and development of technology include valuable parts in language learning at all levels of education to improve and shape teaching quality and learning processes for independent learners (Aminatun and Oktaviani, 2019; Sari and Wahyudin, 2019). Each pupil has a unique set of language learning strategies and styles (Wahyudin and Rido, 2020; Mandasari and Oktaviani, 2018; Ayu, 2018). This argument is similar to Abdelheim's (2015) claim that the success of learning a language mostly depends on the personal learner's effort; this same capacity to learn a language is not a deciding factor. This leads to questions about how personal language learners might obtain and exert control over their language learning and usage. There are six different language learning strategies that students might use, according to Oxford (1990) such as memory strategy, cognitive strategy, compensation strategy, metacognitive strategy, effective strategies, and social strategies. Pupils can mix all strategies to make the teaching and learning process of English enjoyable. The most common challenge is the limited availability of pupils' and teachers' establishment, usage, and factors affecting the use of strategy.

In the previous study, Houn (2022) examined the factors that affect the speaking communication skills of twelfth-grade high school of English-language students. As a result, this research can help English teachers re-examine their weaknesses and strengths in oral English teaching, as well as recognize students'

inadequacies and intellectual skills to enhance their English learning, especially their speaking ability. The research can also help teachers better understand their students' language difficulties and find appropriate ways to teach effectively. Garcia (2022) researched to investigate the numerous factors that could affect students' speaking abilities. The research also includes 124 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in their fourth year of secondary school from three different high schools in Spain. Students who had greater emotional awareness had better speaking skills, whereas students with musical knowledge had higher levels of emotional understanding. Hsieh and Wang (2019) researched the competency, grammatical structures, vocabulary, and group indicated of early-age language students' speaking performances. To a significant extent, discourse characteristics distinguish contestants across ability levels. The mission type impacted grammar, vocabulary, and content, but not fluency characteristics. The findings have significant implications for the language growth of young second and foreign-language learners, as well as deep insight into the design of conversational analysis tasks. Jaekel (2018) conducted research to (1) explore the use of LLS in material compared to standard foreign language instruction. in addition to (2) determining the influence of LLS use as well as self-efficacy on speaking skills. Students from Germany in Year 9 Language and Content Integrated Learning (CLIL) and regular English as a foreign language (EFL) decided to participate (N=378). These findings indicate that increasing self-efficacy even as a location concerning strategies may be the best way to support students. Kassem (2018) taught a Speaking Class to the first English Department students at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia using a Hybrid Problem- Based Learning (H-PBL) strategy. A pre-post speaking proficiency exam, a students' ambition questionnaire, a personal interview, and observation sheets were used as tools for data collection in the study. The outcomes showed that the H-PBL strategy enhanced students' speaking proficiency, increased motivation, and resulted in students becoming more personality and self-reliant.

Considering the findings from previous studies, just several studies at the private university had already handled this significant problem, with a few using

qualitative research, two utilizing quantitative research, and the majority concentrating on what variables are employed by high-proficient students instead of the strategies used. Given the current gap in this frame of reference and the incredibly huge importance of speaking English for professional and academic purposes, the goal of this research is to look into the reasons for high proficiency students in this skill as well as the strategies they used. These research results are expected to gain insight into the commonly used strategies used by high-achieving students to improve their speaking abilities. As a result, this study will also provide essential information for enhancing and managing students' speaking skills, especially for students with limited English proficiency.

METHOD

Research Design

Given that the initial objective of the study was to know the strategies used by students with high proficiency in speaking English at private university students in Malang, Indonesia. This study used a case study research design to achieve the objective. The use of the approach focuses on the ideas and opinions of the participants as well as personal experiences (Creswell, 2003). This study employed a qualitative approach with a semi-structured interview to capture the participant's accounts of past learning experiences.

Participant Profile

This research involved three university students in Indonesia following some criteria such as 1) having the highest achievement scores in their speaking classes at the university and 2) having actively participated in debating championships. After going through the learning process, three students are eligible to be recruited. There were three female students in the 5th semester of English department in Malang with a majority age of twenty-one years. They all have high scores in speaking classes from semesters 1-5. They all come from Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia. All participants have lived in a foreign language development institution for three years. Since they lived in a foreign language development institution, they ever joined debate competitions at their institution,

even out of town to represent their school. So that way, they are identified as a participant in this research study.

Research Instrument

To conduct the research, an instrument was required to be stated. The research instrument was the equipment used by the researcher to collect data, and it was critical to obtain accurate data. In the qualitative approach, data is gathered through participant observation, interviews, and documentary materials. The researcher investigated strategies used by students with high-proficient to improve their speaking skills in a private university. The researcher collected data by using semi-structured interviews as a research instrument, to find out answers from participants in-depth and clearly.

Data Collection

In order to collect the data needed for this study, Semi-structured interview was the main instruments used in collecting the data. One of the advantages of this interview is that the researcher or interviewer does not need to provide questions sequentially, but instead makes a framework and outline of what has been formulated (Boonsuk et al., 2021). In the process of conducting interviews and asking questions according to the circumstances of the participants in the actual interview context. The interviews have two part elements, including the part I) participants' background information (name, age, school year, and university college), and part II) a total of five questions that were used to answer the research questions which explored what strategies they use and how the strategies help improve their speaking skills.

The interview started with the question, "What are the strategies do you use to improve your speaking skill?". It then continued with a more specific question, "How do you use the strategies to improve your speaking skill?". The conversation led to some other questions, such as "Why did you choose those strategies?", "Where do you find the strategies? (Initiatives/from other sources)". Ultimately, the interview ended with the question "Do you think that your strategies can help students with low proficiency in speaking skills? Why?".

The interviews were conducted in four sessions each of which lasted 45 minutes in every session. The three students' email addresses were collected to invite them to the semi-structured email interviews. First, emails were sent to them to explain the purposes of the interviews in this study. Then, three students agreed to participate in the semistructured email interviews. After that, the discussion was emailed to them, while responding to the items, the participants continued emailing us if they had any confusion and we immediately replied with clarification. Second, the interviews session were conducted with opened-ended questions in a place to ask for information about the two research questions. The next interview sessions conducted via Zoom, and WhatsApp Voice Notes to clarify, complete and validate the data.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using content analysis following the procedures suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), who provided six-phase guidance that is a very beneficial framework for carrying out this type of analysis. (1) get acquainted with the information, (2) create coding categories, (3) take a glance at topics, (4) evaluate topics (5) create topics; (6) write up.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Question 1: What strategies are used by high-proficiency students in speaking English to improve their speaking skills?

The results of the analysis show the strategies used by students with high proficiency in learning speaking skills. Students are using the strategies namely memory strategy and social strategy. The memory strategy was used by recording important information, frequently reviewing information, and taking note of the important points, from that students can know which material they have not understood. While, the social strategy was used to interact with other people such as giving opinions, discussing material, etc. However, in the memory strategy in the context of memorizing something, we don't just memorize it, we need to understand it because it's useless to memorize but not understand the material.

(p1) added the strategies that required her to practice speaking English every day because speaking without practicing is nonsense. This strategy can be done by using social strategy by speaking in English with friends or talking alone. At least it can train students to always speak English every day to improve their speaking skills, not only that with this strategy students can train their speaking more fluently and have good pronunciation. (p2) and (p3) also added the strategies that were listening or seeing something about English such as listening to English songs, watching English movies, or English podcasts. With this strategy, students will be familiar with English, making it easier for students to improve their speaking skills. An example of the interview response is in the following.

“For me, memory strategy is very important to improve speaking skills. we need something called re-honing what we have learned and got, not only memories, after we know the theory we have to practice it because practice makes better but to be more successful in developing their speaking skill, students should employ the speaking strategies more frequently”(P1)

“For me, social strategy social strategy has a positive impact, when I interact with other people, especially with foreigners, this will provide a lot of benefits for me in improving my speaking skills, as I can get a lot of new knowledge”(P2)

Question 2: How the students use those strategies to improve their speaking skills in this online learning?

The following finding presented the result of the analysis of using memory strategy and social strategy. In memory strategy, memorizing something is done by recording important things that have been learned and obtained during the learning process, with the aim that what has been learned is easy to remember and understand. And for the social strategy, interacting with other people is done by getting a discussion with a friend about the material to practice their English language in their daily activities. They used those strategies consistently, by setting their targets to improve their speaking skills. (p1) said talking alone in front of the mirror to practice my fluency in speaking English, or invite friends to discuss using English in class or outside class. (p2) added listening to English

songs, watching English movies, and reading English books from what we like, so we will have the habit of always hearing English speech, making it easier for us to understand English words and add our vocabulary. (p3) also added the strategy of using comfortable strategies, enjoying, and having fun every day to improve your speaking skill.

“I usually use comfortable strategies, enjoy and have fun by listening to English songs and watching English movies makes me entertained and not bored in learning, besides that, I can add new vocabulary that I have never known. This is also very helpful for low proficiency students in speaking because with this they will not only just talk but before speaking they will have basic knowledge of how to pronounce words” (P3)

“for me practicing the English language is very important, I usually interact with my friend to share our own opinions about our environment at least three times a week, besides I can train my speaking skill I also can improve my fluency in speaking English by this social strategy” (P1)

Discussion

In general, the current study shows that the strategies used by students with high proficiency are memory strategy and social strategy. It is emphasized that students with high proficiency can provide important information for developing and improving the students' speaking skills, especially for students who have low proficiency in spoken English. Memory strategies said to Widhayanti (2018), are methods that help students retain new information so they can use it later. Memory strategies have been employed for a very long time. She continued to state that actions like coming up with mental methods, using pictures and music, doing thorough reviews, and using reactions are all examples of memory strategies..

These finding results are in line with other researchers' findings, such as Faris (2018) who found that due to their incredible potency as mental tools, memory strategies are regarded as one of the most powerful tools in the process of acquiring a new language. Memory techniques include actions that assist people to recall and acquire new information, such as using pictures, initials, and

keywords. This aid students in integrating new material with L2 topics from their second language. Simple rules are suggested as a memory strategy to organize information in human memory. They are described as those approaches that support learning in keeping particular information for later access. For him, memory strategy is a technique of arranging or storing data to enhance memory.

Another strategy that has been given the ultimate focus in this study is the use of social strategy in developing speaking skills. Numerous earlier studies have found that the social strategy is also a useful strategy for enhancing students' speaking abilities. The social strategy was mentioned by Henriquez, Von, Pena, & Llanquileo (2017), as another way for learning a foreign language that can help students in improving their speaking abilities as they communicate with one another. The proficient language user will be able to assist their acquaintances in speaking English. To finish the speaking assignment or group project, they will cooperate and assist one another. Zakaria (2019), revealed that one of the strongest ways for learning a foreign language is through social strategy. Several students have difficulty speaking in languages apart from their mother language. Students can improve their speaking abilities by practicing with friends because they are of the same age and skill level. Mandasari & Oktaviani (2018) said that students can cooperate and engage in active language learning, as evidenced. Due to their freedom to utilize English without concern for grammar or sentence structure errors, they will start to dominate conversations. In addition to creativity and critical thinking, Rusdin (2018) listed cooperation and communication as the other two 4'Cs of 21st-century learning. Students will be offered the opportunity to speak English and practice speaking it. Students' speaking abilities will be improved in addition to their listening, reading, and writing abilities.

Although Sanjaya (2016) said that social learning strategies make a negative contribution to learning outcomes which means that if the social learning strategies increase the results of learning will go down. This happened because students have not been able to carry out effective social strategy activities with optimal, such as learning to work together and controlling feelings and emotions to achieve learning outcomes. Social learning strategies generally show very weak relationships this thing due to the following reasons. First, the activities on the

strategy social affective have not been able to be done by students optimally to increase yield study. The two social affective learning strategies are still low used by students in the study. This causes effective social learning strategies to provide a smaller contribution to the results study. On the other hand, have been discovered to have bad impacts, as memory affects the development of speaking skills. This process of engaging that not all learning strategies contribute positively to the acquirement of speaking skills; therefore, educators must expressly motivate learners to use appropriate strategies to do well in English language learning by including coverage of the three significant language groups in the classroom strategy Strategy- Based Instruction (SBI). Thus according to Cohen (2000), strategic objective instruction delivers the following advantages to students: instills self-belief in learning and using the language effectively, encourages learner autonomy outside of the classroom, and teaches effective task execution. Several studies have shown that integrating strategy-based instruction in the classroom has a significant benefit in improving students' oral performance (Cohen, 2000; Cohen, Weaver, & Li, 1996; Nakatani,2006).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

The purpose of this study is to find out the strategies used by high proficiency students in English speaking skills for English education in the 5th semester of a private university in Malang and to find out how they use the strategy to improve their speaking skills. This finding reveals that participants with high proficiency use memory and social strategies to improve their speaking skills. In this case, they used memory strategy by recording important information, frequently reviewing information, and taking note of the important points, to remember the material. Furthermore, social strategies are used to interact with other people by sharing information, discussing material, and giving opinions. Moreover, students also used the strategy of watching English movies or listening to English songs to improve their speaking skills because with these strategies students will have new knowledge of how to pronounce words and be familiar with new vocabulary. Hereby to use strategies that are reported to be influential in achieving success in learning speaking skills, students should employ speaking

strategies more frequently. So with this, further research must provide or research effective strategies to improve students' speaking skills.

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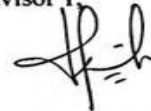
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