



THE USE OF SOCIAL STRATEGY IN SPEAKING ACTIVITY OF LOW AND HIGH LEVEL'S STUDENTS

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Abstract: This study aims to identify whether there is a significant difference in the use of social strategies between students with low-level and high-level speaking abilities at State Islamic University Imam Bonjol Padang. This research involved 90 students from the English Education Department at the university, classified into two groups based on their speaking ability: 46 low-level students and 44 high-level learners. Data were collected using a questionnaire that measured the use of social strategies in speaking learning. The results of this research indicated a significant difference in the use of social strategies between the two groups of students. The average score for the low-level students was 47.32, while the high-level students had an average score of 59.20. The Mann-Whitney test confirmed that this difference was statistically significant, suggesting that students with higher speaking abilities tend to use social strategies more effectively or frequently than those with lower speaking abilities.

Keywords:

social strategy, speaking

A. INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills refer to the capacity to communicate verbally and effectively in a specific language. These skills encompass various competencies, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Speaking is a critical component of language proficiency as it is often the most direct and immediate form of communication. It involves not only the production of sounds but also the ability to convey meaning, emotions, and intentions clearly and accurately in different contexts. Effective speaking requires a combination of cognitive and motor skills, as well as the ability to navigate social interactions.

The importance of speaking skills is evident in everyday interactions, academic environments, and professional settings, where clear and articulate communication is essential for success. The ability to speak English has a central role in cross-cultural communication and everyday life. The status of English as an international language in Indonesia is the most important factor promoting the spread of English in Indonesia. People all over the world need English language skills, including speaking, at an international event. People use English when they meet each other in an international meeting, conference, international business and in other parts of the world. The importance of speaking skills cannot be overstated, especially in the context of higher education. At the university level, students are often required to engage in discussions, present ideas, and participate in debates, all of which necessitate strong speaking skills.

As a second language, English is considered as difficult to learn especially in terms of speaking skills (Hashim, Yunus, & Hashim, 2018). The anxiety and problem of speaking a second language instead of the first language may derive from less exposure of the language in a learning environment and community, lack of vocabulary and lack of confidence (Hashim & Isa, 2012). Navarro (2009) emphasized on the responsibility of the teachers to identify the problems encountered by the students to speak English, analyses the problems and try to solve the problems as to improve students' speaking skills. The problems faced by the students may relate to linguistic or non-linguistic such as the factors that come within the inner self. Low self-esteem can lead to the problem of adept to speaking skills.

In Indonesia, where English is considered a foreign language, students often have difficulty developing their speaking skills due to lack of exposure to the language outside the classroom. Based on my experience studying as an English student at State Islamic University Imam Bonjol Padang, students experience difficulties in speaking English, such as they are embarrassed when speaking English, they are afraid of mispronunciation of words, and lack of vocabulary in English, and another reason is that they are afraid of being laughed at when wrong in speaking English.

There are many problems when learning English speaking skills and these must be addressed by teachers and students. In addition, language learning strategies along with the language learning styles are among the main factors that have a very important role to determine how the students learn a second or foreign language, Oxford (2003). Therefore, understanding the social strategies used by students in speaking can provide valuable insights in improving English language learning.

Implementing social strategies can be a viable solution for addressing disparities in speaking skills among students with both low and high abilities. For students with low speaking skills, social strategies provide a less intimidating and more engaging way to practice speaking, helping them overcome anxiety and build basic skills. They can benefit from the scaffolding provided by more proficient peers and structured social activities that offer gradual and repeated exposure to speaking tasks. On the other hand, students with high speaking skills can refine their abilities by taking on leadership roles in group activities, mentoring less proficient peers, and engaging in more complex and nuanced conversations. This reciprocal learning environment not only enhances the speaking skills of all participants but also promotes a sense of community and collaborative learning. By integrating social strategies into language instruction, educators can create an inclusive and dynamic learning environment that supports the speaking development of both low- and high-ability students, ultimately bridging the gap in speaking proficiency and enhancing overall language competence.

English language education experts have done a lot of research on social strategies in the context of language learning. According to Brown (2007), social strategies include students' interactions with their peers in the learning context. For example, strategies such as taking revenge, negotiating meaning, and providing feedback can influence students' speaking abilities. Apart from that, according to Ellis (2008), social factors such as social status, self-perception, and personality can also influence the use of social strategies in speaking. Oxford (2003) explains that social strategies in foreign languages are important according to her definition of language as "a form of social behavior; it is communication, and communication occurs between and among people. Learning so that a language involves other people, social strategies are very important in this case process." Three sets of strategies are included in social strategy, asking questions, working with others and stressing with others, Oxford (1990).

Thus, research on the social strategies of students with different levels of speaking ability at State Islamic University Imam Bonjol Padang will provide a deeper understanding of the factors that influence English language learning at the university. Apart from that, this research can also provide valuable input for teachers and policy makers in designing more effective learning strategies in improving students' speaking abilities. The purpose of the research is to determine

whether is significant different in the use of social strategies between students with low and high speaking abilities.

B. METHODOLOGY

This method of research is descriptive quantitative research. According to Sugiyono (2016), quantitative descriptive research is a research method used to describe or describe existing phenomena by measuring relevant variables using statistical tools. Quantitative descriptive research aims to describe characteristics or facts about a particular population or phenomenon without making general conclusions (generalizations). This method focuses on collecting data that is measurable and can be analyzed statistically.

The population of research consisted of English students at State Islamic University Imam Bonjol Padang, with a focus on students who had low and high levels of speaking ability. The samples that were taken were IV semester English students with low and high levels of speaking ability using purposive sampling technique. This research involved 90 students from the English Department at Imam Bonjol State Islamic University Padang, classified into two groups based on their speaking ability: 46 Low-level students and 44 high-level students. Data were collected using a questionnaire that measured the use of social strategies in speaking learning.

In collecting data, researcher used an instrument in the form of a questionnaire with a Likert scale which is made into a Google Form link to make it easier for respondents to fill out the questionnaire. In this research, a 4-point Likert scale is employed to measure respondents' levels of agreement or disagreement with various statements presented. The Likert scale is one of the most commonly used methods in survey research to assess attitudes, opinions, or perceptions of individuals (Boone & Boone, 2012). This scale consists of four response categories: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The choice of a 4-point scale specifically eliminates the neutral option to encourage respondents to take a more definitive stance on the given statements (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011). After collecting the data, researcher calculated the average score of the previously distributed questionnaires using SPSS 2.9 to describe general trends in the use of social strategies in both groups.

The formula for calculating the mean of one group of data is:

$$\text{Mean} (\bar{x}) = \Sigma x_i / n$$

Where:

Σx_i is the sum of all values in the group.

n is the total number of data points in the group.

The formula to calculate U is:

$$U_1 = n_1 \times n_2 + (n_1 \times (n_1 + 1)) / 2 - R_1$$

$$U_2 = n_1 \times n_2 + (n_2 \times (n_2 + 1)) / 2 - R_2$$

Where:

n_1 and n_2 are the sample sizes of the first and second groups.

R_1 and R_2 are the sums of ranks for the first and second groups.

C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The researcher obtained the speaking scores of fourth-semester students from the English Department at Imam Bonjol Padang State Islamic University, from the lecturer responsible for the Interactive Speaking course. After obtaining the scores, the researcher classified the students into two groups: low-level students and high-level students. This classification was based on the median formula, where students with scores above the median were categorized as high-level students and those with scores below the median were categorized as low-level students. After the students were classified, the researcher distributed questionnaires and obtained scores from each group.

1. Description of the Data

As stated in the methodology, this research consisted of 90 students of English Department. They are classified based on their speaking ability: 46 low-level and 44 high-level. The data collected are described in the table below.

Statistics Data

		Statistics	
		low level	high level
N	Valid	46	44
	Missing	0	2
Mean		47.3261	59.2955
Std. Error of Mean		1.18324	1.27448
Median		48.5000	62.0000
Mode		54.00	62.00
Std. Deviation		8.02511	8.45392
Variance		64.402	71.469
Range		31.00	41.00
Minimum		33.00	31.00
Maximum		64.00	72.00

From the table above, it is noted that the mean score for each group is 47.32 for low-level students and 59.29 for high-level students. The standard error of the mean is 1.18 for low-level students and 1.27 for high-level students. The medians are 48.5 for low-level students and 62 for high-level students. The standard deviation is 8.02 for the low-level group and 8.45 for the high-level group. The variance is 64.40 for low-level students and 71.46 for high-level students. The range for the low-level group is 31, and for the high-level group, it is 41. The minimum score for the low-level group is 33, and for the high-level group, it is 31. The maximum score for the low-level group is 64, while for the high-level group, it is 72.

2. Data Analysis

a. Test of Normality

Tests of Normality							
		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Group	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Students Score	Low	.109	46	.200*	.969	46	.253
	High	.194	44	<.001	.852	44	<.001

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the data, the low-level group's value of 0.253 is greater than 0.05, indicating normality, whereas the high-level group's value of 0.001 is less than 0.05, indicating non-normality. Consequently, it can be concluded that the significance value for the high-level group is not normal. Therefore, the next step for the researcher is to use the Mann-Whitney test to determine the significance between the two groups.

b. Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Test of Homogeneity of Variance					
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Students Score	Based on Mean	.613	1	88	.436
	Based on Median	1.056	1	88	.307
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.056	1	73.633	.307
	Based on trimmed mean	.864	1	88	.355

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that the significance value based on the mean is 0.436, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that the data distribution is homogeneous.

c. Hypothesis Testing

The researcher tested the hypothesis using the Mann Withney U test

Test of Mann Withney U

Ranks				
	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Students Score	Low	46	29.43	1354.00
	High	44	62.30	2741.00
	Total	90		

Test Statistics^a

	Students Score
Mann-Whitney U	273.000
Wilcoxon W	1354.000
Z	-5.976
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001

a. Grouping Variable: Group

From the table above, it can be seen that the number of respondents in the low-level group is 46, and in the high-level group is 44, so the total number of respondents is 90. The sum of the ranks for the low-level group is 1,354, and the sum of the ranks for the high-level group is 2,741. The Mann-Whitney value is 273.000, the calculated Z value is -5.976, and the P-value (Asymp. Sig) is <0.001. Based on the data above, it can be concluded that the P-value (Asymp Sig value) of 0.01 is less than 0.05, thus the H_0 is accepted and H_1 rejected. Therefore, it can be stated that there is a significant difference in the use of social strategies between low-level and high-level students.

The results of the analysis using the Mann-Whitney test indicate that there is a significant difference in the use of social strategies between groups of students with low and high speaking abilities. The Mann-Whitney test results show an Asymp Sig

value of 0.001, which is less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference between the low-level and high-level groups in the use of social strategies.

These findings suggest that students with higher speaking abilities tend to be more active in using social strategies in learning speaking compared to students with lower speaking abilities. The social strategies more frequently used by the high-level group may include greater interaction with peers, use of the target language in social contexts, and participation in discussion groups.

This result is consistent with previous research indicating that the use of social strategies can enhance students' speaking abilities (Brown, 2007; Oxford, 1990). Students who more frequently interact with others in the target language have greater opportunities to practice and improve their speaking skills. Research by Johnson and Anderson (2021), This research examined the use of social strategies among high school students in the United States. The researchers found that students with higher speaking abilities were more likely to engage in group discussions and seek out conversations with native speakers. These findings are consistent with the present study, which also shows a higher use of social strategies among students with higher speaking abilities. Research by Kim and Park (2020), In their investigation of university students in South Korea, Kim and Park found that social strategies, such as asking for clarification and participating in language exchange programs, were positively correlated with speaking proficiency. The present study supports these results, highlighting that students with better speaking skills utilize social interactions to enhance their language learning.

This research is also consistent with other research such as research by Alharbi (2019), this research focused on Saudi Arabian students learning English as a foreign language. The study revealed that students who frequently used social strategies, such as interacting with peers and teachers in English, showed significant improvements in their speaking abilities. The findings of the current study align with Alharbi's conclusions, further emphasizing the importance of social strategies in developing speaking skills. Research by Zakaria, N., & Hashim, H. (2019), This research showed that the use of social strategies, such as collaborating and seeking help from peers, significantly improved students' speaking abilities. Students with higher speaking skills more frequently utilized these strategies to enhance their proficiency. Research by Basalama & Abubakar (2020), This research found that social strategies, including conversing with native speakers and participating in group discussions, were more commonly used by students with higher speaking proficiency, contributing to their improved speaking skills.

The implications of these findings are that English teachers should encourage the use of social strategies in the classroom, especially for students with low speaking abilities.

D. CONCLUSION

This study aims to identify whether there is a significant difference in the use of social strategies between students with low and high-level speaking abilities at State Islamic University Imam Bonjol Padang. Based on the data analysis, it was found that there is a significant difference in the use of social strategies between the low-level and high-level groups. Students with high speaking abilities use social strategies more actively compared to students with low speaking abilities.

Average Use of Social Strategies: The average use of social strategies for the high-speaking ability group is 59.20, while for the low-speaking ability group, it is 47.32.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicate a significant difference in the use of social strategies between students with low and high speaking abilities. The Mann-Whitney U test results show an Asymp Sig value of 0.001, which is less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference between the low-level and high-level groups in the use of social strategies.

This study suggest that the use of social strategies plays a crucial role in improving students' speaking abilities. Students who more frequently use social strategies tend to have better speaking skills.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of social strategies in language learning, particularly in enhancing speaking abilities. By understanding and effectively applying these strategies, students can improve their communication skills in English.

Recommendations for Future Research:

1. Expanding the Research Sample

Future research could involve a larger and more diverse sample from various universities or schools to achieve more generalizable results.

2. Using Diverse Data Collection Methods

Future research might use a variety of data collection methods, such as direct observation, interviews, and case studies, to gain a deeper understanding of social strategy use and the researcher also suggests a method for determining the sample which groups students into low and high using speaking assessment standards.

3. Exploring Other Variables

Subsequent research could investigate the impact of other variables, such as learning motivation, family support, and access to learning resources, on social strategy use and students' speaking abilities.

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