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GOOD EFL LEARNERS' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO HANDLE THEIR SEAKING SKILL

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In learning speaking, learners might achieve some differences of success. Some learners might achieve high speaking proficiency while some others might achieve low speaking proficiency. Learners' success in learning speaking might be caused by some factors such as the mastery of linguistic elements like grammar and vocabularies and the mastery of communication strategies. Thus, mastering linguistic elements and communication strategies is important for the students to handle their problems in speaking. In relation to the importance of learners' mastery on communication strategies to handle their speaking problems, this article tries to report the result of the study on finding out the good EFL Learners' communication strategies based on Dornyei's theory of communication strategies (1995) and the reasons of why they used those communication strategies in conversation. This was a case study involving two good EFL learners as the subjects of the study. Data were got by assigning those two good EFL learners to give descriptions on some abstracts and concrete words. Data were collected trough observation and in-depth interview. The finding indicated that good EFL learners employed some communication strategies such as the use of code switching, use of non linguistic means strategies, fillers, etc and they had some various reasons of using those communication strategies to handle their speaking problems.

Keywords: *Communication strategies, Good EFL learners.*

A. Introduction

Speaking is one of the subjects EFL learners should master in learning English. However, to master speaking is not an easy thing. EFL Learners often get difficulties to speak English fluently. Learners' difficulties in learning speaking might be caused by their lack of grammar understanding, vocabularies and communication strategies. In relation to communication strategies, Dornyei (1995) stated that communication strategies are the strategies learners might use to handle their speaking problems to achieve their communication goals. He further classified his communication strategies into some communication strategies: message abandonment, topic avoidance, circumlocution, approximation, use of all purpose words, word coinage, use of non-linguistic means, literal translation, foreignizing, code switching, appeal for help, and fillers. In addition, Brown (1987) stated that learners might employ verbal and non-verbal mechanism in communication due to their linguistic limitedness. Thus, using

communication strategies, learners might use verbal and non-verbal strategies to handle their speaking problems and achieve their communication goals.

Studies on learners' communication strategies had been done by some researchers. Lam (2006) studied about the effects of oral communication strategies teaching (OCST) on learners' performance. The finding indicated that treatment class were generally outperformed the comparison class. Next, Lin (2007) studied about seven Taiwanese university EFL learners' perception on communication strategies. The finding indicated that in general most students agreed that communication strategies might help them enhance their English comprehension. Then, Huang (2010) studied about the factors influencing the use of oral communication strategies by the technological university students in Taiwan. The finding indicated those students' self-perceived oral proficiency, the frequency of and motivation in speaking English were significantly correlated with the use of communication strategies. It was concluded that functional practice and intrinsic motivation was important in the development of communication strategies usage and oral competence. Thus, it might be concluded that communication strategies might help learners handle their speaking problems, further using communication strategies; learners might develop their oral competence. Based on the study above on the use of communication strategies by the learners in communication, this article tried to report the results of the study on finding out good EFL learners' communication strategies to handle their speaking problems. This study was focused on finding out the good EFL learners' communication strategies using Dornyei's theory of communication strategies (1995) and the reasons why they used certain communication strategies in communication. This was a case study employing two good EFL learners as the subjects of the study and data were collected through observation and in-depth interview.

B. Good EFL Learners' Communication Strategies and the Reasons why They Used Communication Strategies in Communication.

Good learners are learners who are able to employ certain strategies effectively in line with the requirement of the language task (Chamot & Zade, 1998). Next, good learners are able to explain the strategies they employ and the reasons why they employ those strategies (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Further, good learners are active in the language learning process, having awareness that language as a system, developing awareness that language as a means of

communication and interaction, accepting and coping with the effective demands of the L2, and learning further the L2 by making inference and monitoring (Naiman et al. (1978). Thus, good learners are learners who have awareness that language as a system, are active during the learning process and are active in using language as a means of communication and interaction. Good learners further might use communication strategies to develop their speaking skill. In relation to the use of communication strategies by good EFL learners, the study indicated that good EFL learners employed some communication strategies to handle their speaking problems and they had some reasons why they employed those communication strategies in communication. They were presented as follows:

The subject 1 employed approximation strategies (1):

(1): "Emm historically / yaa it came from / it came from Europe for modern piano it came from Europe actually emm and from now on it still being **used** and still / popular for the / ee musicians especially for classic musician even for modern musician aa piano still / being used even for the ee what emm the manual ones or / with the automatic piano piano ee piano or with the / there are so many piano".

The data indicates that the subject tried to say that historically piano was from Europe and it is now still played and still popular within the classical and also modern musicians. He said that there were two kinds of piano, manual and modern piano. The subject employed the word 'used' to refer to the word 'played'. To be 'played' in some cases had also meaning of to be 'used'. The subject employed approximation strategies due to his limited vocabularies so that he replaced the targeted term with another term which has a close meaning to the targeted term. He stated: "It is because of my vocabulary limit, so I would like to replace it with another word that has similar meaning or context". Thus, it might be concluded that the subject employed approximation strategy in term of applying the word 'used' to refer to the word 'played'. This is relevant to the theory of communication strategies which suggests that approximation strategy is a strategy done by employing an alternative term to express the meaning of the lexical item as closely as possible (Dornyei, 1995).

Next, it was found that the subject 1 employed use of all purpose words strategy (2).

(2): "Confidence is basically ee our soft skill, ee it it can be it can be naturally ee owned by someone or it can be learned or trained by someone. ee it is ee when we feel con//we **have** confidence we we feel very what's it we have no shy or we can

express anything freely and we don't we don't have ee any hesitation when we have confidence it's for//it is usually necessary for us if we have if we have to do like public speaking or explaining something or for communication we need some confidence".

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The data indicates that when the subject tried to describe about confidence. He stated that confidence was a kind of soft skills owned by someone and it could be achieved through learning or training. He stated that when we felt confident we would not be shy to express our ideas. He employed the words 'have' in the sentence 'we have confidence' to express 'feeling confident'. In this case, the word 'have' had been used to replace the word 'feel'. For him, it is safer to employ a more general word that he knew than he tried to employ an exact word but he did not know the word. He said that it was done due to his weakness in vocabulary. He stated: "It is saver to use of all purpose words if I do not know exactly what I need to say or what word that I need. It is some kind of lack of vocabulary". Thus, it might be concluded that the learner employed use of all purpose word strategy in term of replacing the word 'feel' with 'have'. This is relevant to the theory of communication strategies which suggests that use of all purpose words strategy is a strategy done by employing a general lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking (Dornyei, 1995) .

Another example also shows the use of approximation by the subject 2 (3).

(3): " A student at least should have computer aa what any kind of computer and for helping the work we use it for English student we can use it for translate translating aa what's it translating any texts or books..**something like that**".

The data indicates that the subject wanted to say that computer was very useful for the students. Using computer students would be able to do many kinds of assignments. For example using computer students would be able to translate texts, books or 'something like that'. In this case, 'something like that' refers to any kind of texts or books that can be translated using computer. He did it because of forgetting the vocabularies and because he wanted to avoid too many repetitions and to make variation in the conversation. He stated: "…I forget the vocabularies and I avoid too many repetition and just for variation of the conversation". Thus, it might be concluded that the subject 2 employed use of all purpose words strategy in term of employing the word 'something like that' to refer to 'any kind of texts or books' that can be translated using computer. This is relevant to the theory of communication strategies which

suggests that use of all purpose words strategy is a strategy done by employing a general lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking (Dornyei, 1995).

Then, it was found that the subject 1 employed use of non-linguistic means strategies (4).

(4): "ee when feel like bored in my home and I have spare time to spend my spare time usually I go fishing and I don't choose ee any place that far away from my home I just go around ee very ee what is it near the nearest river that I assume it contains many fish. Just May be on cans or after school usually but lately I don't go fishing anymore. Because I find like fishing makes me what is it peaceful feel aa when I go fishing I feel that // I have no problems that I forgot for for for a moment only but after I go go back home I still find the problems just like that. It doesn't matter ee the fish that I get, I just ee I feel fun by spending time doing fishing, that's it… ee Fishing pool stick…Fishing pool or the stick and..and the what is it the fishing line and the hock…long..."

The data indicates that the subject 1 tried to describe about his hobby fishing. In telling about his hobby fishing he frequently used non linguistic means strategies. For example, when he wanted to describe 'long stick' that we needed to fish, it was expressed by moving his hands showing long stick. He frequently employed eyes contacts in giving explanation or when he tried to answer questions. He employed some expressions like the use of his hands movements, eyes contacts and also smiles to convince the interlocutor. The use of non linguistic means was very important for him because it could help him speak fluently. He stated: "The use of non linguistic means help me a lot in doing conversation. I try to be as natural as possible so that it can be more casual and easy going. It helps the person in front of me understand well about my intention". Thus, it might be concluded that the subject 1 employed use of non linguistic means strategies by using some expressions like the use hands, eye contacts, mimes and smiles. This is relevant to the theory of communication strategies which suggests that the use of nonlinguistic means strategy includes the use of mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation (Dornyei, 1995).

Subject 2 also employed use of non-linguistic means strategy (5).

(5): "Yaa hiking mountain means that you hike ee a mount or some mounts and // and usually / you / prepare it well so well from the logistic / from the tent that you / that you will aa will stay for some nights and the the main purpose of hiking mount usually you you / reach the summit / so ee every summit of the mount or every top of the mount the main target of hiking mount / and ee there are two kinds of hiker / ee there are one is one is the the hiker with ju.. just enjoy the environment around the mount but ee usually the top is is not the priority and the / the second is the 'summiteers', summiteers is / the hiker which ee // I mean which / the top of the

mount is / the the main target ee as soon as possible // and and // I am is / ee I mean I am hiker…”.

The Data indicates that the subject wanted to tell about one of his hobbies, climbing. He said that we had to prepare our logistics well before climbing. Tents were used for a shelter during climbing time or when we had reached the top of the mounts. Reaching the top of the mounts was the target of climbing mounts. In telling about mount climbing, subject 2 employed use of non-linguistics means. Some of non-linguistic means strategies that he often employed were hands movements, mimes, eyes contacts, and smiles. He said that use of non-linguistic means strategies was important for him. By employing those strategies during the conversation he would feel more enjoyable and comfortable. He said: “ee doing those gestures ee // I can feel what more comfortable in saying something and sometimes / when I move my hand // I can found my word and / it’s like / kind of code // ee code for myself I mean when I when I move ee my hand such away so “ohh ya I remember ee it’s belongs to those words” so I can yaa I can I can speak aa easily I mean easier / than when I move my body especially my hands… eyes contacts / or ee seeing some / another place it’s like to make / ee my conversation feel / ee enjoy and comfortable…”. Thus, it might be concluded that 2 subject employed use of nonlinguistic means strategies by employing hands movements, mimes, eyes contacts, and smiles. He used non-linguistic means strategies during the conversation because he felt enjoyable and comfortable. This is relevant to the theory of communication strategies which suggests that the use of nonlinguistic means strategy includes the use of mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation (Dornyei, 1995).

Subsequently, the data indicates that subject 1 employed code switching strategy (6).

(6): ”…that’s all the//the stick, fishing line and hook and I need extra for the.. what is it // ee I am not sure how do we call it “umpan” that we usually Indonesians say. Or worm I usually use…worm.”

The data indicates that when the subject 1 explained about his hobby ‘fishing’ he needed some tools like fishing stick, fishing line and also food for the fish. In this case, he did not know the English word for ‘food for the fish’ and then also he employed the Indonesian word ‘umpan’. He avoided stopping the conversation but employing code switching. He stated: “I didn’t know

the meaning of 'umpan' in English and I really need this word so that I use the word without translating it. I know that the person should know about the word 'umpan' then I give example 'warm'. Thus, it might be concluded that subject 1 employed code switching strategy to solve his communication problems. This was known from the use of the Indonesian word 'umpan' to express the English word for 'food needed to fish the fish'. This is relevant to the theory of communication strategies which suggests that code switching strategy is a strategy by employing a L1 word with L1 pronunciation or a L3 word with L3 pronunciation in L2 (Dornyei, 1995).

And then, it was found that the subject1 employed appeal for help strategy (7).

(7) : "Yeach like what I say because it is hard for me to find the correct word that I I really need to say so I I need sometimes to recall my memory in that moment I usually add some what is it//eee I forgot//…".

The data indicates that when the subject tried to describe finding the right words he felt difficult to continue his expression. Then, he used appeal for help strategy in term of stating "it ee // I forgot' while turning and seeing to the interlocutor. He employed this strategy especially when he was facing difficulties to express his ideas in English. This was also done when he did not know what to say to continue his conversation. He stated: "When I have difficulties in term of ideas of English, I ask for help…I ask for help if I cannot remember what I am going to say and from the help I can continue the conversation". Thus, it might be concluded that subject1 employed appeal for help strategy to solve his communication problems in term of turning to the interviewer while saying 'What is it..eee I forgot' and asking the interlocutor to continue his expression. This is relevant to the theory of communication strategies which suggests that appeal for help strategy is a strategy by turning to the conversation partner for help either directly for example using 'what do you call…' or indirectly using pause, eye contact, rising intonation, puzzled expression (Dornyei, 1995).

In addition, appeal for help strategy is also applied by another subject 2 (8).

(8): "… ee seeing some / another place it's like to make / ee my conversation feel / ee enjoy and comfortable // so ee I myself don't know ee how it's happened but / ee I think ee when ee when I when I do the gesture it's help me / and I think more more comfortable / but when / when I do when why when I didn't / move my my gesture / emm it's like feeling of sometimes stiffness or ee sometimes feel / e ee / I mean from the environment feel feel didn't comfort so it ee sometime its ee / what how to say it emm / affect me ee / ee in in in the the first of the conversation".

The data indicates that subject 2 wanted to say that eye contacts made him feel enjoyable and he further said that gestures helped him because by doing it he became more comfortable. On the contrary, he felt uncomfortable when he did not do it during his conversation. Next, he wanted to continue his explanation but he felt difficult to express his idea and then he said "…aa sometime its aa / what how to say it emm /…". In this case, he employed appeal for help strategy, it happened when he tried to explain the significance of the use of eyes contacts and gestures in the conversation and he suddenly stopped his explanation and for the next he said "…aa sometime its aa / what how to say it emm/…" while looking at the interlocutor. He employed appeal for help strategy when he found difficulties to express his ideas during communication. By doing so he hoped to get some help from the interlocutor so that he could continue his conversation. He said that "It comes naturally when I am having conversation. Furthermore, I would like to have this conversation going to be two-ways communication." Thus, it might be concluded that subject 2 applied appeal for help strategy to solve his communication problem in term stopping his explanation, turning to the interlocutor while saying "what how to say it". This is relevant to the theory of communication strategies which suggests that appeal for help strategy is a strategy by turning to the conversation partner for help either directly for example using 'what do you call…' or indirectly using pause, eye contact, rising intonation, puzzled expression (Dornyei, 1995).

In addition, subject 1 often employed time gaining strategies during the conversation (9).

(9): "Mmm ok, computer basically ee contains of three parts of first the most important is CPU or Central Processing Unit and then the output for monitor or CD something like that and also have input , ee input tools like a mouse, keyboard, and so on and we can have like monitor, printer ooor ee other like LCD and…something like that. So computer basically the first..the first a what's it // a movement in technology and then later on Mmm we have Laptop and now now days we have notebooks and tablets, something like that so basically computer is used for ee helping our works such as typing or imaging or something like that of processing image or video something ee which is ee very helpful for our life today and for the experts, for the experts they they   use the computer for scientific research and may be like astronomy and Geo..what is it..ee for Geology I think and and and so on and that's all."

The data indicates that subject 1 tried to describe about computer by employing some expressions like 'mmm', ee, ooor, making repeats, and 'what's it'. and finally he stated the

word 'confidence'. Then he also employed the use of 'pause'. Those expressions were often employed by the subject during the conversation. He often did it and doing fillers in conversation was better than just keeping silent. By doing it, he hoped to have time to think about what he was going to say in the next and it could be one of his ways to get away from the difficulties during the conversation. He stated: "I use fillers so often because it is better than being silent…I need it when I am thinking the next sentence that I am going to say…In English the use of fillers can be one way of getting away from difficulties…Sometimes I find some difficulties in doing English conversations so that I use fillers". Thus, it might be concluded that the subject 1 employed time gaining strategies/ fillers to solve his communication problems. This was known when he employed some expressions like 'mmm…, what's it…, eee…, and also employed some repetitions during the conversation. This is relevant to the theory of communication strategies which suggests that use of fillers or hesitation devices are using filling words to fill pause and to gain time to think (Dornyei, 1995).

Then, fillers were also done by subject 2 (10):

(10):"But emm / yaa just like what I'm doing right now // that's natural for me / even the psychologist say that ee "when / when the when ee I destruct something I mean destruct by another abject that instead ee what what I'm saying is not true" / but // I don't know is ee / it's it's not for me I think I just just flowing naturally yaa / but I used to / ee / use eye contat to make // to make sure my opponent ee / what emm concentrate on / my conversation also and to make ee yaa sometime to / make believe that / ee make believe what what I'm saying".

The data indicates that the subject often employed some expressions like "emm, aaa, repeats like what what it's it's, etc". He did fillers because he could not remember the words that he wanted to express. He stated: " … it 's more I think / that's my way to find the the best words / for my my speaking my / my conversation //…It is one of my strategies to avoid long gap in the conversation so the communication will run well without a long boring break". Thus, it might be concluded that subject 2 employed fillers strategies in conversation. He did fillers to avoid making long silent during the conversation and to gain time to think. This is relevant to the theory of communication strategies which suggests that use of fillers or hesitation devices are using filling words to fill pause and to gain time to think (Dornyei, 1995).

From the analysis, it was found that good EFL learners employed some communication strategies to handle their speaking problems. Some communication strategies that they employed were approximation, use of all purpose words, use of non-linguistic means, code switching, appeal for help and fillers. There were some reasons why they used those communication strategies in the conversation such as being lack of vocabularies, feeling comfortable, natural, getting help from speaking partners, getting time to think to remember the lost vocabularies and also creating two – ways communication. By using communication strategies good EFL learners might handle their speaking problems. Frequently, the problems that learners might face during communication were caused by lack of vocabularies. These problems might be handled using communication strategies. In line with the use of communication strategies to handle learners' speaking problems Dornyei (1995) stated that communication strategies are the strategies learners might use to handle their communication problems due to their linguistic deficiencies. Next, the finding indicated that for the sake of achieving communication goals good EFL learners have used consciously some verbal and non-verbal communication. Dealing with the use of verbal and non verbal communication Brown (1987) stated that learners might use verbal and non-verbal strategies to communicate their ideas due to their limitedness in their linguistic elements. In addition, Karimnia and Zade (2007) stated that learners might use communication strategies to encounter their speaking problems. In line with Karimnia and Zade, Corder (in Bialystok, 1990) stated that learners might use a systematic technique when they are in difficulties during communication and these techniques are known as communication strategies. Then, Kasper (1983) stated that communication strategies are devices used by learners to handle communication barriers to achieve communication goals. Thus, it might be concluded that learners might use communication strategies to handle their speaking problems and using communication strategies they might achieve their communication goals.

The finding also indicated that good EFL learners knew what they might do to handle their speaking problems. During the conversation, good EFL learners used some ways/ strategies when they found some speaking problems. Using communication strategies, they tried to continue the conversation to reach the communication goals. In relation to good learners, Rubin (1975) stated that good learners know how about to tackle a language, they constantly search for meaning and they are willing to use language in a real communication. In addition, Rubin and Thomson (1982) stated that good learners might use their first language in learning a second

language and they might also use contextual cues to help them during the conversation. Next, Stern (1983) stated that good EFL learners like use learning strategies deliberately. Thus, it might be concluded that good EFL learners are learners who know well what to do for the success of their language learning. They might use some communication strategies to handle their speaking problems to achieve their communication goals.

C. Conclusion

From the discussion above, it might be concluded that communication strategies are essential for good EFL learners. Communication strategies, either using verbal or non-verbal strategies, might help learners handle their speaking problems. Learners' problems in speaking are usually caused by their linguistic deficiencies and these problems might be handled using communication strategies. By applying communication strategies in conversation, learners might become more comfortable and relaxed. This further brings learners to able to express their ideas fluently.

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