

SPEAKING MODEL TEXTS IN TEXTBOOKS FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract: This article is based on a study which aims at finding out the quality of the communication strategies implemented in the speaking model texts available in the senior high school English textbooks published by Semarang Municipality. The model speaking texts in the textbooks are segmented into turns and moves as suggested by Eggins and Slade (1994). The communication strategies are classified referring to Murcia, et al.'s (1995) classification. The results reveal that only 4 out of 32 texts employ communication strategies of various kinds which have potential of effective implementation.

Key words: communication, communication breakdown, speaking model text

The idea to conduct research of speaking model texts in the revised version of *Senior High School* (SHS) English textbooks published by Semarang Municipality is inspired by the research results (Rukmini, 2006) which show that speaking model texts in the first published version of those textbooks do not meet the students' needs. The flow of oral communications in those texts goes nicely without the existence of *communication breakdown* (CB). With regards to speaking language, CB takes place when one of the speakers involved in the oral communication fails to convey or understand the meaning they encounter with. In real oral communication, CB often happens, especially when the medium of communication is not the speaker's native language.

The absence of CB in speaking model texts can not be tolerated since English

School Based Curriculum, the one which is now applied in SHS in Indonesia, suggests that teachers and learners of English are to discuss, not only the content of the model texts, but also the expressions used by the speaker, their functions, why they are chosen, their contribution to achieve their social purposes, etc. Without discussion on the CB and how to cope with when this happens, learners might think that oral communication should perfectly flow and this may cause them to say nothing rather than speaking which causes CB to occur.

However, the study only concerns with the communication strategies used to overcome CB which seems to happen in the model texts; explaining its context with other moves and why they are implemented as so. In short, the study tries to portray the implementation of communication strategies used in the model text.

As social creatures, human beings can not avoid communicating with others. It is awkward for someone to say nothing when meeting someone else in a given place; even more so when they have to be together in a considerably long time. The need to communicate is also exhibited when someone tends to read a newspaper, magazine, book, etc when having no friend to talk with. Reading is also communicating, that is between the writer and the reader.

In the basic principle of its medium, communication can be classified into two, written communication and speaking communication. In these two kinds of communication, exchanges occur. What is being exchanged, according to *systemic functional linguistics* (SFL), is meaning, not word, clause, sound or others. Furthermore, SFL elaborates that the meaning is expressed in language.

Communication happens because its participants have a social purpose; only a mad person who speaks with no purpose at all. In other words, people using a language have a purpose—language use is functional. The function is to communicate, to realize meanings. The realization of meanings itself is influenced by the context of culture and context of situation where the meanings are exchanged. The process of making meaning is done semiotically (Eggins, 1994:2) that is making meaning by choosing. The implementation of this theory is well illustrated in the following example. When someone is in Washington, US, he/she will choose ‘Hi’ as to greet others. ‘Hi’ is chosen, and not others, such as ‘Good morning or Hello’ because she/he is sure that in Washington greeting people by saying ‘Hi’ is accepted culturally and situationally.

That theory is in line with one of the two schools of communication offered by Fiske (1990:4). This communication school is called the semiotic school which views communication as the production of the exchange of meanings. This school believes

that a message is the construction of sign, which, through interacting with the receiver, produces meanings. The message itself is affected by the receiver-- how she/he interprets the received message.

Being Involved in an oral communication, after finding the meaning which is exposed to her/him, someone should respond with another meaning based on the function of the concerned meaning. This response is then responded by the interlocuter. This happens on and on until the social purpose is achieved. In other words, meanings in a given situation are dependent on one another. That phenomenon is one of the reasons why language education has shifted its focus from isolated sentences to whole texts.

The paradigm shift of language education offered by Kern (2000:19) brings about effects in the oral skill instruction of English as suggested by Richards in his reflection on teaching English as a second and foreign language (2001:12). He states that in an oral skill instruction, speaking or oral inter-action is the basis for learning with both native and non-native usage of models by considering that the focus is on communicating in ways that are appropriate in cross-cultural setting. He suggests that accuracy and fluency are the primary goal even though tolerance of errors should be given. Explicitly, he mentioned that the model speaking texts should be informed to the students by analyzing the corpus. It is done to make students get experience in getting involved with speaking expressions in context.

Based on the suggestion, speaking model texts should not be always the speech of native speakers. In fact, in this global era, with sufficient English proficiency anyone may communicate with another in the world who can speak in that language regardless of where she/he comes from.

Using English to communicate orally is important in learning by giving more

tolerance to the errors. The existence of error however can be reduced if students have sufficient strategic competence which can compensate any deficiencies of any other underlying competencies. Teachers have to teach how to overcome the problem when communication breakdown takes place.

The provision of a good model text is also proposed by Rukmini (2006). Her research results on speaking text reveal that in the authentic speaking text, its clauses are usually minor; hesitations frequently occur since the speakers hardly have time to think and this may cause errors in speaking. Using environmental contexts to help verbal communication often happens, for example saying 'like this' while pointing at a given thing.

Some other specific features of speaking texts are described by Feez, et al. (2002:77), such as dynamic, on-going and open ended, flexible, fluid, spontaneity phenomena (characterized by false starts, hesitations, interruptions, overlap, incomplete clauses), lexically sparse, using everyday lexis, non-standard grammar, having interactive stages which are difficult to describe, grammatical complexity, turn-taking organization, moving from one point to the other and sometimes back again to the previous point, relying on shared physical context, and many others. Therefore, The above features should be considered and implemented in the model text. In learning process, they should be included in the discussion between students and the teacher so that they know why a given move is realized in a certain way, what the purpose is, in what context the concerned move is applied effectively.

Speaking model texts which will be discussed here are the ones which are appropriate for SHS students. Ideally, they should be authentic conversations which really happen either at schools or in any place in the students' future life.

In the process of learning, the students are guided by the teacher to analyze the model texts in order to learn its lexicogrammar which depend on who speaks what to whom, in what situation (Dewerianka, 1994 as cited in Hammond, 1992:1). In applying School Based Curriculum, when teaching, a teacher can use any method as long as it suits the students' needs, characteristics, and facilities the school has, so that the results of learning will be the most effective.

The role of model texts, particularly speaking ones can be clearly seen through the scope of English subject, as stated in the school based curriculum (2007), which covers:

1. discourse competence, that is the competence to understand and/or produce texts, both speaking and written, which is realized in the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing to achieve the informational literacy.
2. interpreting and producing various short functional texts and monologue of various genres: *procedure, descriptive, recount, narrative, report, news-item, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion, review, public speaking*. The gradation of material can be seen through lexicogrammar used and the text development.
3. supporting competencies: linguistic competence (using grammar, lexical items, pronunciation, punctuation appropriately), socio-cultural competence (using appropriate expressions in various context of situations), strategic competence (overcoming problems when CB occurs so that communication does not stop, and actional competence (conveying and understanding communicative intent by performing and interpreting speech and speech act sets).

(School Based Curriculum, 2007: 308)

It is explicitly written in number 1 (above) that students of SHS should be able to work with not only written texts but speaking ones as well. The learning should be text based and meanings being speaking should be contextual. Being involved in a speaking text, students should know what to say when opening a conversation, sustaining it, using strategic competence to keep the conversation going, and how to end it. They should know how to develop a conversation (speaking text) to achieve its social purpose. All the competencies stated which are needed by the students when being involved with a given text should be reflected in the model text.

One of all the competencies often unconsidered is 'the strategic competence -- competence to negotiate messages and resolve problems or to compensate for deficiencies in any of the other underlying competencies' (Murcia, et al., 1995:9). This competence is usually used when CB occurs. Model texts should show explicitly that CB is there. Students of SHS should be aware that causing CB is common in an oral communication since the speakers hardly have time to think what to say and to respond. Teaching students how to overcome when this happens is inevitable.

Communication strategy is used when CB takes place in a conversation. It occurs when a speaker has communicative intention which she/he fails to express because of the gap in her/his linguistic repertoire. If this problem arises, when she/he is already engaged in speaking, she/he must try to find a way of getting the meaning across. The way to cope with the situation is what Littlewood (1984) calls communication strategy, but the communication strategy classification which is used as the instrument of this research belongs to Murcia, et al. (1995:28), the one which is more detailed compared to Littlewood's.

Murcia, et al. classify communication strategies into five classes: avoidance or

reduction strategy, achievement or compensatory strategy, stalling or time gaining strategy, self monitoring strategy, and interactional strategy. The avoiding or reduction strategy can be done by avoiding a topic, replacing message, or abandoning message.

In achievement or compensatory strategy, a speaker replaces lexical item of a given meaning she/he fails to find by saying in another way. This strategy consists of ten sub-classes. The first is circumlocution, for example, saying *a tool for loosening a screw* to replace *a screw driver*. The second is approximation, e.g. saying *hammer* for *mallet*. The third is all purpose words, e.g. *thingy*, *thingumajig*, meaning a person or thing whose name a speaker forgets. This can be used in the same way as *what's his name?* or *What do you call it*. The fourth is non-linguistic means, e.g. using mime, gesture, pointing, drawing pictures. The fifth is restructuring, e.g. *The bus was very..... There were lots of passengers*. The sixth is called word-coinage, e.g. saying *a tool keeper* for *a tool man*. The seventh is literal translation from first language, e.g.: saying *The problem will be weighed* to replace *The problem will be considered*. The eighth is foreignizing, that is saying English with first language pronunciation, e.g. an Indonesian speaker says *know* as [knouw] for [nou]. The ninth is called code switching, e.g. an Indonesian says *There is kerak in the pipe* for *There is stain in the pipe*. The tenth is retrieval, e.g. saying *bro....bron.....bronze*.

The stalling or time gaining strategy consists of two kinds, they are fillers, hesitation devices and gambits, e.g. *Well....., Where was I.....* and self and other repetition, e.g. *Two Two runners*.

The self monitoring strategy is sub-classified into self initiated repair, e.g. *Two..... I mean twice* and self rephrasing, e.g. *He is a teacher... no ...no... an*

instructor who trains me to operate this machine.

The interactional strategy has four sub-classes. The first is appealing for help, e.g. *What do you call.....?* (direct) *I don't know the word **sapu** in English.* (direct); by using interactional strategy, the speaker hopes the interlocuter will give a help.

The second sub-class is meaning negotiation strategy. This strategy is done by collaborating with the interlocuter, consisting of (a) indicators of non/mis-understanding which can be in the form of request for repetition, e.g. *Pardon me, Could you say it again?*; request for clarification, e.g. *What do you mean ?*, request for confirmation, e.g. *Did you just now say?*; (b) expressing non-understanding, can be verbal, e.g. *Sorry, I don't catch your words* and non-verbal, e.g. by raising shoulders, blank look; (c) interpretive summary, e.g. *You mean.....?*

The third sub-class is called responses. These can be in the form of (a) repetition, rephrasing, expansion, reduction, confirmation, rejection and repair, (b) comprehension checks, these are used to check: whether the interlocuter can follow the speaker is saying, e.g. *'Am I making sense?*, whether what the speaker says is correct or grammatical, e.g. *Could I say that?*, and whether the interlocuter can hear the speaker's speech, e.g. *Do you hear?*

According to Sacks (1994:700), when someone analyzes a conversation, she/he needs to account two grossly apparent facts about speaking data, that is only one person speaks at a turn and the speaker change recurs. These facts imply that a conversation is a turn-taking activity in which every speaker will hopefully take the chance to speak; it will be very complicated to interpret the meaning conveyed if more than one speaker speak at a turn.

A turn is defined by Eggins and Slade (1994:84) as 'all the talk produced by one

speaker before another speaker gets in', for example:

1. Mom: You are going to your friend's party, aren't you?
2. Alana: Hm..... I don't know.

There are two turns shown above, the first is produced by Mom; it starts from the word *You* and ends in the word *you*. The second is produced by Alana with her *Hm...* and *I don't know*. A turn is an important discourse unit, however it cannot be used to analyze a speech function to use which is suggested by Halliday (1984) in speaking discourse. Further more he suggests that the speech function is realized through move but not turn. One move realizes one speech function. In the above example, Alana produces two moves; *Hm.....* functions as a filler to avoid being speechless, and *I don't know* as a response to Mom's question. A move, based on the above explanation can be defined as a discourse unit which is used to express a speech function. The form can be a word, a word group, or a clause.

METHOD

The data source of this study is the revised English textbook for SHS published by Semarang Municipality and the data are all speaking model texts provided in it.

There are two instruments used in this study, the theory of segmenting a speaking text into turns and moves as suggested by Halliday (1984) and the communication strategy classification of Murcia, et al. (1995).

The procedure of analysis is done as follows. Firstly the model text is segmented into turns and moves and numbered as shown below. The ordinal number (1,2,3, etc.) represents the turn produced by a given speaker and the alphabet (a, b, c, etc.), the move. The numbering is to make the

explanation of finding easily done when referring to a given turn or move.

Turn/Move	Speaker	Text
1/a	Jay	<i>Hello Jean</i>
1/a	Jean	<i>Hello Jack</i>
1/b		<i>You look so cheerful</i>
2/a	Jay	<i>Pardon me?</i>

Secondly the communication strategy is identified by typing the move in bold. In the above analysis the move ***Pardon me?*** is identified as communication strategy and therefore it is bold typed.

Thirdly the communication strategy is classified based on the communication strategy classification suggested by Murcia, et al. (1995). In the above example, move *Pardon, me?* is classified as negotiation strategy in which Jay asks to Jean to say again the move she says previously.

The percentage quantification of all communication strategies found in the analyzed model texts is done in the ending step of the analysis. This supports the conclusion on the frequency of communication strategy used in the model texts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The first communication strategy is found in the first model text as shown in this excerpt analysis below.

(1)

Turn/Move	Speaker	Text
1/a	Handoko	<i>Could you tell me</i>
1/b		<i>if we've got a reservation</i>
1/a	Receptionist	<i>Just a minute ... please.</i>
1/b		<i>We've got your reservation</i>
1/c		<i>It's five people three weeks.</i>
1/d		<i>Three single rooms and one double room.</i>
1/e		<i>Am I right?</i>

It is realized in the move *Am I right?* which is produced by the receptionist since he feels that CB tends to happen. He has produced four moves but unfortunately Handoko does not produce any responding move at all. As this happens, the receptionist uses an inter-actional strategy

which checks Handoko's comprehension; that is by asking if what is said by him is right and at the same time asking Handoko to take the chance to speak.

The second communication strategy is found in the fifth model text as follows

(5)

Turn/Move	Speaker	Text
4/a	Customer	<i>All right</i>
4/b		<i>I think</i>
4/c		<i>I'll take it</i>
5/a	Saleslady	Well ...
5/b		<i>Will there be anything else?</i>

In this fifth model **Well ...** is the communication strategy used by the saleslady to avoid silence. Silence in a conversation is an indication that CB tends to occur and **Well ...** is said by the saleslady (in her 5/a move) until she finds an idea what to say next. This kind of

communication strategy is called filler time gaining strategy of which its function is to fill silence which causes an awkward moment to happen in a conversation.

The following finding also shows the implementation of filler in model text 9.

(9)

Turn/Move	Speaker	Text
2/a	Bill	<i>Have you two met before?</i>
2/a	Ellen	<i>No, I don't think e have.</i>
3/a	Bill	Well ...
3/b		<i>let me introduce you then</i>
3/c		<i>Ellen Robbin,</i>
3/d		<i>This is my friend Ted Newman</i>

Well... is speaking by Bill in his 3/a move when he has no idea what to say to sustain the conversation until he gets an idea to introduce Ellen to Ted.

The last communication strategy is found in the 24th model text as follows

(24)

Turn/Move	Speaker	Text
2/a	Mom	<i>You are going to your friend's party ...</i>
2/a	Alana	<i>Hmm</i>
3/a	Mom	<i>Why are you still here?</i>
3/b		<i>You should be ready by now</i>
3/a	Alana	<i>I don't have anything to wear.</i>
4/a	Mom	<i>What do you mean?</i>
4/b		<i>There are many dresses in your wardrobe</i>

When Alana in her 3/a move says *I don't have anything to wear*, Mom does not know the meaning Alana intends to convey since the fact that she has so many dresses in her wardrobe. To clarify the meaning, Mom uses an interactional strategy, particularly meaning negotiation strategy by asking Alana ***What do you mean?*** and elaborates it with *There are many dresses in your wardrobe* move.

The findings and explanation above imply that the implementation of communication strategies in the model speaking texts of the textbook under study is effectively done.

The explanation of findings reinforces the suggestion given by Murcia et.al (1995) that communication strategy can not be excluded from the model text. This is supported by the fact that English is not the first language of the students which means that they hardly have experience in working with texts outside the class. Providing communication strategy in a model text that students work with means facilitating students with experience in working with it, one of the efforts done to achieve the strategic competence.

The last finding is related to the frequency of availability of the communication strategies used in the textbook. Only 12.5% of the analyzed model texts

have communication strategy. This indicates that the chance for the students to work with it is relatively low. This maintains Murcia's statement that communication strategy tends to be unconsidered.

Regarding the kinds, they are not various two of the four communication strategies are interactional strategies whereas the other two are gaining time strategies. They are not various, only 2 of the 5 kinds of communication strategies offered by Murcia, et al. are used.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In accordance with the aim of the study, that is, portraying the communication strategies implemented in the speaking model texts of the revised SHS English textbook published by Semarang municipality, it can be concluded that the implementation of the four provided communication strategies is effectively done.

However the availability of communication strategy in the model text is not sufficient. This can be solved by modifying model texts with communication strategy before introducing it to students. Another effort which can be done is by providing challenging exercises which train students how to use communication strategy to

overcome CB. An example of this is by asking students to insert communication strategy in the speaking model texts which do not have it. This can be followed with discussion on the communication strategy made by students, its function and the reason why it is chosen to insert. Doing so means analyzing corpus—reinforcing Richards' suggestion (2001:18) for teachers when they are to introduce model texts to their students.

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