

## Research Article

### HELPING STUDENTS TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILL BY COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AT UNETI HANOI

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#### ABSTRACT

As we know, since Vietnam carried out the open-door policy in order to develop its economy after a poor and backward long time due two wars against French and American, especially, Vietnam joined the WTO in November, 2006. More and more foreign companies and organizations go to Vietnam to do their business. Vietnam has been enlarging its business relationship with all nations in the world. It is possible to say that Vietnam has achieved a considerable success from the given mechanism. Because of this reason, teaching and learning English have become very necessary more than ever because it is used by most countries and it considered to be the international language. There have been many magazines, newspapers such as Saigon Times, Vietnam News and so on which are printed in English for foreign businessmen. Moreover, it is taught in most school in Vietnam from secondary schools to universities and it is also considered to be an obligatory subject in students' school curriculum.

**Keywords:** speaking skill; communication strategies, across culture.

#### INTRODUCTION

Being a teacher of English in a college, we have understood this very deeply. We always try to do my best in order to help students learn the language which they have learning. It is when learners can speak and listen in English fluently which can profit them in their lives and jobs, should we, the teachers of English in Vietnam, teach students communication strategies as soon as possible? This has motivated me to implement this research project. I have chosen the research topic to study for many reasons. First, no one can deny the significance of speaking in daily life. Second, most learners who begin to learn a foreign language, or who have been learning for ages, is afraid of speaking. Third, in my opinion the research will help both learners and teachers to have better way of teaching and learning speaking.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

##### Findings and strengths of the articles:

Based on my above-mentioned, now I would like to talk about eight articles relate to our future research.

**Article 1.** "As a classroom language, students' attitudes towards speaking Turkish in English prep classes" by GürbüzOcak, Faculty of Education, AfyonKocatepe Universtity, Afyonkarahisar 9003200, Turkey and NurcayTuru, *HandeÖzçalışan*, Hande School for Foreign Languages AfyonKocatepeUniverstity, Afyonkarahisar 9003200. In the opinion of GürbüzOcak et al, the students' level of target language use increases as their motivation level goes up and the students' anxiety level associated with teacher's attitudes is not high, the relationship between gender and responses is not significant, and age is not a significant variable, either.

**Article 2.** "The attitudes of isiXhosa-speaking students toward language of learning and teaching issues at Rhodes University, South

Africa: General trends" by PhilominaAziakpono and Ian Bekker, English Language and Linguistics Department, Rhodes University, Grahamstown. Aziakpono's et al study shows the results reveal that the respondents have a generally positive attitude toward English as LOLT, attitudes toward the use of isiXhosa in education and attitudes toward a bilingual policy at Rhodes University.

**Article 3.** "What Learning Contrasts Reveal about University Students' attitude towards English Language Learning" by Mable Chan, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong. As shown in Chan's research, findings and results may provide important information for teachers to understand the needs of second language learners and decide how teachers themselves and the curriculum could accommodate such needs to enhance students' English language proficiency level. It is also concerning what students do in the learning contract in improving speaking, listening, reading and writing show that students are somewhat traditional in adopting ways taught by their primary or secondary school teachers.

**Article 4.** "Student Attitudes' Toward Native and Non-Native Language Instructors" by Tammy JandreyHertel, Lynchburg College and Gretchen Sunderman, Florida State University. As Hertel states, results indicate that students perceive native speaking instructors to possess advantages over nonnative speaking instructors with regard to pronunciation and culture, but not with regard to the teaching grammar or vocabulary. Proficiency level and the native language of participant's current instructor also influenced opinions.

**Article 5.** "Strategy Knowledge and Perceived Strategy Use: Singaporean Students' Awareness of Listening and Speaking Strategies" by Donglan Zhang and Christine C.M. Goh, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Donglan Zhang et al hold the view that findings and results may lead to conduct similar studies with a wider range students on their strategies awareness, how far knowledge about strategies can influence students' actual application and ESL listening and speaking performance, explore the culture-specificity and context-dependent nature of such strategies through comparative research.

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**Article 6.** “Investigating the Difficulties in Speaking English for Academic Purposes – A Case Study of an Overseas Chinese Student” by JIN Yan-hua, College of Foreign Languages, Zhejiang Sci-Tech University, Hangzhou 310018, China. JIN Yan-hua expresses the view that the speaking difficulties for academic purposes are closely related with cross-culture problem, learning strategies and linguistic causes.

**Article 7.** “The impact of strategies-based instruction on speaking a foreign language” by Andrew D. Cohen, Susan J Weaver and Tao Yuan Li, Center of Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota, June 2006. In the opinion of Andrew D. Cohen et al, with regards to the question of whether strategies-based instruction makes a difference in speaking performance, the finding was positive: the Experimental group outperformed the Comparison group on the third task, city description, in the posttest, after adjusting for pretest differences.

**Article 8.** “Using discussion pedagogy to enhance oral and written communication skills” by Elise J. Dallimore, Julie H. Hertenstein, and Marjorie B. Platt. As reported by Elise J. Dallimore et al, the findings provide evidence that active preparation and participation in class discussion can be linked to students’ reports of improved oral and written communicative skill development. Conclusions suggest that discussion can be a useful addition to cross-curricular programs (such as writing and speaking across the curriculum) and standalone courses (such as public speaking). This technique can be used in combination with other strategies. All articles are related to what we want in our future research. The articles not only have clear purposes and research questions but most of them also have good format with these parts: Abstract, Introduction, Literature review, Methodology, Data analysis, Conclusion, and References. Those all have shown the importance of language learning and teaching. We may realize that strategy use is often related to learner’s language proficiency. Different students can use different strategies when they learn the same subjects or practice the same skills. The choice of using strategy is influenced by learner’s ability; learner’s motivation, learner’s culture and learner’s language learning environment, learning strategies are also related effectively to language proficiency. It means, if we have reasonable strategies in learning language, we will enhance our language proficiency. So the investigation and instruction strategies for the students are now important. And if we work well, we bring many benefits to our students.

#### Weaknesses:

Here I would like to point out some limitations of the articles above.

**Article 1.** In the opinion of GürbüzOcak et al, the sample of the study is limited due to the possible difficulties in administration; it should be carried out by increasing the sample size.

**Article 2.** According to Aziakpono’s et al, they do not find out how to use isiXhosa alongside English in the areas that have been identified by students.

**Article 3.** As shown in Chan’s research, the study comes from one cohort only, the findings may not be representative enough in indicating the common learning objectives chosen by Cantonese ESL learners and their language learning beliefs, which provide important information for teachers to understand the needs of second language learners and decide how teachers themselves and the curriculum could accommodate such needs to enhance students’ English language proficiency level.

**Article 4.** As Hertel states, the study does not include a qualitative examination of attitudes towards NS and NNS instructors in order to gain a deeper understanding of students’ perceptions and further adjust instructor education programs and TA preparation to better meet learners’ needs.

**Article 5.** Donglan Zhang et al hold the view that, the study does not conduct with a wide range of Singaporean learners; it may not broaden the knowledge for the authors of Singaporean learners’ strategy awareness, and how far the knowledge about strategies can influence their actual application and ESL listening and speaking performance. Also, the authors would like to know more about the culture-specificity and context-dependent nature of such strategies.

**Article 6.** JIN Yan-hua expresses the view that, the study only focuses on one Chinese student YE, her personality and background may not be relevant to other overseas students.

**Article 7.** In the opinion of Andrew D. Cohen et al, the study does not seek to measure the impact of in-class discussion on actual students’ learning, including written and oral communication skill development.

**Article 8.** As reported by Elise J. Dallimore et al, the somewhat limited sample size in this study meant that certain kinds of investigation were impossible. One was that of determining whether the increase of strategy use was related to a similar increase in task performance for both the more and the less proficient learners. The sample size was too small to further divide it along the lines of proficiency. Firstly, the scales are rather small, that may not be possible to be generalized, and also not be in-external validity. Secondly, the data may be unreliable, because the subjects’ age is not the same; the gender is inappropriate rate, even some of them doesn’t mention about the gender. The level is not similar level of English proficiency, from different teachers with different teaching methods; those may lead to different motivation and achievement. And some of the articles, the time is not occurred. Finally, some of the articles, the formats are unclear and confusing; they do not follow any rules, which make the reader difficult to identify.

#### Outline of agreement between the articles:

As shown in David WATKINS’ research, some similarities and differences between Western education and non-Western education, typically Chinese education. They are shown obviously in the following table:

Western education	Non-western education
Extrinsic motivation	Intrinsic motivation
Individual orientation in learning	Collective orientation in learning
Active in learning	Passive in learning
Success based on effort and ability	Most success based on hard working and effort
Small-size class (18 – 22 students)	Large-size class (50 – 60 students)
Group work: skills-centered	Group work: cognitive-centered
Classroom disciplinary: behavioral problems.	Teachable students

We may see the cultural influences on the teaching and learning process and they are practical to the teacher and the learner in some certain situations. Every student has his/her own strategies of learning. They will help him/her get good results for his/ her purposes such as passing the exam, getting good marks... Analysis showed that he/she works hard on the books; reads article and grammar books; writing diary, online blog... chats with native speakers; does all exercises that are assigned... Furthermore, he/she should focus on the suitable approach to his/her learning. In learning language,

everyone usually uses his or her strategies to facilitate the learning process. These strategies are related to learners' dominant abilities, the purposes of learning and the context of their language learning (gender, cultural backgrounds, learning style...). Therefore, there are numerous learning strategies used by learner. The purpose of these strategies tends to the success of learners in language learning.

#### Outline of disagreement between the articles:

Students should not receive knowledge passively, they need to explore it. Beside that, students must not be more books based. No method is the best. It is the teacher that can create the best methods which help students learn effectively and apply the knowledge to their real life. Examination is also considered seriously. We educators need to make examinations more communicative. In other words, the way we assess or motivate students should not only base on their effort during exams, but also base on their daily performance. If this comes true, the purpose of language learning will be much better. A class is composed of individuals, and teacher should pay attention to the different identities he/she is faced with the students' aptitude and intelligence, some of them are better than the others at learning English. It is possible that people have different aptitudes for different kinds of study; Then the good learner characteristics, according to Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada(2006:54) the characteristics can be classified in several categories (motivation, intellectual abilities, learning preferences) and some, such as "willing to make mistakes", can be "considered a personality characteristics". A good learner may be based on cultural assumptions; they may not be influenced by age or gender. In my opinion, I like to let students develop their own strategies in learning language. I could help, adjust and make students' strategies profit. And I only suggests or teaches strategies when students really need. The teacher should base on students' motivation, habit and belief to suggest his/her strategies instruction in order to enhance students' proficiency in learning language. Moreover, one lesson is taught but there may be 30 or 50 lessons are learnt, that is each person with each different learning style, education and knowledge background, motivation, may understand the lesson in a different way, therefore, the teacher must make right tasks to suit the learner to promote their autonomy in learning, by group works and pair work, those who are shy and weak may feel more confident and have equal chances to talk, to use the language to communicate. By asking and answering questions, students can review, activate their old knowledge and access new knowledge more easily.

#### CONCLUSION

The articles all suggest that we should have further enlarging researches in order to get more results that are authentic and above all, to bring the most common research issues. To solve problems better, almost all have indicated the direction of further research. Thank for the authors, their researches may help me lead in conducting my research to three aims. The first aim is to investigate students' attitudes towards speaking and find out which factors create these attitudes. The second is to identify speaking strategies, which students find the most important and the third one is to supply some useful strategies that improve students' speaking skill. Hence, based on the articles, the aim of language teaching process is to help students to be able to use the target language competently, especially speaking and listening. However, in reality, the outcomes of learning a foreign language have so far been not satisfactory for many reasons. A lot of students are rich in vocabulary and have a good command of grammar, but they cannot express what they want to say in English fluently in spite of simple sentence. Thus, teacher is able to evoke the students' interest by using his/her own strategies

such as analyzing the problem, paraphrasing what is in the book, asking questions, games, drills and practices, discussing using visual instructions (pictures, films...). By questioning, answering, making conversation, guessing meaning, searching information themselves, the students in the constructivist classroom gradually become "expert learners", this helps promote learning. The teacher should supply students' opportunities to use language in meaningful situations and ensure that they can apply what they have learnt exactly.

#### GLOSSARY

<b>LOLT</b>	: Language of learning and teaching In Hertel's research:
<b>ESL</b>	: English as a Second Language
<b>NNs</b>	: Native Speakers
<b>NNNs</b>	: Nonnative Speakers
<b>TA</b>	: Teaching ability

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