# THE EFFECT OF A METACOGNITION-BASED COMMUNICATION STRATEGY TRAINING ON LEARNERS' ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILL

## By

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## Abstrak

Penelitian ini merperkenalkan sebuah Pelatihan Strategi Berkomunikasi yang berbasis Metakognisi yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keahlian berkomunikasi lisan para mahasiswa. Pelatihan ini dilakukan dalam bentuk beberapa aktivitas untuk meng-aktifkan kategori-kategori yang ada dalam metakognisi dan melatih kemampuan penampilan lisan dengan menggunakan Permainan Peran. Penelitian yang merupakan penelitian kuantitative ini menggunakan desain penelitian murni dengan tujuan mengukur keahlian berkomunikasi lisan para pembelajar bahasa asing sebagai efek dari pelatihaan yang dilakukan. Objek penelitian adalah 61 orang mahasiswa program Bahasa Inggris semester 4 di UIN Raden Inten Lampung yang berusia dari 20-24 tahun. Sampel penelitian dalam kelas experimen (n=31) mengikuti 5 minggu program pelatihan yang meliputi rangkaian aktivitas bertujuan meningkatkan keahlian berkomunikasi lisan mereka. Peserta dalam kelompok kontrol (n=30) mengikuti program pembelajaran yang biasa di dalam kelas berbicara.

## Abstract

This study introduces a Metacognition-Based Communication Strategy Training (MBCST) in order to improve the students' oral communication skill. The training was conducted in the form of several activities to activate some metacognitive categories and to rehearsal oral performance by using Role Play. This present study which is a quantitative study with a true-experimental design, was aimed to measure EFL's oral communication skill as the effect of MBCST. The participants were 61 fourth semester undergraduate students of English Department of UIN Raden Inten Lampung, ranging from 20-24 years of age. The participants in experimental group (n=31) went through a five week intervention program of a Communication Strategy Training that engaged them in a sequence activitities for improving their oral communication skill. The participants in the control group (n=30) went through a conventional speaking instruction program,

*Keywords: Communication Strategies, Metacognitive Awareness, Oral Communication Skill, Metacognition*

**INTRODUCTION**

The goal of learning a language is to communicate. Therefore, oral communication skill as one of the critically important skills in the target language needs to be developed. It is necessary to encourage learners to communicate more often and to use a broad range of language learning strategies throughout the learning process. Tarone (1977) states that when communication strategy is considered as an interactional phenomenon, it is seen as an attempt to bridge the gap between the linguistics knowledge of L2 learner and linguistic knowledge of learner's interlocutor in the real communication situation.

Communication strategies can help learners to expand the language and to convey what they want or need to say in communication. Tarone (1980) said that even if the communication is not perfect in grammatical or lexical terms, in the process of using the language for communication, the learner will be exposed to language input which may result in learning and which may be considered as learning strategy. Therefore, by raising learners' awareness of communication strategies will develop the oral proficiency that they might use to solve potential communication problems. Moreover, the learning process can be facilitated by making students aware of the range of strategies from which they can choose and use during language learning (Cohen 2003).

An effective way to introduce and to make learner practice some strategies needed for communication is by giving them a communication strategy training. In this process, learners are informed about how, why, and when of communication strategy use. They are also given the opportunity to realize the benefits of strategy use, evaluate its effectiveness and transfer strategies to new situation and tasks (Sarafianou and Gavriilidou, 2015). Kyungsim and Leavell (2006) that the importance of directing learners toward strategies is that they could use it in

order to become more effective in the language learning process.

Nakatani (2005) states that students' communicative skill can be improved by developing strategies for communication. He adds that raising students' awareness of strategies that might use to solve potential communication problems could develop their oral proficiency.

From the previous studies (Nakatani, 2005; Maleki, 2010; Sukirlan 2014) on Communication Strategy have proved that Strategy Training is beneficial for students, however, they did not investigate the communication strategy training based on metacognition to improve the students' awareness and their oral communication skill. The area of using Communication Strategy Training based on metacognitive awareness to facilitate speaking skill is unexplored. This research aims at filling this gap which might help language practitioners to design their everyday teaching activities.

## 1. Metacognition

In the process of language learning for communication, learners consequently often evaluate their success as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how well they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency (Richards, 1990). The activity in evaluating the success involves metacognition, that is, the ability to think about and control one's own learning. It means that they must be aware of (1) what to study in a particular learning situation, or task awareness; (2) how best to learn it, or strategy awareness; and (3) whether and to what extent they have learned it, or performance awareness (Wade & Reynolds, 1989).

Metacognition or metacognitive awareness can give positive effects on the learning process. Nakatani (2005) points out that many scholars believe that metacognition,

not only can focus on raising the learner's awareness of the learning process, but also can enhance L2 skill. Moreover, Rahimi & Katal (2011) support that metacognition can improve the level of the students' performance and achieve the desirable goal by implementing metacognitive teaching in an educational process.

Hence, metacognition based-communication strategy training can help learners to move forward from their current base of strategy use by teaching them strategies that are either new to them or which they currently do not use very effectively. This might allow learners of different proficiency levels to select strategies that suit their particular needs and way of working, as well as including the 'metacognitive dimension' that many researchers view as essential to effective strategy instruction (De Silva and Graham, 2015).

Metacognitive dimension can be distinguished into two major components: Metacognitive Knowledge and Metacognitive Regulation or Metacognitive Strategies (Flavell, 1979). The former refers to knowledge and awareness of one's own cognition which includes three sub-processes that facilitate the reflective aspect of metacognition: Declarative Knowledge (knowledge about self and strategies), Procedural Knowledge (knowledge about how to use strategies) and Conditional Knowledge (knowledge about when and why to use strategies). The latter refers to the ability to manage one's own thinking process which consists of five sub-processes: Planning, Information Management Strategies, Comprehension Monitoring, Debugging Strategies and Evaluation (Schraw and Dennison, 1994).

## 2. Communication Strategies

There are two main theoretical perspectives of communication strategy, namely interactional and psycholinguistics.

For the interactional view focus on the joint negotiation of meaning between interactants. Meanwhile, in psycholinguistic view, its focus on the cognitive process in relation to the use of communication Strategy (Nakatani 2005, Maleki 2010, and Sukirlan 2014).

Faerch and Kasper (1984) define communication strategies as potentially conscious plans for solving what to individual present itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal. In this definition, communication strategies are being related to the psycholinguistic term mainly in the cognitive process. It means that communication strategy can be identified when a speaker is aware of having a problem and try to overcome it with a strategy.

There are some classifications or taxonomies of communication strategies proposed by some experts. For example Tarone (1977) classified the notion of communication strategies into 5 major strategies: (1) Avoidance consists of topic avoidance and message abandonment; (2) Paraphrase consists of approximation, word coinage, and circumlocution; (3) Borrowing consists of literal translation and language mix; (4) Appeal for assistance and (5) mime.

Meanwhile, Faerch and Kasper (1984) divided the communication strategies into (1) Reduction Strategies consists of formal reduction and functional reduction; (2) Achievement consists of compensatory strategies and retrieval strategies. The compensatory strategies have two sub-divisions: namely non-cooperative strategies and co-operative strategies. The former strategy is divided into L1/L3 Based strategies (e.g. code-switching, foreignizing and literal translation) and L2 based-strategies (e.g. substitution, paraphrase, word coinage and restructuring and the latter strategy is divided into direct appeal and indirect appeal. Meanwhile, the retrieval strategies only have one strategy, that is, waiting which consists of waiting, using semantic field and using other languages.

Bialystok (1990) points out her communication strategies taxonomy consisting of 3 main categories: (1) avoidance

or reduction strategies consist of message abandonment and topic avoidance; (2) achievement or compensatory strategies consist of circumlocution, approximation, use of all-purpose word, word coinage, use of non-linguistic means, literal translation, foreignizing, code-switching, appeal for assistance; and (3) stalling or time-gaining strategies consist of use of filler/hesitation device.

For this research, the writer will use the communication strategies taxonomy proposed by Nakatani (2005) since it specifically focuses on oral interaction and interlocutors' negotiation behavior for coping with communication breakdown. Nakatani (2005) classifies the communication strategies into 2 main categories. The first is Achievement Strategies, which presents learners' active behavior in repairing and maintaining interaction and they consists of help-seeking strategies (e.g. an appeal for help and asking for repetition); modified interaction strategies (e.g. confirmation checks, comprehension checks, clarification request); modified output strategies; time gaining strategies; maintenance strategies (e.g. providing active response and shadowing; and self-solving strategies (e.g. paraphrase, approximation and restructuring). The second categories are Reduction Strategies, which reflect learners' negative behavior as they try to avoid solving communication difficulties and they consist of message abandonment; first language-based strategies; interlanguage-based reduction strategies and false starts.

According to Simon (2014), in order to make the students more autonomous during the Oral communication skills classes, the information contained by the selected teaching materials has to be introduced gradually, starting with controlled practice and ending with free expression exercises. The teacher may choose some pair-activities such as role-plays, in which each participant is given a role to conceive and play or a group activity in which a topic is discussed pointing to advantages and disadvantages. During these activities, the participants have to negotiate meanings and sequences of meanings until they get a final version of a certain assignment.

In the end, a whole class discussion activity could be done in order to summarize the students' pair or group work.

From the explanation above, it can be inferred that one solution to improve students oral communication skill is by giving them strategy training which involves the students actively in the learning process. Moreover, strategy training gives the students a lot of opportunities to use some communication strategies in oral interaction and practice to overcome the problems arise in the communication.

## 3. Metacognition-based Communication Strategy Training

Based on some evidences of the studies about Strategy Training, the writer proposes metacognition based communication strategy training for the improvement of the students' oral communication skill. According to Sarafianou and Gavriilindou (2015), strategy training can be defined for the purpose as an intervention that set out to train learner to notice and then do something in order to improve an aspect of their ability to learn the language. It can help students know more about themselves, so they can try out, test and become experts in using the strategies that help them the most. Some of the most frequently reported from some researchers that benefits of strategy training include skill-specific improvement, increase students' metacognitive awareness as well as increased frequency and variety of strategy use.

Many experts have proved that learners need to develop their metacognitive knowledge about language learning and become aware of and evaluate their own and alternative language learning approaches. They also realize that learners' prior language learning beliefs can impact to the learner's potential learning (Lai and Lin 2014). Nosratinia, Saveiy and Zakers' study (2014) concerning about the efficacy of learner training in changing learner beliefs, explain a learner training program that engaged students

in exploring their own beliefs and behaviors in group tasks was found effective in promoting learners' active participation. In addition, informing students of the learning objectives of tasks has been found to be beneficial in that it helps students figure out what they have to do and how to achieve the intended outcome.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The participants of this study were the second year students of English Education Program who had a speaking class in UIN Raden Intan Lampung. Their ages ranged between 18 and 20. There were two classes of the population sample. The first training group, consisted of 31 students, received metacognition based communication strategy training. The control group consisted of 30 students, received only a regular communicative course. A simple random sampling technique was used to choose the participant class for this study.

In this study, oral communication test was conducted to find out whether the students' oral communication skill improve or not, before and after they have the training. The tests were scored based on Nakatani's Oral Communication Assessment Scale (2002) to identify the level of students' oral communication ability.

**Table 1 Criteria level of the oral communication skill**

| Scoring Level | Criterion |
|---|---|
| Level 7 | Almost always communicates effectively in the task<br>Speech is generally natural and continuous.<br>Can interact in a real-life way with the interlocutor.<br>Can generally develop the dialogue spontaneously with few errors. |
| Level 6 | Generally communicates effectively in the task<br>Is not quite fluent but interacts effectively.<br>Can generally react flexibly.<br>Makes a positive contribution to the dialogue. |
| Level 5 | Communicates reasonably effectively in the task<br>Is sometimes fluent but with hesitancies.<br>Can interact fairly comfortably and gain flexibility.<br>Makes some contribution to the dialogue. |
| Level 4 | Communicates moderately effectively in the task<br>Makes some pauses but fairly intelligible.<br>Shows some flexibility.<br>Is somewhat independent of the interlocutor in the dialogue. |
| Level 3 | Communicates modestly in the task<br>Makes frequent pauses but somewhat intelligible.<br>Shows little flexibility.<br>Can maintain dialogue but in a rather passive way. |
| Level 2 | Communicates marginally in the task<br>Makes numerous pauses, at times long ones.<br>Still depends on the interlocutor but begins to interact a little with him/her.<br>Given help, communicates quite basically.<br>Requires some tolerance from the interlocutor. |
| Level 1 | Communicates extremely restrictedly in the task<br>Can answer simple questions but with numerous long pauses.<br>Depends on interlocutor with only partial contribution to dialogue.<br>Some questions have to be repeated or rephrased. |

Adopted from Nakatani (2002)

The data was collected and analyzed to see the implementation of metacognition-based communication strategy training on students' oral communication whether there was a significant improvement after being trained. Independent group T-test was used as the data analysis when the data is used to

compare two types of data or mean from the different subject.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first day of training was the Orientation of Oral Communication Strategies (OCSs). On this stage, the researcher who acted as a trainer, inform the students about the goals of the metacognition-based communication strategy training. After the students were introduced to the model of OCSs, then they are taught how to use OCSs in daily conversation. The trainer described the types of OCSs, and gave some examples of potentially useful strategies. The trainer also elicited additional examples from students based on the students' own learning experiences. In order for helping them to recognize and to memorize the strategies used in their OCSs practices, Oral Communication Strategies Sheets were distributed to them. The sheets were also included strategy diary which can be used for self-reflective training by students. This stage was activating the students' declarative knowledge in metacognitive knowledge aspect of metacognition.

The Exposition of Oral Communication Strategies (OCSs) was conducted on the second day of training. On this stage, the students were exposed with several video clip of OCSs dialogue made by the researcher and some models. After that, they were asked to identify particular communication strategies the speakers used in the dialogue performance. On this stage, the students' procedural knowledge and conditional knowledge from Metacognitive Knowledge aspect of metacognition were activated.

The third day of training was Practice of Oral Communication Strategies (OCSs). When doing the rehearsals, the trainer asked them to record their performance with their cell-phone, in order for they can analyze their own performance. On this stage, the Metacognitive Regulation aspect of metacognition was activated. This stage was divided into five phases, planning, management information, monitoring, debugging and evaluation. In the planning phase, the students reflected the previous lesson and selected the proper strategies they were going to use in the next performance. They used the OCSs diary to make plans for using specific OCSs. For the information management phase, the students had made the prediction of CSs used before they did the performance and after that, they repeated the simulation task. In the next phase, namely monitoring, the students recognized the goals and procedures of the new task. After they discussed through brainstorming sessions basic dialogues, they created the possible OCSs which could be used in their next performance. The students monitored their own performance according to the guidelines of the strategy diary after they practice the task. In the debugging phase, the students rehearsed with their peers then they analyzed their performance. The students also checked the list of the strategies they used in the performance after that they corrected the comprehension and performance errors. The last stage was the evaluation. In this stage, students checked their own learning, then they reflected on their strategy use. The last activity in the training was to analyze their self-assessment of their performance by using the strategy diary.

## Oral Communication Skill Pre-test and Post-test

The pre-test of oral communication skill was administered in the first meeting before the treatment of metacognition based communication strategy training was implemented. It was conducted to see the students 'oral communication skill proficiency before the treatment began. In the pre-test, which was conducted in 90 minutes, the students were asked to do role play task in pair. They were also given some intructions and a situation that should be performed in front of

the class immediately. The performance was not in planning, so they must act the role improvely.

After each of the performance was recorded, the two inter-raters analyzed the video and classified the students's oral communication skill based on Nakatani's Oral Communication Scale. The result of pre-test can be seen in table 4 below.

**Table 4. Summary of Pre-test Result**

| Scoring Level | Treatment Class | | Control Class | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| 7 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| 6 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| 5 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| 4 | 16 | 51.6% | 19 | 63.3% |
| 3 | 15 | 48.4% | 11 | 36.7% |
| 2 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Number | 31 | 100% | 30 | 100% |
| Mean | 3.516 | | 3.633 | |
| The lowest level | 3 | | 3 | |
| The highest level | 4 | | 4 | |
| St. Deviation | 0.508 | | 0.491 | |

From table 14 above, it can be seen that all students both in treatment class and control class were in the level 3 and 4 which means that both classes have similar oral communication capability before the treatment. 51% students of treatment class were at level 4 of Oral Communication Scale, meanwhile, more students in control class (61%) were in the same level. It indicates that

the majority of students in the control class has the higher capability in oral communication than students in treatment class. It also can be seen from the mean of oral communication skill level both classes which were treatment class was lower than the control class.

The post-test of oral communication skill was administered in the last meeting after the treatment of metacognition based communication strategy training was implemented. It was conducted to see the students 'oral communication skill proficiency after the treatment session. The post-test was conducted in 90 minutes. The activities were the same as the posttest but with only different topics of the role play. The result of post-test can be seen in table 5 below.

**Table 5. Summary of Post-test Result**

| Scoring Level | Treatment Class | | Control Class | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| 7 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| 6 | 3 | 9.7% | 3 | 10% |
| 5 | 24 | 77.1% | 7 | 23.3% |
| 4 | 4 | 12.9% | 13 | 43.4% |
| 3 | 0 | 0% | 7 | 23.3% |
| 2 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| 1 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Number | 31 | 100% | 30 | 100% |
| Mean | 4.967 | | 4.2 | |
| The lowest score | 4 | | 3 | |
| The highest score | 6 | | 6 | |
| St. Deviation | 0.481 | | 0.924 | |

From table 15 of posttest result above, the data show significant differences between

the data in the pretest result. After the treatment class had a metacognition based-communication training, the students' oral communication skill level had increased significantly than the control class who had an ordinary learning method in the speaking class. Nearly all students in the treatment class improved their ability of oral communication. It can be seen from the data that 77.1% of students of treatment class were at level 5 and only 12.9% in the level 6. In contrast, there is no significant improvement of the oral communication ability in the control class. Only 10% of students were in level 6 and 23.3% of students are still in the level 3. It indicates that by having metacognition based-communication strategy training, students in treatment class can improve their oral communication skill more significantly than the control class.

**Table 6. Mean Difference in Oral Communication Test between Two Groups**

**Group Statistics**

| | Class | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Post test | 1 | 31 | 4.968 | .5467 | .0982 |
| | 2 | 30 | 4.100 | .8847 | .1615 |

From table 6 of the group statistics, it can be seen that the mean of oral communication posttest for experiment group is 4.968, and the mean oral communication posttest for the control group is 4.100. Meanwhile, the standard deviation were 4.968 for the treatment class and 4.100 for the control class.

**Table 7. The result of the T-test on Test Score Gains between the Two Groups**

| Group | Df | Pretest | | Posttest | | Gain | t | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | M | SD | M | SD | | | |
| Treatment | 59 | 3.516 | 0.508 | 4.968 | 0.546 | 1.452 | 4.625 | .05 |
| Control | 48.052 | 3.633 | 0.490 | 4.100 | 0.884 | 0.467 | 4.590 | Ns |

Independent Groups T-tests was used to examine whether there was a significant difference in mean score gains within each group. These results are presented in Table 7. The improvement in the students' oral communication skill score was significant in the treatment group (mean gain: 1.452, t = 4.625, p < 0.05). By contrast, there was no significant change in the control group scores (mean gain: 0.467, t = 4.590). It can be concluded that the students in the metacognition based-communication strategy training group improved their proficiency level more significantly than those in the control group in the oral communication posttests.

Given that EFL learners tend to face many communication breakdowns, they need to acquire oral communication skills in order to maintain and develop their conversational interactions. Therefore an effective method is needed to improve the ability of learner' oral communication such as strategy training. A communication strategy training based on the learners' metacognitive awareness has been proved very effective to increase the learner's oral communication skill. As it is said by Dunbar, Brook & Miller (2006), an oral communication course can offer students, knowledge of effective communication techniques and provide a safe arena for developing and practicing skills, which can create positive feelings about communicating in the future.

Oral communication skill as one of crucial skill in communication besides written skill, should be considered as the basic necessity in learning a language. Some studies have been conducted on improving oral communication skill in a various way, for example, Lai and Lin (2012) who investigate strategy training in a task-based language classroom. Their finding indicates that learner training program in TBLT could be effective in changing learners' perceptions about their own language learning, promoting greater learning outcomes and enhancing and maintaining good task performance. However, their approach does not increase the learner metacognitive awareness well since TBLT only focus on the task and less activate the students' metacognitive knowledge which is very essential for accomplishing the task successfully under various conditions or in metacognitive knowledge aspects known as declarative knowledge. Moreover, procedural and conditional knowledge as the other aspect of metacognitive knowledge should also be activated in order to make the learners become more skillful in "how to do things" and also the "procedure" so they can be more automatic and more accurate in doing the task. The other metacognitive knowledge aspect, namely conditional knowledge is not less important than two others. Learners not only need to interact actively in the task but they should know when and why to apply various procedures, skills and also cognitive actions or strategies.

In this study, during the interactions carried out in the metacognition based communication strategy training tasks, the students always struggled to produce the target language, and they were given some opportunities to overcome their communication difficulties by using communication strategies informed at the beginning of the training process.

## CONCLUSION

The metacognition based communication strategy training is not only giving them information about communication strategies which can be used by them in the communicative interaction but also providing them some activities to apply the communication strategies to improve their oral communication skill. In addition, through such training which based on metacognitive awareness, the students activated their metacognitive knowledge (declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge) by understanding which type of communication strategies to use and also activated their metacognitive regulation (planning, information management, monitoring, debugging and evaluation) by learning how to use them appropriately.

Based on the evidence that metacognition based communication strategy training could be applied in the speaking class, it is suggested for English teacher to do such training in order to apply communication strategies in their communication. The teacher can also seek for better communicative tasks to stimulate students creativity in speaking. The researcher suggests for the next researcher to discuss further on written communication skill, since this research only focuses on the effectiveness of the metacognition based communication strategy on the oral communication skill. In addition, the researcher offers recommendations that is to encourage the education council to facilitate Metacognition based Communication Strategy Training for many proffesionals, particularly English teachers so they can raise their ability in oral communication and share it to the students.

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