

The Application of Strategic Competition in EFL Setting in Transactional and Interpersonal Conversation Class

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to describe the communication strategies (CS) utilized by English education students in the first semester at the University of Muhammadiyah Semarang. Data derived from the transcription of online conversation using virtual video conference occurred in the classroom. By evaluating their utterances and applying Celce Murcia (1995) typologies of communication strategies, this descriptive qualitative study was able to determine the frequency of communication methods utilized in the class of Transactional and Interpersonal Conversation. According to the findings, the frequency of communication strategies was Avoidance Strategies (15%), compensatory strategies (48%), Stalling or time gaining strategies including fillers, hesitations, and gambits (16%), and appeal for help (22%).

Keywords: Students in a speaking lesson, communication skills, YouTube video

INTRODUCTION

The main goal of English learning is to trigger students to communicate in English, the target language, both written and spoken. Different to written English, the spoken one is more dynamic than the other (Artini, 1998). Its function is as tools to express idea and written form is symbol to represent oral language (Thanh, 2015). Which one is the hardest? Spoken or written language? Luh Putu Artini (1998) expressed that both channel of language is complex in their own way. Each of them has their own challenges and difficulties. Speaking, for foreign language learners is not easy thing to do because when producing oral text, someone does not only need to pay attention to its structure or rule of the language, but also mechanics of language elements, transactional or interaction speaking, and sociocultural norms (Heriansyah, 2012).

The main problem encountered by foreign language learners dealing with speaking activity can be categorised into two problems, such as linguistic and non-linguistic problems. Linguistic problems include limited

vocabulary, pronunciation problem, and structure. Whereas, non-linguistic problem covers anxiety, L1 interference, nothing to say, lack of self-confidence, and sometimes afraid of making mistake (Widyasmoro, 2019). Frequently, foreign language learners find it difficult to express their idea because their low motivation and it is absolutely will affect their language performance (Nailufar, 2018). As English is used as foreign language in Indonesia, many students are reluctant to use target language, say English, in the classroom. In the class of Transactional and Interpersonal Conversation, my students tend to use Bahasa Indonesia as means of communication in the classroom instead of practicing their English. This happened for a reason, such as lack of vocabulary mastery and they feel that they do not know how to express their ideas in English. Even when they are in the middle of the conversation, they choose to keep silent for a long time to think about the proper words to convey the meaning to their partners or audience. Students' ability to compensate for breakdown in communication deals with the term of communicative competence (Ting, et.al., 2017). The notion of communicative competence includes discourse competence, sociocultural competence, formulaic competence, interactional competence, linguistic competence, and strategic competence (Fitriati et.al., 2019). The last competence refers to the ability of using verbal and non-verbal language to overcome any communication breakdown due to any limited competences in expressing his/her idea.

Strategic competence is interesting area to be explored because in context of Indonesian classes, especially in class of Transactional and Interpersonal Conversation in English Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang, students tend to keep silent in the middle of the conversation or speech when they do not know any words or terminology to say. In speaking, this condition is called "pause". Similar to gamers who "pause" their game for some reasons, in speaking this silent period can be categorised into two conditions, such as (1) physiological function to allow someone to breath, (2) cognitive function to assist speaker to think what to say, and (3) communicative function to deals with the communication problems (Cenoz, 1998). As foreign language learners, pausing in the middle of speaking is natural and normal. It is becoming problem when someone stop in a very long time while he is speaking since it indicates something wrong happen. It can be about cognitive problem or speaker forget what to say or maybe he does not know how to say it properly in English. To overcome this condition, strategic competence is awfully necessary. As one of the communication competences, strategic competence assists speaker to face communication barrier. Without such competences, it is impossible for someone to carry out his/her communicative intent although he/she know grammar well (Dörnyei, 1995). Thus, when someone master grammar or have the ability in construct good sentences, it is no guarantee that he can perform spoken activity fluently. This can be due to psychological factor affecting this

condition or any other factor makes someone disfluent. However, by having sufficient knowledge or strategic competence, it will help learners to fluent their speaking.

The notion of strategic competence in the classroom implementation has been studied by several researchers. Many of them explained that Communication Strategies is very important to solve communication problems or difficulties that might be experienced by students of English for Foreign Language (Zhang et.al, 2009; Maleki, 2007; Nakatani, 2006). It is in line with Santoz et.al. (2015) that strategic competence, the small part of communication competence, played important role in creating effective communication. It will help beginners to deal with any difficulties frequently occurred in daily conversation.

Celce Murcia (1995) coined strategic competence as cognitive ability of applying communication strategies and how to use it in daily basis. Whereas, Canale (1983, p.12) elaborated that strategic competence is the ability in implementing both verbal and non-verbal communication to overcome communication breakdown due to lack of competences in one or several aspects in communication competences. Celce Murcia (1995) categorized strategic competence as follows:

- 1) Achievement, this includes strategies of approximation, circumlocution, code-switching, and miming.
- 2) Self-monitoring that covers phrases that allow for self-repair like..."I mean..", "something like that"...
- 3) Interacting includes asking help from others (involving negotiation of meaning, confirmation check, etc)
- 4) Stalling or time gaining by using phrases like "what is that?" "where was I?"

As foreign learners, mistakes (grammatical or pronunciation problems) are commonly and normally done by students especially when they are asked to speak. This will absolutely drive to hesitation and cause communication breakdown at last. In fact, viewing this as deficit is not proper, instead it is an opportunity to develop students' strategic competence. As we know that communication competences include several aspects such as (1) discourse competence, (2) linguistic competence, (3) formulaic competence, (4) interactional competence, (5) socio- cultural competence, and (6) strategic competence (Celce Murcia, 1995).

Furthermore, this reflective paper tries to emphasis on what strategic competence used in online class of Transactional and Interpersonal Conversation. Thus, a gap distinguishes it from previous studies of Communication Strategies using face-to-face channel. This thought is employing online platform to identify the frequent SC used in online class of Transactional and Interpersonal Conversation. The issue of "online" class is something that has not been conducted by other

researchers in their study.

The question may appear is this study, such as “do students in English Education of Unimus taking Transactional and Interpersonal Conversation class know what is strategic competence?” The advanced questions, then need to be raised. “Do they apply strategic competence when they speak?” and the last one is “What type of strategic competence they use when they perform their speaking activity?” In this reflective paper, I would like to reveal what kind of strategic competence are frequently used by students in English Education of Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang.

According the latest curriculum applied in English Education Program in Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang (Unimus), the freshmen will get basic speaking subject entitled Transactional and Interpersonal Conversation. This subject focuses on the conversation between two or more students in context of transactional and interpersonal communication. There are 25 students joining this subject from various ability of English-speaking skills. Since they come from various region in Central Java, Sumatra, and Borneo. This variety will absolutely affect their ability because each regions performs different learning style.

METHOD

A qualitative study is undertaken based on theoretical considerations to determine what communication methods are used by students of English Education at Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang in Transactional and Interpersonal Conversation class. The goal of this study is to support the taxonomy by offering examples to illustrate what each strategy means and to define what and how communication strategies are utilized by students in the Transactional and Interpersonal Conversation class at Universitas Muhammadiyah Semarang.

Instruments

The instruments employed in this paper are: (1) observation, (2) CS Markers.

Observation

Conversations happened virtually in the classroom were observed every Monday morning in the classroom. The researcher took part in 'free chats.' The classroom observation lasted nearly one month and was conducted once a week. The subject's performance is about describing people or place or thing. I recorded the virtual meeting to transcribe the talks and tag them with CS markers. When the researcher was unsure about the likely use of CSs, she wrote down the sentence so that people might listen to the recorded speech and undertake retrospection to clear up the confusion.

Cs Marker

Typology	Definition	Examples
Avoidance Strategies		
Message replacement	Avoiding topic being discussed into another topic	Changing the topic Pretending (not) understand Not responding
Message abandonment	Speakers usually give up because the topic of discussion is too difficult	
Compensatory Strategies		
Circumlocution	Learners describe the thing that they do not know how to say it in English	If someone forget how to say "giraffe", he/she would say "animal that has long neck"
Restructuring	Reconstructing sentence into new one without changing the meaning	<i>I am come from... I am coming from Tegal..</i>
Word coinage	Creating a new terminology to make concept clearer	Airball for balloon Ice container for freezer Vegetarianist for vegetarian
Nonverbal signals	Mime, gesture, imitation	Nodding head to represent agreement Give two thumbs up for say "good"
Literal translation	Translating the literary lexical item, idiom, grammatical structure from L1 to L2	She fell because she was sick Instead of saying she collapsed because she was sick.
Foreignizing	Adjusting word into L2 concept of morphology or phonology	"otw" used by mostly Indonesian to refer to on the way, but it is pronounced as Indonesian way (<i>oh-te-wey</i>)

Code switching	Using L2 terminology to say something in L2 without translating	My favourite thing is my <i>gaman</i> . My <i>gaman</i> is <i>arit</i> or <i>clurit</i> .
Stalling or Time Gaining Strategies		
Hesitation device, gambits, fillers		Ok,... Something like that...
Self and other repetition	When speakers know about L2 item but they need time to recall them	Actually... he...he...he arro...arrogant...
Self-monitoring		
Self-initiated repair		
Self-rephrasing	Over elaboration	This is big, huge, building I have everseen
Interactional Strategies		

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

On the table, you can see the results of the data analysis. According to Celce- et. al. the overall finding of adopting communication strategies is shown in the table below. This table contains all percentages related to the development of communication strategies upon analyzing the data gained:

Table 1:
 Communication Strategies

Avoidance Strategies			15%
Message replacement	11	8%	
Message abandonment	10	7%	
Achievement or Compensatory Strategies			48%
Circumlocution	0	0%	
Restructuring	0	0%	
Word coinage	0	0%	
Nonverbal signal	17	13%	
Literal translation	21	16%	
Foreignizing	0	0%	
Code switching	25	19%	

Time Gaining Strategies			16%
hesitation device, gambits, fillers	21	16%	
Self-monitoring strategies			0%
Self-initiated	0	0%	

Avoidance or Reduction Strategy

Message replacement, topic avoidance, and message abandonment are all part of this strategy. All of those tactics are not used by the teacher or her students in the dialogue transcription. It is, in my opinion, due to the subject of the teaching learning activity. The teacher tended to discuss the book's exercises. As a result, the students' speaking abilities are underutilized. There were 8.3% Message replacement and 2.7% students employed message abandonment.

- (1) I love this pet because I..... (long pause) my mom bought this cat.
- (2) My motivation in here is.... (long pause) Thankyou mom, that's all...

In expression (1), student tried to use the strategy of avoiding the topic by changing the message. At first, he wanted to talk about reason why he loves his pet. However, it changed into talking his mother. While, sentence (2) student tended to give up not to continue her topic.

Achievement or Compensatory Strategy

The L2 learner used this method to try to maintain the original communicative objective while compensating for lacking resources or making an effort to collect the required items. In the dialogue script, five of six kinds of strategic competency in achievement or compensating techniques are mentioned. Nonverbal signalling, literal translation from L1, and code switching are examples of these tactics. Based on their definitions, they will be discussed and assessed.

a. Nonverbal signals

Nonverbal messages include miming, gestures or movement or body language, facial expression, and imitate the sound. They greatly assist L2 learners in smoothing out conversations when they are unsure of the words or phrase that they are trying to say. The following are some nonverbal indications that can be detected in the conversation:

- (3) T : –Yeah, my friends are grumpy... What does it mean?
 grumpy...grumpy is like... (facial expression turned to be grumpy) S :
 –angry?

The teacher in the example above intended to explain the meaning of the term grumpy by using her facial expression to make students understand. Students can read the facial expression and then correctly guess the meaning of the word "grumpy."

b. Literal Translation from first language

Literal Translation enables students to translate words from their native language word for word. The teacher, as well as her students, are foreign learners, too. However, it is unavoidable that learners make mistakes, such as when speakers translate words literally from Indonesian into English, resulting in a strange sounding speech. The following is an example of utterances containing strategy mentioned in the list of the talks:

- (4) T : When was she born?
Ss : She born in 1998 (read: one thousand nine hundred and ninety eight)

Sample (4) demonstrated that student make a mistake when responding to the teacher's inquiry. To replace nine-teen ninety-eight, he said one thousand nine hundred and ninety-eight. They actually translate Bahasa Indonesia into English; thus, it doesn't sound very frequent in English.

c. Code Switching

When non-native speakers talk in the target language (English), they may blend their first language with the target language. It could happen without their knowledge or as a result of their desire to avoid a dialogue breakdown. The first language spoken by the instructor and her students in this study is Javanese, while the second is Bahasa Indonesia. They are learning English as a foreign language. As a result, there are numerous utterances in Javanese and Bahasa Indonesia. The following is an example of a conversation:

- (5) S : My favourite thing is my gaman. My gaman is arit or clurit.
T : What is it? Do you know what is the English term for clurit? S :
Iyes mam...I don't know mam

Expression (5) inferred that Bahasa Indonesia has an impact on their ability to converse in English. The employment of L1 elements is very common here, accounting for up to 22.3 % of the whole discussion. They employ the approach to avoid conversational breakdowns when they are unable to memorize the terms in English as the Foreign Language.

Time Gaining Strategies

Time gaining is a technique used by speakers to make the most of their allotted time. This type of approach includes hesitation devices, gambits, repetition, and fillers. They are frequently employed when the someone requires additional time to convey the message.

a. Fillers, Gambits

They are utterances made by the speaker to pass the time while waiting for any idea in L2 terminology. The example can be described as:

(6) T : err.. my bird's name is ...err..Kacer and it ..err..has...er...two colours...err..red. err.. I love...err..my bird.

As many as 18.5% of the conversation employed fillers as the strategy to overcome difficulties.

b. Self and Other Repetition

When the speaker is aware of L2 items, but needs time to remember them from memory, repetition is used. The following are the results of the conversation's repeat findings.

(7) T : So..so... do you agree.. do you agree that durian is yummy...delicious?
S : yes...yess..delicious...it is delicious

Repetitions are frequently used to highlight the point in order to be more understandable. While the second one might be used to wait for proper vocabulary to be conveyed to the audience.

Self-Monitoring Strategy

It is kind of strategy that enable learner to fix mistakes that might be made during the speaking process or talk. In this case, speaker knows that he/she makes mistakes in producing speech/conversation. Thus, by the repairing the sentence, the audience or partner will have better understanding.

Self Initiated Repair

This strategy assists learners to initiate sentence repairing. This is done to prevent misunderstood between speaker and listener. The following is the strategy:

(8) T : Do you buy ...did you buy your own motorcycle?
S : Hehe...no, my parent..my parents mam...

In sample (8) the speaker repaired "Do" into "Did" because she knew that she was supposed to use correct grammar.

Interactional Strategy

This strategy deals with learners' ability to explain something unfamiliar by asking for assistance. Here are the examples of interactional strategies:

- (9) S : It eats..err...ulat..ulat Bahasa Inggrisnya apa mam? T
: Caterpillar
S : Yes...it eats caterpillar..
- (10) S : Err.. the fruit is... apa ya? Daging buah apa ya mam? T :
you can say flesh..
S : oh ya...the flesh is very delicious

I did not come across any of the communication strategies given by Celce Murcia et al (1995: 28). Only Avoidance Strategies, Compensatory strategy (nonverbal linguistics, literal translation, and code switching) exist. In addition, fillers and appeal for help seems to be the most effective strategy to compensate the communication breakdown done by foreign language learners.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings, the frequency of communication strategies found in the transactional and interpersonal conversation class are Avoidance Strategies (15%), compensatory strategies (48%), Stalling or time gaining strategies including fillers, hesitations, and gambits (16%), and appeal for help (22%). In addition, fillers and appeal for help seems to be the most effective strategy to compensate the communication breakdown done by foreign language learners.

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