

Exploring Students' Strategies to Cope with the Problems in Communicating with Native English Speakers

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Abstract

Communicating with native English speakers is important for students in EFL context. Unfortunately, many of them faced factors which inhibit them in communicating with native English speakers. Thus, appropriate strategies are needed to employ to overcome their problems in communicating with native English speakers. The purposes of this research are to explore the factors which inhibit the students at higher education to communicate with native English speakers and to find out the strategies to deal with the inhibiting factors to communicate with native English speakers. This research was conducted at one private university in Yogyakarta. Four third-year English Department students are participated in this study. Furthermore, descriptive qualitative research design was applied in this research and the data were collected by one-on-one interviews. The study has found inhibiting factors the students participants faced to communicate with native English speakers, namely lack of psychological state, lack of linguistic competence, lack of English speaking skills, and lack of culture knowledge. The second, it was related to the strategies the students applied to overcome those problems. The strategies found in this study were using communication strategies, asking for repetition, practicing the target language, improving English speaking skills, joining organization activities, doing communicative activities, and using technology.

Keywords: communicating NES, inhibiting factors, strategies, English foreign languag

Introduction

English language is one of the international languages that has been learned by Indonesian students. The result of Dardjowidjojo research (2000) indicated that English language is learned by more than 13 million students in Indonesia. English is also learned in the university level. For university students, English language is very important. They will use English language in many aspects, such as reading textbook in English language, communicating with other people. They will learn English language in different majors for different purposes, like to communicate with others by using English language. Baker and MacIntyre (2000) claimed that a lack of communication skills plays a major role in lowering one's

Willingness to communicate. Thus, communication using English is one of the key elements for learning English language. The students have to master English in order to ease them in communicate by using English.

In fact, it is not easy for the students in English as Foreign Language (EFL) context to develop communicative skills even though they have been learned English for long time. Wang, Ahn, Kim, & Lin-Siegler (2017) mentioned that there are some factors which is haunting the students in EFL context to communicate by using English language, such as lack of linguistics, lack of cultural knowledge, and lack of psychological state. It is in line with Wang, Ahn, Kim, and Lin-Siegler (2017) who said that the students have some challenges when

they communicate in English language, such as they do not understand about the culture of the target language; they still have low psychological factors such as feel anxiety and low confidence which make them unwilling to communicate using English language. Eventually, they face many problems in the real context, such as being stuck when having conversation, thinking a lot how to apply grammar rules in conversation, and lacking of the vocabulary.

Moreover, the students in EFL context also should be able to communicate with native English speakers. It is important for the students in EFL context to communicate with native English speakers, because they will get some benefits. Firstly, native English speakers have authentic and standard

of English language. Therefore, the students are able to take their fluency to another level by learning new grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, idiom, and other things. Secondly, the students will have good experience when they talk to someone from other country of the language which they are learning. Thirdly, communicating with native English speakers is the best opportunity to expose the students' knowledge that they need to train further.

Unfortunately, the students have barrier factors to communicate using English language especially with native English speakers. According to Liu and Jackson (2008), non-native English speakers are reported having low confidence when they should speak English to American. Thus, they cannot

communicate with native English briefly. It is supported by what the researcher found. Based on the informal interview to EFL students in a private university in Yogyakarta, some students rarely or never communicate with native English speakers. This phenomenon happened, because the students in EFL context still find difficulties in communicating with native English speakers which is obstruct their performance in communication skill using English language. They also think that communicating with native English speakers is something frightening.

Therefore, the researcher was interested in investigating the factors which inhibit the students to communicate with native English speakers. Besides, the researcher wanted to find out how do the

students deal with the inhibiting factors to communicate with native English speakers.

Research Methodology.

This research applied qualitative research method and use descriptive qualitative design. The data gathering process conducted on July 2018. The participants of this research were students of English Language Education Department at Private University in Yogyakarta batch 2015. They were chosen because of three criteria. The first is the participants have learned English language more than two years. The second is the participants have experience to communicate with native English speakers. The third is the participants have willingness to communicate with native English speakers.

To protect the participants' identities, pseudonym were used in the transcript of the interview. The pseudonym that were used are: Sky, Aurora, Tiera, Snow. All participants were female. The researcher used the interview instrument to gather the data. According to Cohen et al. (2011), the interview is a flexible tool for collecting the data which involves multi-sensory channels like verbal, non-verbal, spoken, and heard. Besides, the researcher also used, standardized open-ended interview. Based on Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011), data are complete for each participant on the topics addressed in the interview. Then, there were several steps of the data analysis, such as transcription, member checking and coding. The first step is transcribing the recorded interview into written form. Then, to

maintain the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher did member checking to make sure that the data same as on the participants answer. Next, the researcher also used four types of coding that are, open coding, analytical coding, axial coding, and selective coding. After finishing doing coding, the researcher got the findings of this research.

Finding and Discussion

Inhibiting Factors in

Communicating with Native English Speakers.

Lack of psychological state.

Apparently, the findings of this research found that lack of psychological state is one of the inhibiting factors faced by students in communicating with native English speakers. According to Wang, Ahn, Kim, and Lin-Siegler (2017), lack of psychological state is

factors which threaten non-native English speakers when communicate with native English speakers which refers to students psychological such as feeling anxious, afraid, and nervous. The findings show that the participants mentioned many problems related to the lack of psychological state which divided into three parts below.

Lack of self-confidence. The participant of this research has different statement related to the lack of self confidence. In the interview session, Sky said “we feel lack of self-confidence in getting communication using English language”. Sky also added, “because we will communicate with native English speakers who have been master in English language, so I feel unconfident, I am afraid to make mistakes”.

Feeling nervous. Feeling nervous is one of problem that the participants face when they communicate using English language. Tiera stated, “So, the inhibiting factor for me when communicating with native English speakers is because I feel nervous”. Tiera also added, “I am also fear [nervous] with native English speakers and I do not know why”.

Feeling afraid. One of the fears experienced by the participants is they are afraid of making mistakes when getting conversation with native English speakers. Tiera said, “Then, it maybe I feel afraid what they said or what I said will make miscommunication”. Feeling afraid can influence the students’ performance in communicating with native English speakers. Tiera added, “I feel afraid if I miss understand to catch up what the native speakers

said to me, so it will cause misunderstanding and break the conversation”.

Lack of linguistic competence. The other factors inhibiting the participants in communicating with native English speakers is lack of linguistic competence. Wang, Ahn, Kim, and Lin-Siegler (2017) mentioned that one of the factors which make the students afraid to communicate with native English speakers is lack of linguistic competence. There are so many problems related to lack of linguistic competence.

Poor pronunciation. Three participants of this research mentioned that they had problems related to pronunciation hampering their communication with native English speakers. Sky stated, “but if pronunciation, I have problem on it.

Because, I ever mispronounced.”

From this statement, it could be seen that the way to pronounce the word in English language is difficult.

Further, Sky also said, “native English speakers do not understand what I said, like they are confused with the meaning”. In addition, Tiera had similar problem in pronunciation. She said, “mispronunciation, because sometimes they (native English speakers) have different word like between flower and flour have the same pronunciation”.

Lack of grammar knowledge. Two participants of this research mentioned the other problem which inhibits their communication with native English speakers. The problem is related to grammar knowledge. Sky said, “because in speaking, it is not necessary to use

correct grammar rule, so that I am afraid to use incorrect grammar”. Then, Tiera also said the same problem related to grammar. Tiera was overthinking about the grammar when she communicated with native English speakers. She said, “Like grammar, because I am still confused to use present, past, and future”.

Lack of vocabulary. Lack of vocabulary is the other problem from linguistic competence faced by the participants in communicating with native English speakers. Aurora said, “The first, I am afraid that I have limitation in vocabulary”. Then, Tiera also answered that she was also lack of vocabulary. Tiera said, “I have lack of vocabulary”. She felt that she was still lack of vocabulary in English language, so she was afraid if it would make the native English speakers misunderstand.

Further, the answer was emphasized by Snow who stated, “I feel that I have limited vocabulary”.

Lack of English speaking skills.

The other factor which can inhibit the participants in communicating with native English speakers is lack of English speaking skill. According to Sharma (2008), the factor which also can hamper the students in communicating with native English speakers is lack of English speaking skills.

Lack of English communication

skills. During the interview, Sky said, “we feel our English is still incorrect”. Sky also added that she was afraid if the native English speaker did not understand. She thought that she still had bad pronunciation whereas native English speakers had good pronunciation.

Fear of misunderstanding due to native English speakers fast speaking pace. In the interview session, Aurora stated, “The second, native speakers speak faster than us who learn English language. So, I am afraid if I do not know what they said”. Additionally, Tiera also answered the same thing. She said, “Because they speak very quickly, because they are native English speakers of the English language.” Tiera also added that she wondered if she did not catch what the native English speakers said to her, and it led to miscommunication. She was also afraid that it would ruin the conversation with native English speakers. Furthermore, Snow stated, “native English speakers speak quickly, so I face difficulty to catch up because I am still learning.” She added that for example, they (native

English speakers) spoke something, but they (native English speakers) spoke too fast, it made her did not understand. She also said that she must listen carefully to catch what the native English speakers said.

Lack of cultural knowledge. Based on the interview, one participant revealed that lack of cultural knowledge is one the factors she faced in communicating with native English speakers. Aurora said, “I do not know the native English culture”. Aurora also added that she did not understand how to know whether the native English speakers had good mood or bad mood.

The Strategies to Cope with Inhibiting Factors in Communicating with Native English Speakers

Using communication strategies.

This strategy done by the students to cope with the inhibiting factors

directly in communicating with native English speakers. Jeharsae (2012) pointed out that communication strategies can be used by the students to solve their problems in communicating with native English speakers.

Asking the other people. Sky stated, “so, sometimes I will ask my friends”. Sky also added that sometimes she could not catch up what the native English speakers said because the pronunciation was difficult to understand.

Asking for repetition. In the interview session, Aurora said, “then, I also ask for repetition”. Furthermore, Snow said, “I should ask, “I’m sorry, what did you say?” or Pardon?”. Snow also added that because of the speaking pace, the native English speakers spoke faster than her, it made her missed the word

that native English speakers pronounced even though she knew that word.

Asking to explain the definition of the word. Aurora said, “For vocabulary, I usually ask them to explain”. She also added that for example they [native English speakers] wanted to drink something and I did not know the meaning, so I asked them to explain more.

Asking for repetition. This strategy is other strategy which can be used by the participants directly when they communicate with native English speakers. Aurora stated, “For the speaking pace I ask them to speak slowly”. She also added that she would explain to native English speakers that she still learned English language. Then, Snow also stated, “I ask them to speak slowly”. It is in line with Wang, Ahn, Kim and Lin-

Siegler (2017) who found the strategy which can be used in communicating with native English speakers; it can be from of interaction in asking for repetition.

Practicing the target language. Sky stated, “I will practice the target language first”. She also added that practicing the target language was done to know how to pronounce that word in the correct pronunciation. This strategy is in line with Buckingham (2009) which who stated that practicing the target language is one of the strategies which can build the students’ self-confidence and motivation.

Improving English speaking skills.

This strategy is in line with Wang, Ahn, Kim, and Lin-Siegler (2017) who mentioned that improving English speaking skill is a strategy the students can do by listening to

the music, watching western movies, and reading an English book or novel.

Listening to the music. Sky stated, “And then, I also listen to the music”. She also added that she faced inhibiting factors in pronunciation when communicating with native English speakers, and the easy way to know how to pronounce and practice the pronunciation was by listening to the music. Aurora said, “Firstly, I listen to the music”. Furthermore, Snow also had the same answer. She said, “Or listening to the music”. She also added that by listening to the music she would know the meaning of some new words.

Learning by listening to the native English speakers. Tiera said, “If grammar, I learn from them when they speak”. Tiera had inhibiting

factors in linguistic competence especially in grammar knowledge. Then, Snow also had the same answer. She said, "I think we should often listen to native English speakers". She also added that she would watch and listen a vlog from native English speakers.

Watching the English video. Aurora stated, "Secondly, watching music video or video lyric". She also added that by watching the video, she could increase the vocabulary.

Furthermore, Tiera had different way. She preferred to watch the movie to watch video or video lyrics. She said, "I usually watch a western movies". She also added that she learned how to pronounce English word correctly by watching the movie.

Joining organization activities.

This strategy is in line with Sun

(2015) who stated that extracurricular activities will play as a key role for awaking the students' culture. One of the participants from this research joined one program in college. Aurora said, "Joining program in (English Department Students Association) EDSA which discusses native English speakers or the culture." By joining extracurricular, the students can get more exposure about culture of the target language. Therefore, the students can put themselves when they communicate with native English speakers.

Communicative activities. Snow said, "Read an article in English language, actually every text using English language". She also added that from reading an article in English language made her learn many things such as grammar,

vocabulary, and knowledge toward the culture. It is in line with Al-Harbi (2012) who mentioned that one of the communicative activities is by reading a piece of text. This activity also can build the participants' self-confidence when they communicate with native English speakers.

Using technology. Sky stated, "Or sometimes I use an application like electronic dictionary to check the pronunciation. In contrast, Aurora had different answer. Aurora stated, "Then, if there is a new word, I directly look up to the dictionary. Furthermore, Tiera also had the same answer as Aurora's. Tiera stated, "Sometimes I do not know the meaning, then I usually use electronic dictionary".

Conclusion

The finding showed that four participants faced the inhibiting

factors in communicating with native English speakers. The factors were lack of psychological state, lack of linguistics competence, lack of English speaking skills, and lack of culture knowledge. This research pointed out that there were seven strategies used by four participants of this research. The strategies were communication strategies, practicing the target language, improving English speaking, joining extracurricular activities, doing communication activities, using technology, and asking for repetition.

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