

THE USE OF STORYTELLING TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY

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Abstract

Speaking is a secondary skill in language, coming before reading, and writing skills. In this modern area speaking skill plays an important part in negotiation to make deals internationally, such as promoting, debating, arguing, and complaining. English is one of the international languages, which is a compulsory subject in Indonesia. By and large, teaching speaking in English is not an easy endeavour. In fact, students tend to be shy just to say a few words in English. In other words, it is hard to make them speak up. As the consequence, English teachers should exert their efforts to make their students practice speaking in a relatively convenient way. Storytelling can be used as an alternative technique to teach speaking, at least to make students speak English at their own pace.

This paper is going to explore how a teacher can make use of storytelling in delivering speaking class. It will deal with the background of using storytelling, the advantages and the procedure of delivering speaking class, and the students' comments upon experiencing speaking class by means of storytelling. The methods used to collect the data are observation and questionnaires. This study was conducted by involving English teachers and students of senior high school. The results show that the use of storytelling in teaching speaking could make the students express their ideas freely and the students were motivated to speak in English no matter how broken their English was.

Keywords: storytelling, teaching, speaking, ability

1. INTRODUCTION

In the global era, people are demanded to be able to speak English in international transaction and interpersonal activities. Technology requires users to be able to understand English instructions. Many jobs require workers to be able to speak English in communicating and negotiating with foreigners or foreign companies.

In reality speaking skill is considered to be difficult skill. Based on the observations during the teaching and learning process, there are still many senior high students who have many obstacles in learning to speak English. They find it difficult to start speaking, to compose correct sentences, to maintain continuous conversation, to pronounce the words correctly, even to express their feeling, ideas, and thought. This is relevant to what is said by Hughes (2011;600) in which speaking involves some other aspects such as grammar and vocabulary.

Based on the interview with students, the cause of the inability to speak English is because they never train themselves to speak English, not knowing the practical ways to speak English, and they are afraid of making mistakes, in pronouncing words and expressing their ideas in English. They are not confident to speak in English.

In addition, to be able to speak English, students have to involve the components in speaking Skill, namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and accuracy (Nunan, 2003).

The techniques of teaching applied by the teachers may influence the students' bravery to express their ideas in English. Besides, the time allotted to learn speaking is quite limited. Students only have about 90 minutes in a week to learn English, including speaking.

To solve the problem, the teacher tries to improve students' speaking ability by applying interesting story telling in the English speaking class. Storytelling is an activity of conveying stories from a storyteller to listeners with the aim of providing information to listeners so that they can be used to raise emotions and to be involved in problem solving. In the delivery, storytelling can be delivered using teaching aids, but it also focuses on expressions that rely on vocal quality, facial expressions, hand movements and body language.

Storytelling involves series of events to be told. *Story* and *narrative* can be of the same thing. Academically, the word *narrative* is a term which is more preferred than *story* (Miller, 2010: 1). Story and storytelling may be regarded as a sort of play. When storytelling is going on, the tellers and listeners can give some feedback to each other. In this sense, the participants need to be physically present together.

In the process of storytelling, a story teller and the story itself should be in unity. In such a process, projection, identification, empathy, imitation, and imagination are paramount. The audience project themselves into the characters in the story. They try to identify themselves with the played characters. This will show empathy with them. This will go on by using imagination from the part of the listeners who may then imitate the characters. In fact, each culture has its own ways of signaling the start and end of a story. For example, in English, one people use "Once upon a time", and "They lived happily ever after". Storytellers oftentimes give comment, and the moral of the story they are telling. However, some storytellers let the story speak for itself, and listeners are welcome to generate their own interpretations (Miller, 2010: 2)

Pellowski (1990: 13) points out that storytelling as an art or art of a narrative skill from stories in the form of poetry or prose, which is shown or led by one person in front of the audience directly where the story can be narrated by telling or sung, with or without music, images, or with other accompaniments that might be learned orally, either through printed sources, or through mechanical recording sources.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative design in which quantitative counting is little bit needed to know the percentage of the increase of the students' speaking ability. The setting of this study is Jetis Senior High School, involving 33 students.

The study employed two data collection techniques, namely classroom observation, and questionnaires. Classroom observation was conducted to get data about the students' speaking ability. Through classroom observation, the researcher could see the mean score of the students' speaking achievement and the percentage of the improvement.

In addition, questionnaires were administered to find out the students' responses toward the teaching learning process. It was applied to dig out the students' interest and motivation in teaching learning process conducted by the teacher.

Procedure

Adopting Miller's (1996), the procedure of delivering speaking class by using storytelling is as follows:

- 1) The teacher prepared scenario by providing some various narrative stories.
- 2) The teacher asked the students to study the scenario before teaching learning process.

- 3) The teacher asked the students to make a group of 4 or 5 related to the numbers of characters in the story.
- 4) The teacher explained the competencies that will be achieved after the learning process.
- 5) The teacher asked the students in group to improve the narrative text into transactional story script.
- 6) The teacher checked the students' transactional script to correct the grammar, vocab, diction, and the appropriateness of the context.
- 7) The students created puppets as a media aid in presenting the story. This is supported by Hannah (2013:159) that it is necessary to wear certain costumes in storytelling.
- 8) The teacher asked the students to practice the scenario at home continuously until they got fluency. This is in line with Nation's (2008:155) that a teacher needs to give some time to the students to prepare words or phrases before presentation.
- 9) The students did the scenario by storytelling presentation in front of the class
- 10) The audiences listened to the other group presentations while they made a peer-observation by filling out the observation form about their friends' presentation.
- 11) The teacher observed each presentation by giving score on their presentation. (The scoring included pronunciation, intonation, grammar, vocabulary, accuracy, and fluency) based on the scoring rubric of speaking.
- 12) There were questions and answers after the presentation, about the moral value of the story.
- 13) The teacher and the students made the conclusion about the story itself and the presentation.
- 14) The teacher gave feedback and made reflection together.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from two observations revealed that there was 1.06 % improvement of the students' speaking ability. The following table describes the mean score in the first meeting and the mean score in the second meeting.

The result of students' speaking ability.

No	Indicators of Students' Speaking Ability	Meeting		The improvement in %
		Meeting 1	Meeting 2	
1	Pronunciataion	65.18	70.64	1.08
2	Intonation	65.88	72.91	1.10
3	Grammar	71.64	73.55	1.02
4	Vocabulary	66.03	69.30	1.04
5	Fluency	65.88	72.91	1.10
6	Accuracy	70.64	74.06	1.04
	Mean			1.06

From the table above, it is seen that the mean score on each indicator is below 80.00. It means that their speaking ability is still low. Based on the observation, in in the first meeting, students still had many hindrances in story telling because they did not rehearse it continuously. They still made many mistakes in pronouncing the words, stressing words, intonation, pitch and tone. In telling the story, they were not fluent yet. It is noticed that they still had a note and just

read the script. Bringing and reading the note disturbed the student's performance in telling the story.

Based on this reality, the teacher made feedbacks and reflection about how to present a story telling and what requirements should be met in telling a story. The teacher then gave the students a second chance by giving a week to practice story telling at home by considering the feedbacks given. In the next meeting, the students were given a second opportunity to present a story telling in front of the class. From the second presentation, it was seen that they got much better in their performance. Although the mean scores were still below 80.00, their achievement was better than their achievement in the first meeting. It is seen that there was an increase of 1.06% in students' speaking ability. It means that Story telling could improve the students' speaking ability.

3.1 Students' Response

The following are the students' response toward the teaching learning process toward the speaking class of storytelling. In general, the students were more motivated to speak English. They were braver to express their ideas in the target language, no matter how broken their English was.

Student A said that the technique was useful. Translated from his Indonesian: *(I feel very happy today because the story telling presentation can improve my English speaking ability especially in improving conversational section which I could use my expression through the context and the sense of the situation. Besides, the techniques can make us more communicative and make me more confident.*

Student B said that learning English became easy and fun. It made her confident to speak in English. Translated from her Indonesian: *(In my opinion, the storytelling class is fun and learning English is not difficult. The story makes me explore things in my English. It can also make me confident to speak in front of the class).*

Student C commented that her class became more interesting and more relaxing. Translated from Indonesian: *(The class today is very interesting because the atmosphere is very fun and relaxing but it keepsus focused on the storytelling activity. In conversation parts we are demanded to use our gesture and our expression. It makes me more confident because I am forced to perform the best. I am forced to do repetition continuously until I get the appropriate expression, pronunciation, best gesture, and fluency).*

Student D thought that story telling was difficult but it was challenging. She liked the techniques used to teach speaking. Translated from Indonesian: *(For me storytelling technique a is difficult because I have to memorize many sentences using appropriate gesture, expression, and pronunciation, while I have to think much about the fluency. After the teacher gave me information that I could make improvement in my conversation section, I felt that story telling became a challenging technique. I start to know how to use impromptu conversation accompanied by expression. I like this learning activity because it makes me active and encourages me to speak. I become brave and get confidence although sometimes I have to think and struggle very hard).*

4. CONCLUDING REMARK

It is not simple to teach speaking due to some reasons on the part of the students. Some students are not motivated to speak in the target language. Some are reluctant, and some are afraid to make mistakes. It needs a special strategy to have them speak in the target language.

A teacher needs to be creative and anticipative in teaching speaking in the hope that the students will be willing to speak up in the target language, and have fun at the same time. Students must be triggered to express their ideas in the target language willingly.

In this study it was found out that story telling could be applied to make the students speak up and brave to express their ideas in the target language. Some extra efforts had to be exerted by the teachers to make the speaking class run well.

From the students' responses, it is seen that the students liked the storytelling technique in learning to speak English. Some students said that they enjoyed their class when the technique was applied, although some students found it hard to do storytelling at the beginning because they thought that storytelling would be burdensome due to having to memorize all sentences. Yet, they enjoyed the challenging activities.

More importantly, the teacher should be a good model in speaking English, and be creative in helping her students to speak in the target language. An attractive teacher will raise the students' motivation. It was found out that some students wanted to be able to speak English well as their teacher did.

5. REFERENCES

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