

TEACHING SPEAKING TO YOUNG LEARNERS THROUGH STORYTELLING

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1. Background of The Study

Learning to speak English fluently is one of the greatest challenges for young learners. For young learners, having the ability to speak in English is the main concern of their English learning (Pinter, 2006). They tend to measure their speaking capability by their fluency when they can speak with their friends or their teacher in English. Likewise, young learners interaction through verbal communication with others are considered by most teachers as an indicator of the success in learning speaking of English. Consequently, in many countries, the teaching of speaking to young learners is mainly intended to encourage the primary students to be able to communicate instantly with others on the basis of their constructed knowledge (Brewster, et.al, 2003:8). It indicates that there is the teaching of speaking to young learners arisen. There, many primary schools in Indonesia provide their students with classroom activities which promote their speaking ability.

Conducting meaningful and purposeful classroom activities in the teaching of speaking to young learners has in-depth discussion among young learner practitioners. Brewster et.al (2003:98), for instance, acknowledge that primary teacher can do this by using a wide kind of activities that actively support students' understanding and guide their intention to specific parts of the spoken text. This could include the use of suitable activity-teaching techniques, for instance, games, role-play, storytelling and so forth (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990). Fortunately, the government also support this idea with the realese of government decree number 24 year of 2006. In the decree it is stated that the main concern of speaking competence standard for elementary school students is students' proficiency in English language use. It covers students' ability in uttering short phrase and sentence in simple ways (www.kemdiknas.go.id). From the decree above, it can be concluded that the teaching of speaking to primary student is intended to facilitate students to get a lot of speaking activities which are relevant to their constructed knowledge. Thus, accomplished English teacher for young learners should know how to facilitate children learn speaking of English (Musthafa, 2010).

Moreover, as regards on the dimensions of learning English for young learners, English teacher for young learners should also consider three dimensions of learning a target language. The dimensions cover children should have a great deal of exposure to, engagement in and support for the language they are learning (Musthafa, 2010). Therefore, if the learning speaking of English is to be as effective as expected, accomplished English teacher for young learners should know how to facilitate how students learn speaking of English (Musthafa, 2010). This thought leads to a verdict on the use of meaningful and purposeful classroom activity that plays an essential role in the teaching of speaking to young learners. Thus, this study is focused to get a picture of the teaching of speaking at primary school through storytelling. In addition, this study portrays how the teacher organises the classroom activity conducted. Hopefully the finding of this study will provide possible information for the practical use of storytelling in the teaching of speaking to young learners.

2. Methodology

As indicated explicitly in introduction, this study employed qualitative approach (Thomas, 2003). The approach was employed to portray the teaching activity through storytelling and the ways of the activity was organised. In terms of its covered, this study used a case study (Meriam, 1998) since the study was bounded on site and participant, covering one International Primary School and one primary English teacher. Thus, this case study was related to what being investigated in the present study to portray the storytelling activity conducted by the teacher in the teaching of speaking

to you learners and investigate the teacher's strategies in conducting the activity holistically (Yin, 2011).

This study was conducted at one International Primary School in Bandung. The reasons of selecting this school were ELT practices and accessibility. Regarding the ELT practices, this was a primary school in where the school has introduced the teaching of speaking to young learners since year of 2007. Since the school began its teaching-learning in the year 2007, consequently, it has just four grades of student level (namely primary 1, primary 2, primary 3 and primary 4). Additionally, the school was chosen as the research site since the school made a feasibility of conducting this study there. The school welcomed the study. The school has also built a good rapport with researcher before, during and after the study. Thus, the data could be gathered easily (Alwasilah, 2000).

This school is named "International" since it uses International curriculum in addition to the national one. It joins the Cambridge University Curriculum Singapore in terms of teaching and learning module. Likewise, this school is like other private primary schools in Indonesia. It adopts the government curriculum, which allows the school to have English as a local content or extra curriculum study. According to the Head of Planning and Standardisation Affairs, this school provided speaking as a separated subject for the students, because of the need of the students' potential. This idea comes from the school experience base when it was conducting the teaching of speaking to the students. The school acknowledged that the most students who have ability to speak English start learning speaking from the early age. Thus, this school attempted to provide teaching and learning speaking beginning from the first grade.

Moreover, to promote the effective language learning, there was English as a part of the school vision and mission. The school also has vision and mission that the teaching English is intended to reveal English oriented towards quality, effectiveness and with characteristic dignity which refers to the National Education Department. Thus, the students would have a secure environment to use English in activities. The students could have a field trip study, an English competition such as spelling bee, mini-drama, and so forth. There are also many facilities to promote the students in learning speaking, such as storybooks, computer, internet, in-focus and teaching aids.

The participants of this study were one English teacher and students of four classes (namely primary 1, primary 2, primary 3 and primary 4). The reasons for choosing these participants were that 1) the teacher has applied teaching speaking to young learners for years, besides that 2) she was just the one teacher who taught speaking at those four classes, and 3) the students of four classes are students who have been taught by the teacher. Therefore, the participants may represent area of this study (Holliday, 2005).

The data for this study were gathered through three instruments, including classroom observations, documentations and interviews with the teacher. The following are the discussion.

Classroom Observation

The classroom observations were conducted to investigate out the story telling activity in the teaching of speaking to young learners. It was also intended to find out the ways of the teacher organised the activity throughout the teaching. The classroom observations were conducted over a period of 12 meetings during April to May 2011 for the entire four classes. The first class of thirteen children namely primary 1 (four boys and nine girls) was observed from the beginning April to the middle of May and it was in three-time observations. The second class of ten children namely primary 2 (two boys and nine girls) was observed from the beginning April to the end of May and it was in three-time observations. The third class of twelve children namely primary 3 (five boys and seven girls) was observed from the beginning April to the end of Maya and it was in three-time observations. And, the fourth class of nine children namely primary 4 (six boys and three girls) was observed from the beginning April to the end of May and it was in three-time of observations.

The observations were conducted directly to the classroom activities. It aimed to observe that the researcher can notice directly the process of teaching and learning during the classroom activities (Brewster et.al, 2003). These observations were carried out by the researcher herself and were recorded by a video camera. It aimed to record the teacher and students' interaction briefly.

Additionally, in these observations, the researcher acted out as a passive participant observer who did not intervene the teaching and learning process. As means, the processes of teaching and learning were not manipulated.

Furthermore, to enrich data from observations, observation sheets were used as long as classroom observation. In order to get in depth description on several characteristics or activities presented to the subjects of this study, this study used a self-checklist type in collecting data as suggested by Brewster et.al (2003). In terms of the self-checklist which used, this study adopted and adapted the instrument of observation on the teacher's ability in conducting the teaching and learning process. This sheet has been widely used since then in simulating on micro teaching task on the learning and teaching course in the English Education Department of Indonesia University of Education years 2010/2011. It covered about what has been heard, seen, experienced, and thought in the course of collecting and reflecting the data (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2007).

Documentations

Documentations stand in this study as an encapsulated example of how does the teacher conduct and complete a form of classroom practice through storytelling. In terms of documentations gained in this study, this study analysed the lesson plans, teaching media (worksheet and materials). Further, these were employed to identify the relation of source of media on the teaching and learning process towards classroom speaking activity through. These sources were periphery which will be matched with observations and also became an essential part of triangulation data (Cresswell and Clark, 2007).

Interviews

These interviews were conducted in order to support the data gathering related to the storytelling in the teaching of speaking to young learners. The interviews were employed to identify what activities and strategies that the teacher applied during the teaching-learning speaking to young learners through storytelling. The open-ended interviews were applied in this study to gain supporting data. The interviews had done through recording. The processes of recording used recorder. The interviews were employed in formally and informally. The formal interview was in the form of semi-structured questions at the end of the research. On the other hands the informal interviews were taken for 12 times after the class sessions in which these interviews had formed several ongoing interviews within the observations. The ongoing interviews were intended to investigate the teacher's aim in implementing particular instructional events dealing with the classroom activities in the teaching of speaking. These ongoing interviews were kinds of helpfulness as the teacher's answers on the ongoing interviews assisted the researcher with the answer for two research questions for this study. Particularly, these interviews were conducted dealt with the actual practices teacher did, for instance when the teacher applied such an instruction regarding her students grade. In sum, the results of the interviews were conducted to crosscheck the other data revealed. Finally, the data collection, then, were transcribed as the data for analysis (Creswell, 1994).

Having gathered data through three instrumentations, therefore, there were three groups of data collected in this study; group data from observations, teaching documents, and interviews. The data, further, were analyzed using mixed method data analysis to address the two research questions. Overall, this study applied six activities for data analyses. To address the two research questions which stated in Chapter I, these activities involved transcribing the video, coding the data, categorizing the data, presenting the data, interpreting the data and making the conclusion. What follows are discussions on the stages of data analyses.

Firstly, the data result from classroom observations were transcribed and analyzed. In so doing, teacher instructions and her behaviours were analyzed to potray the storytelling activities, strategies, material or media selection that the teacher employed throughout the classroom practices. Then, the data were categorized to and interpreted to answer the two research questions. After

analyzing the storytelling applied in the teaching of speaking for each class, the findings were analysed to find out the relevance of each step with the theories as discussed in Chapter II, such as the theories of classroom activities, young learners' learning characteristic and their constructed knowledge, teacher's strategies in the teaching of speaking and so forth. Furthermore, the documentations collected were analysed. The reliable documentations of this study were lesson plan/teaching scenario, teaching materials/media, teacher comments and report to the students' achievement. This study intended those documentations to see how the activities and strategies of teaching, and media selection used for the classroom activities in teaching of speaking to young learners. Then, the documentations were analyzed by using content analysis as proposed by Merriam (1998:116). This analysis covered three activities. Firstly, the data from the documentations were described on the content of documents. Then, it led the researcher to code the data and interpret the finding of data collection based on the theory.

Furthermore, the data from interviews were also transcribed. Then, it also constructed an interview summary form. This form covered practical details about the time and details about the content emerging theme which covered the kinds of classroom activities the teacher conducted and the teaching strategies the teacher applied in the teaching of speaking to young learners.

Overall, the data findings were analyzed based on the theories which reviewed in this study. Additionally, in this study, the data collection and analysis took place simultaneously. The researcher carried out data analyses as the research progresses, it was needed to interpret the data so that it could gain an understanding of what is going on and get visual details on the data collected. Further, these data analyses were presented in a condensed body of information. And then, summing up and recommendations were conducted as the last data analysis stages.

Subsequently, regarding the belief that conclusions about an object are more valid if the results of different analyses support one another, this study used data triangulation. The triangulation was employed in order to enhance the validity of the data obtained in each technique and to build a system of interconnected data between three different instrument aspects of same thing.

In brief, the methodology which described above blend the theories from Alwright (1988), Cresswell (1994), Merriam (1998), Alwasilah (2000), Brewster et.al (2003), Holliday (2005), Frankael and Wallen (2007), Cresswell and Clark (2007), Knight and Smith (XX), Meier and Henderson (2007), Emilia (2008), Schunk (2009), Heighem and Crocker (2009), Richards (2010), Dawson (2009), Yin (2011).

4. Result and Discussion

As discussed in the theory covered, storytelling is a kind of classroom activity that can be conducted by a teacher in the teaching of speaking. In this study, it could be seen that the teacher conducted storytelling in the teaching of speaking for the primary 1 (25%), primary 2 (50%) and primary 4 (25%). In implementing the storytelling in these three classes, the teacher employed two types of leaning, including the teacher told the students a story and the teacher asked the students to tell her about their story.

Regarding the data from observation, for instance, concerning the storytelling activity for the primary 1, it could be seen the teacher told a simple story within the teaching of speaking. The teacher conducted the storytelling to expose some language usage in context. It could also be inferred from the data that the teacher provided students a lot of speaking engagement through storytelling. The activity seemed bring enjoyable and meaningful activities for students while they were learning language usage in context. The excerpt following illustrates the discussion above.

T: "Primary One, Ms. Nicole is going to read a story about pet. Sit down properly ya!".

(T pauses the teaching instruction and starts the story)

T : "Sam, the Cat. Jill has a brown cat. Her cat name is Sam.

"Do you have pets?" (T pauses the story and has a question as regards with the topic)

S1 : "Ya, cat, Ms. I have cat, Ms." (T is miming cat at students during the story)

T : "woow, you have a cat, Edry? Mioww (T produces cat's sound effect)

Ss : "Mioooow" (Ss imitates the teacher in producing cat's sound effect)
S1 : "Ya, I have a cat"

(Observation#Primary1)

The data from the excerpt above shows that the teacher taught language usage through storytelling. By exposing the clause 'Jill has a brown cat', the teacher taught grammar, particularly the use of verb possession 'has', in context and in meaningful way. Such treatment, as stated by Gass and Selinker (2008), is suggested in the pace of children learning English since teaching grammar in subconscious way facilitate children internalise the language pattern in use. It, therefore, gives students example of words use. It is also relevant with Wright's proposition (1995:6-8) that stories might be used to introduce basic vocabulary such as family, animals, food, and so on. In addition, in telling the stories the teacher used mimes and sound effect to emphasise some vocabularies. Such treatment, as stated by Cameron (2001), helps the students developing meaning of word since the teacher involved students learning words through the concept of syntagmatic association. It could also be seen that the teacher asked a question at the beginning story time. Therefore, in terms of addressing an interaction question from the beginning lesson, it seemed the teacher has followed the suggestion by Musthafa (2010) regarding his dimension of learning a language –engagement principle.

However, there were different instructional events deals with conducting storytelling activity in the teaching of speaking for primary 2 and primary 4. For the two classes, the teacher asked the students to tell their own stories. For instance, for the primary 2, the teacher asked students to tell a dream they had. The students were asked to tell the worst or best dream of each one. It can be shown in the excerpt below:

T : "Have you ever had dream at a night time?"
Ss : "Yes, bad dream.. good dream."
Ss : "I have Ms.. I have.. bad dream.. good dream".
T : "Ok, I'm going to take you in circle, in turn to talk about your dream. Ok, Reyhan, you first. Can you tell me about your dream."

(Observation#Primary2)

From the data above, it could be seen that the teacher provided the student with learning experience dealing with how to convey their thought, idea and feeling through story. Such treatment is categorized by Wright (1995:21) as area fluency since students in the activity were encouraged to attempt to express their ideas and experiences even if they can only use single words or short phrases. It is also relevant to the dimension of learning as proposed by Musthafa (2010) who states that children learning a language need a lot of speaking engagement in the class so they will get language experience. It leads to a conclusion that the storytelling is compatible with young learner's characteristics in which children learn from direct experience (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990; Wright, 1995; Brewster et.al, 2003; Paul, 2003; Musthafa, 2008).

As illustrated as above, the data from documentary also revealed that the teacher used storytelling as a kind of classroom activity in the teaching of speaking. The data revealed also that the teacher conducted the storytelling for several objectives, for instance, 'Students will become more fluent by ever increasing their range of active vocabulary' (see Appendix 5). Such objective, as stated by Wright (1993) and Cameron (2001), provides important position to help students understand and further develop their vocabularies through the activity. Such objective is also suggested by Brown (2001:149-151) who mentioned that lesson plan should contain goals and a list of objective that should be achieved by the students at the end of the lesson. Making a good planning is important in the teaching activity (Moon, 2009) as the teacher will enable an effective classroom takes place.

Likewise, the data from interview also supports the discussion from the two data above. The data from teacher's interview infers that the teacher used the storytelling on the teaching of speaking. The following excerpt can be seen as evidence to the discussion above.

Actually I like to do some activities in my classes. Sometimes, telling a story. Of course, I did those activities with put consideration on their class level and their characteristics as language learner.

(Interview#5)

From the teacher's answer above, it can be inferred that the teacher was knowledgeable enough about classroom activity in the teaching of speaking to young learners. It also can be seen that the teacher corresponded the activity with the students' characteristic and their class level. Concerning the children's characteristic, such activity is in line with some scholars who propose that proposing suitable classroom activities are required for the effective teaching of speaking to young learners (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990; Reiser and Dick, 1996; Pinter, 2006; Suyanto, 2006; Musthafa, 2008). Thus, it can be concluded that the use of storytelling in the teaching of speaking is relevant to the ELT for young learner principle as discussed by many experts.

This result has discussed the storytelling activities which were conducted by the teacher in the teaching of speaking. The findings revealed that the storytelling activity was relevant to the young learners' learning characteristic and their constructed knowledge. It leads to a verdict of an appropriate classroom activity in the teaching of speaking to young learners. Moreover, based on the findings; the teacher, in this study, seemed to follow the two dimensions of children learning language while she was conducting the storytelling activity. The two dimensions are exposure to and engagement in the language students are learning. It escorts to the conclusion that the storytelling activity was conducted by the teacher in the teaching of speaking to the primary students in this school.

The following illustrates how storytelling activity was organised by the teacher during the teaching of speaking. In the storytelling activity, the teacher organised story telling activities through two strategies, which are: teaching a class as a whole and organising oral performance.

Teaching a Class as Whole

Having observed over a period 12 meetings, the teacher applied whole class teaching for several purposes. The purposes are 1) giving explanations and instruction, 2) managing activities, and 3) getting students in the lesson.

In term of giving explanations and instruction and managing activities, the data from observation indicated that the strategies applied at the beginning, mid- and closing of the activities. In this case, throughout the storytelling, the teacher performed the strategies in informing the activity students will do. As examples, the following excerpt presents what the teacher said in applying a whole-class teaching at the beginning lesson and at the mid-activity.

T: "Primary One, Ms. Nicole is going to read a story about pet. Sit down properly ya!".

(Observation#Primary1)

T: "Ok, I'm going to take you in circle, in turn to talk about your dream.

(Observation#Primary2)

The excerpt above reveals that teacher applied teaching a class as a whole to introduce the lesson (Harmer, 2007; Musthafa, 2008) and to manage students' behaviour (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990, Brester et.al, 2003). In this case, to manage students' behaviour teacher organised students' seating arrangement. She asked the students sit on the chair around her. This strategy is appropriate to provide support for students' learning since having pupils sit on their chair around the teacher, teacher has a sure that students can see her and the illustrations and can hear it clearly (Wright, 1995; Brewster et.al, 2003; Gebhard, 2006; Harmer, 2007). It leads to a conclusion that the teacher used teaching a class as a whole to set up the activity.

Moreover, in term of getting student's attention to the stories, the data form observation also indicates that the teacher applied teaching a class as a whole. The following excerpt shows how the teacher drove her students' intention to the story. The teacher read a story entitled '*Sam, the Cat*'

T : "Sam, the Cat. Jill has a brown cat. Her cat's name is Sam.
 "Do you have pets?" (T pauses the story and has a question as regards with the topic)
 S1 : "Ya, cat, Ms. I have cat, Ms."
 T : "woow, you have a cat, Edry? Miowwww"
 Ss : "Mioooooow"

(Observation#Primary1)

What the teacher did in this part made the students get intention to the lesson. The extract above shows that by pausing and looking at students and then adjusting a question, the students become subconscious that the teacher was gaining their intention. It is suitable to be employed in the young learner classes since asking question gives further support for pupils' understanding to relate what they hear to what they have in their real-life (Brewster et. al, 2003:196). This thought is in line with Musthafa (2008) who states that children learn best through direct experience. The experience plays essential role in children growth where they can relate what they hear to what they have in their home. Additionally, having applied teaching a class as a whole in the opening stage, it seemed that the teacher is following the suggestion from Gebhard (1996) and Harmer (2007) regarding the setting up activity premise.

Moreover, in terms of the influence of applying teaching a class as a whole, from the researcher's note, the pupils looked to pay interest and enjoy to the story during teacher was applying such strategy. What follow is a note from the researcher's note illustrates the discussion above.

Throughout telling story, the students pay attention to the story time. The students respond by answering what the teacher asks, for instance: "Ya, cat, Ms. I have cat, Ms", "mioooooow". (Fieldnote#Primary1)

According to Scott and Ytreberg' (1990) proposition, whole class teaching provides secure environment for children to talk and to share what they felt and thought. It can be seen that the data above approves what Scott and Ytreberg stated. It is also in line with Musthafa (2008) who affirms that a whole class activity is suitable for young learners since it provide an activity in which all students are doing the same thing at the same time. It also leads to a conclusion that the teacher took part as model (Musthafa, 2008) and facilitator during the activity.

Organising Oral Performance

As regards with the second strategy teacher used, it can be seen that the teacher set up the storytelling through organising oral performance. Through this strategy, the teacher asked students to perform a simple story they had. It was found on the teaching of speaking through storytelling to the primary 2 and primary 4. The following excerpt is an example to the discussion above.

T : Ok, Reyhan, you first. Can you tell me about your dream."
 (Ss make a lot of noise)
 T : "Everybody listen to Reyhan tells about his dream."
 (Reyhan starts his story)
 S1 : "I have a bad dream. When, I look at the window. There is a woman. Face is (giving scary mimes)
 T : "with scary face?" (T scaffolds Reyhan)
 S1 : "Yaa.. And I"
 T : "Screamed?"
 S1 : "Ya and then I felt down."
 T : "Ooh..very scary dream, I think.....
 : Now Hera, your next. Everybody listen to Hera"
 (Hera gets her line)
 S2 : "Yaa. I have dream."

T : "Ya. You had a dream?"
 S2 : "I cook with my big family. When I cook I see celebrity, beautiful celebrity come to my home."
 T : "What's the celebrity name?"
 S2 : "I don't know"
 T : "Ooh. You didn't ask the name of the celebrity?"
 S2 : "Ya.. i don't ask. And she cook with my family. I cook with celebrity many food"
 T : "Wow, that's a great dream"
 S2 : "And then when I cook with celebrity, my sister weak up and it's finish."
 T : "Ooooooh..."
 S1 : "I got a question. What food did you cook?"
 T : "Ohh, wonderful question"
 S2 : "many"
 T : "Hmm, many kinds of food?"
 S2 : "Ya, many kinds"
 S3 : "I got question too. Where does you cook?" (*Mia also asks question to Hera*)
 T : "Where did you cook?"
 S2 : "Yes, in Garut".
 T : "In Garut?"
 S2 : "yes"
 T : "wonderful. Thank you Hera"

(Observation#Primary2)

From the excerpt, it can be seen that the students seem enthusiast to perform their story as they used their face to mime what they talked. From their performance of using miming and their body language, it seems that they were enthusiastic to tell their story. The excerpt also shows that they ignored the errors they made. It indicates that the strategy teacher used made the students had experience to use language which might be best showed through the activity like storytelling. It is in line with Kayi (2006) who stated that teacher providing time for students telling their own story will stimulate them to convey their thought since children love telling stories (Wright, 1993; Paul, 2003; Suyanto, 2008; Musthafa, 2008).

The case that the teacher applied teaching a class as whole and organising oral performance implies that she set up the activity to motivate children in learning. What the teacher did in this activity is also supported with the data from interview. The following extract is what the teacher said when she was asked about the strategy in organising the storytelling activity.

Usually, I organized the whole class to get them involving in the lesson. In storytelling, I usually asked them to tell their own story to the class, and then I told a simple story for them, while telling a simple story I did also a question-answer activity.
 (Interview#11)

From the extract above, it can be inferred that the teacher attempted to give purposeful activity for the students. It can be implied that she corresponded the teaching strategies to the teaching principles since each of the strategy provides certain objective such to organize pupils to speak to and to interact with their friends and teacher in classroom and other speaker of the language about their lives or their world (Pinter, 2006:56).

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