

INTERACTIONAL STRATEGIES AS WAYS IN FACING COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN USED BY EFL STUDENTS IN SURAKARTA

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Abstract: This research employed a descriptive qualitative design applying a case study. It pointed out to investigate the use and the underlying factors of interactional strategies by the EFL students in Surakarta. The EFL students who are carried by interactional strategies can help to attain the effective communication which the message or idea is able to be well-delivered. The data collecting techniques in this research are observation and interview. It utilized purposive sampling. There were 10 participants who were actively involved in question and answer session after having presentation in a class. It was a content class majoring American studies where the EFL students are to practice English speaking skills. Based on the data analysis, it shows that the EFL students used appealing strategies more for help rather than negotiation strategies, responses or comprehension checks. Their low understanding on presented material underlies the use of appealing strategies for help. Besides appeal for help in verbal way, the results show that they are often in puzzled expression and smile when they are not able to handle question and answer sessions.

Keywords: communication strategies, EFL students, interactional strategies

INTRODUCTION

To achieve the goal of language learning, second language learners or in this case English as Foreign Language students need to acquire their communicative competence. Therefore, it is still becoming an issue to be discussed while in facing the twentieth century “people should make communication and expand way elsewhere their native or local communities” (Isya, 2018). Ellis in Fauziati (2017) pointed out that improving the skill or ability in using target language is the aim of learning second language then to achieve it, speaking is the most significant skill among others. In addition, there are three other language skills that also need to be developed: reading, writing and listening (Alawi: 2006). Communication deals with how the speakers and hearers are able to deliver and receive the message even negotiate the meaning (Rubin and Thompson in Fauziati, 2017). As a reflection, Idrus (2016) conducted a research in Malaysia that English (second language for Malaysian and foreign language for Indonesian) is professionally practiced in the global arena. This brings a number of unemployment of university graduates due their inability to communicate well in English.

As proposed by Hymes (1972), communicative competence means that the speaker and hearer learn second language in expressing and grasping the message in any situation. Communicative competence is an effect of dissatisfaction toward audiolingual and grammar-translation method in learning second language (Fauziati, 2016). There were a number of theories standing for communicative competences and its sub-competences. They were from Hymes followed by Canale and Swain which offered three sub-competencies (grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competence), Canale then revised and divided sociolinguistic competence into

sociolinguistic itself and discourse competence, Widdowson (in Bagaric and Djigunovic, 2007) who clarified a clear-cut view of communicative competence into competence and capacity, Bachman with her communicative language ability then Celce-Murcia et al with its comprehensive outputs for both its linguistic and cultural issues.

Canale and Swain (1980) proposed four main sub-competencies in communicative competence: grammatical (the knowledge of language code), discourse (cohesive level), sociolinguistic (the mastery of sociocultural code) and strategic competence or later well known as communication strategies. The number of research in the field of communication strategies were broadly discussed within other variable. Yaman and Ozcan (2015) investigated the communication strategies used by EFL students in Turkey. Sener and Balkir (2013) resulted that approximation is the most used of communication strategies. There were also several research discussing communication strategies and gender (Abunawas, 2002; Cervantez and Rodriguez, 2012; Hajiesmaeli and Darani, 2017 and etc).

Felix (in Fauziati, 2017) denoted strategic competence or communication strategies as how the speakers faced their breakdown of communication also limited on linguistic knowledge of the target language. Celce-Murcia et al (1995) classified the taxonomy of strategic competence or communication strategies into five classifications. They are Avoidance or Reduction strategies, Achievement or Compensatory strategies, Stalling or Time-gaining strategies, Self-monitoring strategies and Interactional strategies. Avoidance or reductions strategies deal with message replacement, topic avoidance and message abandonment. Achievement or compensatory has lots of examples: circumlocution, approximation, all-purpose words, non-linguistic means, restructuring, word-coinage, literal translation from L1, code switching into L1 or L3 and retrieval. Stalling or time-gaining strategies are fillers, hesitation devices, gambits and another self-other-repetition. Meanwhile, self-monitoring strategies are into self-initiated repair and self-rephrasing. Lastly, interactional strategies have five types: appeal for help (it can be a direct or indirect), meaning negotiation strategies (indicator of mis-understanding), request (repetition request, clarification request, confirmation request and expression of mis-understanding), responses and comprehension checks.

Those strategies should be found in how EFL students give a presentation in the lecture. Nevertheless, this research focuses on interactional strategies. Therefore, this research will draw on the research question into: What interactional strategies are used by EFL students in Surakarta?

METHOD

This research carried out a case study as the methodology and applied a descriptive qualitative design. Qualitative deals more in words rather than numbers (Miles and Huberman, 1994) As Patton (2001) had dealt, qualitative method is able to produce a refined and insightful result. In addition, this research used case study as its strategy so that the researcher has no involving hand in the observed case (Yin, 1994).

This research implemented the flow model of Miles and Huberman (1994) to analyze the data. There are three main steps in flow model analysis. They are data reduction, data display and drawing conclusion. Data reduction is that the researcher should select then collect the data taken from data source. Thus, it needs to erase the unrelated data which are unsupported to the research of interactional strategies used by EFL students in Surakarta. Later those data are set according to the types in certain classification of interactional strategies by Celce-Murcia et al

(1995). Data display eased the researcher in case to read the result to find the answers to the questions. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommended data display in narrative form. Lastly the data are drawn in a conclusion. It should be remarked towards checking from data collection, reduction and display which maintain the classification of interactional strategies used by EFL students in Surakarta.

This research took place in an English Department in Surakarta, Central Java. There were ten EFL university students as the research subjects. They were students of American Study while the rest are majoring Linguistics, Literature and Translation. EFL students are obliged to choose a certain major when they had passed fifth semester. American study requires the students to have a presentation in each class. Furthermore, those EFL students had surpassed three levels of speaking lectures in the beginning of their program. Therefore, we assumed that those EFL students taking American Study are able to produce several communication strategies partially related to interactional strategy as the focus of research. Their age ranges from 19 to 21. The data for this research had been collected from April to June 2018 in one of their lectures in Gender class.

This research carried out a purposive sampling. Creswell (2007) stated that purposive sampling highlights the main staple of the research. Patton (2001) classified purposive sampling in case study into several levels: people, perspective, geography, activity and time-based. Thus, this research is suitable in people focused since this research observed and analyzed EFL students set a presentation assignment. This research focused on whether EFL students used interactional strategies in their presentation assignment when facing communication breakdown. In answering the research questions, this research used observation and unstructured interview to gain more complete data. A qualitative research needs trustworthiness to clarify its credibility or internal validity (Shenton, 2004). Thus, we took three ways: triangulation (data collecting), member check (re-ensure the data to the respondents) and thick description (describing the actual situations and surrounded context among the respondents).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results were collected through an observation towards ten EFL students in classroom situation then it was Gender class of American Study major. The result showed the use of interactional strategies by the EFL students and the data were calculated in percentage as shown in the following table.

Table 1. The Use of Interactional Strategies of EFL Students

Appeals for help		Total	Meaning negotiation strategies					Interpretive Summary ISum	Responses Resp	Comprehension Checks CCh	Total	
			Requests			Expression of non-understanding						
Dir	Ind		RRq	CRq	CnRq	Ver	NVer					
Fre	27	31	58	-	-	-	5	36	-	3	13	57
%	46%	54%	100%	-	-	-	8%	63%	-	5%	24%	100%

Dir = direct	Ver = verbal
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Ind = indirect	NVer = non-verbal
RRq = repetition request	ISum = interpretive summary
CRq = clarification request	Resp = responses
CnRq = confirmation request	CCh = comprehension checks

According to the table above, the EFL students were applying no request (repetition request, clarification request and confirmation request) and interpretive summary. Basically, those sub-types of interactional strategies were commonly applied in an ‘interaction’. However, these data showed that the EFL students should train their speaking skills through presentation’s assignment there and there were several small talks between the speaker and the hearer. There were two main types in interactional strategies: appeals for help and meaning negotiation strategies.

Nevertheless, there were only six sub-types of interactional strategies used by EFL students among others. They were direct and indirect in type of appeal for help, verbal and non-verbal expression of non-understanding, responses also comprehension checks. The two dominant high percentage that had been owned by indirect appeal for help and non-verbal expression of non-understanding. Those were experienced by mostly all EFL students. Students often gave a puzzled expression and or raised eyebrows. Puzzled expression was signed to indirect appeal for help while raised eyebrows, in this case, was on non-verbal expression of non-understanding.

On the other hand, the use of direct appeal for help was also in a high percentage. The Gender class encouraged EFL students to read and understand more. Thus, it should be a difficulty if the students did not master the presented material which made them need help from the hearer, his or her classmates. The direct appeal for help was in an expression ‘how to say... and what do you call...’. The speaker invited the hearers to help them in facing communication breakdown. Next was comprehension checks. Celce-Murcia et al (1995) mentioned that there were several situations producing comprehension checks. There were whether the interlocutor can follow you, whether what you said was correct or in grammatical form, whether the interlocutor is listening and whether the interlocutor can hear you. Nonetheless, the EFL students used mostly on whether the interlocutor can follow (e.g. am I making sense?) then followed by whether the interlocutor is listening (e.g. do you still pay attention?). The speaker was able to manage the presentation session and got more attention from the hearer as if there was ‘interaction’ in that presentation session through comprehension checks strategies. Thus, the speaker was able to confirm whether his or her presentation were well-watched or not.

The use of verbal expression of non-understanding and responses were in a low percentage. EFL students rarely used these strategies in their presentation. It was found that the percentage is very low level. Not many students were brave to ask for some information or materials from the hearer directly.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis and interview, there were six types of interactional strategies used by EFL students in the classroom. They are direct and indirect (appeals for help), verbal and non-verbal (expression of non-understanding), responses and also comprehension checks. In the types of appealing for helps, the EFL students indirectly used indirect sub-types of interactional strategies mostly rather than direct sub-types. Meanwhile, in meaning negotiation types, EFL

students implemented more on non-verbal expressions of non-understanding. It was followed by comprehension checks, verbal expression of non-understanding, and responses sub-types. Thus this types of interactional strategies are part of taxonomy of Celce-Murcia et al (1995).

The use of indirect sub-type was most used in a way of puzzled expression. When EFL students did not master his or her material, they were going to take this act. It is in line with the meaning negotiation strategies which shows that non-verbal expression of non-understanding (raised eyebrows) was still being used in nowadays by EFL students. They did since they were going to negotiate the impromptu question in the midst of presentation session. Therefore, the interactional strategies were coming up when there emerged or provoked 'interaction' between the speaker and the hearer.

This research on interactional strategies need in-depth analysis. Not only interactional strategies but also four other strategies (reduction, compensatory, stalling and self-monitoring) that was able to be analyzed. I am convinced that there should be more research on communication strategies especially in interactional strategies.

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