

# Speaking Strategies Used By the Junior High School Students with Different Level of Speaking Ability

Muhtarom  
UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya  
[mmuhtarom@yahoo.com](mailto:mmuhtarom@yahoo.com)

Hikmatul Masykuriyah  
UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya  
[ria.hikmatul86@gmail.com](mailto:ria.hikmatul86@gmail.com)

**Abstract**—Speaking strategy is the way students overcome their problems in speaking. They are defined as a means of solving problems in speaking used by the second and the foreign language learners in order to achieve a particular communicative goal (Faerch and Kasper, 1983). Students' speaking strategies may vary. The students with low level ability may use more strategies rather than the middle or high level students. They are 12 speaking strategies that may be used by the students, some of them are: students are trying to translate from their native language into English; production "blocking" is occurring due to nervousness, the speaker is looking for a specific word, rather than using simple language to describe what is meant, etc. (Lopez, 2011). This research discovers the speaking strategies used by students and how they applied it. Based on the research, it found that the students' speaking ability influences their speaking strategies. The students who have low levels of speaking ability speak differently from the students who have middle or high level of speaking ability.

**Keywords:** *strategy, speaking, speaking strategy, students' speaking level*

## I. INTRODUCTION

From the preliminary study that the researcher did to the junior high school students in the English class, she found that the students used different strategies when they are speaking. The speaking strategies that they used were never taught by the teacher. There are four previous studies about speaking strategies that support this research. The first study was carried out by Issitt (2008) in a UK university during a ten-week pre-semester program of English for academic purposes, which prepared students for the speaking test of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). This preparation consisted of three aspects: 1) developing students' confidence with an emphasis on reducing exam anxiety and on offering exam practice, 2) providing students with the IELTS regulations so as to better inform the students as to what the speaking test was about, and 3) making students aware of the marking

of the IELTS exam criteria and helping them to adjust their speaking performance to match these criteria. The result showed that the training of these students in strategic performance aided them in passing the test with the required scores for university entrance. Although the sample was small, the preparation of students in using the strategies made them better prepared to tackle tasks in foreign language learning. According to Issitt (2008), encouraging students to use a variety of perspectives may also help motivate them to study independently and to consider different theoretical positions.

The second study was conducted by Gallagher-Brett (2007), who applied a questionnaire to elicit information concerning learners' beliefs about speaking a foreign language. According to Gallagher-Brett (2007), the three strategies mostly used by the students were practicing, revising, and repetition at home after revision. Although the result was from a very small number of participants, it reveals that the participants used strategies when they are speaking a foreign language. An interesting feature of the findings was the acknowledgement by students of failure due to individual factors related to their actions, efforts and feelings. This refers to the participants' awareness of themselves as learners and of their responsibility for their own learning actions and outcomes. The two main themes emerging from this study are: awareness of strategy used by students, and the role of affective factors such as confidence, mood and anxiety when they are speaking a foreign language.

The third study that was conducted by Selinker (1972) indicates that developing the ability to use particular communication strategies is supposed to be an effort to improve the second or foreign language learners' communicative competence as well as to enable them to compensate for their target language deficiency.

The students stated that practice and revision are the most important activities conducive to successful speaking of a foreign language. These strategies are metacognitive and although they are important, the researcher's main argument in this study is the need to train students in the use of speaking strategies to help them better in their performance when they are speaking in English.

The fourth study that was done by Lopez (2011) reported the speaking strategies used by the students who were studying for a BA in English Language Teaching (ELT)

in five public Mexican universities. Students from these universities were given questionnaires concerning their use of speaking strategies. The results showed that the strategies mostly used by the students are asking for repetition, using paraphrase or synonyms for unknown words, and asking for message clarification. Although there is a wide range of strategies in use, the students tend to select strategies according to their level of language proficiency.

Based on these previous studies, the researcher found that the previous researchers have not discussed about the strategies that used by the students with different level of speaking ability. By that reason, the researcher was curious about the strategies that used by the students with different level of speaking ability. The researcher also focused on the junior high school students.

The phenomenon found by the researcher in the classroom indicates that students always have difficulties in doing speaking. To overcome their difficulties, they have their own strategies. The different strategies are clearly seen from the students who have high, middle, and low speaking ability level. This attracts the researcher to observe the students' speaking strategies by the questions below:

1. What types of speaking strategies are used by the students who have high level of speaking ability?
2. What types of speaking strategies are used by the students who have middle level of speaking ability?
3. What types of speaking strategies are used by the students who have low level of speaking ability?
4. How do the students who have high level of speaking ability apply their speaking strategies while they are speaking during the teaching and learning process?
5. How do the students who have middle level of speaking ability apply their speaking strategies while they are speaking during the teaching and learning process?
6. How do the students who have low level of speaking ability apply their speaking strategies while they are speaking during the teaching and learning process?

## **Theoretical Background**

### **Speaking Strategies**

An important component of language learning strategy training is that of speaking strategies. Oral strategies are referred to in the literature as communicative strategies, communication strategies, conversation skills or oral communication strategies; for the purpose of this study, *speaking strategies* are those devices used by students to solve any communication problems when they are speaking in English. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), speaking strategies are crucial because they help foreign language learners "in negotiating meaning where either linguistic structures or sociolinguistic rules are not shared between a second language learner and a speaker of the target language"

One of the language learner goals is to speak a foreign language in different oral exchanges and ultimately to be a competent speaker. For Hedge (2000), a competent speaker knows how to make use of speaking strategies. Hedge (ibid) comments that: "These strategies come into play when learners are unable to express what they want to say because they lack the resources to do so successfully". These verbal and non-verbal strategies (e.g. verbal circumlocution, clarification, non-verbal mimicry, gestures, etc.) may be used to compensate for a breakdown in communication or for unknown words or topics, and they may also be used to enhance effective communication.

Speaking strategies are essential, since they provide foreign language learners with valuable tools to communicate in the target language in diverse situations. However, there is disagreement as to whether or not to teach speaking strategies. Kellerman (1991) advocates against such training and believes that learners can transfer these strategies naturally from their native language to the target language. On the other hand, Canale (1983) encourages training in speaking strategies because learners must be shown how such a strategy can be implemented in the second language practice. Furthermore, learners must be encouraged to use such strategies rather than remain silent, and must be given the opportunity to use them (Lopez, 2011).

As reported in the previous studies, there are speaking strategies which have been investigated. Rubin's research (1981) includes some categories of speaking strategies, such as clarification or verification, guessing or inductive inferencing deductive, deductive strategies, and social affective strategies. O'malley and Chamot (1990) divide strategies into three dimensions; they are metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and social affective strategies. Oxford (1990) develops a taxonomy that divides strategies into direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies are these that directly involve the target language. And indirect strategies provide indirect support for language learning through focusing, planning, evaluating, seeking opportunities, controlling anxiety, increasing cooperation and empathy, and other means. Direct strategies include memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. And indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. And the latest one are the strategies used by Lopez (2011) in her study. Lopez (2011) took the strategies that are already constructed by Universidad de Quintana Roo (UQROO).

Based on UQROO, there are 14 strategies that are commonly used by the students, they are:

1. Asking a classmate or teacher the way how to say the words or phrase.

2. Using a dictionary to solve the difficulties that may appear when they do their speaking.
3. Using a synonym or describing what the learners want to say.
4. Code mixing and code switching.
5. Using gestures and hands.
6. Asking the speaking partner to repeat a word or phrase if the words are unclear.
7. Relating the unclear words to the part of the conversation that is understood.
8. Using known words and phrases when the learners do not know how to say something.
9. Structuring some ideas in the learners' mind before speaking.
10. Using fillers such as: and, well, etc. to gain time
11. Repeating the last word or phrase said to gain time.
12. Not thinking too much before speaking so that ideas can flow in English.
13. Asking the speaking partner to repeat or explain in different words that the student did not understand.
14. Telling the speaking partner about the un-understandable words.

#### Students' Level

Based on Oller and Vallette's scoring system, the teacher can measure the students score and on which level the students belong to. The students' level meant in this research is the students' achievement in their speaking test.

There are six stages in the scoring system. The stages are used to decide the students' speaking level. Those stages follow the requirement that is written in the speaking test requirement explained before.

##### High level of speaking ability

The students are considered to have high level of speaking ability if their speaking test scores are in the level of fifth until sixth level of each speaking test requirement based on Oller and Valette scoring. Each requirement level has its own score. The highest level in the test requirement is six.

##### Middle level of speaking ability

The students are considered to have middle level of speaking ability if their speaking test scores are in the third until fourth level for the speaking test requirement as Oller and Valette scoring.

##### Low level of speaking ability

The students are considered to have low level of speaking ability if their speaking test scores are in the first until second level for the speaking test requirement as Oller and Valette scoring.

#### Scope and Limitation of the Study

Concerning with the objectives of the study, the scope of the study will be focused on the speaking strategies used by junior high school students who have high, middle, and low level of speaking ability. These speaking strategies are categorized into fourteen speaking strategies (Lopez, 2011). In order to avoid broad discussion, this study is limited to the eight grade students of SMPN in Sedati.

## II. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### High level of speaking ability

Firstly read about the strategies that will be used by the different speaking ability level of students when they are speaking, we will say that the strategies used by the low English ability level students are more than the strategies that used by the high level of speaking ability students. That thought totally different with the fact that encourage by the researcher. In this research, the researcher found that the students with high level of speaking ability used more strategies than the low English ability level students.

After observing and investigating the first subject (students with high level of speaking ability: SHL1 and SHL2), the researcher found that the students with high level of speaking ability mostly used more speaking strategies while they were speaking, they used 9 strategies out of 14 strategies mentioned by Lopez, they were; using *Synonym or Describing* what they wanted to say in the target language, doing *Code Mixing and Code Switching*, using *Words and Phrases* that they already knew, adding *Fillers* such as *and, well, eee, emm, then* to gain time while they were speaking, *Asking the Other Speaker* to explain his or her explanation that they did not understand, *Structuring Some Ideas* before speaking, *telling the word in the target language*, using *Gesture*, and *Not Thinking Too Much* before they speak.

Based on the additional interview that done to the high level of speaking ability students they do those strategies to make them not felt nervous and make sure that what they were explained or said was understood by the responder or listener. They felt un satisfied if the responder or listener cannot catch their idea.

### Middle level of speaking ability

The middle level of speaking ability students have different number of speaking strategies they used. They do not have as much number of strategies used by the high level of speaking ability as the high level of speaking ability one.

From the observation done by the researcher, the students with middle level of speaking ability (SML1 and SML2) used some strategies. They used less strategy than the students with high level of speaking ability. There were eight

strategies used by the middle level of speaking ability students, they are asking the way to say the words in English, using code mixing and code switching, using gestures and hands, structuring some ideas before speaking, using filler to gain time, repeating the last word said to gain time, not thinking too much before speaking, and asking the speaking partner to repeat or explain in different words that the students did not understand.

Based on the observation, SML1 and SML2's did not speak very fluent but they spoke mostly in English. The speaking strategies were shown when the SML1 explained his drama scenario.

### Low level of speaking ability

From the observation and interview that was done by the researcher, the speaking strategies that were used by the low level students were less rather than the students with high and middle level of speaking ability. That was because the low level of speaking ability students did not have any idea to speak. They just kept silent if they do not know the translation of the words that they will say. This strategy was always done by SLL1 and SLL2 while they were speaking even they were speaking in explaining the drama or presenting the paper.

Besides, the strategies that were used by the students with low level of speaking ability are code mixing and code switching, using gesture, and structuring some ideas in their mind before speaking, using filler and repeating the last words or phrase to gain time, and asking the speaking partner to repeat or explain in different words that they do not understand.

### III. CONCLUSION

With a simple conclusion that we can not decide that the high level of speaking ability students will never using much strategies when they are speaking. In the otherwise, the low level of speaking ability students used less speaking strategies when they are speaking. The number of speaking strategies used by the students is not mostly based on they ability to

speak, but it maybe because of the anxiety or their want to speak.

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