

IMPROVING THE STUDENTS’ SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH HUMANISTIC STRATEGIES IN ECC OF UNUSA

Tiyas Saputri

Nahdlatul Ulama University of Surabaya, Jl. SMEA No.57, Surabaya, Indonesia
E-mail: tiyass@unusa.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the humanistic strategies applied in the English speaking class activities. Researcher conducted a study on participants of English Chat Club (ECC) which is provided in Nahdlatul Ulama University of Surabaya as 30 students. ECC activity is a student activity unit which is an extra activity (outside of the course) that aims to improve the English speaking ability. The strategy used was a humanistic strategy. The humanistic strategy is a strategy that the group atmosphere which is available in the English class is cooperative and supportive each others so it will improve English learning to bring out the best of the students English speech performance. This strategy aims to help student, through an active participation, to develop more positive feelings about themselves and their classmates to cooperate and support each other to grow and improve their speech performance. Based on the students’ evaluation and the lecturer’s observation of the students’ speech performance and their academic achievement. It can be concluded that the humanistic strategy has created a cooperative and supportive group atmosphere and has given positive effects on the students’ speech performance.

Keywords: Humanistic Strategy, Positive Feelings, Cooperative, Supportive.

INTRODUCTION

In acquiring the oral proficiency in the target language, foreign language learners may have to face some problems, both internal and external. Internally, they may experience the feeling of anxiety. They may feel reluctant to use the target language as they may be afraid of making mistakes. They may have the feeling of discomfort using the target language as “it deprives them of their normal means of communication” (Nascente, 2001, p.18), that they have

to use a language other than their mother tongue. This will certainly not facilitate their learning process to acquire the oral proficiency.

In addition to the internal problem, learners may have to face the external factor that may be caused by their classmates or even the lecturer. The lecturer may be over critical in correcting mistakes, which is discouraging and makes the learners reluctant to speak English for fear of producing mistakes (Josefa, 2001, p.92). Similarly, their classmates’ attitude may not encourage them to

participate in the oral communication. Some active students, usually the good speakers, may dominate the oral communication; some may even laugh at their classmates for making mistakes in their speech performance. All these problems relate to the affective domain of second language acquisition.

A. The Affective Domain

"Affects", as it is used in Psychology, refers to feeling or emotion. The affective domain is the "emotional side of human behavior" (Brown, 1980). Brown categorized two facets of the affective domain: the "intrinsic side of affectivity" and the "extrinsic factors", which are the "social cultural variables". The intrinsic side of affective domain involves a "variety of personality factors within a person". Further, Brown pointed out three specific personality factors related to second language acquisition: "1) egocentric factors, 2) transactional factors and 3) motivation" (Brown, 1980, p.102)

1) Egocentric Factors

Egocentric factors refer to one's view of self or self-concept. The term self-

concept is described as a "global term referring to the amalgamation of all our perceptions and conceptions about ourselves which give rise to our personal identity" (Williams and Burden, 1997, p.97). One specific aspect of self-concept is self-esteem, "the evaluative feelings associated with the particular view that we have for ourselves". It is a personal judgment of worthiness that we hold towards ourselves. How we judge ourselves depends on the experiences we have with ourselves and with others. In the context of second language acquisition, learners can be expected to perform better in their oral performance by enhancing their self-esteem related to their task. Such enhancement will help them have better conceptions of their abilities in their oral skills.

2) Transactional Factors

Transactional factors refer to "the process of reaching out beyond the self to others" (p.107). A human being is a social being, and language is the means of communication used to maintain the social relationship. To be able to communicate effectively we need to have empathy, which is

“the process of reaching beyond the self and understanding and feeling what another person is understanding or feeling” (p.107). This indicates that to enhance empathy in the speaking classroom, opportunities are to be provided for the lecturer and the students to share themselves-their feelings and speaking experiences including their problems.

In this research, the researcher wants to conduct research whether the humanistic strategy can improve the students' English speaking skill of ECC (English Chat Club) of UNUSA and how the humanistic strategies can improve the students' English speaking skill. In this case, the students are asked to apply humanistic strategies with a “supportive and co-operative group atmosphere” in order to help them, through active participation, to develop more positive feelings about themselves and their classmates, in a positive group atmosphere. Therefore, they would experience giving and receiving supports to grow and excel at their speech performance. Thus, they can have a better understanding towards each other, which may lead to a positive group atmosphere.

3) Motivation

Motivation is one of the personality factors that affect language learning. It is “an inner drive that moves one to a particular action” (p.112). To account for motivation, we need to understand some basic human needs or drives, which are considered universal. Ausubel (1968), quoted by Brown (1980) identified “six desires or needs of human (1) the need for exploration, (2) the need for manipulation, (3) the need for activity, (4) the need for stimulation, (5) the need for knowledge, and (6) the need for ego enhancement, for the self to be known, to be accepted and approved by others. (p.112-113). Language learners who are meeting these basic needs in their learning experience will be motivated to learn. The discussion on the personality factors of the affective domain shows the importance of classroom group atmosphere created by how the students as well as the lecturer as group members interact with each other. This suggests that if the group members, lecturer and students, can co-operate to create a conducive group atmosphere, that the affective side of each individual is well

attended to, students can be expected to have better academic achievement.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the speaking class of ECC applied the humanistic strategies to all 30 members of it. Then, these strategies were evaluated by using questionnaires filled by them and collected. After collecting the data, these data were analyzed descriptively and made into the percentage.

Firstly, in the speaking class of ECC, the humanistic strategies were applied based on the assumption that a "supportive and co-operative group atmosphere" as suggested by Hadfield (1995, p.15), will enhance learning to bring out the best of the students. To help the students lower their anxiety and enhance their emotional well-being, there needs to be a supportive atmosphere of "sharing and caring" (Moskowitz, 1977, p.28), where students give and receive supports. Besides, the strategies were designed that students were given as much opportunity as possible to practice their English speaking skills. The primary aims of the humanistic strategies were to help the students,

through active participation, to develop more positive feelings about themselves and their classmates, in a positive group atmosphere. Therefore, they would experience giving and receiving supports to grow and excel at their speech performance.

A. Promoting a Co-operative and Supportive Group Atmosphere

In the classroom setting, students interact with one another besides the interaction between the lecturer and the students. How the students experience the learning process influenced by their relationship with the lecturer as well as their classmates. Through the application of the humanistic strategies the students were led to the understanding that each student played an important role to create a conducive learning atmosphere. This would minimize anxiety and enhance personal growth. Thus, they needed to co-operate and support one another to achieve their common goals to develop their public speaking skills and to improve their English oral proficiency.

1) Getting to know each other

The first strategy is getting to know each other, which was carried out in the first meeting. The students as well as the lecturer shared about themselves, their families, their previous learning experience in speaking classes, the problems or difficulties they faced in speaking English. The lecturer showed her interest in the students by trying to memorize their names through a name-mentioning activity: the first student made a brief introduction, the second student mentioned the first student's name before introducing himself/herself, followed by the third, fourth until the thirtieth student, who had to mention the other twenty nine students' names before making her own introduction. Finally the lecturer called the students' names one by one starting from the first to the thirtieth before she introduced herself. In addition, she explained about the objective of the first activity, emphasizing her role to help the students achieve their goals and her expectation to get to know each others.

2) Praising each other

The second is praising the students of any opinions they have shared, for examples:

"Good job"

"Good content and good organization"

"It's very good, you're not nervous or at least, you can handle your nervousness."

"I think your voice is loud and clear. Moreover, you're very confident that your speech becomes very convincing."

"You're very communicative."

"Brilliant, you're good."

"Maintain your good style."

"Awesome, it's rare that a student can make such a good speech."

"You've improved indeed, calm and able to deliver your speech fluently. Good job."

"You're getting better and better"

These activities were to enhance the students' self-esteem and esteem for others. The affirmations they received from others were expected to help them build their self esteem.

3) Empathizing with each other

When the students shared their experience, problems and anxiety in

using English for oral communication, they began to have understanding towards each other, on which the lecturer continued to promote empathy among the students in the speaking class. The lecturer led the students to see the state a speaker had to go through delivering a speech in front of the whole class that anxiety and nervous feeling were common state to be faced. To overcome the threatening state the students were helped to develop affective strategies to control their emotion and negative feelings, by empathizing with each other. The students learned to see a speech performance from different points of view, both the speaker's and the listeners' view points from their negative feelings. This may help to reduce anxiety and promote comfort in the speaker. The listeners, similarly, were expected to be good listeners, to be attentive, following each speech. This would give encouragement to the speakers to try their best, as one of the students shared how she got encouraged every time she looked at one of her classmates whose eyes seemed to say: "Come on, you can do it." It was through these ways that the students

supported each other in their learning process.

4) Minimizing criticism and encouraging self-evaluation

The students' public speech performance was evaluated on the basis of language (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation), content and delivery. Content refers to the topic, supports and organization, while delivery refers to the voice control, eye contact, gestures, posture, and time management. Following the deliveries, the lecturer and students were engaged in an evaluative discussion on each student's speech performance, particularly on the topic, its supports and organization, and the delivery. Those related to the language – grammatical deviations and incorrect pronunciation-were collected by the lecturer to be shown, corrected and practiced. It was expected that external criticisms could be minimized. Rather than criticizing themselves or feeling sorry for what they had done, the students were encouraged to reflect and self-evaluate and to focus on what they needed to improve based on the

comments and suggestions. The students had to follow this experience closely, as they would write their self-evaluation essay and grade their academic achievement. It was agreed that their self-evaluation and their proposed grade would be taken into consideration as a determining factor for their final grade.

B. Involving students' active participation

During the first three meetings, the lecturer took charge of the class by giving inputs, directions, explanation and encouragement. Afterwards, the students took turn to manage the classroom activities: to open the meeting, direct the speech deliveries, and coordinate the class discussion. They were also in charge of the collection and distribution of the students' written affirmations for each individual speaker.

After all students have filled the questionnaires, then the students' evaluation (questionnaire) and their self-evaluation essays were collected. The result shows that all students have positive response towards the class group atmosphere: twenty five students (83%) consider it very good

and the other five students (17%) good.

This is supported by their positive comments in their written evaluation, some of which are quoted as follows: "Speaking class of ECC is very enjoyable."

"Your speaking class is the best I've ever had."

"I like the class. I think the class is very relaxing."

"It has a friendly atmosphere."

"It was a warm atmosphere."

"I've never been as good as I did in the speaking class."

Giving and receiving positive regards are other kinds of new experience. Almost all students (93%) like to give affirmations. Two (7%), however, do not like to give positive regards. Finally, they all admit that these positive regards written on paper bring positive effects on them.

It is true that trying to find the positive sides of others is not common for the students. This is best expressed in one of the students' comments:

"I have never thought before of my friends' positive side. When they made mistakes, it was easy to find their mistake. Yet, when the lecturer

asked me to find the positive sides in their speech, I had difficulty in finding them.

Gradually, however, they learned to do it. They learned to see their own positive sides and their classmates' as shown in the following quotations:

"I have also learned to find something positive in myself."

"I learned to know other people's positive sides."

Finding the positive sides has made them value themselves and other people more, increasing their self-esteem and the esteem for other people as expressed in a student's comment:

"Finding the positive sides of myself and other people has made me value myself"

The experience of having their good sides pointed out helps them develop their self-confidence as seen in the following quoted comments:

"The affirmation helped me a lot, it really built my confidence."

"I received lots of affirmations which build up my confidence."

"The nice affirmation condition my mind to keep saying "Never say too late to learn English."

This is also supported by the students' answers to the questionnaire that all students

'(100%) think that their classmates' affirmations have helped them have a better self concepts of themselves. Twenty eight students (93%) believe that they have helped them build their confidence:

"I have also learned to find something positive in myself. It made me value myself more than usual since I could find the goodness in myself."

"I've found myself get improved in my self confidence."

"The Speaking class of ECC makes me brave to face other people (Indonesian or foreigner) and help me to have a better self confidence."

"I've built up my confidence, which is quite difficult to be found in my previous classes."

The following expressions show the co-operation and support they experienced:

"It helps me much and encourages me through the others' affirmations."

"Almost all classmates pay attention to me. It makes me feel honored. All students appreciate"

"The class atmosphere supports me much to deliver my speech that all of my friends pay

"It was a warm atmosphere. I can feel that while I'm doing my speech."

"I'm so glad to have such wonderful friends who gave great support to me"

"From the class I get not only knowledge, but also friendship, compliment, safe guard and heart of everybody in the class."

All the students (100%) believed that the classroom atmosphere contributed to the improvement of their public speaking performance. The following are some of the quotations of the students' writing:

"I'm not shy anymore and I succeed in "my eye contact",

"I learned and improve a lot from this class."

"I feel I'm improved and know each other better."

"Since then, I can calm down myself and control my nervousness."

"I get improved in my pronunciation."

"Thanks to all my classmates in Speaking class of ECC for teaching me many useful things"

The students' evaluation shows the lecturer's role in the students'

learning atmosphere. What the lecturer said and did brought effects on the students' interaction as seen in the following:

"The fact that my lecturer had emphasized on the first day that everybody needs a little love and attention had opened my eyes.

"My lecturer has made the situation in the class more comfortable."

"She supports us by teaching us to support ourselves."

"She has made us, the students close and support each other."

"By having a lecturer like you, it helps me not to be afraid of speaking up, because you're patient and you always appreciate my efforts. You never underestimate your students who still have some problems in speaking."

Everybody in the class were the same, we were just human beings who were still in the process of learning, and that was why all of us need love and attention."

The supportive attitude of the lecturer encouraged the students to support each other and improve in their performance. Good responds from the students toward these strategies applied in the speaking class of ECC

were implied the following expressions:

"I am so happy to join this Speaking class of ECC. I'm going to join again this activity next semester."

"Thank you very much to all my classmates for making this class becomes alive and an unforgettable class for me. I hope we would be solid friends"

This is a rewarding experience for the lecturer as well.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The humanistic strategies have promoted rapport among the students as well as between the students and the lecturer. "This English class is so alive." This is the lecturer's comment about the class. They have helped to promote a co-operative and supportive group atmosphere in ECC, which enhanced learning and enabled students to improve their English speaking skill. They appeared to be highly motivated. Their attendance was excellent; there were five students (17%) who had missed the class once, the rest (83%) had full attendance. They were co-operative in participating all the activities carried out in class, following the lecturer's

suggestion. Their speech performance showed significant improvement.

They learned to have better control of the language. Some showed creativity in the use of sentence patterns and vocabulary. In the end of the program, they were able to improve their speech delivery based on the motion given in the debate simulation, such as in the use of eye contact that made them look more confident and speak more convincingly. All the students passed the course, with twenty three students (76%) having grades meeting their expectation indicated in their self evaluation essays, five students (17%) even got higher grades than their expected grades, while two students (7%) got lower grades than their expected grades.

4. Conclusion

The values of humanistic strategies can be seen through the students' and lecturer's evaluation which is integrated in the teaching and learning process in the speaking class of EEC. The affirmations they gave to and received from their classmates turned out to be effective to enhance their public speaking performance.

Students became closer, experiencing giving and receiving support to grow and excel at their speech performance. Moreover, what they have experienced in their Speaking class of ECC appears to have a lasting effect on the students and they become better.

REFERENCE

- Brown, H. D. 1980, *Principles of language learning and teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07632: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Hadfield, J. 1995. *Classroom dynamics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Mardijono, Josefa J. 2001. *Humanistic Strategies in the EFL Speaking Class*. Puslit Petra Journal. Vol. 3, Iss. 2; pg. 92-108, 16 pgs diakses tanggal 11 November 2014
- Moskowitz, G. 1977. *Sharing and caring in the foreign language class*. Boston, Massachusetts: Heinle Publishers.
- Nascente, R. 2001. Student anxiety. *English Teaching Professional*, 19. pp.18-20.
- Williams, Marion and Burden, Robert L. 1997. *Psychology for language lecturers, a social constructivist approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.