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**TITLE: COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGIES HELP STUDENTS IN
COMMUNICATION**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The importance of English Language is undeniable given the popular rise of globalisation which nations bolster their connections among themselves. English Language is generally considered as the medium of communication between people from two different nations when they meet, even if there is a continental distance between them. English Language has reduce the gap among nations around the world in many different aspects. As such, there is a sense of requirement to learn the language that is currently in demand. Communication is very important to get message or ideas across in the form of written and spoken language. It is inevitable to isolate communication from the society as people act as social beings need it for conveying something simple such as expressing feelings or something more complicated like giving ideas or information throughout the course of their lives for sustainability of their well-being in their life. English spoken language is becoming more prominent as it provides significantly more information and expression in conveying message as it reveals image, personality, knowledge of the world, ability to reason, skill to express thoughts instantly.

However, it is not easy for non-native speakers of English Language who learn English Language to speak like the native speakers as there could be several factors which hinder their ability to express naturally. In most Asian countries, English Language is probably the second language which they use mainly in written language and less frequent in spoken language. From the socio-cultural perspective, verbal communication can be a challenge when they are coming from different backgrounds, involving different cultures and languages used in their community. These factors can create difficulties like unfamiliar sound system, limited vocabulary and unfamiliar sentence construction, which are related to linguistic factors. Two-way communication often requires appropriate responses to accomplish the communicative goals. The use of spoken English Language has somehow caused some problems and broken down communication, such as misunderstanding as to getting the wrong message, not getting the message across or accidentally offending someone.

The challenge is even more prominent in the context of second language (L2) learners as they are not always fluent in their speaking of English Language. In Malaysia, numerous efforts were executed with minimal success as changes to the education system in Malaysia were constantly being introduced from time to time, to improve the overall proficiency of the L2 learners. The L2 learners still struggle in expressing themselves because the emphasis on improving their speaking skills is not implemented. L2 learners often find it difficult to sustain a conversation in English, with instances like long pauses and nervousness contributing to the obstacle, breaking down the communication altogether. Hence, there is a necessity for L2 learners to master the communicative strategies to maintain simple exchanges as the main purpose of communication is to make the recipients understand the message being conveyed.

Communicative fluency is essential for effective communication as fluency helps the flow of ideas to be conveyed more naturally without having fear in speaking or other problems like having long pauses which could distort the communication. Hence, the study is intended to find out the effectiveness of communicative strategies learned in one of the L2 speaking classrooms taught.

1.2 Research Problem

L2 learners have difficulties maintaining and extending conversation in English Language as they often resort to mother tongue or stop talking altogether.

1.3 Research Objectives

To identify the benefits of L2 learners learning the appropriate communicative strategies in conversation.

1.4 Research Question

Do L2 learners benefit from learning and applying appropriate communicative strategies in conversation?

1.5 Hypothesis

Communicative strategies could help L2 students in performing simple exchanges to maintain conversation.

1.6 Significance of Study

This study can help in providing evidence for other teachers to attempt in improving their teaching by doing reflection on the teaching and learning process to assist L2 students in their communicative skills. This could be beneficial to L2 teachers to have a notion of including communicative strategies into their teaching content to help prepare L2 learners for the real world.

1.7 Scope

This study only covers the communicative strategies such as phrases for clarification and phrases for thinking to improve fluency in conversation. The study does not cover other parts of speaking skills.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

This study cannot be generalised to all students in the school as the students are chosen from only one particular class, which could have variation in their background, culture, ability and proficiency. This study cannot be generalised to other speaking skills or other English Language productive skills.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Approaches

The research approach is based on mixed method, involving both qualitative and quantitative methods. The purpose for a mixed method is for a more reliable result through integration of two different types of data. In addition, a more comprehensive understanding of the issue will be established rather than having a single form of data.

2.2 Research Design

The research design is based on the mixed method approach, focusing on 3 different forms of data collection. For quantitative research design, comparison and correlation will be made for the scores of two different speaking tasks of the L2 learners. For qualitative research design, comments given by the teacher for every individual learner will be recorded to identify the key issues as well as progress among the two different speaking tasks. For triangulation, L2 learners are given open-ended questions about their views and self-reflection on their learning.

2.3 Methods of Data Collection

The data collection is done with 3 main methods: records of scores from two speaking performances following treatments through action research, comments from teacher on the speaking performance and an online questionnaire survey of L2 learners' reflection on their learning. The speaking performances are from 2 different lessons with similar learning contents. The comments from the teacher are also based on these two speaking performances. The online questionnaire survey is a reflection-based open-ended survey to gather the emerging themes or general idea from the group. The online questionnaire is created from Typeform.com

2.4 Analysis

The analysis of the findings is done according to the methods used in collecting data. The records of scores of the L2 learners would be compared between two speaking lessons and find the improvement of the L2 learners' performance comparing lesson with treatment and lesson without treatment. Comments from teacher are being referred as to identify the general problems L2 learners faced in their speaking performances. Emerging themes (similar ideas from majority) are identified through open-ended questionnaire given to L2 learners for the reflection of classroom teaching and learning process.

2.5 Context

The study group is a group of 16 students from Senior 2 Rationale, with the teacher being the researcher. The lessons involved are all Speaking Activity lessons. Two activity lessons chosen as subjects of the study are Lesson 3 'Superstitions around the World' and Lesson 4 'Trip Advisor'. Both lessons require students to speak about something to convince people, hence having similar strategies to speak.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Results of Speaking Performances



Lesson 3 (Superstitions around the World)

No.	Student ID	Name	Comments	GV	ER	P	I	TTL
1	12379	林隽贤 Lim Jun Xian	Readiness/lack vocab	2	2	2	2	8
2	13083	苏宇泽 Soh Yu Zhe	Pron “carat”	3	3	3	3	12
3	13151	曾燕妮 Chen Yin Ni	Unclear words – muttering	3	3	2	3	11
4	13407	林邦彦 Lin Bang Yen	Overall OK	4	4	4	5	17
5	13448	曾君龙 Chen Jun Long	Wrong vocab – safety (safe)	3	3	3	3	12
6	14031	童煊帋 Thong Xian Hui	Overall OK	5	4	4	4	17
7	14035	陈文翰 Chin Wen Han	Poor structure of sentences	3	2	4	3	12
8	14056	刘兼杰 How Kin Keat	Overall OK/short pauses	4	3	3	4	14
9	14071	黄恩环 Jane Wang En Huan	Stammer/lack fluency	3	3	3	2	11
10	14073	黄嘉琦 Jacquelin Ooi Jia Qi	Wrong pronoun – we (our)	3	3	3	2	11
11	14086	刘炫乐 Lau Xun Le	Overall OK/short pauses	4	3	4	3	14
12	14089	关凯桦 Kuan Kai Wah	Overall OK/lack fluency	3	3	4	3	13
13	14090	陈誉航 Tan Vi Hang	Overall OK/little vocab prob	3	5	3	4	15
14	14101	杨裕宏 Yong Yu Hong	Overall OK/little pron prob	4	4	3	5	16
15	14107	何国俊 Ho Kok Jun	Tenses are wrong throughout	2	3	3	3	11
16	14115	王振皓 Wong Chan Hao	Overall OK/little tenses prob	3	4	4	5	16

Lesson 4 (Trip Advisor – Planning a Trip)

No.	Student ID	Name	Comments	GV	ER	P	I	TTL
1	12379	林隽贤 Lim Jun Xian	Min participation/effort made	2	3	3	2	10
2	13083	苏宇泽 Soh Yu Zhe	Pron “very” (r-sound not made)	3	4	3	3	13
3	13151	曾燕妮 Chen Yin Ni	Structure prob in sentence	3	3	3	3	12
4	13407	林邦彦 Lin Bang Yen	Overall OK/little grammar prob	3	5	4	5	17
5	13448	曾君龙 Chen Jun Long	Wrong preposition – on (in)	3	3	5	4	15
6	14031	童煊帋 Thong Xian Hui	Overall OK/short pauses	5	3	4	4	16
7	14035	陈文翰 Chin Wen Han	Noun prob/unfamiliar word	3	3	3	3	12
8	14056	刘兼杰 How Kin Keat	Vocab prob/lack fluency	3	2	3	3	11
9	14071	黄恩环 Jane Wang En Huan	Vocab – meat fish (fish meat)	3	4	4	3	14
10	14073	黄嘉琦 Jacquelin Ooi Jia Qi	Verb prob – be verb not used	3	3	3	4	13
11	14086	刘炫乐 Lau Xun Le	Overall OK/little adj prob	3	4	4	4	15
12	14089	关凯桦 Kuan Kai Wah	Chinese translation	3	2	3	2	11
13	14090	陈誉航 Tan Vi Hang	Overall OK/little prep prob	3	4	3	4	14
14	14101	杨裕宏 Yong Yu Hong	Plural/Singular prob	3	3	3	4	13
15	14107	何国俊 Ho Kok Jun	Overall OK/short pauses	3	3	3	4	13
16	14115	王振皓 Wong Chan Hao	Pron prob – desert (dessert)	3	4	3	4	14

Representation

GV – Grammar and Vocabulary	ER – Extended Response		Improved score
P – Pronunciation	I – Interaction		Dropped score

3.2 Findings of Questionnaire Survey

From the online questionnaire survey, L2 learners have responded to 7 open-ended questions based on 2 categories: speaking strategies (4 Questions) and speaking fluency (3 Questions). The respondents are of anonymous identity to protect the fairness and the reliability of the responses. The researcher only chose 5 responses to identify the emerging themes from each question.

i) Part 1 - Speaking strategies

Question 1a - Tell me about the difficulties you have in a speaking presentation and maintaining conversation.

Respond 1: I think it's my vocabulary and I can't speak English fluently.

Respond 2: I often feel nervous and restate the statement which I have mentioned before.

Respond 3: My difficulties in speaking are that I don't have many new words and my pronunciation is not accurate.

Respond 4: Sometimes I don't know what I can say because my vocabulary is not enough to let me clearly express something.

Respond 5: A lot of words that I don't know how to describe and sometimes don't know how to pronounce them.

Question 1b – Tell me about the strategies you have learned in overcoming the speaking difficulties.

Respond 1: I learned that I need to read more and talk more.

Respond 2: Reading books and speak more English.

Respond 3: Know more about grammar and vocabulary to speak.

Respond 4: Need to know more about grammar and vocabulary for speaking.

Respond 5: Be brave to speak my own opinion.

Question 1c – Tell me about the strategies you have used in overcoming the speaking difficulties.

Respond 1: Talk with friends in English using words I know.

Respond 2: I do many practice to speak fluently and correct myself during speaking to make sure I will not make the same mistakes.

Respond 3: I will try to speak English with my friends and watch more English movies on how to talk in conversation.

Respond 4: By speaking to my aunt more because she doesn't know Chinese, and I can learn from a fluent speaker.

Respond 5: Just say anything that I can think of similar to the message I want to say.

Question 1d – Tell me about the usefulness of learning and having strategies in performing a speaking task and maintaining conversation.

Respond 1: I think this kind of stuff can improve my English speaking.

Respond 2: Improves my grammar and vocabulary skills in speaking.

Respond 3: I think it can help me to communicate with more people and have more selective conversations with others.

Respond 4: It is useful because it can help me in the future and helps me speak fluently.

Respond 5: Improve speaking English with people and have good communication.

ii) Part 2 – Speaking fluency

Question 2a – Tell me about the importance of understanding a message and making people understand a message in a speaking task or conversation.

Respond 1: Yes, it is important to tell something but using simple words is enough.

Respond 2: Understanding a message is important in order to let people do the exact thing.

Respond 3: This ability will be very important when I go for interview.

Respond 4: It can let people know what I want to present to them.

Respond 5: To make sure that there is no misunderstanding and know what the person wants to tell us.

Question 2b – Tell me about the importance of speaking in a smooth flow without making too much pauses.

Respond 1: It is very important when you communicate with people and for people to understand you.

Respond 2: To keep the mood of the audience good so that they listen to us.

Respond 3: Speaking in a smooth flow without making too much pauses can make the person you are talking to feel comfortable

Respond 4: It can make people feel good and improve their confidence to talk to you.

Respond 5: To prove that you are good in speaking and improve understanding without confusion.

Question 2c – Tell me about the use of strategies in making your speaking more effective and fluent to get your message across.

Respond 1: Using simple words, I can speak more fluently.

Respond 2: Straightforward and simple words can help in speaking more fluently.

Respond 3: I can communicate easier with other people.

Respond 4: I am now always trying to speak English with people and not shy.

Respond 5: Easier to talk to people and I can speak louder.

4.0 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Discussion

i) The comparison between the first lesson and second lesson have indicated that the L2 learners have both benefitted as well as dropped marks from the previous lesson. There are eight L2 learners who have gained more marks in Lesson 4, while there are six L2 learners who have dropped marks compared to Lesson 3, with the remaining two L2 learners maintaining their score in the two lessons. One student who has markedly improved is Chen Jun Long, scoring 3 marks more than the previous score. The drop in score is slightly less significant as the most marks lost are only 2 compared to the previous score. While there could be other factors affecting the performance of the L2 learners, the improvement of the learners could also be supported by the comments given by the teacher.

ii) Comparing comments between the two lessons, there are some L2 learners who have evidently improved from the previous lesson and resolved the problem they had. Example 1, Lim Jun Xian was not ready to speak as he lacked vocabulary, but he made effort in the next lesson though with minimum participation. Example 2, Jane Wang En Huan made lots of stammering and lacked fluency in Lesson 3, but improved on the next lesson, making mistakes primarily on vocabulary like 'meat fish'. The next example shows gradual improvement by making small steps in improving the language. Jacqueline Ooi Jia Qi made simple stride by rectifying her use of pronouns (we-our), and she would move on to realise her next mistake was a verb (followed after pronouns). One more example that L2 learner learned to speak more fluently is seen in Lau Xun Le, as he improved on his short pauses he made in Lesson 3, to speak more fluently, albeit grammatical errors made in adjective in Lesson 4. Lastly, Ho Kok Jun who had major tenses issues in Lesson 3 tried to be more careful in his approach in Lesson 4, improving his grammar but making little pauses as he spoke.

iii) The online questionnaire survey was conducted to get an insight on the L2 learners' learning experience throughout the Speaking Activity lessons. First part of the questionnaire involves the learners' understanding of speaking strategies. From the findings, we can say that the emerging theme from the responses of Question 1a shows that L2 learners are having problem with English language vocabulary and it affects the way they speak, especially to speak fluently. The emerging theme from the responses of Question 1b shows that L2 learners feel the need to gain more knowledge of the world through reading and know more about words and structures that can be used in speaking, as well as be more proactive in speaking. Next, the emerging theme from the responses of Question 1c shows that L2 learners are using certain strategies to improve their speaking, especially in responding and maintaining conversation in a fluent manner. Last question of this part is Question 1d, with the emerging theme from the responses shows that L2 learners are content with strategies they have learned and used in helping them to communicate and express more fluently with people. Part 2 involves learners' understanding of speaking fluency. The emerging theme of Question 2a shows that L2 learners think that understanding a message is important for people to accurately understand what is being said, minimising the chance to be misunderstood, and in formal occasion such as an interview. Next question, Question 2b has the emerging theme from the responses that shows that L2 learners are aware of the importance of having fluency in a conversation and the implication of fluency in a conversation or a speaking act. Lastly, L2 learners responded that they use strategies to

improve speaking English with people in various ways, making them more confident in speaking generally.

4.2 Conclusion

From the results and findings, it is evident that there are problems with L2 learners in terms of their speaking performance. L2 learners are aware that they have problems but they are at times unaware of how they could cope with the disadvantage of them being the second language speakers. With assistance given by the teacher, L2 learners would be aware of strategies they require in compensating their flaws in producing a more fluent speaking performance to make communication more successful.

4.3 Recommendation

Following this study, it would be recommended for teachers to make learners aware of their own learning and make their weaknesses known and accepted to be given an opportunity to make improvements. Learners should also be aware of the strategies in communication for speaking to be a usable skill in the actual world outside the classroom with the message being the importance in a speaking situation. Teachers who are teaching the Speaking Activity classes should also try to assist learners to have communicative strategies which could help them in both presentation in the class as well as real world conversation with people outside classroom. Future study could be focussed on the improving the accuracy of L2 learners in the English Speaking Activity lessons.