

The English Teacher Strategies to Enhance Students' Speaking Performance

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Abstract—This study uncovers the teaching strategies of an English Teacher at MAN Insan Cendekia Jambi who is empirically proven of being able to enhance his students' speaking performance. MAN Insan Cendekia Jambi is an Islamic Senior High School which is well-known for its quality from which some students experienced overseas students' exchange, continued their studies abroad, and regularly walked on podiums on English Competitions both in Sumatra region and national. Researchers conducted a qualitative inquiry by employing in-depth interviews, document collections, and non-participatory observations. The data then analyzed through coding, classification, and finding themes. To establish trustworthiness, researchers triangulated the data among participants and techniques of gathering the data. The finding revealed that the English teacher executed some strategies with an aim at enhancing students' speaking performance in English. Those strategies are being the model of successful English user, assigning students with creative tasks, and constructing intensive interactions among students.

Keywords—*madrasah teacher; successful English teacher; teaching strategy; speaking skill*

I. INTRODUCTION

To speak in English as a foreign language demands particular skills to communicate successfully, such the ability to formulate statements with correct grammar and vocabulary, to convey messages with appropriate expression, gesture, and intonation, and so forth. In fact, the teaching of English in Indonesia is compulsory for only secondary school students and higher students (academy, university), not for young learners in kindergarten or elementary schools [1]. Therefore, both English teachers in junior and senior high schools experience huge challenges to build their students' ability to speak English. Considering the facts that their students have just learnt English in secondary schools brings about students' difficulties to speak English as caused by limited possession of vocabulary and weakness in grammatical mastery. Ellis, a noble scholar in the field of English Language Teaching, assured,

"...I was in many different countries and one of the problems that I see in these countries is that the students study English for six, seven years at high school and maybe two, three years at university and yet at the end of it they

can hardly say a thing in English-they can't communicate [2]."

In fact, the students of MAN Insan Cendekia Jambi, an Islamic Senior High School, have shown that they are successful speakers of English despite the load of subjects they have to study: general subjects (civic education, math, science, social, and others which are similar as the curriculum of Senior High School Students in Indonesia) and also Islamic Religion subjects (Arabic language, Islamic law, Islamic History, and Norms-Values of Moslems). Some students experienced exchange programs to English speaking countries such the United States of America and Australia. Some others pursue bachelor degrees overseas which major in medical, chemistry, and else. In terms of English competitions, the students of MAN Insan Cendekia Jambi have won several trophies in National English Debate Championship, Regional Speech Competition, and also English Olympiads. Those facts drove the researchers to investigate who the teacher was and how could he successfully brought those students into communicative English speakers.

II. THEORETICAL REVIEWS

Richard and Renandya stated that an effective teaching considers some crucial aspects. It includes well-planned curriculum, efficient classroom activities, focused instruction, personal interaction, and the like [3]. Sarmiento and Zuniga, also classified factors which influenced English language teaching and learning process, namely: teacher's degree, appropriate activities, target language in class, teaching resources and technology, considering discipline, timing, feedback, instruction, students' need and students' level [4]. The most factors which influence the learning and teaching English language, to Sarmiento and Zuniga, are teachers' degree and well-considered activities. Hence, many elements involve in the process of teaching which determine its effectiveness. Those important aspects of teaching can be a guidance to create an effective teaching in the English teaching and learning process. A significant aspect is the English teacher ability to deal with students, English material, as well as classroom-non classroom language managements or we usually call this a teaching strategy.

J. R. David cited in Sanjaya defined that strategy is a plan, method, or series of activities designed to achieves a particular educational goal [5]. So, strategy can be interpreted as a guidance to achieve the determined goals. In learning and teaching process, strategy is a planning that contain about series of activities designed to achieve the goals of education. Operationally, the researchers defined teaching strategies as a series of actions employed by teachers to transfer knowledge, exemplify the skills, and modeling language production the sake of achieving the learning goals.

“None of teaching strategies is perfect in itself. In order to conduct an effective teaching, creative teacher chooses a variety of effective learning strategies that underpin each other to activate learners, to engage learners and to instill motivation to learn. Effective strategies are those that can transfer knowledge into practical application” [6].

Manurung highlighted the significance of teacher himself as the ultimate factor in applying strategies, which is the ability of the teacher to execute the knowledge he knows best for students in the classroom and the skill he can show to students either inside or outside the classroom.

Harmer [7] wrote, there are three main reasons for getting students to speak in the classroom. Firstly, speaking activity provide rehearsal opportunities—chance to practice real life speaking in the safety of the classroom. Secondly, speaking task in which students try to use any or all of the language they know provide feedback for both teacher and students. Finally, the more students have opportunity to activate the various elements of language they have stored in their brains, the more automatic their use of these elements become.

Some scholars have investigated the strategies to teach English especially with a purpose of enhancing students’ speaking skill in various levels of study. First, Anjaniputra in 2013 found that teaching strategies used by English teacher at one of secondary schools in Sumedang, West Java-Indonesia were cooperative activities, creative task, role play, and drilling [8]. In year 2014, Nurhasanah proposed “three-minute descriptive speech” as an effective strategy to enhance university students’ oral communication skill [9]. She justified that presentation-like strategy was significant to boost students’ motivation and confidence to produce oral language. The latest related study is the work of Budiyanto, Saleh, Rukmini, and Sofwan which was published in a journal of Theory and Practice in Language Studies in 2018 [10]. They developed a model of teaching speaking through discussion and presentation for the students of accounting department which empirically proven to be effective. The students excelled their speaking performance as they were able to possess more vocabularies and be more accurate in English grammar. This article, hence, is to reveal the strategies of an English teacher in senior high school to enhance his students’ speaking performance as some evidences have shown that his students were successful English users.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

The design of the research was qualitative descriptive as it aims at cultivating the human lived-experience which later

presented to readers in the form of a narrative data. The data was obtained in the last quarter months of year 2017 at MAN Insan Cendekia Jambi. To establish a research ethic, the major participant who was the English teacher signed letter of consent that he agreed to participate completely in this research and had no objection that his name is explicitly mentioned in this paper.

In-depth interviews to the teacher and the students were executed to obtain detail information of what the teacher did in order to build the skills of students of MAN Insan Cendekia Jambi to speak English. Several non-participatory observations and collecting documents were conducted to gain more detail insights of teacher’s practices to teach speaking to the students. To establish trustworthiness, the researchers consulted the data gathered from the teacher, the students, and field notes of the observation.

IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

There are three themes emerged from the analyzed data which showcase particular strategies executed by the English teacher of MAN Insan Cendekia Jambi namely Mister Didik (the way students and his colleagues call him) to enhance his students’ speaking performance. The table below shows the themes and sub-themes emerge in the finding:

TABLE I. EMERGENT THEMES OF THE TEACHER STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE STUDENTS’ SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

Themes	Sub-Themes
Being the Model of a Successful English User	Sharing successful stories of him and his graduated students
	Use English as a medium of instruction
	Actively using English outside classroom sessions
Assigning Students with Creative Tasks	Multiple projects in a semester; video, song lyrics, book compilation
	From LOTS to HOTS; questioning system, debate
	The power of practice; rehearsed talks, drilling, role plays
Constructing Intensive Interactions among Students	Multiple-peer activities: group projects, small-group discussions every meeting
	Presentation systems; speakers, audience, question and answer system
	Peer-feedback

A. Being the Model of a Successful English User

Mister Didik, a non-native English speaker, is a figure of something at MAN Insan Cendekia Jambi, both as an English teacher and as an eager motivator to his students. He is enthusiastic and friendly from which the students felt assisted and motivated to speak English well. He himself graduated from a university in one of English speaking countries in the world that is Flinders School of Education in South Australia from which he earned Magister of Education degree. With a high pride, Mr.Didik was so confident sharing to his students his experience of studying and living in Australia. He is so consistent motivating the students to continue study aboard and competes in any competitions for going abroad. Below some statements articulated by him which supported the first sub-theme:

"I myself try to speak English well" (MD-10)

"What I expected from my students is not only they can achieve high score in English subject and being able to speak English fluently but also they can continue study abroad" (MD-13)

"I motivate students to pursue education abroad. I also gave some tricks on how to gain scholarship. I shared my experience studying abroad" (MD-23)

Mr. Didik occasionally mentioned his graduated students who have successfully living abroad both for student exchange or pursuing their higher degrees in university. Mr Didik without hesitation had the researchers see the pictures of his students who underwent study abroad, to name some: two pictures of different students who went to the United States of America for student's exchange program, 3 pictures of various students who are in Russia, Singapore, and Nordic countries for pursuing bachelor degrees in medical (2 students) and in chemistry (one student).

"I often talk about the success story of their seniors who continue study outside in Indonesia" (MD-23)

Mr. Didik's intensive stories can lead students to own an instrumental motivation as they were driven to continue study abroad by the means of English language. To Ellis [11], instrumental motivation in the form of ambition to pursue study abroad and win the scholarship competition can be a significant role on the success of language learning.

The second sub-theme is related to the Mr. Didik's use of English almost all the time during instruction. Two students highlighted,

"Although Mr Didik speaks English all the time, the language and terminologies he used are so understandable." (S1-4)

"We enjoy the class of Mr Didik. He is so fun. It is always exiting" (S4-4)

Classroom English is a significant factor which leads language learners to have sufficient input in the target language and later produce it when triggered or voluntarily when needed (Ellis, Harmer, Brown). Therefore, the act of language teacher to use English as a medium of instruction supports the acceleration of students' quality in speaking English. Ellis highlighted, "Language learning cannot occur without some input" [11]. Mr. Didik's effort to expose students with English in the classroom obviously supplied students with a rich input.

Further, the researchers found that Mr. Didik is so participative even outside the classroom setting. He invested his time and energy to talk in English with his students in non-classroom setting, say in the dormitory and between classes. Richards indicated that "In teaching English it is therefore important to consider the emotional demands that learning a language involves –both during in class and out class occasions – and to help students develop emotional skills needed to use English in both these situation" [12]. Thus, no wonder most of students at MAN Insan Cendekia performed good oral English considering the facts that the teacher exposed them with

English almost all the days brings about their fluency in language production.

"I mingled with students during my days at the dormitory" (MD-19)

"I trigger students to talk the current issues, definitely in English, not only their difficulty in the subject. I often ask the students not to be hesitant, don't be doubtful, when there is an explanation of a lesson they haven't understand yet". (MD-18)

In a nutshell, the English teacher of MAN Insan Cendekia Jambi has shown that he is a model of a successful English user. By doing so, he has shown to the students that communicating in English for Indonesian people are possible; no excuse for not mastering it. He boosted his students' motivation to speak English, encouraged them to pursue study abroad by exposing the students with excellent oral English.

B. Assigning Students with Creative Tasks

Mastering speaking skills in English is effortful since lots of language features and non-linguistic aspects between Indonesian and English which are pretty much different. Therefore, language learners are requested to practice speaking in English frequently otherwise they will not be able to produce oral language fluently and accurately. A simple way to encourage students to practice speaking English is by giving them a task to talk. After analyzing the data, researchers came up with three sub-themes.

Harmer defined a task as a common activity which has an outcome [13]. Thus, assigning task means driving the students to produce oral language production as an outcome of doing that task. Professor Richards recommended English teacher to conduct speaking tasks with such activities of communication in order to run an effective speaking class [12]. Eventually, students develop their fluency best if engaged in tasks where all their concentration focuses on producing something. Instead of thinking of language, for example, the students focused on telling the procedure of making such dishes when they are assigned to present a procedure text.

Several students commented,

"I love English...especially with Mr Didik because he gave us many interesting projects to do" (S3-4)

"I like the assignment given by Mr. Didik because I love watching western movie with which I practice pronunciation and listening." (S1-8)

To encourage his students to speak English, Mr Didik always assigns the students to do creative task in the form of projects in every semester. Based on the interview, the teacher mentioned he has ever had his students in groups make video clip of English song that they sing themselves. Technically, the students should select one interesting English song, memorize and sing-act it along in the video clip and or make a parody based on the song. Then, he also assigned the students to create an English movie of one-hour duration.

Next, he also ever asked the students to make an English drama that shows in the last meeting of the semester. Even

more, this academic year, he ordered the students to make a compilation of an English material based on the topics he taught during semester. Overall, Mr Didik always has the students do a project in each semester.

“...besides that, I have ever assigned the student to do a drama project. The drama/play is performed at the end of semester. As for this semester, I have them compile a book based on the material I teach them in the class.” (MD-10)

Besides that, in observation, the researcher found that the teacher always uses a screen monitor as media to support his strategy in teaching speaking. The teacher played a video about the topic in the day and asked the student to understand that video. The teacher did not only show some videos, but he also showed the picture to support their strategy.

From the elaboration above, the researcher concluded that the teacher also employed creative task to teach English, especially with an aim at enhancing his students' speaking skill. Assigning creative tasks is effective to drive students to produce oral English as they lead students to speaking fluency.

C. Constructing Intensive Interactions among Students

To enhance students' speaking performance, Mr. Didik build students' sense of cooperation by frequently asked them to work in group. Chodijah assured, teacher's job is to help students communicate [1], which means teacher's act should lead students to produce oral expressions and or respond the speakers/peers by giving feedbacks (answer, statement, or actions). One of ways, thus, the teacher must facilitate students to construct stimulus in the form of either questions or statement which trigger students to think further instead of responding yes or no only.

Mr Didik highlighted,

“Most of the students are already active. I just gave them a little trigger for them to talk more with some questions about the topic being discussed. My focus is to have an active class with two-way communication” (MD-8)

The researchers witnessed during observations that Mr Didik always assigns the students to work in peer or in groups, either to make discussions or to do a project. Rehearsal prior to performance is a must as well as open discussion inside-outside the classroom, drive the students to give peer-feedback, ask students to debate, and trigger them to ask questions. Newton and Nation [14] assured that the use of cooperative activities can encourage negotiation of language item. The more students work with their peer, the more language item such English vocabulary and sounds the students can practice. Accordingly, the students enhance their performance in speaking English.

The noticeable strategy employed by the teacher is role plays. Role plays is activities where students are asked to pretend to be in various social contexts and various social roles [15]. Newton and Nation added that many teachers ask students to act as if they were in a real-life situation in role plays [14]. The teacher gives students time for preparation and then students must find partners to make some dialogues and perform their small scenes using their own ideas. During the observation, the researchers witness the teacher asked the

students to a role the example of a dialogue about asking and giving an opinion in a pair. Then, student role and play about the dialogue of asking and giving an opinion. Teacher also asks students to make their own dialogue about asking and giving an opinion in a pair and then role it with their friend.

Mr. Didik convincingly stated,

“I try to trigger students to communicate by giving updated topic to talk. Once I found the topic did not attract their attention. I will order them to communicate each other through peer-work or group discussion.” (MD-12)

Based on the interview, Mr Didik assured that most students enjoy role play activities. Furthermore, he explained that role play is one of the activities that he used to increase students' fluency and accuracy. From the explanation above, the researcher can conclude role-play is a fun activity and simple in implementation. It means, the role-play enables flow of language to be produced. During the observation, the researchers got evidence that through role plays the students enjoy their English class. The unique thing about the role play as expected by Mr Didik was the students were expected to express their argument, ideas and even self-existence though certain roles in speaking skills.

V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper is to uncover the strategies employed by the English teacher of MAN Insan Cendekia Jambi considering the phenomena that he was successful bringing students into success through English speaking performance, i.e. winning English competition regionally and nationally, following students' exchange to English speaking countries, and pursuing higher education in overseas universities. After gathering data through interview, observation, and document collections, the researchers emerged three themes which characterize the strategies employed by the English teacher to enhance students' speaking performance; 1) being the model of a successful language user, 2) assigning the students with creative tasks, and 3) constructing intensive interaction among students. Thus, it is suggested that English teachers in the similar education level adapt those strategies in order to achieve better speaking performance of their students. For teachers or educators in the lower or higher levels, they can select among three strategies and try them out in the classroom with some adjustment.

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