




Original Research Article

Successful English Learners in Speaking English at SMAN 2 Surabaya

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ABSTRACT

This study is conducted to investigate the learning strategies used by successful English learners of SMAN 2 Surabaya in converting controlled process into automatic one. Adopting qualitative descriptive analysis, this study consistently describes the phenomena. Notably, it is designed as a case study since the researcher is interested in describing some aspects of second language performance of the subjects as individuals. In collecting the data, the researcher used an interview and supported by the researcher as the observer of the observation conducted in the classroom. The subjects of this study are two successful English learners of eleventh grade. Thus, the data got from the subjects derived from the observation and interview selected, simplified, and organized to draw the conclusion. Based on the results, successful English learners used both direct and indirect strategies in learning to speak English. They also did activities such as paying attention to the language learning tasks, delaying speech production to focus on listening to the target language, cooperating with peers, cooperating with proficient users of target language, seeking practice opportunities, making positive statements, taking risk wisely, and self monitoring, progressive relaxation and has deep breathing.

Keywords: learning strategies; successful English learners; speaking ability

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1. Introduction

Some learners are able to learn English successfully if they use it actively in their daily communication. In other words, we can say that some of them successfully learn and use English, while the others do not. This is because the success that one has in learning English as a second language may be influenced by some factors, including differences in environmental surroundings, individual characteristics of the learner, and learning strategies used by the learner. In short, “language learning strategies is specific action, behavior, step, or technique used by the learners in the process of learning a language to improve their language skills” (Oxford, 1990). The use of language learning strategy will somehow help the learners to improve their ability in learning a second language if the strategy selected by the learners is appropriate with them. In other words, if the learners use the strategy which is not appropriate for them, it will not be effective (Oxford, 1990:1).

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Widiati & Cahyono (2006) in Riggenback and Lazaraton argued that the parameter of learning success is judged by the fluency of the language they produce, so the great numbers of learners want to develop English speaking proficiency. Moreover, a large percentage of the world's language learners study English in order to develop proficiency in speaking. As a result, the learners' success in learning a second language is often evaluated from their speaking ability. Consequently this study focuses on the speaking skill.

Based on Chaney & Burk (1998), speaking is one of the basic skills that should be acquired by second or foreign language learners. It shows that to speak means to express thought, ideas, and opinions orally to response the verbal/non verbal information.

Therefore, in this study, the researcher wants to investigate the learning strategies used by successful English learners at SMAN 2 Surabaya. Based on the researcher's preliminary study in eleventh grade students at SMAN 2 Surabaya, it is found that most of the students have a good proficiency in English especially in speaking. It is known that this school has been famous for its reputation to generate high proficiency learners in Surabaya. In addition, the researcher's observation in class XI IPS-1 showed that most of the students are communicatively active in responding the teacher's questions and also in English class discussion. Moreover, the researcher has observed teaching learning process and student's score. It showed that most of the students are communicatively active in responding the teacher's questions and also in English class discussion. Thus, the way the students' speak show that they used some learning strategies.

Related to speaking, the automaticity is the later stage in speaking in which the speakers have learnt, practiced, and repeated lots. At the first time we learn to speak, everything seems to be controlled. Moreover, the activity of speaking is restricted to repetition and drills, so the speakers have to pay more attention to the accuracy.

Based on the description above, this study is aimed to investigate in-depth the learning strategies used by English learners at SMAN 2 Surabaya in improving their speaking ability. Then, the research problem to be investigated in the present study is formulated as follows 'What learning strategies are used by successful students of SMAN 2 Surabaya in assisting themselves in converting controlled processes into automatic ones in speaking English?'

This study aims to investigate the learning strategies used by successful English learners of SMAN 2 Surabaya in speaking English. Thus, the objective of the study is to

identify the strategies used by successful students of SMAN 2 Surabaya to assist themselves in converting controlled processes into automatic ones.

2. Methods

This study focused on in-depth investigation on the strategies used by the students of SMAN 2 Surabaya in speaking English. Specifically, this study aimed at describing the strategies used by successful students to assist themselves in converting controlled process into automatic ones.

Moreover, in order to investigate the successful students' strategies, this study used descriptive research. This type is intended to establish the existence of phenomenon by explicitly describing them. It uses a collection of technique which is used to specify, delineate, or describe naturally occurring phenomena without experimental manipulation (Seliger, H. W., & Shohamy, 1997). Thus, this study was determined as qualitative research in nature. The subjects of this study were two successful English learners of eleventh grade who had outstanding achievement in English lesson at SMAN 2 Surabaya. The criteria of successful English learners are they had to be the first, the second, or the third rank in English class or competition which were at least in local level and their average score in English is 85 or above. The researcher selects the subjects by collecting information about the students' classroom achievement from the teacher, classifying the subjects with the criteria she defined, and choosing the subjects with the criteria.

Based on the criteria, two students were selected as the subjects of this study; they were the eleventh graders in Social Science class in different class. The first subject was in the eleventh grader in Social Science 1. Actually, she had actively participated in English competitions since she was in the tenth grade and won a debate contest as the first winner in local level in 2012. In addition, her English score was 90. The second subject was in the eleventh grader in Social Science 2 that won English debate contest as the second winner in local level in 2012. His average score was 88.3.

In collecting the data, the researcher used observation technique in which observation refers to a technique which focuses on collecting nonverbal behavior data (Susanto, 2010). Here, the researcher was a non participant observer and just sits among the subjects to have an observation. Then, the researcher brought observation sheet and video recorder. When using video recorder, it was needed to observe the verbal and non verbal strategies such as facial expression, gestures, body language and the like. In order to achieve the objective of

this study, the researcher interviewed the subjects by using interview guidelines. One of the utterances that were taken to be the data was seen below.

“I don’t speak depends on ‘comfort’. I do speak depends on ‘when I have to’”

The utterance above shows that she delayed her speech, because she thought that while other classmates did the presentation, she did not have to speak. It is one of the indirect strategies gotten from the subject that supports the analysis.

3. Findings and Discussion

In this section, the researcher analyzed her observation and interview result. She also analyzed each subject separately. The first subject who analyzed firstly is in eleventh grade of Social Science 1 and the other is in Social Science 2.

In the first subject, the researcher found number of strategies she used in speaking English. The first is she applied indirect strategies. It is seen from the observation that she sat silently, paid attention, and listened to her classmates’ presentation. Taken from the interview, she said,

“I don’t speak depends on ‘comfort’. I do speak depends on ‘when i have to’”

Her statement shows that she delayed her speech, because she thought that while other classmates did the presentation, she did not have to speak. According to Oxford framework, she applied metacognitive strategies. Here, she paid attention to the target language. She also delayed producing speech and focused on listening to the target language.

Still in the same situation, she helped her presenting mates softly to answer the problem questioned by other audience by giving them clue. It means that she cooperated with her peers. She applied social strategies.

Furthermore, before she and her group presented their presentation, she applied direct strategies. She did not bring anything for her own needs in her group. At the time while her friends presented the presented material by memorizing their notes and she just stood up and focused her attention to the slide show. It shows that she practiced naturalistically flowing with what happened in the natural setting. Moreover, in the interview, she said,

“At the first I felt nervous and everything, but as the time went by and i have experienced so many kinds of competitions with various rivals, now i am not nervous anymore. Well, sometimes it still hits me but i know how to handle it better”.

It also shows that she sought practice opportunities. She found her speaking practice opportunities by herself by joining English competitions that made her familiar with speaking

English. She had applied metacognitive in which she sought out or created opportunities to practice the new language in naturalistic situations.

She also said,

“Usually I give motivations to my own self, or me and my teams motivate each others. It feels good to know that i am not fighting all alone and all by myself. It is good to know that we are all together”.

It is clear that she applied affective strategy by making positive statement. Furthermore, in the same situation, she applied indirect strategy, now, she focused on using affective strategy.

As seen from the interview, she said,

“Well, to manage such emotions when i am speaking, usually i focus more on the audiences and trying my best not to do embarrassing”.

It shows that she pushed herself to take risks when speaking English and did the best with no regret.

Subsequently, the researcher found that she also monitored herself in speaking English. It can be seen from the interview result that she said,

“Yep, usually I ask my coach to record me with handycam when i’m performing on the stage, so that I can watch it later”

It is shown that she had applied direct metacognitive strategy by doing self-monitoring.

Continuing the first analysis, the researcher now looked deeply at the second subject. He applied indirect strategies. It is seen from the observation that he sat silently, paid attention, and listened to his classmates’ presentation. Asking whether he delayed his speech until he felt comfortable enough to speak, he replied,

“Sure, for some seconds”.

He applied metacognitive strategies where he paid attention to the target language. He also delayed producing speech and focused on listening to the target language.

Still in the same situation, he helped his presenting mates softly to answer the problem questioned by the teacher by answer correctly. It means that he cooperated with his peers. He applied social strategies.

In addition, he applied direct strategies. It is seen after he helped his mates by answering in Indonesian and translating into English. He applied compensation strategies in which he used switching to the mother tongue.

In indirect strategies, he sought practice opportunities by helping his mates sitting beside him to answer the problem. It indicates that he used metacognitive strategies. Then, he

tried to answer a complicated problem when no one could solve it. He took a deep breath and encouraged his mate beside him to keep answering.

Furthermore, before he and his group presented their presentation, he applied direct strategies. He did not prepare anything for his own needs in his group. At the time, he was looked so excited when his group was going to present. It shows that he practiced his English naturalistically flowing with what happen in the natural setting. Moreover, in the interview, he said,

“I have already joined many competitions; I do not usually feel nervous”.

It also shows that he sought practice opportunities. He found his speaking practice opportunities by himself by joining English competitions that made him familiar with speaking English. He had applied metacognitive in which he sought out or created opportunities to practice the new language in naturalistic situations.

She also said,

“In debate competition, we usually do not care with the emotion, the argument is likely the most important thing. So I do not really care with that, sometimes i am relaxed or just on fire”.

It is clear that he pushed himself to take risks when speaking English and defend his argument. Yet, he enjoyed with many kinds of competitions even speak in front of the class. Subsequently, he also monitored himself in speaking English. It can be seen from the interview result that he said,

“Check my performance on video, or just simply ask my coach”.

It is shown that he would be identifying his errors in producing English in the near future. Therefore, this student had applied indirect metacognitive strategy.

4. Conclusions

The researcher presents the conclusions based on the findings of the research of her study. Based on the results of the study on successful English learners at SMAN 2 Surabaya, the conclusion is successful English learners use both direct and indirect strategy of learning in both formal and informal situation to assist them in converting controlled processes to the automatic one. In informal situation, they apply direct strategy by making use of compensation and cognitive strategy. In applying compensation strategy, they switch their target language to his mother tongue. In applying this learning strategy, they do some activities that are practicing speaking naturalistically, repeating saying word over and over,

and transferring words or structures from target language to the native language. Moreover, they also apply indirect strategy by making use of three types of learning strategy. They are metacognitive, affective, and social strategy. In applying the learning strategies, they also do activities such as paying attention to the language learning tasks, delaying speech production to focus on listening to the target language, cooperating with peers, seeking practice opportunities, making positive statements, taking risk wisely, and self monitoring, progressive relaxation and has deep breathing. In addition, in the formal situation, they apply both direct and indirect strategies of learning. In applying direct strategy, they make use of cognitive strategy by doing such activities as translating the target language expression into the native language and practicing the target language naturalistically in the natural setting. Then, in applying indirect strategy, they used three types of learning strategy that are affective, metacognitive, and social strategy. In making use of those learning strategies, they do activities like taking risk wisely, having cooperation with peers, paying attention to the target language, and asking for correction to the proficient user of the target language.

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