TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH GENRE-BASED APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This research aims at evaluating teaching speaking skills through genre-based approach and proposing a recommendation for further research and development programs to create a better teaching and learning model based on the research findings. This evaluation research for an ongoing program uses some data sources, such as (1) 2006 Curriculum of English Profession Program which has orientation to genre-based approach, (2) syllabus, (3) lesson plan, (4) course book, (5) observation to teaching and learning process of speaking classes, (6) in-depth interviewing with lecturers and students, and (7) verification to curriculum makers and course book authors. The result of this research shows that the teaching speaking skills through genre-based approach at Language Center of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta has not been optimal yet. It is caused by some factors, i.e. (1) the lecturers often find difficulties to understand some concepts of genres along with the methods to teach them to their students, (2) the topics discussed in class are less attractive, (3) the students' exercises in class are less varied, and (4) the students have not been motivated optimally to practice speaking skills so that only few students who are active in class. Based on the result of this research, the researcher recommends the policy makers of Language Center to conduct a workshop on quality improvement of teaching speaking skills through genre-based approach for the lecturers. The researcher also recommends

the lecturers of this institution to conduct classroom-action researches in order to solve the problems for the sake of quality improvement of their teaching speaking skills through this approach.

A. INTRODUCTION

Language Center (LC) of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (MUS) as a center of language teaching, training, and study continuously improves its quality of language teaching and learning process. Up to now, LC has carried out English Profession Program (EPP) as the main language course besides other courses. In managing the course, however, LC faces some problems, such as the ineffectiveness of the course, the students' low achievement, and the lack of participants for the course due to little dissemination, etc. Based on those problems, the institution needs to improve the language course by carrying out research and development programs.

On 24 March 2006 a team led by Dyah Kristina of Technological and Professional Skills Development Sector Project (TPSDP) distributed a questionnaire on the needs of English to students of English Profession Program of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. The answers of the questionnaire showed that (1) the students are interested in audio and audiovisual as learning sources. The reason is that they really enjoy the combination between serious and entertained learning; (2) the students are interested in topics/themes which relate to young adults, like hobbies, sports, fashions, information technology, etc.; (3) the students feel that the performance of the course books which are currently used in teaching and learning process of speaking skills are not attractive. This is because of the poor quality of the paper, the layout, and the pictures are not varied nor colorful; and (4) the students suggest that to revising the content of the course books by choosing materials which are relevant to their study and their future career projection.

Then on 26 March 2006 the team conducted an in-depth interviewing with the lecturers of English Profession Program of MUS. Based on the results of the in-depth interviewing, (1) all respondents agree to bring speaking skills as an "excellence" of graduates from this institution; (2) all respondents agree to choose topics which are varied and relevant to the life and spirit of young adult; (3) respondents are of the opinion that the speaking materials which are currently applied do not have gradation of difficulty levels; and (4) respondents agree that the roles of lecturers in developing course materials innovatively and creatively are the key to the success of teaching and learning speaking skills. The implication is that the lecturers need accesses of self impro-vement sufficiently.

Based on the above need analysis, the policy makers of Language Center decided to change the curriculum from English for Specific Purposes-Based Curriculum to Curriculum with Genre-Based Approach. The new curriculum follows the trend of Competency-Based Curriculum for elementary schools and secondary schools which was launched by the Ministry of National Education in the school year of 2004/2005 and then modified into School-Based Curriculum which was launched in the school year of 2006/2007.

Related to the ongoing new curriculum implementation, the researcher is interested to evaluate it by the focus on teaching speaking skills through genre-based approach. Specifically, this research is intended to identify and describe (1) the relevance among curriculum, syllabus, lesson plan, and course book, (2) the effectiveness of teaching and learning process, and (3) the techniques of evaluation.

B. THEORETICAL REVIEW

1. Teaching Speaking Skills

The primary aim of teaching speaking skills is to help the learner develop the skills of speaking. The means of achieving this aim are many, but probably the most important is learner's motivation. The

motivation to speak in the mother tongue may often be different from the motivation to speak in the foreign language. The speaker in the mother tongue has a reason for speaking and the consequent motivation is self-directed. Greenall and Pye (2005: ix) state that the reason may sometimes be spurious or ephemeral, but at least this speaker is in control and can choose what he or she wants to speak. But in the foreign language speaking is often a classroom activity and may be directed and controlled by the lecturer. This speaker is often told either implicitly or explicitly what to speak and how.

There seem to be three key factors in stimulating the learner's motivation: the material, the task/exercise, and the lecturer's role. In this research the researcher tries to evaluate the incorporation of these three factors and to reveal whether the attempts to make speaking enjoyable and motivating are proven successful.

Since 2006 to now the teaching and learning speaking skills at Language Center of MUS is followed by non-English department students from semester one to semester three. The names of the speaking skills-subjects are *Speaking Acquisition 1*, *Speaking Acquisition 2*, and *Speaking Acquisition 3*. Those subjects are integrated into the English Profession Program as shown in the following table.

NO.	SUBJECT	CREDIT	SEMESTER			
			I	II	III	IV
1.	**Speaking Acquisition 1**	2	√	-	-	-
2.	Writing Acquisition 1	2	√	-	-	-
3.	**Speaking Acquisition 2**	2	-	√	-	-
4.	Writing Acquisition 2	2	-	√	-	-
5.	**Speaking Acquisition 3**	2	-	-	√	-
6.	Writing Acquisition 3	2	-	-	√	-
7.	TOEFL Exploration	2	-	-	-	√
8.	Academic Writing	2	-	-	-	√
	TOTAL CREDIT	16				

There are, however, some factors that a lecturer needs to consider when teaching students how to speak through genre-based approach. They include some aspects, like selecting appropriate speaking materials, knowing the students' needs and interests, recognizing the students' language proficiency and background knowledge of the genre being chosen as well as the degree of difficulty of the genre.

It is also important for a lecturer to help his/her students develop their speaking skills by using various types of speaking exercise in order that students grasp the content and the ideas of the genre they are speaking. Nunan (1998: 51-52) states that some speaking exercises that aim at helping students use language in real-life situation are (1) Learner listens to and reads two-line dialogue and practices with a partner, (2) Listen and repeat, (3) Listen to a model dialogue and repeat, interpolating own name, (4) Read question cue and make up question, (5) Read two line skeleton dialogue and practice with partner, (6) Listen/read a model question and ask a partner, (7) Read a model dialogue and have a similar conversation using cues provided, (8) Study a substitution table and make up sentences, (9) Study questions and answer in a model dialogue and make up similar questions using cue words, (10) Look at picture and study model sentences. Make up similar sentences about similar picture, (11) Listen to number and dates. Read numbers and dates and say them, (12) Listen to tape script and answer written comprehension questions, (13) Listen to an interview. Ask and answer similar questions with a partner, (14) Look at diagrams of clocks. With a partner ask and answer questions about the time, and (15) Listen to a model, study a map and say the route from one specified point to another.

From the above speaking exercises, a lecturer should be able to choose the exercises which are reasonable for his/her students based on their capability, whether they are at low-level, intermediate or advance. Although the methods of teaching and learning are supposed to be flexible, it is stressed that the lecturers should pay

attention to the processes or steps maturely in order that all activities in class refer to one goal, i.e. the achievement of students' speaking skills. Moreover, the difficulty levels of the subject materials given to the students are supposed to be in gradation, for example a communication which is started by using short-single sentences to complex sentences.

2. Genre-Based Approach

Basically a verbal-communication activity is a process of creating texts, both spoken and written, which happens because persons interpret and respond the texts in a discourse. So, a text is a product of situational context and cultural context. For instance, when a person speaks in English, he/she does not only have to use English vocabularies but also its grammar in order to be understood by other speakers. Moreover, when we speak we always do so in particular social situations. This means that the language we use is fashioned by those situations, not only in what we say, but also in how we say things. For instance, in a job interview neither interviewees nor interviewers simply say what comes into their heads. Rather, the routine of the interview governs what each says and when. Related to those contexts, Macken (1991: 7) is of the opinion that "*the point is that speaking in this context or in any other is not at all simply a matter of using words and sentences, but of understanding the rules which govern the whole interaction as a totally*".

A context of culture creates various genres, i.e. text types which have communicative purposes, text structure, and certain linguistic characteristics. In other words, speakers are supposed to under-stand the concepts of spoken commu-nication of to whom, about what, when, where, and how they speak. So, it is quite important for students who learn speaking skills to learn genres which come from English culture, including how to talk in English. Genres also carry linguistic implica-tions in which students should get attention.

The following table shows genres which are used in 2006 Curriculum of English Profession Program at Language Center of MUS. They are applied in speaking skills-subjects (*Speaking Acquisition 1*, *Speaking Acquisition 2*, and *Speaking Acquisition 3*).

GENRE	SOCIAL FUNCTION
Recount	To retell events for the purpose of informing or entertaining.
Report	To describe the way things are, with reference to a range of natural, man-made and social phenomena in our environment.
Discussion	To present (at least) two points of view about an issue.
Explanation	To explain the processes involved in the formation or workings of natural or socio-cultural phenomena.
Exposition (Analytical)	To persuade the listener that something is the case.
Exposition (Hortatory)	To persuade the listener that something should or should not be the case.
News Item	To inform listeners or viewers about events of the day which are considered newsworthy or important.
Anecdote	To share with others an account of an unusual or amusing incident.
Narrative	To amuse, entertain and to deal with actual or vicarious experience in different ways. Narratives deal with problematic events which lead to a crisis or turning point of some kind, which in turn finds a resolution.
Procedure	To describe how something is accompanied through a sequence of actions or steps.
Description	To describe a particular person, place or thing.
Review	To critique an art work, event for a public audience. Such works of art include movies, TV shows, books, plays, operas, recordings, exhibitions, concerts, and ballets.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Type of Research

This research is a descriptive-qualitative research which aims at evaluating the teaching and learning process of speaking skills. Specifically, this research is called formative evaluation research because it is done for an ongoing program to find out the strengths and weaknesses and to improve and develop further program implementation (Sutopo, 2002: 114). It uses qualitative method and the data are collected from (1) 2006 Curriculum of English Profession Program, (2) syllabus, (3) lesson plan, (4) course book, (5) observation to teaching and learning process of speaking classes, (6) in-depth interviewing with lecturers and students, and (7) verification to curriculum makers and course book authors.

2. Source of Data

The data of this research are collected from three different sources: (1) informants, (2) events, and (3) documents. The informants are three lecturers and fifteen students who involve in the teaching and learning process, the curriculum makers, and the course book authors. The events are the teaching and learning process of speaking skills-subjects (*Speaking Acquisition 1* and *Speaking Acquisition 2*). The documents are the curriculum, syllabus, lesson plan, and course book.

3. Technique of Sampling

This research uses purposive sampling technique which is selective in the sense that the subjects selected are the ones who involve in the process of teaching and learning speaking skills and could provide information or data needed for this research. The samples for the research are three English teachers who teach speaking skills-subjects and fifteen students who learn each subject of speaking skills. From nine faculties (Medical, Economics, Psychology, Law,

Engineering, Geography, Islamic Sciences, Pharmacy, and Teacher Training and Education) in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, the researcher uses three faculties, i.e. Medical, Economics, and Psychology as the research samples.

4. Technique of Data Collection

This research uses observation, in-depth interviewing, and document analysis as the techniques of data collection. *The observation* is done to the process of teaching and learning speaking skills which are managed by three lecturers. The researcher uses observation technique namely passive observation as explained by Spradley (1980: 88). In this activity, the researcher presents in class and sits down at the back of the class to observe the teaching and learning process and writes important notes. The researcher does not have interaction with the teacher and students during the class. The observation is conducted five times for each class. *The in-depth interviewing* is done by the researcher to the three lecturers and the fifteen students. The purpose of interviewing the lecturers is to obtain information about their understanding on the concepts of genres, the methods to teach them to their students, and the factors which strike the teaching through genre-based approach. The purpose of interviewing the students is to know their response to the teaching of speaking skills through genre-based approach. *The document analysis* is done to the curriculum, syllabus, and lesson plan of spea-king skills-subjects. The reason of analy-zing documents is to complete information which has been obtained through observation and in-depth interviewing.

D. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Findings Related to the Relevance among Curriculum, Syllabus, Lesson Plan, and Course Book

The success of teaching and learning speaking skills depends on many factors, such as (a) the course book, (b) the lecturer's

competence, and (c) the student's attitude towards the subject. The qualified book does not guarantee the success of teaching and learning process if the lecturer is not able to teach it by using good and attractive methods. Moreover, how qualified the course book is and how smart the lecturer is, the teaching and learning process will not be successful if the students do not pay attention to the subject. So, it needs not only qualified course book and good and attractive teaching methods, but also the good attitude of the students towards the subject which should be motivated by their lecturer.

Based on the document analysis, the researcher finds that (1) the course book tends to follow the writing curriculum, not the speaking one, but (2) there is relevance among syllabus, lesson plan, and course book. Statements from the curriculum makers and course book authors seemed to confirm the former finding. The curriculum makers claim that it is difficult to find out the references to create spea-king skills-curriculum. The available references are for writing skills-curri-culum, one of them is Mary Machen's *A Genre-Based Approach to Teaching Writing, Years 3-6: An Approach to Writing K-12* as their adapted main reference. The course book authors, who are also the curriculum makers for the case of this research, also claim that to find the original speaking-text models is not an easy job. So, the materials of the speaking skills-course books are adopted from *Communicative Grammar* course books with some modi-fications and some from Jack C. Richard's *English for International Communication*. The result is that some materials in speaking skills-course books are too tight and less natural. Consequently, the lecturers need creativity to use some sources to enrich their teaching references since the course books are not the only one source.

Related to the decisions about program goals and objectives, whether expressed in terms of behavioral objectives, proficiency levels, or some other forms, are essential in language program design. In

language curriculum development, Richards and Rodgers (1986: 157-158) state that teachers and program developers select different kinds of tasks, activities, and learning experiences, the effectiveness of which they then test in meeting the program goals. It involves experimentation, informed by the current state of the art in second language learning theory, and research into the teaching and learning of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Statements from the tutor of syllabus and lesson plan seemed to confirm the latter finding. Based on the tutor's judgment, most lecturers have made syllabuses and lesson plans excellently. The function of syllabus and lesson plan is to be a rule of thumb to the lecturers in teaching the materials. In this research, most students claim that the teaching materials of their lecturers are relevant with the goals of the teaching syllabus as contracted by them at the first meeting of each semester.

2. Research Findings Related to Teaching and Learning Process

Using in-depth interviewing techniques to collect data, some students respond that they do not enjoy speaking skills-subjects when asked about their interest in speaking English. Various reasons are given as to why they are less interested in the subjects. Among them are that speaking is not one of their everyday habit, that they do not know how to speak effectively, that speaking with certain genres needs strong language basic knowledge (vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation), and the topics given are less attractive.

Statements from lecturers seemed to confirm those problems. According to them, the majority of students lacked proficiency in speaking are particularly caused by their low capability of the language basic knowledge. Moreover, the lecturers should always provide practical clues as to how to arouse students' interest in speaking and on how to encourage them to become good speakers.

Students' lack of interest in speaking stems mostly from lecturers' insensitivity toward the needs of their students. With students in some classrooms coming from diverse cultural, linguistic, interest, and study program backgrounds, analysis should be a prime consideration before a lecturer assigns his/her students with genres. The chosen genre that one group of students find interesting might not be interesting to other students. Similarly, a genre that is easy to practice by some students may be quite difficult to decipher by other students. It is clear, therefore, that lecturers play a significant role in inspiring their students to speak and to enjoy doing so.

Given the importance of speaking skills in daily life and pro-fessional jobs, there is an onus on the lecturers to foster students to become well-trained and effective speakers by continuously cha-llenging them with topics relevant to their interests.

Besides the above facts, the lecturers find difficulties to manage big classes and let all of students participate in speaking practices. They find difficulties to motivate students optimally to practice speaking skills so that only few students who are active in class whereas the others are only listeners.

It often happens that a student has many ideas in his/her mind, but he/she still finds difficulties to speak or to talk to. He/she is confused to make a sentence with a list of words, to arrange words in good sentences with correct grammatical structure and to pronounce them appropriately. Again, he/she needs strong language basic knowledge, i.e. vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation to express his/her ideas in the spoken communication. Some researchers (Tarigan, 1985; Sadtono, 1987; Purnomo, 1994) have proved that the three language basic knowledge can be built up by students' reading activity.

In accordance with the student-active learning method recently used in teaching and learning process in Indonesian schools, the

activity of the students is emphasized. As proved in this research, the suggested activity which is implemented by the students' good habit in speaking is still important to be emphasized and developed.

3. Research Findings Related to Techniques of Evaluation

There are many kinds of test, such as pre-test, mid-test, formative test, and post-test. Based on the analysis of evaluation techniques, most lecturers usually test their students' speaking skills by only two tests, i.e. mid-test and post-test. Few lecturers also test their students by formative test, but no lecturers test them by pre-test. Their reason is that mid-test and post-test are the obligatory tests in which the scores should be submitted to the administration office. The lecturers find difficulties to manage portfolio evaluation which include pre-test and formative test to big classes although they seem to be aware that the portfolio evaluation assures the monitored-learning progress of each student intensively.

Although 12 of 15 students being interviewed claim that the test items of examinations made by their lecturers are relevant to the materials given in teaching and learning process, it is suggested that speaking skills-lecturers should always keep and improve tests that fulfill their validity and reliability. It means that if the students are tested by other persons who do not teach them, the results will be reliable. Moreover, they are expected to be more confident in job interviews and more competitive in job markets that include the local, regional, and international level as well after finishing the English Profession Program.

E. CONCLUSION AND RECOM-MENDATION

1. Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, the researcher draws a conclusion that the teaching and learning process of speaking

skills through genre-based approach at Language Center of MUS has not been optimal yet. It is caused by some factors, such as (a) the lecturers often find difficulties to understand the concepts of genres along with the methods to teach them to their students, (b) the topics discussed in class are less attractive, (c) the students' exercises in class are less varied, and (d) the students have not been motivated optimally to practice speaking skills so that only few students who are active to practice them in class.

2. Recommendation

Based on the research findings, the researcher recommends the policy makers of Language Center of MUS to conduct a workshop on quality improvement of teaching speaking skills through genre-based approach for the lecturers. The materials of workshop could be focused on teaching methods for a big class, methods of motivating students, methods of giving tasks/exercises, and techniques of evaluation. Related to the students' lack of language basic knowledge (vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation), it is recommended to modify the subjects of English Profession Program by including reading skills. It can be done, for instance, by changing the *Academic Writing* which is taught at semester 4 into *Reading Comprehension* at semester 2. The *Academic Writing* is supposed to be included into *Writing Acquisition 3* or change the name of *Writing Acquisition 3* into *Academic Writing* (see the above subject-spread table of English Profession Program). The researcher also recommends the lecturers of this institution to conduct classroom-action researches in order to solve the problems for the sake of quality improvement of their teaching speaking skills through genre-based approach.

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