

**Analysis of communication strategies used by students in business English classes at the faculty of economics and business, University of Lampung.**

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**ABSTRACT**

Communication plays an important role in today's global environment because everyone will be inseparable from communication activities. Language is a communication tool used as a means to express and convey information, to learn about people and the world around them. This study describes the use of communication strategies in English classes in the Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Lampung (FEB Unila). This study aims to find out how the use of communication strategies by students during discussions in class and their speaking skills in using these communication strategies. This study used a case study approach to investigate the use of communication strategies at the perspective of language proficiency because the most significant predictor of the use of a particular communication strategy was language proficiency. The subjects of this study were taken purposively as much as 1 class with a total of 36 students with high and low proficiency levels. They are first-year students of the S1 Management Department at FEB Unila. In this study, researchers used several data sources, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. This is intended to answer research questions based on data triangulation so that the data obtained is more reliable. The results of this study show that there are nine communication strategies used by learners in speaking for discussion; message abandonment, approximation, stalling, literal translation, code switching, convoluted, begging for help, mime, and using versatile words. The study also found that the strategies used in learning influenced learning outcomes in English communication where strategies such as approximation, literal translation, stalling, convoluted, asking for help, and mime greatly helped learners to express their ideas in discussions and were shown to get good and excellent grades in almost all speaking performance criteria.

**Keywords:** *Communication Strategies, English Language Teaching, Business English.*

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Currently, the English language has become the most important international communication tool. English is needed when we communicate with foreigners, we encounter both domestically and abroad. Therefore, English language learning is now starting from an early age. With the increasing interdependence among countries worldwide, English is no longer just the language of countries where it is the first language, such as the United States, England, Australia, and parts of Canada, but it has become the language of all countries in its position as a global lingua franca. As a result, English is the most important language in the world. Consequently, all countries in the world require English as one of the subjects taught in schools. The goal is to ensure that the younger generation can speak English both passively and actively, or in other words, the younger generation is expected to be able to speak English fluently or just understand what others say or be able to express their ideas in writing.

In various countries such as India, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, English has been taught from primary schools to universities. Indonesia should also place English in the same position to play a

larger role at the international level in the fields of science, economics, politics, technology, and culture. Although English is a foreign language in Indonesia, it holds a significant position in our daily lives. This is clearly seen in the education system in Indonesia. English is one of the subjects taught to students from elementary to college levels. This is because English is seen as an advantage and an opportunity to get a good job in the future. Additionally, in Korea, someone who is proficient in English is considered capable of surviving as part of the global society. English is recognized as a tool to better understand international perspectives.

In the university-level English learning process, English learning is applied as a compulsory subject in the early academic year. As a language, English has four language skills: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Speaking skill should be an important and more difficult skill than others because it allows speakers to produce direct and spontaneous speech (Nunan, 2003). Many students feel afraid when asked to speak in front of the class. Additionally, Syafryadin (2016) also reported in his research that students really want to speak in public.

In the process of learning English, when studying speaking skills, the feeling of fear and nervousness in communicating in a foreign language is called language anxiety (Horwitz, 1986). Language anxiety can affect the quality of oral language production, making individuals less fluent than they actually are. In addition, a study conducted by Horwitz (1986) showed that anxiety affects students' speaking performance in language classes, which means that more anxious students tend to avoid engaging in difficult communication using the target language. Foreign language learners may face various communication problems when their interlanguage is limited. To convey their messages and stay in conversation until their communication goals are achieved, ESL (English as a Second Language) learners need to use communication strategies, which have been generally defined as devices used by second language learners to overcome perceived communication barriers and achieve specific communication goals (Faerch & Kasper, 1983).

Dornyei (1995) defines communication strategies as systematic techniques used by speakers to express the meaning of words or phrases they want to express when facing difficulties in oral communication. Communication strategies are important in helping second or foreign language learners communicate successfully when they encounter production problems due to a lack of linguistic knowledge. There are several theories of communication strategies, such as Dornyei's taxonomy, Faerch's theory, and Tarone's theory. The theories are somewhat similar, but in this study, the researcher used Dornyei's theory to classify communication strategies used by students in speaking classes. Dornyei's theory consists of message abandonment, topic avoidance, message replacement, circumlocution, approximation, word coinage, non-linguistic means (using non-linguistic means), literal translation, code-switching, asking for help, and time-gaining strategies.

Furthermore, the researcher chose Dornyei's taxonomy because it is simple and easy to understand. Dornyei's taxonomy is the latest taxonomy, thus providing a complete, up-to-date, and easily understandable classification example. In other words, by using Dornyei's taxonomy as the theoretical foundation used to analyze the data, readers of this research can understand the use of communication strategies. This study aims to find out the types of communication strategies used by students in speaking classes, then identify the dominant communication strategies used by students, as well as the reasons they use those strategies.

## **II. METHODS**

The researcher used a mixed-method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data for the research (Cresswell, 2009). The research participants were first-year students consisting of 36 students. Arikunto (2010) explained that if the population is less than 100, then all samples should be taken. Based on this statement, the researcher used all students as samples. The instruments used in this research were observation sheets and video recordings. The observation checklist was used to classify the types of communication strategies, and the video recordings were used to obtain transcripts of student conversations. In this research, data were collected by observing classes where students conducted discussion and presentation sessions. To compile all the information, research data came from transcripts of students' performance presenting speeches for presentations in front of the class and describing the reasons why students used certain communication strategies in their speech.

In collecting data, the researcher performed several procedures. First, the researcher recorded students' speeches for presentations in class using a camera. The second step was to transcribe the video recordings of students' speeches. Third, the observation checklist was filled out by marking the count if students used certain communication strategies. Finally, the researcher analyzed the communication strategies applied by students and calculated the percentage of communication strategies used. The researcher ensured the data's credibility by using inter-rater reliability (Cohen, 2007), and then the data were displayed to classify the findings based on Dornyei's theory, including the types of communication strategies and the dominant types of communication strategies used during the presentations. After that, the researcher described the data.

## **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Communication Strategies Used by Students in Speaking for Discussions**

Based on interviews and observations conducted by the researcher, it can be concluded that in every speaking activity, learners always use communication strategies to help them express their ideas in speaking for discussions. They use these strategies because they often face difficulties when discussing certain topics that are difficult or unfamiliar to them. Based on the interview and observation results, there are nine communication strategies used by learners to express their ideas in speaking: approximation, time gain, message abandonment, literal translation, translation, asking for help, circumlocution, using filler words, and pantomime.

The approximation strategy is used by learners to express their ideas in speaking because it helps learners when they do not know or forget the appropriate patterns or structures in their L2. They can continue speaking using similar words or terms to convey the ideas they want to express. According to Tarone, 1997, "The approximation strategy is used when learners use incorrect words but refer to similar objects or events" (Tarone in Saville and Troike, 2006). This strategy is often used by learners because in speaking, the most important aspect is not just grammatical rules but also the content of the discussion. Therefore, learners try to pay attention to their grammar, but sometimes it is overlooked as they focus on the content of the topic they are discussing.

The time gain strategy is also frequently used by learners during speaking activities. Learners use this strategy by pausing or hesitating to think about their next statement. They employ this strategy to help them when they forget and try to remember the material they want to express in the discussion. According to Dornyei, "This strategy uses fillers or hesitating devices to fill gaps and gain thinking time, for example; well, now, uh, um," (Dornyei in Nugroho, 2011).

The message abandonment strategy is used by learners when they encounter foreign or difficult topics during the discussion. Almost all learners say that when they discuss a topic they are unfamiliar with, they will simply provide arguments or opinions based on their knowledge, even if it is unrelated to the previous statements. According to Tarone (1977), this strategy is used when learners give up on a topic because it is too difficult to discuss. Therefore, by using this strategy, learners can sustain or continue their conversation even if the topic is challenging for them.

Literal translation, code-switching, and pantomime are used by learners to express their ideas in speaking when they cannot correctly express them using words or terms in their L2. Most learners say that they try to convey their ideas using other words or terms when they do not know the L2 equivalent of certain words, terms, or events and avoid using L1 in their speech. According to Tarone (1977), the use of these strategies is to describe an object or event rather than using the exact vocabulary item and employing gestures to refer to an object or event.

The last strategy used by learners based on interviews is asking for help. Almost all learners use this strategy to help them express their ideas in speaking for discussions. Learners say that in speaking for discussions, they interact with their friends and teachers, so when they genuinely do not know how to express a particular object or event in L2, they can directly ask their friends or teachers by saying "what is it called?" or "how do you say it?". According to Dornyei (1995), the use of this strategy can create interaction between interlocutors (speaker and listener) when there is a gap in someone's L2 knowledge during speaking.

### **Speaking Skills of Students Using Communication Strategies**

Based on the speaking performance results, different communication strategies used by learners yield different speaking performance outcomes for discussions. Therefore, their speaking abilities through their performances also vary between one learner and another, depending on how they convey difficulties and express their ideas accurately.

The use of the approximation, literal translation, and circumlocution strategies by learners significantly helps them express their ideas in discussions. With these strategies, they can communicate some difficult words in L2. These strategies are L2-based strategies that enable learners to avoid using L1 in their speech. On the other hand, the message abandonment strategy does not support learners' performance well because when learners use the message abandonment strategy in discussions, they do not provide enough arguments to support their ideas. Although the message abandonment strategy can help learners sustain their conversation in the discussion, it does not benefit them as they cannot provide more supportive arguments in their conversation. Meanwhile, the code-switching strategy assists learners when they cannot express some terms in L2, but if learners frequently use this strategy in speaking, it indicates that they lack vocabulary, affecting their speaking performance negatively. The time gain strategy significantly helps learners express their ideas in discussions. By using this strategy, learners can remember and think about what arguments they will explain next. However, if learners stop for a long time in each utterance, it will worsen their performance as they will appear confused and not well-versed in the topic.

The asking for help strategy is rarely used by learners as they try to independently convey their ideas. It is the last strategy chosen by learners when they encounter some difficult terms in L2 and do not know how to express their ideas in a discussion; they will directly ask their friends or teachers. Pantomime or gestures are used by learners as their habit when speaking in front of an audience. The use of this strategy can significantly boost learners' confidence when speaking. Furthermore, based on the

interview results, learners said that using gestures makes them feel free to express their ideas in speaking for discussions. The last strategy used by learners is using filler words. This strategy is rarely used by learners because the words they utter are irrelevant to the topic or argument and are unnecessary words like "yes." Therefore, this strategy does not have a positive impact on students' speaking ability.

Based on the speaking performance results of the first and second learners, it can be seen that learners have met all speaking performance criteria using the time gain, approximation, asking for help, circumlocution, and pantomime strategies. The use of these strategies helps learners in expressing their ideas in speaking for discussions. According to Morreale et al. (2007), learners can communicate topics clearly and identifiably, provide well-supported arguments with good sources, and speak almost free of grammatical or pronunciation errors.

From the speaking performance results of the third and fourth learners, it can be seen that the students have sufficiently met the speaking performance criteria as they can express their ideas clearly about the discussed topics, meaning that students can convey their arguments clearly and show acceptable attitudes, facial expressions, and eye contact while speaking (Morreale et al., 2007). However, learners 3 and 4 use a lot of L1 in their speaking, using code-switching and using filler words, which affects their speaking performance negatively as they use inappropriate language and often encounter pronunciation difficulties (Morreale et al., 2007).

From the speaking performance results of the fifth and sixth learners, it can be seen that the learners have not met the speaking performance criteria as they cannot communicate the discussion topics clearly and lack clarity in the organization and content of their speech (Moreale et.al, 2007). This happens because learners use the message abandonment strategy to sustain their conversation, but using this strategy indicates that learners do not provide supporting arguments on the topic, making their speaking performance weak in terms of content, organization, verbal, and nonverbal delivery.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

##### **Conclusions**

There are nine communication strategies used by learners in speaking for discussions: message abandonment, approximation, time-gaining, literal translation, code-switching, circumlocution, asking for help, pantomime, and using fillers. Learners use message abandonment strategy by giving up on a topic because it is too difficult, and they do not provide further explanation about the topic they are discussing. Approximation, literal translation, circumlocution, and pantomime are used by learners to describe an object or event rather than using appropriate vocabulary items and other nonverbal means to refer to an object or event. Time-gaining strategy is used by learners by using fillers or hesitating to fill pauses and provide time to think about the ideas they want to express. Asking for help is used by learners by asking their friends or teachers in the middle of their conversation. Code-switching and the use of fillers are used by learners to express their ideas by using L1 and incorporating non-essential words like "yeah" in their speech.

This study found that when learners use the message abandonment strategy, they obtained poor content and organization criteria as they did not provide further explanation about their supporting arguments, meaning they did not meet the criteria for speaking performance. Additionally, learners who used the translation and filler strategies obtained poor language criteria in speaking performance as they frequently used L1 during their speech. On the other hand, other strategies such as approximation, literal translation, time-gaining, circumlocution, asking for help, and pantomime greatly helped learners in

expressing their ideas during discussions. By using these strategies, learners became more independent in overcoming difficulties and thinking deeply when encountering difficult or unfamiliar terms in L2. Learners who used these strategies received good to excellent scores in almost all speaking performance criteria.

Since learners utilize various communication strategies during discussions, it is essential for educators to highlight and promote effective strategies such as approximation, circumlocution, and asking for help. Encourage learners to express their ideas creatively and independently using these strategies, as they have shown to lead to better performance in speaking. Learners who rely heavily on translation and code-switching may face challenges in meeting language criteria in speaking. To support their language transition, language instructors can offer targeted language support, vocabulary building exercises, and encourage learners to use English as much as possible during discussions. Furthermore, learners who employ time-gaining strategies demonstrated the ability to think deeply and formulate their ideas during discussions. Educators can encourage critical thinking skills by introducing thought-provoking topics, promoting discussions that require analysis and evaluation, and providing opportunities for learners to articulate their thoughts in a structured manner.

Creating a positive and inclusive learning environment is also crucial to reduce learners' fear of making mistakes when speaking English. Encourage open communication, peer-to-peer interactions, and constructive feedback to boost learners' confidence in expressing themselves during discussions. Moreover, utilizing video recording and playback tools enable learners to review and self-assess their speaking performance. This can help learners identify areas of improvement and track their progress over time.

Integrating speaking practice in various subjects and activities can encourage learners to communicate in English beyond the language classes. This approach allows learners to practice using English in real-life scenarios and enhances their overall speaking proficiency. Acknowledging that learners have different strengths and areas for improvement in their speaking skills and providing personalized learning opportunities and tailor strategies based on individual needs can optimize their language development. Furthermore, recognizing and celebrating learners' progress and efforts in their speaking development as positive reinforcements can motivate learners to continue practicing and improving their communication skills.

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