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STUDENTS' BELIEF ON USING CERTAIN LEARNING STRATEGIES IN IMPROVING THEIR SPEAKING ABILITY

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Abstract

Students have their own belief in using certain Language Learning Strategies (LLSs) including the students in a private institute in Indonesia. The previous research revealed that beliefs affects the formulation of effective teaching methods and will carry out the improvement of learners' language learning abilities. In addition, some scholars identified that LLSs are differed by some factors. It was found that females tend to use cognitive strategies and males use metacognitive strategies. Other research by Šafranĵ, J. (2013) supported the previous research finding that sex differences in strategy use had a profound influence. This paper investigates the students' belief on using certain Learning Strategies supporting their speaking ability and to find out the possible unrevealed learning strategies. There were 33 students of a private institute in Indonesia being included in this research. The finding shows that the students have strong belief that three learning strategies support much on their speaking improvement: MS (Memory Strategies), AS (Affective Strategies),

and SS (Social Strategies). The following researchers are expected to cover students' belief associated with the other skills especially that of receptive one.

Keywords

Belief, Learning Strategies, Speaking

1. Introduction

This study aims to figure out the learning strategies support the students speaking ability and to find out the possible unrevealed learning strategies used by the students support their speaking ability. Referring to a state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing, belief plays as a central construct in every discipline which deals with human behavior and learning. Students' choosing on learning strategies reflects the students' belief on them. In teaching and learning process, beliefs will affect the formulation of effective teaching methods and will carry out the improvement of learners' language learning abilities (Horwitz, 1985). Furthermore, he added that understanding the beliefs of learners is important because it helps teachers to understand learners' approaches to language learning and learners' use of learning strategies better so that they can plan language instruction appropriately.

Learners' approaches or strategies in learning language may vary depending on their belief. Individual Learners' have different consideration and thus causes different uses of learning strategies (Altan et al, 2003). Thus, this is hypothesized that there is a strong correlation between the students' belief on using certain learning strategies and their speaking ability, the skill that becomes the variable in this research.

Learning strategies refer to the learners' manner and style in learning. More specifically in this research the two elements: manner and style are coming up in the form second language (L2) learners' detailed planning in learning their L2. In addition to that, Yu (2013) defines language learning strategies as specific actions, behaviors, steps or techniques that students use to improve their progress in developing second language skills. Both of the definitions have an implication to the gradual attempt of achieving competence; to enhance and then to improve.

The learning strategies used in this research refer to those described by Oxford (1990): cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, memory-related strategies, compensatory strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) offered alternative taxonomies regarding L2 learning strategies: Metacognitive strategies, Cognitive strategies, and Social/affective strategies. The judgment whether a certain strategy is good or bad is worth to avoid since a strategy essentially neutral until the context of its use is thoroughly considered. The provided

learning strategies are used for the consideration of the targeted skill. In short, a certain learning strategy is sometimes proper only with a certain skill.

The recent researches were mostly to investigate the certain language learning strategy uses in certain different situation and condition. It is thought that students' need for the use of learning strategy could be differed by sex, disciplines, materials and skill, setting, etc. Solak and Cakir (2015) said that a significant difference was found for females in cognitive strategies and for males in metacognitive strategies. Other research by Šafranĳ (2013) found that sex differences in strategy use had a profound influence. For example, compared with males, females reported the significantly more frequent use of conversational strategies, reflecting social interaction.

Peacock and Ho (2003) found different use of LLSs across disciplines. Very low use of metacognitive strategies is by computing students. Amazingly, their research also indicated that the differences were also found by both age and by gender: older students were strong in affective and social areas, and females in memory and metacognitive strategies.

Materials also become an element to be considered in using certain learning strategies. Sadeghi, Hassani, and Hessari (2013) identified that the students prefer different language-learning strategies in different ways depending on the skill. Results also indicated students learning language through different materials, employed different types of learning strategies.

Language learning strategy used also varied due to the students' setting. The setting can be narrowed by the living environment of the language learners. Simply say, inside the classroom or outside the classroom. Resulted from a semi-structured interview analysis, Kamalizad & Samuel (2016) indicated the fact that EFL and ESL students differed from each other with regard to using the language outside the class, and the obstacles they faced while learning and using the target language outside their language classes in their related settings.

Latest researches on language learning strategies are varied in finding. Such as Ajeng (2017) identified the fact that even though the language learners have similar learning strategies, but they tend to perform activity in the learning process. While Irfan and Alyani (2015) recognized that Metacognitive is the most preferable strategy from which the learners take control of their own learning.

Other researchers were focused on finding the students' belief about language learning such as Mohebi and Khodadady (2011) which come up with the suggestion that teachers should be aware of learners' beliefs of language learning as well as their own in order to assist less successful

language learners to become successful. Siew and Wong (2010) also conducted research on Beliefs about Language Learning with Malaysian Pre-Service Teachers as the participants.

The fact that most of the previous research focused on the finding the use of learning strategies in certain circumstances and or separately investigate the students' belief about language learning and nothing to do with the use of learning strategies in accordance with the students' belief and the skill, speaking, in this case. Moreover, the identification of some unique and possibly unrevealed learning strategies could be elaborated by providing judgment or guarantee related to the improvement of such skill. This is to convince that the ability to perform good speaking could only be achieved under the students' strong belief in choosing the learning strategies. This is important for investigation since speaking has become the targeted skill for improvement from time to time.

2. Methods

This quantitative research study basically uses linear regression analysis and projected to answer the two research problems. 33 students considered as good speaking performers of the non-English department (across departments) of a private institute in Indonesia become the participants of this study. 30 (84.4%) of them are female and 3 (15.2%) are male. About 1 (3%) of them categorized his English proficiency as very good, 15 (45.5%) as good, 13 (39.4%) as fair, and 4 (12.1%) as poor. All the selected students have been joining an intensive English language program about eight months and are selected from ten classes under the consideration that they have the average number of the score of 80 on speaking.

The participants' selection process is also based on the teachers' recommendation. The recommended names then verified by having a semi-structured interview by accommodating analytical scoring rubric for speaking performance by O'Malley and Pierce (1996: 67). The first instrument being used was semi-structured interview sheet accompanied by the analytical scoring rubric. This is to verify the existed score reflected the students' speaking performance. Ten questions are designed to investigate the students' fluency, grammar accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

An online questionnaire which was distributed through WhatsApp was designed to answer the first and second research problems. This questionnaire covered ten questions directed to know the students' demography and thirty formulated statements representing the whole principle of the six learning strategies adapted from Oxford (1990): 1) Memory Strategies ((MS), (2) Cognitive Strategies (COGS), (3) Compensatory Strategies (COMS) , (4) Metacognitive Strategies (METS), (5) Affective Strategies (AS), and (6) Social Strategies (SS). Each learning the strategies (LSs) was then represented by five statements. The items expected the students' agreement ranging from

strongly disagree, agree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. The items were written in English along with its Indonesian translation. The questionnaire ended up with and three additional questions directing to dig up the information whether the participants have their own learning strategies besides the existing six.

3. Findings

After verifying the students' score on speaking performance using semi-structured interview, the step I did was coming to make the conclusion that the 33 participants were deserved to be categorized into orally good English performers. The conclusion led me to the next step, analyzing the data. It reveals that from the six learning strategies, the participants believe that three of the Learning Strategies have more contribution than the other three: MS, AS, and SS. From the following table, MS, AS, and SS have probability value ≤ 0.05 . While the other three: COGS, COMS, and METS have probability value ≥ 0.05 (COGS 0.79, COMS 0.08, and METS 0.09).

Table 1: *Students' belief on certain LSs*

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	80.00000	5.76E-13	1.39E+14	0.0000
MS	-3.42E-13	1.26E-13	-2.719237	0.0115
COGS	3.63E-14	1.40E-13	0.259506	0.7973
COMS	-1.93E-13	1.09E-13	-1.763984	0.0895
METS	1.97E-13	1.15E-13	1.718661	0.0976
AS	-7.29E-13	1.82E-13	-4.009787	0.0005
SS	4.69E-13	1.23E-13	3.827399	0.0007
Mean dependent var	80.00000	S.D. dependent var		0.000000
S.E. of regression	3.41E-13	Sum squared resid		3.03E-24
Durbin-Watson stat	2.021194			

Regarding MS, about 16 (48.5%) of the students strongly believe that images and sounds help them much in doing speaking and only 1 (3%) showed negative respond in it. In AS, about 23 (69.7%) of the students strongly believe that having a good model speaking performer help them to motivate learning English and only 1 (3%) showed negative respond regarding the need' of model, about 25 (75.8%) strongly believe that forcing themselves to speak English even though they know that their pronunciation is not good is better than keeping silent all the time and only 2 (6.1%) of them showed negative respond. The students showed various response when they were asked whether they believed that they could not speak whenever they are afraid or nervous. About 3 (9.1%) of the students strongly disagree, 6 (18.2%) agree, 10 (30.3%) neutral, 7 (21.2%) disagree, and 7

(21.2%) strongly disagree. When the students were asked about being laughed by their friends of making mispronunciation, it was only 1 (3%) of them feeling affected, 7 (21.2%) of them were neutral, and 14 (42.4%) don't care about it. In the last item of AS the students were asked to respond whether they feel impossible to speak English after seeing their friend doing it so well. 10 (30.3%) of the students strongly disagree, 12 (36.4%) disagree, 5 (15.2%) neutral, 3 (9.1%) agree, and 3 (9.1%) strongly disagree.

The last contributive LSs is Social Strategies (SS). The first item was given to know the students' belief about whether practicing speaking with others is the best way to improve speaking proficiency. It reveals that there were 22 (68.8%) of them strongly agree, 6 (18.8%) agree, and only 1 (3.1) disagree. When the students were asked about whether a debate is a kind of good strategy to practice speaking, they responded it variedly. 5 (15.6%) of them strongly disagree, 1 (3.1%) disagree, 6 (18.8%) neutral, 9 (28.1%) agree, and 11 (34.4%) strongly agree. The next item was designed to know whether feeling reluctant to ask a question in English becomes a barrier to learn English or no. 3 (9.4%) of them strongly disagree, 3 (9.4%) disagree, 7 (21.9%) neutral, 11 (34.4%) agree, and 8 (25%) strongly agree. The next item was intended to know the students' respond whether studying and sharing are good ways in learning speaking. 0 (0%) of them strongly disagree, 2 (6.1%) disagree, 1 (3%) neutral, 10 (30.3%) agree, and 20 (60.6%) strongly agree. The last item was about asking the students whether they need friends to practice English. 1 (3%) of them strongly disagree, 3 (9.1%) disagree, 7 (21.2%) agree, and 22 (66.7%) strongly agree.

To answer the second research problem, the data derived from the last three items of the questionnaire were manually analyzed, classified, and compared to the six LLs. It reveals that the students doing such variations. The variations are mostly related to the media being used as the means of learning strategy; Smartphone application such as social media, music, movie, and recording. A student was identified to chat in English (sometimes mix it with *Bahasa Indonesia*) almost every day by means of social media. It was also found that a student used to record her speaking activity using her Smartphone. The unique non-technological LSs is also found such as the needs of a native speaker of English to speak with.

4. Discussion

The 33 students' belief on MS, AS, and SS in improving their speaking proficiency had been proven statistically through this research. This is obviously seen that the less contributive LLs to the English student being used as the participants in this research are COGS, COMS, and METS. Students with different characteristics of the students being used as participants in this research

might have a different belief. Their belief on the three LLs enables them to be able to speak English better than the other students in the same level and institution. Because no one of the respondents come from English department it is likely very normal to happen. Students in this criterion have minimum expose to both theoretical and practical English. It seems that COGS, COMS, and METS are very technical to be used by the students being as participants in this research.

The participants need more aids as stimuli to speak English such as images, pictures, sounds, and body movements which are included in Memory Strategies (MS). Students from English department may not really need these kinds of stuff especially for those who have good conceptual thinking. The participants also in high needs of a model of a good speaking performer, a well established internal motivation, and an extra courage to cope with nervousness as being included in Affective Strategies (AS). It is obviously seen that the participants' struggle hard to maintain their mood to speak using English. Again, students majoring English may not in a high needs of these three factors.

Social Strategies (SS) plays important role in improving the students' speaking proficiency. The students' belief about the best way to practice English with others indicates that they need partners to practice from their social life. Including social elements are good at practicing English. This is also beneficial to stimulate the students' external motivation to speak.

5. Conclusion

Students being included as the participants in this research have the strong belief on using non-technical strategies in improving their speaking proficiency. Technical strategies refer to linguistically strategic approaches such as COGS, COMS, and METS. Students in different characteristics and discipline could probably have the different belief on using certain learning strategies. It could also be different in the result as being associated with different skills. Therefore, the following researcher could go figuring out these two opportunities.

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