

THE EFFECTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG ADOLESCENT LEARNERS TO SPEAK ENGLISH

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Abstract

This qualitative study focuses on the discussion of effective teaching strategies to encourage young adolescent learners to speak English during the classroom activity. The purpose of this study is to present the speaking strategies used by young adolescent English teachers in Pontianak to motivate their students to speak English in their lesson. The participants involved five teachers in different level of education: elementary and lower secondary level, who were selected randomly to minimize subjectivity to the research. The data were gathered by using open – ended interview. The results of the interview were described and narrated. The results showed that group work and drilling were frequently implemented by the teachers in their classroom to encourage their learners to speak. They confirmed that group work and drilling were appropriate to the level of English speaking skills of their learners.

Keywords: speaking, group work, drilling.

Abstrak

Penelitian kualitatif ini berfokus pada penjabaran strategi mengajar yang efektif untuk memotivasi siswa remaja muda untuk berbicara bahasa Inggris selama proses belajar mengajar. Tujuan penelitian adalah untuk menampilkan dan membahas strategi berbicara yang digunakan oleh guru Bahasa Inggris di Pontianak untuk memotivasi siswa dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris dalam proses belajar mengajar. Partisipan penelitian yaitu lima orang guru dari level pendidikan yang berbeda, yaitu pendidikan dasar dan pendidikan menengah yang dipilih secara acak untuk meminimalisir subjektivitas penelitian. Data penelitian dikumpulkan menggunakan wawancara. Data penelitian kemudian dideskripsikan dan dinarasikan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa group work dan drilling adalah strategi yang sering digunakan para guru untuk memotivasi siswa dalam berbicara. Para guru meyakinkan bahwa group work dan drilling adalah strategi yang sesuai dengan level keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris bagi para siswa.

Kata Kunci: berbicara, group work, drilling.

INTRODUCTION

The real proof of success as a language learner is when communicating the language. As Willis (1996) said that the most important thing in learning languages (especially foreign languages) is using that language. In Pontianak where English is still a foreign language (EFL), the success English language learners are when they are not only capable to write, read, and listen to English but also when they are

able to speak well. Using the target language well is the evidence that the language learners have learned and understood the English as target language.

Because speaking proficiency is important for students, teachers in Pontianak should put it as one of the main goals in learning English. In order to achieve the goal, applying teaching strategies is the main requirement. The strategies which are applied by the teachers must be varied because of the numerous available speaking strategies. However, the concern is that what considerations should be thought by the teachers. They may depend on the students' problem, students' need, and supporting facilities had by the teachers or the schools.

There are many studies related to speaking problems such as students' anxiety which are done by some researchers (Tanveer, 2007; Yahya, 2013; Hadziosmanovic, 2012; Pearson. et al 2007; Subaşı, 2010). However, there are limited studies discussing about the effective teaching strategies applied by the teachers to encourage speaking, particularly in Pontianak. This is the gap in which the writer would like to raise. The studies which concern with effective teaching speaking strategies are actually important in order to balance the studies about speaking problems. The results of the studies would be more beneficial for other teachers as references to choose alternative strategies for teaching speaking.

The level of the students is the focus of the study is young adolescent learners; including elementary level to junior high school level. Young adolescent learners are defined as those who are 10 to 15 years old (National Middle School Association, 2003). It means they are around 5 grade of elementary school to 3 grade of junior high school. Salyers and McKee (2009) state that during the age, young adolescent experience grows their intellectual more than any time in their life. In other words, the students will use all quotients they have, especially intellectual to acquire the target language. Thus, regarding to its urgency, the teacher must have applied techniques or strategies to maximize the quotients to be proficient in oral English in which this part is the writer's concern.

Since the focus of this study is to find out the effective teaching speaking strategies applied by young adolescent English teachers in Pontianak, the writer concerned on what strategies were frequently used by the teacher; how teachers

implemented the teaching strategies, what considerations considered by the teacher, and how students' ability has improved. Through this paper, the writer expects that the young adolescent teachers in Pontianak become aware of strategies for encouraging their students to speak in their classroom, and this strategies described in this paper could be one of the references for them to apply.

METHODE

This study was conducted through qualitative study. The writer focused on analysis of the teaching strategies applied by English elementary and junior high school teachers to teach speaking. The writer used description to describe the teaching strategies and their implementation in the classroom. The implementation of qualitative methodology in this study was based on its definition, aims and which was closely related to the purposes and implementation of the study.

Qualitative study is characterized by its aims which relate to understanding some aspects of social life and its methods which generate words rather than numbers as data for analysis (Patton and Cochran, 2002). Qualitative methods is also aimed to understand the experiences and attitudes, feeling of individual producing subjective data, the community, and this method answers the questions about what, how, and why of a phenomenon (Hancock 2002, Patton and Cochran 2002). As in this study, the researched aspect was the experience of EFL teachers in applying teaching strategies to teach speaking to their students (as the community in qualitative study).

The participants of this study were teachers of elementary and junior high schools in Pontianak. The numbers of participants were five teachers in which three teachers of elementary and two teachers of junior high school. The different level of study was decided based on the focus of the research which is young adolescence learners whose age are ranging from 10 to 15 years old. These participants were selected randomly to eliminate the subjective influence of external factors, as well as to ensure the generalizability of results of this research (Cresswell, 2009).

In qualitative study methodology, data are collected through direct encounters with individuals, through one to one interviews or group interviews or by

observation (Hancock, 2002). In accordance with this, a semi-structured interview was selected as the tool for data collection. Semi-structured interview is also called as open-ended interview in which the questions based on the topic areas in which the writer is eager to explore (Patton and Cachron, 2002). Through the interview, the writer explored the information from the respondents to collect the intended and needed data for the research. The interviewees were interviewed for 15 – 30 minutes. The interview was recorded by tape recorder. Then, the writer transcribed the results of recording which was presented in the finding.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The finding in this paper is based on the result of analyzing the interview. After analyzing the interview, the writer noted that there were a lot of strategies for teaching speaking that the participants (the school teachers) applied in their classroom. For junior high schools, the teachers had applied drama, role plays, story-telling, group work, and presentation. However, among of the strategies, the teachers mostly used group work. Meanwhile, the teachers of elementary school had applied songs, pictures, drilling, and pictorial games. However, among those strategies, the teachers frequently used drilling strategy.

The strategies which were mostly applied by the participants were further discussed as the theme of this paper, as below.

Group Work

Based on the participants' response, the junior high school teachers (Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 3) chose group work as the technique which was mostly applied to encourage speaking. The reasons and implementations of group work were almost similar from Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 3. They chose group work because the students were more interested in it. They were motivated to speak when the teacher applied group work. According to the teachers, the students were passive in speaking activity before group work strategy applied. "I have motivated them to speak. I use English when teaching. But, they still do not want to speak" (Teacher 1). "The students speak only when they are asked questions. Even, they use Bahasa Indonesia when answering my questions" (Teacher 2). "The students

who speak in my classroom are only few, and always similar from every meeting. I can say only the active ones” (Teacher 3).

According to the teachers, their students did not want to speak because they were ashamed and afraid of making mistakes and being laughed by other students. They said that the only moment for students to speak was in speaking assignment such as retelling story, not in the process of classroom activity. Even so, while doing the assignment some of them still used Bahasa Indonesia, not fully English.

However, after applying group work, the students were encouraged to speak up. The classroom atmosphere became more live and interesting. According to the teachers, the students became very enthusiastic to speak English in their groups. Eventhough, they were confused while using it for the first time, but after several times applying group work they became accustomed to get involved and used speaking. This meant that group work has encouraged the students to speak in the classroom activities. “I like to use group work very much. My students become interested and excited to speak. They want to speak English although some students are still only brave to speak only with their group members. But, that is not a problem; at least they want to speak” (Teacher 1). “After I apply group work, my students want to speak up, not only when I ask them questions. Maybe, it is because they speak with their friends, so that they feel comfortable” (Teacher 2). “More students have been motivated to speak after I use group work” (Teacher 3).

Those teachers did not determine group work without considerations. Group work was chosen based on the teachers’ and students’ necessity. According to their opinion, there were more than 30 students in each class they taught. With those numbers of students, it was difficult for them to organize and encourage all students to speak. Furthermore, they also could not ensure themselves whether all students had spoken up or not. Another consideration was the time for assessing speaking. “Group work does not need much time” (Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3). They said by making students into group work, they could save more time to explain other materials or give feedback and motivation to their students after speaking activities.

Besides, according to the teachers' responses, group work created cooperation, peer teaching, problem solving, and social interaction among them. The students who had more ability in English would help their group members who had lower ability. Moreover, they could share their knowledge with other students in the group. "Group work builds students' soft skills, such as toleration and togetherness" (Teacher 3). "The members motivate each other to speak up" (Teacher 1).

For the implementations, the teacher had some differences in choosing the members for group. For Teacher 1, it would be better if the group members were chosen based on the seats. "I like if the groups are chosen based on the closest seats. It will not spend much time to decide the group members" (Teacher 1). Meanwhile, according to Teacher 2, she liked to determine the group by her own. "I always choose the students by myself. I am afraid if the students choose the group by themselves, students who have good English ability will not be spread well" (Teacher 2). For Teacher 3, the group members were chosen by the students and her; depend on the material or technique. "For choosing the members in the group, I do not want to be too strict. I mean, the students can choose their group. I think they will be more comfortable to speak if they choose the members by themselves. But, in certain techniques, for example in role play, I will choose the members" (Teacher 3).

Eventhough those teachers have different ways or opinions in choosing the group members, for the implementation in the classroom they had the same opinion. "I ask my students to arrange the seats in round. It will make them easier to interact and discuss the task or material" (Teacher 2, Teacher 3). "How I implement the group work is on face to face way. By seeing each other, they can feel more save to speak" (Teacher 1). According to them, in the speaking activities, group work was more often combined with other techniques, such as role play or games. This was more powerful to encourage students to speak. It was because group work was flexible; meaning it was suitable if it was combined or stood alone.

Drilling

As stated previously, drilling was used by the elementary teachers, in this case were Teacher 4 and Teacher 5. They chose drilling for their students because drilling could encourage and teach the students to speak. According to the teachers, for elementary level, drilling was the most appropriate one. The students had just known English, so the teachers needed to guide them to speak English. Therefore, drilling was suitable for them. "I often use drilling or repetition. You know, elementary is the beginning stage of learning English. Most of my students do not know English. Of course, they cannot speak English. That's why I need to guide them to pronounce the word or sentence. And I am sure drilling is appropriate" (Teacher 4). "For encourage my students to speak, I use drilling. Although they just repeat what I say, they feel motivated to speak. They are enthusiastic waiting for their turns to mention, repeat the sentence" (Teacher 5).

In implementing drilling in the classroom, Teacher 4 and Teacher 5 had different strategies, but still in repetition activities. According to Teacher 4, drilling was about repetition. Every sentence or words that she mentioned had to be repeated by her students. "In drilling, I ask my students to repeat what I am saying. For example, I will say "I go to school by motorcycle; then my students repeat it" (Teacher 4). Teacher 4 did not ask the students one by one to repeat what she had said. She said that it took time if she had to ask students one by one. She asked the students based on the row. "I do not ask the students one by one. I use the row seats. I mean the students in the row seats that I point should repeat my sentence. There are 32 students in my class, and asking one by one will take time. But, using row seats is more efficient because there are only 8 rows" (Teacher 4). She continued that in order to ensure whether the students knew how to say the sentence, she pointed two students on that row randomly.

It was quite different with Teacher 4, Teacher 5 applied drilling by using pattern. The pattern, in this case, did not mean the sentence pattern but the similar sentence with different subject or object; based on what the teacher ordered or pointed. "I do not ask my students to repeat the same sentence as I said. I give them the sentence, but I ask them to repeat with different subject or object or thing. For

example, I say “I am smart. And She?”, and my students will say “She is smart”. It is something like that” (Teacher 5). According to her, previously she taught about the material before doing drilling. She said that drilling was used to encourage the students to speak, and to teach them how to use the material orally.

According to the teachers, the result after applying drilling was seen very well. Previously their students were afraid to speak English because they did not how to pronounce it. However, now they were eager to speak English. They had been encouraged. According to the teachers, their students even spoke English in the classroom, although still found many mistakes; but, at least they would like to try to speak without any anxiety. “Using drilling is a good choice. It is successful encouraging and teaching my students to speak English” (Teacher 4). “Although there are still many mistakes in pronouncing the sentence, I am grateful because they want to speak. I appreciate their efforts” (Teacher 5). They, for further, said that the students got accustomed to speak after using drilling for some times. In other words, drilling had been successful to encourage the students to speak in English.

This study concerned with the teaching strategies which were applied by the young adolescence teachers to encourage their students to speak English in the classroom activities. This study was raised for balancing the studies about speaking anxiety which were mostly conducted by some researchers as mentioned in the introduction section, as well as one of the references for other young adolescence teachers to enrich their speaking strategies. The objective of this study was to find out the teaching strategies for speaking applied by the teachers, as well as their reasons and considerations for choosing the strategies.

Based on the result of interview which had been discussed in finding, the writer found two most frequent strategies for encouraging speaking English. They were group work and drilling. Group work was applied by the junior high school teachers; meanwhile drilling was applied by the elementary teachers. The results of the finding showed that group work was beneficial for encouraging students to speak during the classroom activities. They were able to learn together or peer teaching, to solve the problems, and to interact using English without any anxiety.

This result is in line with Jones (2007) who stated that students in group work would let the students feel more secure and less anxious, share their ideas, learn from each other, involved more, use English in realistic way, and enjoy English to communicate. Through group work, the teacher allowed the students to collaboratively solve communicative task (Nation, 2000, cited in Hue, 2010).

How the teachers implemented group work was based on the face to face interaction; meaning that the students sat in round facing each other. This way was helpful to let the students interact, discussed, and helped one another in learning English (Meng, 2009). Group work was chosen for some considerations; one of them was the number of students in the classroom. The teachers relatively had 30 to 40 forty students in each class which could be categorized as a large class (Alber, 2012). With these numbers of students, it would be difficult for the teachers to organize the class, check and control the students who were active in speaking and who were not. With a large class, the students' ability was not feasible; the teachers might not able to reach some students who were lack in speaking (Jones, 2007). Therefore, based on this consideration, group work was chosen. Through small groups, the teacher could control each student to get involved in teaching learning activity (Meng, 2009).

For drilling, the result also showed that drilling was good for encouraging elementary students to speak English. Drilling was appropriate because it focused on the new language that the learners were learning (Tice, 2015), in this case is English. In its implementation, drilling was used as its concept that was repetition. It meant that the students repeated what they had heard from the teachers or other media, such as tapes and other audio files.

However, there happened differences in implementing drilling since there were numerous types of drilling as what had been cited in Teaching English for Foreign Language blog (2010). The teachers might have pure repetition from the students as what they had said, or they might change the subject or object, even the sentence pattern from positive to negative, and so on, related to what the teachers' objectives or students' needs.

The elementary teachers chose drilling with responsive considerations. One of them was drilling would make the students got accustomed to speaking English. Drilling referred to behaviorist approach in which the students were suggested to be used with foreign language they learned (Risyanto and Haryanto, 2012). The teachers believed that speaking could result in the elementary students' habit after applying drilling for quite some times.

CONCLUSION

Acquiring speaking for EFL students in Pontianak is not easy, especially for elementary and junior high school level. Around these levels, English is newly introduced as foreign language to learn, so that using English orally is difficult. However, one way to help the students acquire speaking skill is that by encouraging them to speak in the classroom until they get accustomed to speak. Thus, in this case, the teachers need to apply appropriate techniques to help the students. The appropriate techniques which are mostly applied by the teachers are group work and drilling technique.

Related to the result of the studies, group work is used by the junior high school teachers; meanwhile, drilling is used by elementary teachers. Each teacher has their own reasons and considerations for choosing those techniques, as well different ways or strategies while implementing them. Although, they have different viewpoints and opinions toward the techniques, the results showed that group work and drilling are appropriate and powerful to encourage students to speak English. Therefore, concerning on their appropriateness, the writer would like to emphasize and recommend these techniques to other English teachers, especially for young adolescence teachers.

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