

**THE APPLICATION OF THE LEARNING STRATEGY TO IMPROVE
THE SPEAKING SKILL OF THE SECOND GRADE STUDENTS AT SMA
UII YOGYAKARTA IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2011/2012**

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to identify the problems of the second grade students in speaking English and to discover the effective steps of the learning strategy to improve the speaking skill of the second grade students at SMA UII in the academic year 2011/2012. This study applied a classroom action research and was conducted in two cycles consisting of planning, acting, observing, evaluating, and reflecting. Subjects of the research were the second grade students of SMA UII in the academic year 2011/2012. Data collecting techniques used were observation, interview, diary and speaking test. Data analysis techniques used were descriptive analysis. Based on the research, there were four strategies applied in cycle I, i.e., the strategies of asking for clarification or verification, grouping, repeating and placing new words into a context. The result of strategies application in cycle I gave positive and negative responses that it did not give much significance to the students' speaking skill. The highest speaking score of the students in cycle I was 18. Therefore, revision was done. There were two strategies that must be revised in cycle II, which were the strategies of grouping and repeating. As the revision was done in cycle II, students showed positive response and gave significant improvement to the students' speaking skill. The highest speaking score of the students in cycle II was 27. Thus, it can be concluded that the learning strategy is successfully implemented and improves the speaking skill of the second grade students at SMA UII in the academic year 2011/2012.

Keyword: *Learning Strategy, speaking ability, students, significance, and response.*

Introduction

One of the English skills required to master by the English learners is speaking. Speaking becomes the most important skill of English since it differs from other skills. Speaking is quite necessitated by the students as the tool to communicate among them. The existence of speaking as one of the English skills then obliges the students to learn it consciously. However, learning speaking is considered difficult. It absolutely needs preparation either mental strength or sufficient curiosity to be well-known of speaking which must be fulfilled by the higher schools students.

As one of the higher schools which give concern on the students' ability of speaking, SMA UII require their students to have good ability in speaking English. The school assumes that by having good speaking ability, their students can compete in every area of competition with other schools. Yet, in the process of learning to speak, students still find many difficulties. Those difficulties are that the students cannot arrange words into English sentences optimally at anytime they want to speak English, the students often do not concentrate when they are required to speak English in front of their classmates, the students cannot pronounce the English words well and clearly when speaking that they often make their hearers can not understand them. Students are often also confused of what to speak because of not having enough English

vocabulary, and the students even have no bravery to come to the front of the class to speak. These difficulties can be generated by some factors. They are internal and external factors.

Internal factors involve any difficulties which are coming from the students themselves such as the students' self confidence, introversion, extroversion and anxiety. Self confidence is the bravery of expressing the students themselves to public. Without self confidence it is impossible for the students to attain good ability of speaking. Brown (2000) stated that one of the major obstacles for the learners to overcome in learning to speak is self confidence. Introversion can be very problematic to the students since they are not open-minded with any other people to do many things such as to share and to socialize. We know that socialization can be a very practical medium to communicate with others. Besides, the students' anxiety has not also made the students feel free to speak for they are many times obsessed by anxious feeling of making mistakes while speaking.

External factors comprise any difficulties which appear from out of the students themselves, such as the students' environment. The environment is one of the very affecting factors. The students seldom want to speak and even are ashamed of speaking when they are with non English speakers. The students often consider that they do not need to

speak up because they do not have an equal partner to speak with. It is believed or not, that the success of the learners in learning to speak a language is based on the situation where they are. Having seen those all above, it is important that the students must be given a lot of practice. Practice of speaking is needed for the students if they need to be skillful speakers. The aims of practice are to make the students accustomed of saying the English words in well organized, reach fluency in speaking and have good ability of speaking English whenever it is needed for communication. Without practice, the students will never be successful for being good English speakers. Practice makes perfects as it is said by the proverb experts. And for practice, the students ought to be given learning strategies.

Learning strategy, according to Brown (2001), is specific method of approaching a problem or task, mode of operation for achieving a particular end, or planned design for controlling and manipulating information. From Brown's definition of learning strategy above, it can be concluded that learning strategy is very important approach to be included in learning to speak. Through learning strategy, the students will get many advantages such as to help students learn to speak English effectively and to improve their speaking skill. Thus, to improve the students' speaking skill, giving the learning strategies will be the best answer to the students

and important by the students to know and to apply.

Based on the background above, there are two main questions used by the researcher as the problem formulations of the research as follows:

1. What are the problems of the students of the second grade in speaking English at SMA UII Yogyakarta in the academic year 2011/2012?
2. What are the effective steps of the learning strategy to improve the English speaking skill of the second grade students at SMA UII Yogyakarta in the academic year 2011/2012?

Review of Related Literature

a. Definition of Speaking

Speaking is a productive skill. It involves using speech to express meanings to other people (Pulverness, 2005). Speaking is therefore identified as an activity to express meanings through a language. The language reveals meanings which can be absorbed by people interacting to one another. It means that speaking is an activity to express things in the communication process among members of society in which people are then supposed to absorb the meanings. Meanings are assumed as manifestation of one's language competence systematically. The language competence is divided into understanding and using language in which called receptive and productive (Bygate, 1987: 5). Productive skill is the ability of making decisions about

speaking, such as what to say, how to say and so on. Meanwhile, receptive skill requires the ability of receiving and articulating the order sounds and structures of the language.

Lado (1961: 240) defines that speaking skills are the ability to express oneself in life situation, or the ability to report act or situation in precise words, the ability to converse, or to express a sequence of ideas fluently. A remark expression leads to anyone is involved in the process of a talk. Harmer (2001: 46) states that speaking happens when two people are engaged in talking to each other. Clark and Clark (1997: 4) state that speaking and listening are of particular important to psychologist for they are mental activities that hold clue to every nature of human mind. In speaking, people put their ideas into words, talking about perception, feelings, and intentions what they want other people to grasp. In their complicated inter relationship from the memory store and adapting them to new requirements as meanings are expressed with more and more finesse and nuance. Brown & Yule (1983:1-5) state that speaking is one of the four basic language skills. Some people say that speaking is the most difficult of the others skills (listening, reading and writing). Through speaking people can convey their ideas, thoughts and opinions, rhetorical utterances.

Based on the stated theories above, speaking can be concluded as putting ideas in the form of words about

perception, feelings and intentions to make other people absorb the messages conveyed.

Brown (2001: 272) writes some micro-skills that are found in speaking as follows:

1. Producing chunks of language of different lengths.
2. Orally producing differences among the English phonemes and allophonic variants.
3. Producing English stress patterns, words stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure and intentional contours.
4. Producing reduced forms of the words and phrases.
5. Using an adequate number of lexical units (words) in order to accomplish pragmatic purposes.
6. Producing fluent speech at different rates of delivery.
7. Using grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc), system (e.g. tense, agreement pluralization), word order, patterns, rules, and elliptical forms.
8. Producing speech in natural constituent-in appropriate phrase, pause groups, breath groups, and sentences.
9. Express particular meaning in different grammatical forms.
10. Accomplishing appropriately communicative functions according to situations, participants and goals.
11. Using appropriate register implicature, pragmatic, conventions, and other socio linguistics features in face-to-face conversations.

12. Developing and using battery of speaking strategies, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, providing, a context for interpreting the meaning of the words appealing for help, and accurately assessing how well your interlocutor is understanding you.

However, the micro-skills of oral communication mentioned above still show complexity and considered wide; therefore, some indicators of the five sub-skills can be developed to accomplish the speaking, and they are:

a. Pronunciation

Pronunciation refers to the micro skills of number 3: producing English stress patterns, words stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, and intonational contours. Cook (1996: 41) considers that pronunciation is a set of habits for producing sound. It includes the segmental feature, vowel, consonant, stress, and the intonation patterns. All those are supposed to be applied by the speakers.

b. Fluency

Fluency refers to the micro skill of number 6: producing fluent speech at different rates of delivery. It has relation with the ability to talk with normal level of continuity, rate, and effort to link the ideas and language to speak from coherence, a connected speech. Someone is said able to speak English or fluent when he speaks it smoothly and readily.

c. Vocabulary

It refers to the micro skills of number 5: using an adequate number of lexical units (words) in order to accomplish pragmatic purposes. The ability of someone's language depends on one's knowledge of vocabulary. The richer vocabulary is mastered, the better skill of communicating can be attained. Rivers as quoted in Nunan (1991:117) has also argued that the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is essential for successful foreign language because the use of language structures and its functions may have affected on comprehensible communication.

d. Grammar

Grammar refers to the micro skill of number 7: using grammatical word clauses (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g. tense, agreement, pluralization), word order, patterns, rules, and elliptical forms. Also number 9: expressing particular meaning in different grammatical forms. Grammar refers to the study or science of rules for the combination of words into sentences (syntax), and the form of word (morphology), (Hornby, 2000: 375). Lado (1961: 90) says that anyone using a language must use its grammar. It shows that grammar plays an important role in speaking skill.

e. Intelligibility or comprehension

Intelligibility or comprehension refers to the micro skill of number 12: developing and using battery of speaking strategies such as emphasizing the meaning of words, appealing for help, and accurately

assessing how well your interlocutor understands you. Intelligibility or comprehension means understandable. In speaking, the speaker and the partner must have good understanding in oral communication.

b. Language Learning Strategy

According to Oxford (1990:8), learning strategy is specific action taken by the learners to make the learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situation. Brown (2001) states that learning strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, or planned design for controlling and manipulating information. The language learners seem will not be in doubt to have involved directly in the language learning in case that the learning strategy is always followed behind their existence.

Rubin and Thomson (1982) state that language learning strategies are strategies which contribute to the development of the language system which the learner construct and affect learning directly. The development of the strategy will create new situation in which the language learners can learn a second language well and in systematic ways. The development of strategy will also presents the language learners to produce an oral communication accurately. Weinstein and Mayer (1986) in Ellis (1996: 531) state that learning strategies are the

behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning that are intended to influence the learner's encoding process. As learning strategies introduced with behaviors and thoughts, it seems that learning is absolutely followed by behavioral activity of the language learners. Ellis (1996: 529) establishes the statement mentioned above with a view that a strategy consisted of mental or behavioral activity related to some specific stage in the overall process of language acquisition or language use.

O'Malley (1992) states that learning strategies are techniques, approaches, or deliberate actions that take in order to facilitate the learning, recall of both linguistics and content are information. Stern (1983) in Ellis (1996: 531) states that in our view strategy is best reserved for general tendencies or overall characteristics of the approach employed by the language learner, leaving the techniques as the term to refer to particular forms of observable learning behavior.

From the definition of the learning strategies above, the researcher concludes that learning strategies are concrete actions, approaches involving behavioral activities that contribute to the development of the learning effectively to attain the language acquisition systematically by the learners. Language learning strategies contribute to all parts of the learning acquisition continuum. Oxford (1990: 9), the features of language learning strategies:

- 1) Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence.
- 2) Allow learners to become more self-directed.
- 3) Expand the role of teachers.
- 4) Are problem-oriented.
- 5) Are specific action taken by the learner.
- 6) Involve many aspect of the learner, not just the cognitive.
- 7) Support learning both directly and indirectly.
- 8) Are not always observable.
- 9) Are often conscious.
- 10) Can be taught.
- 11) Are flexible.
- 12) Are influenced by a variety of factors.

Thus, learning strategies are not just concrete action to be developed by the language learners to the language acquisition, but also how the strategies really contribute to the enhancement of the learners' language based on the features of language learning strategies and play a significant role in acquisition of the language in well order. Social, memory and cognitive strategies as parts of the learning strategies are considered to be very effective strategies in the efforts of maximizing the speaking competence of the learners in the process of language acquisition.

Social strategies as one of the basic social interaction give lot of advantages to language learners since they are active to ask with others that a cooperative activity come out in the language learning process. Social

strategies have a set of strategies involving asking for clarification or verification, asking for correction, cooperating with others, cooperating with peers, cooperating with proficient users of the new language, developing cultural understanding and becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings.

Memory strategies also called 'mnemonics' are definitely defined as ways of learning through a memory aid. Memory strategies are frequently used by the learners to remember practical information found at various sources of knowledge. Memory strategies can help the language learners store and retrieve new information wherever it needs for a communication through memory aids. Oxford (1990: 39) writes that memory strategies reflect simple principles such as arranging things in order, making associations, and review. These principles are absolutely meaningful. For the purpose of learning a new language, the arrangement and associations must be personally meaningful to the language learners, and the material to be reviewed must have significance.

Oxford (1990: 40-43) explores memory strategies into a set of strategies encompassing the strategy of grouping, associating/elaborating placing new words into a context, using imagery and semantic mapping, using keywords and representing sounds in memory, reviewing well, using physical response or sensation and using mechanical techniques.

Rubin (1987) in Ellis (1996) states that cognitive strategies refer to the steps or operations used in problem solving that requires direct analysis, transformation or synthesis of learning materials. This statement is then supported by Piaget (1959); he says that the cognitive development and language acquisition are closely interrelated processes. Without cognitive development there can be little or no language acquisition. Cohen (1998) states that cognitive strategies encompass the language learning strategies of identification, grouping, retention, and storage of language material as well as the language use strategies of retrieval, rehearsal, and comprehension or production of words, phrases, and other elements of the language.

From the definition of cognitive strategies above, it can be concluded that cognitive strategies are typically found as the outstanding strategies to the learners in developing the target language through grouping, retention, and storage of language material for retrieval. Cognitive strategies are essential in learning a new language, due to its function to manipulate the transformation of the target language that the learners carry out when learning a language. Cognitive strategies are strategies used to deal with information-processing of the second language involving identification, grouping, retention, and storage of language material as well as the language use strategies of retrieval that is responsible for all form of knowledge and skills

development. Oxford (1990: 69) in her book entitled "Language learning strategies" writes a set of cognitive strategies, which are practicing, repeating, practicing formally with sounds and writing systems, recognizing and using formulas and pattern, recombining, practicing naturalistically, getting the main idea quickly and using resources for receiving and sending messages, reasoning deductively, analyzing expressions and analyzing contrastively (cross language), translating and transferring, taking notes and summarizing.

c. Teaching Speaking Applying the Learning Strategy

Teaching speaking applying the learning strategy is giving strategies training to the language learners in learning to speak English by applying practical strategies in order to give practical information. To attain the goals of learning a language with the strategy, learners essentially should have effective learning and seriousness in producing the language. According to Cohen (1998: 82) the goals of strategy instruction are to help foreign language students become aware of:

1. How they learn more effectively.
2. How they can enhance their own comprehension of product of the target language.
3. How they can continue to learn on their own and communicate in the target language after they leave the language classroom.

In conducting the teaching process of speaking applying the learning strategy, the researcher applies some strategies mentioned by Oxford (1990) in his book entitled: “language learning strategies”, they are the strategy of asking for clarification or verification, grouping, repeating and placing new words into a context. These strategies are the combination of three main strategies which are social, memory and cognitive strategies. The following is the detailed explanation of the strategies:

1. Asking for clarification or verification

The strategy of asking for clarification or verification helps the learners to utilize someone who is more proficient in English (having good pronunciation of saying the English words) to explain any information whether they are in the form of words, phrases or sentences. When the information explained is still not clear to the learners, they may ask for clarification by having the speaker to slow down and repeat or clarify those words or phrases that they still consider unclear.

2. Grouping

The strategy grouping requires the language learners to classify some language materials in the form of words or phrases into meaningful units whether in spoken or written in a chart. In this strategy of grouping, the language learners classify language elements into nouns (computer, program, etc), verbs

(arrange, publish, etc), adjectives (fluent, tough, steady, etc) and adverbs (well, fluently, etc). This aims at making the materials of the language in short elements in order that they are then easily remember and retrieve by the speakers while speaking.

3. Repeating

To make the learners accustomed of the language materials (words, phrases) learned, repetition is quite necessitated in learning a second language. Therefore, this strategy requires learners to repeat the language materials of an original language unit. This repeating helps learners be accustomed of saying the words in phonetically sounded wherever and whenever it is used for communication.

4. Placing new words into a context

To complete the learners' knowledge of a language, they are supposed to make the words or phrases which have been classified or grouped into a complete sentence. To be able to make the words or phrases into a sentence, it is necessary that the learners determine the patterns of the sentence to be used in constructing the sentences. It is done in order to make the learners easier communicate the words while it is needed for communication. Applying the words or phrases in the sentences is needed in the rhetoric management of a language as the medium for the developing action. In conducting the teaching process of speaking applying the strategies, the researcher applies the literacy approach in which this

approach consists of some steps of teaching; they are BKOF, modeling of text, joint construction of text and independent construction of text.

Research Method

This research applied an action research. Kemmis and Taggart (1988: 10) define action research as a way of increasing our knowledge of classroom and as a tool in teaching. The target community setting was directed to the second grade students of SMA UII Yogyakarta in the academic year 2011/2012. The data needed in this research were opinions resulted from the research members about the problems faced by the students in learning to speak English. Data collecting techniques were questionnaires, observation, interview, diary and speaking test with pre and post-test. Data analysis technique used was descriptive analysis, which is describing and explaining about the existence of phenomenon or what occurs explicitly and comprehensively to prove that the result of the instruments above was able to answer the main question about the application of the learning strategy in improving the students' speaking skill.

Results and Discussion

Based on the observation and students' pre-test of speaking, it was found that the students' problems of speaking English were that the students cannot arrange words into English sentences optimally at anytime they want to speak English,

the students often do not concentrate when they are required to speak English in front of their classmates, the students cannot pronounce the English words well and clearly when speaking that they often make their hearers can not understand them. Students are often also confused of what to speak because of not having enough English vocabulary, and the students even have no bravery to come to the front of the class to speak. This can be seen from the students' speaking skill in their pre-test, in which the highest speaking score of the students was 10. The following result showed in table 1 is the students' speaking skill of pre-test.

Tabel.1
Pre-Test of Students' Speaking Skill

N O	Stud ents ' initi als	Pre -Test of Students' Speaking Skill							Tot al
		Indicator and Score							
		Pr	V b	Fl	G m	Vc	E c	G s	
1	Rg	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	9
2	Fl	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	6
3	Dn	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	9
4	Sy	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	8
5	Rt	2	2	2	1	1	0	1	9
6	An	2	2	1	2	2	0	1	10

Note:

- Pr : Pronunciation
- Vb : Vocabulary
- Fl : Fluency
- Gm : Grammar
- Vc : Voice
- Ec : Eye Contact
- Gs : Gesture

As the students were taught the learning strategy they began to show better performance where they did not feel reluctant to speak English. However, their speaking performance were still not significant eventhough they had given improvement. Students' not significant speaking performance was caused by the use of the strategies which were not maximal. The students still could not implement the strategy of grouping and repeating completely because the students still had the difficulty to explore their words while speaking using the words they had grouped from the learning source. This can be seen from the students' score of speaking. The data of the students' speaking skill improvement in cycle I can be seen in the following table:

Tabel.2
Post-Test of Students' Speaking Skill in Cycle I

N O	Stud ents , initi als	Post -Test of Students' Speaking Skill							Tot al
		Indicator and Score							
		Pr	V b	Fl	G m	Vc	E c	G s	
1	Rg	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	18
2	Fl	2	3	2	2	2	1	2	14
3	Dn	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	16
4	Sy	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	15
5	Rt	3	2	3	2	3	1	2	16
6	An	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	18

From the result of the students' speaking skill in the action of cycle I above, it can be concluded

that the change of the students' speaking skill was achieved compared to that of in the students' pre-test. The highest speaking score of the students in cycle I was 18. Here is the explanation of the change of score. Ragil, in the pre-test scored 9 changed into 18 in the post-test. Faisal, in pre-test scored 6 changed into 14 in the post-test. Danang, in pre-test scored 9 changed into 12 in the post-test. Sumiyati, in pre-test scored 8 became 15 in the post-test. Retno, in pre-test scored 9 became 16 in the post-test and Annisa in pre-test scored 10 changed into 18 in the post-test.

Thus, it can be interpreted that students could implement the strategy especially the strategy of grouping and the strategy of repeating. The students did not have any significant difficulties anymore to use the strategy. The students could explore their words that they had grouped from learning source when they spoke English. Students also spoke their words more clearly that the other students (as the audience) were able to understand better what were said by the speakers. The students' speaking skill in cycle I had showed improvement compared to that of in their Pre-Test although not too significant.

Tabel.3
Post-Test of Students' Speaking Skill in Cycle II

N O	Stud ents , initi als	Post -Test of Students' Speaking Skill						Tot al	
		Indicator and Score							
		Pr	V b	Fl	G m	Vc	E c		G s
1	Rg	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	27
2	Fl	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	21
3	Dn	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	23
4	Sy	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	27
5	Rt	4	3	4	3	4	2	3	23
6	An	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	27

From the result of the students' speaking skill in the action of cycle II above, it can be seen that improvement of the students' speaking was successfully achieved. The highest speaking score of the students in cycle II was 27. Having seen from the score of each of the students, it was seen that Ragil's score improved from 9 to 27, Faisal improved from 6 to 21, Danang improved from 9 to 23. Sumiyati improved from 8 to 27, Retno improved from 9 to 23, Annisa improved from 10 to 27. Thus, it can be concluded that learning strategy was considered effective to improve the students' speaking skill.

Thus, the researcher concluded that the improvement resulted in the action of cycle II showed that the application of the strategy training to improve the students' speaking skill of the second

grade at SMA UII Yogyakarta was implemented successfully.

Conclusion, Implication and Suggestion

The second grade students of SMA UII Yogyakarta had many problems that they faced in the process of learning to speak English. These problems involved the students cannot arrange words into English sentences optimally at anytime they want to speak English, the students often do not concentrate when they are required to speak English in front of their classmates, the students cannot pronounce the English words well and clearly when speaking that they often make their hearers can not understand them. Students are often also confused of what to speak because of not having enough English vocabulary, and the students even have no bravery to come to the front of the class to speak. The application of the learning strategy involving asking for clarification or verification, grouping, repeating and placing new words into a context was carried on in the efforts of overcoming the problems and improving students' speaking skill that they hopely could have better speaking skill. There were two cycles done in this study. The first cycle showed the students' speaking skill had better achievement, but the achievement was not significant. This happened because the students did not used the strategies maximally. As the second cycle conducted, students' speaking skill had significant

improvement in which the students had successfully performed the strategies taught well. Thus, it can be concluded that the application of the learning strategy can improve students' speaking skill of the second grade students of SMA UII Yogyakarta in the academic year 2011/2012. This research also implies that the learners, who are in the efforts of learning to speak English, surely have problems and difficulties. However, these problems and difficulties can be solved by various methods, techniques or strategies including the application of the learning strategy. In relation to the finding above, the researcher honorably proposes some suggestions to the students, teachers and other researchers.

1. To the students

To be good English speakers, the students must keep their learning

spirit as priority; the spirit of learning for the English words as many as possible, practicing to speak the words and using the speaking strategies taught by the teachers.

2. To the teachers

Improving the students' speaking skill can be reached through many ways including applying learning strategies. Therefore, the teachers are hoped that they will proudly have always looked for the best strategy in the efforts of improving the students' speaking proficiency.

3. To the other researchers

This research is absolutely still far of being complete. Therefore, it is hoped that the other researchers can do the same research with the same topic and strategies in different setting.

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