

Strategies in Raising Speaking Performance for Communication

Students: a case study at Universitas Bunda Mulia

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Abstract

Nowadays communication is very important. Communication helps people to understand other people from around the world. If we communicate, it means we can understand their language because people usually use language to communicate. Furthermore, English is an international language for communications. As a result, mastering English is also one of keys to compete and to face global competitions for students in finding the best job in the world.

English is a foreign language for Indonesian students. Therefore, the students have difficulties in learning English. The reason is that they only learn English only in the classroom. The materials they get in the classroom are only grammar. Therefore, the students only learn English theoretically. They do not have much time to practice their English both inside and outside the class. The objectives of this study are first, to find out the problem they face when learning English Subject. Second, to find out the strategies in raising English performance for Communications students in Universitas Bunda Mulia. This is a case study at Universitas Bunda Mulia.

Keyword: English performance, strategies, teaching and learning activities

1. Introduction

English as a global language has tremendous effects to people around the world. It helps to connect people from different nations. Therefore, mastering English becomes a necessity for everyone, including Indonesian students from the foundation level to the higher level. In facing global competitions, Universitas Bunda Mulia prepares the students by giving some strategies increasing English skills. Even though English is a minor subject for Communication students, they must pass English subject with good grades so that they can have their degree. The strategies given to the students involve the standard of four English skills:

speaking, writing, reading and listening in order to compete with other similar levels of education – such as other universities and to face the globalization. They not only are given theories but also practice their English.

English is a foreign language for Indonesians. Therefore, they have difficulties in digesting the terminologies and the meaning of the words or sentences found in the English text books. They also lack of motivation in learning English and still cannot produce English both writing and speaking. Furthermore, their speaking level is in the lower level. They also have extremely difficulty in communication and easily understood.

Shumin in Richards & Renandya (2011:208) says that the functions of spoken language are interactional and transactional. The primary intention of the former is to maintain social relationships whereas that of the latter is to convey information and ideas in, fact much of our daily communication remains interactional. Being able to interact in a language is essential. Therefore, teachers should provide learners with the opportunity for meaningful communicative behavior about relevant topics by using learner-learner interactions as the key to teaching language for communication because “communication derives essential for interaction. This study tried to find out the problem encounter when students learned English especially in their speaking skill and to find out kind of strategies to increase speaking English performance for communication.

1.1 The Objectives

This study tries to find out the problem encounter when students learn English especially in their speaking skill and to find out kind of strategies to increase speaking English performance.

1.2 Significance Study

The findings of the study will provide information and knowledge regarding strategies to increase English performance for communication students. This findings can be applied for English lecturer who teach General English for all programs in Universtas Bunda Mulia .

2. Theoretical Review

According to The New London Groups (1996: 60-90), multiliteracies is “the overcomes the limitations of traditional approaches by emphasizing how negotiating the multiple linguistic and cultural differences in our society is central to the pragmatics of the working, civic and private lives of students”. They believe that students can achieve two goals literacy learning, i.e. evolving language of work, power and community and fostering critical engagement in their social future and achieve success in their employment.

In addition, Noam Chomsky in Whiteson (1996) gives some advice to language teachers. He has said on various occasions that we should surround learners with the best example of language available. Teachers must give students the best materials. Teachers must do some several changes in their approach. They must treat our students as the kind of people who can change the world.

Heaton (1988: 88) mentions that people can produce correct sounds but still unable to communicate their ideas appropriately and effectively. On the other hand, people can make numerous mistake errors both in phonology and syntax yet success in expressing themselves fairly clearly. Furthermore, success in communication often depend as much on the listener as on the speaker a message or may share a common nexus of idea with him or her , thereby making communication simpler

In addition, Nunan (1989) in Richards & Renandya (2011:209) tells about some considerations should be used when teachers design activities. Teachers must create real life activities in the classroom. They must be communicative, meaningful in involving learners in using English for a variety of communicative purposes. They should (1) be based on authentic or naturalistic source materials; (2) enables learners to manipulate and practice specific features of language; (3) allow learners to rehearse in class, communicative skills they need in the real world and (4) activate psycholinguistic process of learning

Shumin in Richards & Renandya (2011:209) says that communication in the classroom is embedded in meaning –focused activity. This requires teachers to tailor their instruction carefully to the needs of learners and teach them how to listen to others, how to talk with others and how to negotiate meaning in a shared context. Out of interaction, learners will learn, and how to communicate verbally and nonverbally as their language store and language skill develop. Consequently, the give-and-take exchange of message will enable them to create discourse that conveys their intention in real life communication. In supporting Nunan's idea, she divides interactions into small talk and interactive activities.

Small talk is the ability to get along with people in society may correlate somewhat with how well a person can engage in brief, casual conversation with others or in an exchange of pleasantries. Teachers should develop interactive activities that enables students to speak in the language–promotion interaction. Furthermore, relevant activities elicit spoken–language production. They provide learners with opportunities to learn from auditory and visual experiences, which enable them to develop flexibility in their learning styles and also to demonstrate the optimal use of different learning strategies and behavior for different tasks. They are (1) aural: with careful selection and preparation, aural material such as news reports on the radio will be fine-tuned to a level accessible to particular groups of learners. (2) visual: because of the lack opportunity in foreign language settings to interact with native speakers, the need of exposure to many kinds of scenes in situations and accents as well as voices is particularly critical. (3) material-aided: Appropriate reading material facilitated by teacher and structured with comprehension questions can lead to creative production in speech; (4) culture awareness: culture plays an instrumental role in shaping speaker's communicative competence which related to the appropriate use of language;

Speaking is important. Furthermore, speaking is one of the part skills to master English. Since English is foreign language for Indonesian students, they are afraid in communicating with English to other people both in the school and their society. Therefore, their speaking skill is not accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.

Assessing English ability, Heaton (1998) explains about how to scoring interview oral ability. He uses marking scheme showing accuracy or pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, appropriacy, fluency, and ease of speech (using a 6 points scale as example), as follows:

Rating	Ability to communicate orally
6	Excellent: on a part with an educated native speaker. Completely at ease in his use of English on all topics discussed
5	Very good: although he cannot be mistaken for a native speaker, he expresses himself quite clearly. He experiences little difficulty in understanding English, and there is no strain at all in communicating with him.
4	Satisfactory verbal communication causing little difficulty for native speakers. He makes a limited number of errors of grammar, lexis and pronunciation but he is still at ease in communication on everyday subjects. He may have to correct himself and re-pattern his utterance on occasion. But there are little difficulties in understanding him.
3	Although verbal communication is usually fairly satisfactory, the native speaker may occasionally experience some difficulty in communicating with him. Repetition, re-patterning are sometimes necessary ordinary native speakers might find it difficult to communicate.
2	Much difficulty experienced by native speakers unaccustomed to 'foreign' English, his own understanding is severely limited, but communication on everyday topics is possible. Large number of errors of phonology, grammar and lexis.
1	Extreme difficulty in communications on any subject. Failure to understand adequately to make himself understood

As English is foreign language for Indonesian students, I focus on comprehensibility in assessing speaking performance. Heaton (1998) also describes it in his the marking scheme as follows:

Rating	Comprehensibility
6	Easy for listener to understand the speaker's intension and general meaning. Very few interruptions or clarifications required.
5	The speaker's intension and general meaning are fairly clear. A few interruptions by the listener for the shake or clarification are necessary.
4	Most of what the speaker says is easy to follow. His intension is always clear but several interruptions are necessary to help him to convey the message or to seek clarification.
3	The listener can understand a lot of what is said, but he must constantly seek clarification. Cannot understand many of the speaker's more complex or longer sentences.
2	Only small bits (usually short sentences and phrases) can be understood- and then with considerable effort by ozone who is used to listening to the speaker.
1	Hardly anything of what is said can be understood. Even when the listener makes a great effort or interrupts, the speaker is unable to clarify anything he seems to have said.

4.1. The Method

This is a case study at Universitas Bunda Mulia, North Jakarta. Nunan (1992) explains that the case study researcher typically observers characteristic of an individual unit-a child, a clique, a class, a school, or a community. Therefore, I took the sample data from one of my classes. Those sample data are the representative of English learners' competency students from lower, medium, and

high level. The data were taken on May until June 2013. The objects were 2nd semester communication students

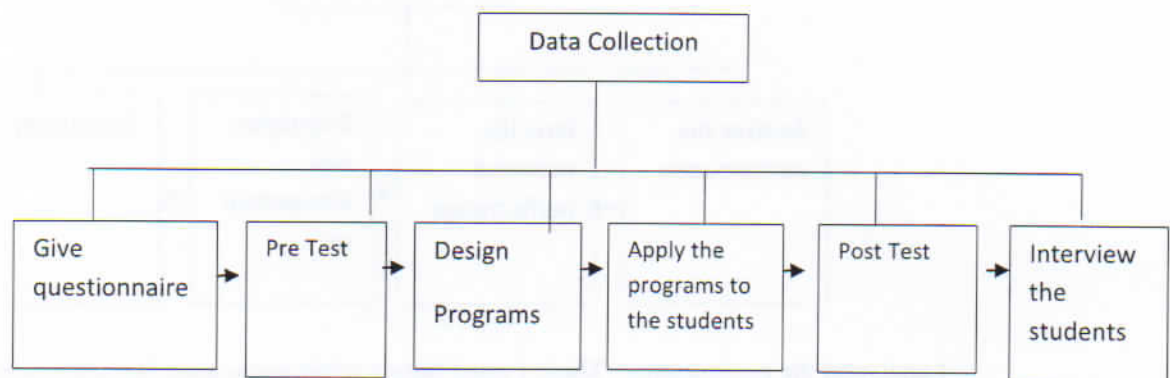
4.2. The Instruments

I gave a questionnaire, gave pre-test and post-test, observed, interviewed. All data were recorded. In increasing English performance some programs given to the students. To assess the English performance, I used Heaton's marking scheme which I mentioned in chapter 2. I chose one of the criteria in assessing speaking performance that was the comprehensibility.

4.3. Data

There were four data. These data were the representatives of English level starting from lower, medium, and high level. The data were second semester students from Faculty of Social of Humanities majoring of Communications at Universitas Bunda Mulia.

4.4. Method of Data Collection

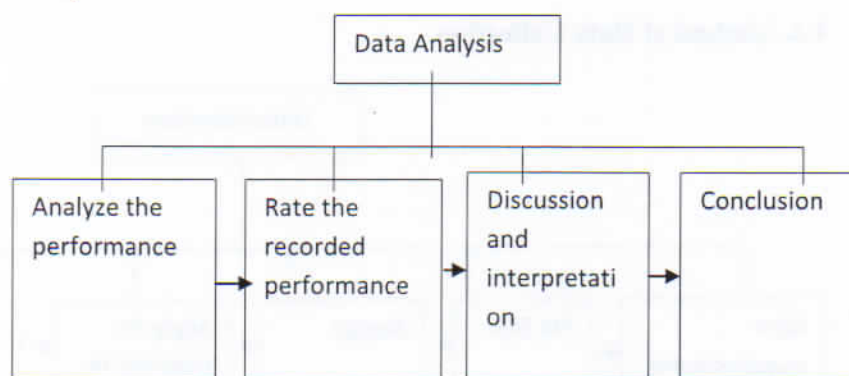


There are several procedures that I did in collecting the data. First, I distributed the questionnaire. Some questions were asked related their English learning experiences and problems. Second, I gave them pre- test by doing self introduction about themselves. Third, I designed some strategies which I took from Kang Shumin in Richards and Renandya (2011). Fourth, the strategies I

chose were small talk and interactive activities. For small talk activities, I applied role play, describing pictures, and interview. Before I gave programs for the respondents-the data, I gave them some activities related the materials from their text book –Business Objectives by Vicky Hollet such as complaints, recommending actions, making suggestion, offering help. When they did describing pictures activities, the materials I took also from their text book. Then, the interview activities were done by asking the student D as the interviewer and other students A,B, and C as interviewees. For interactive activities I asked them to present some presentation about themselves and delivering news. Since they are communication students I asked them to become what they want, a reporter or public relation. They were free to choose the material which they wanted to deliver.

All the activities were recorded that they could learn from their mistakes. After knowing their mistakes, I applied the program and they practiced all activities. Fifth, they did the post test which consisting all the activities that they had done. Sixth, I interviewed the respondents about the entire program.

4.5. Data analysis



I analyzed the performance. Then, I rated their performance used Heaton's scale. After that I analyze all data. Then I draw the conclusion.

5. Findings and Discussions

5.1. Strategies

There some strategies that I implemented for communication students. They were small talks and interactivities activities. These strategies were taken from Shumin (2011). Small talks activities were divided into interview and role plays. I interviewed the students about their background. Then, I also gave the materials about complaints and recommendations. The materials were taken from their text books. Then, I asked students to do presentation about themselves and also role play as public relation and reporter. They were videoed.

5.2. Findings

Before students got the program which I designed, students were lack competence in pronouncing some words and sentence. Grammatical error also found in their speaking. Although some students understand the explanation and instructions, they were passive and did not response very quickly. Furthermore, when they were asked to describe the pictures, they could not explain very clearly because their vocabularies were limited.

Overall, all of the students made enhancement after implementing the strategies. First, their speaking performance improved. They were not clumsy in pronouncing some words or sentences. Their accent were also were disappeared. They also could communicate fluently to others. They also were not afraid anymore if they gave presentation in front of the people. Second, they felt happy because these treatments were interesting and very effective for them as communications students. They enjoyed and were eager to learn the new tasks related their performance. Third, they knew how to speak grammatically correct. Furthermore, heir vocabularies had increased a lot.

After they got program their English performance increased. Student A was in the level one then she increased into level three. Student B was in the level two then she moved into level three. Student C was in the level three then he increased into level five. Student D was in the level five then she increased into level six as seen in this figure below:

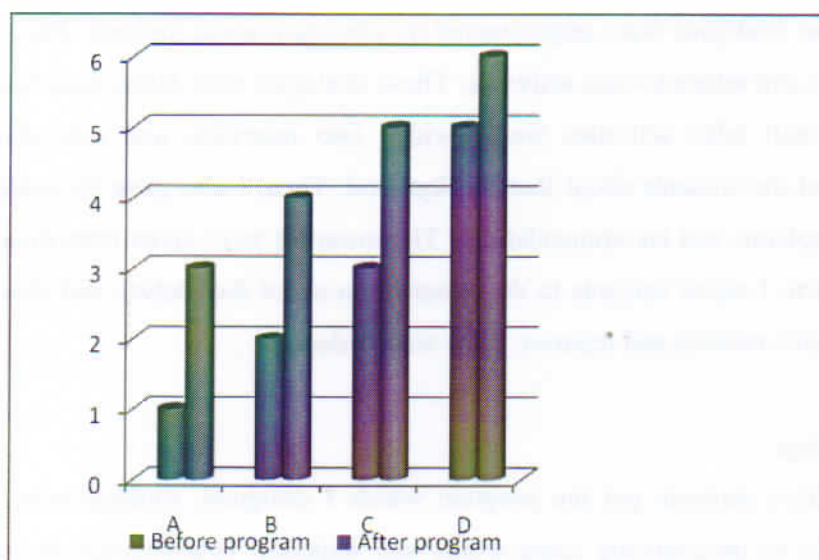


Figure 1. English Scale based on Heaton's Scale

Some strategies which I offered in this study helped students to raise their English performance. Both small talks and interactive students were needed to be applied in their lesson in the communication program. Two students chose small talks were mostly needed. The reasons were effective and can be applied in the real life. Other students chose presentation were needed. The reasons were they have to give lots presentations in front of the people which were in their job. Then, they also said that describing pictures was the most difficult task. First, they misinterpret the picture. Their vocabularies were limited so that they did not know how to describe those pictures.

5.3. Discussions

5.3.1. Student A

Student A's performance was in the first level when she did her pre-test-introducing herself. Based on the Heaton's scale, her speaking was not understood by the listeners. She also cannot clarify everything she said. Therefore, as listeners-I and the other students did not understand her speaking. She was also very nervous, shy, quiet and passive.

Handling student A was challenging. Besides gave those strategies, I also gave special treatments since she was the weakest among other students. Lots of exposures, and repetitions both instructions and practices were given to her so that she can understand and do all the activities. I also pointed student D to be her partner to help her to practice the activities

Student A also was very cooperative in joining this program. Knowing her ability, she watched and learned other students' performance. She also wanted to repeat all the activities and asked both I and other students until she did the all of the activities correctly.

Doing small talk activities, she could do all the activities well. Only in describing pictures, she had difficulties in answering the questions because of the lack of vocabularies. The reasons were the picture was not clear and she did not know how to create sentences in describing pictures. While for interactive activities, her performance runs smoothly even though she still read the note.

After joining the program, her speaking performance increased slightly. Her level improved into level 3. It meant that the listeners can understand a lot of what she was said, even though she had to repeat some words.

5.3.2.Student B

Student B's performance was in the second level when she did his pre-test-introducing herself. Based on the Heaton's scale, her speaking understood by the listener. To understand her speaking, she had to repeat some words until she pronounced those words ad sentence correctly. But because the focus was comprehensibility, she understood all the instructions and did the all activities well. Furthermore, she was an active and enthusiastic student. She was eager to learn and practice all the activities.

After she joined program, her speaking level expanded into level four. In other words, based on Heaton's scale, her speaking was easy to follow. Her intension was clear but several interruptions were necessary to help him to convey the message or to seek clarification. She did well in doing presentation activity but she had difficulties in describing pictures because of her vocabularies limitations.

5.3.3 Student C

Among the students, I got wrong impression about him. I thought his speaking ability was in the level two. After he did his pre-test, describing about himself, his speaking was in the level three. Some mistakes found in pronouncing several words. Students C were quiet but he was active student and dare to ask lots of questions if he had difficulties in doing the activities. Unlike student A, student C can communicate well. Furthermore, a student C's speaking ability improved rapidly although he had problem in describing pictures. He misinterpreted pictures and his vocabularies were limited. Yet, he understood all the instruction and he did all the exercises and he had good progress.

5.3.4 Student D

Student D was the one that I wanted to be most for my samples in this study. I chose her because she was the representation of clever students. In addition, she was very cooperative among other students. She paid attention and listened everything I asked to her. If she had problem with the tasks she would asked me. How to treat her in this study was different from other students. I only explained the instruction; she understood and did all the activities excellently. When she did her pre test-describing herself, her speaking was in the level five. She has made little mistakes.

After joining the, her speaking jumped into level six. Her speaking performance rose sharply. Moreover, she did all the tasks satisfactory. Since her speaking level was the highest, I also asked her to help other students to increase their performance. I pointed her to guide her friends when doing the activities.

6.1. Conclusion

English is foreign language for Indonesian students. Therefore, they learned, spoke, and communicated English only in the classroom. Consequently, they were afraid in communicating to other people. Moreover, students were not accurate and fluent in pronouncing some words and sentence. Grammatical error also found in their speaking. Although some students understand the explanation

and instructions, they were passive and did not respond very quickly because of the limitation of their vocabularies.

The strategies offered helped students in raising English performance. They were small talks and interactive activities. They made lots of improvement when I implemented the strategies. They can communicate English and were not afraid anymore when they speak other people. The strategies were effective and enjoyable for communication students.

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