STORYTELLING TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

The storytelling technique was used in this study to see if it could help overcome some of the difficulties the students had in mastering EFL speaking skills. This technique aims to improve the speaking skills of students in a real life situation. The objective of this study was to measure the students' mastery after they practiced speaking through the storytelling technique. This study used experimental study methods with a sample which was divided into an experimental group (EG) and a control group (CG). The EG was taught by using the storytelling technique, while the CG was taught by using a conventional technique for teaching speaking. In collecting the data, tests and a questionnaire were used. The results showed that the speaking skills of the EG students, taught with the storytelling technique, improved much more and were significantly better than the improvement in the speaking skills of the CG students taught by using the conventional technique.

Key Words: *Teaching Speaking, Storytelling Technique.*

INTRODUCTION

In this era of globalization, many Indonesians use some limited English in daily communications besides using Indonesian and their local language, e.g. Acehnese or Gayonese or any other mother tongue. Using English in conversation is important, especially in learning speaking. It is the most important skill from amongst the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The researcher believes that skill in speaking is a priority for many EFL learners in evaluating their success in learning, on the basis of how fluent they feel that they have

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become in their spoken EFL. To become a capable speaking of English for the EFL learner is very significant. Therefore, the student must pay great attention to learning well in order that they can speak English well (Richards, 1990; Richards & Renandya, 2002). Speaking has an important role to convey or to express thoughts, ideas and feelings using EFL.

Moreover, speaking is the second of language after listening that needs a kind of practice such as how to pronounce the word. Speaking is also an instrument to express message to listener whether the listener understands or not (Tarigan, 1986:15). This means that speaking is the foundation for being able to use EFL. There are many reasons why students should learn speaking in class; the first is so that students can interact with other people, fluently and appropriately. Then, secondly, speaking is an oral expression of thoughts. This means that through speaking, people can try to express what they think or feel directly. According to Tarigan (1992:8) speaking is the skill used to express a message through oral language. This means that speaking is a medium to express ideas, opinions, feelings, and messages. Both the speaker and the listener are actively involved. The speaker produces the language which can be heard by the listener(s) and the listener(s) should try to listen carefully in order to be able to understand the content of what is being spoken.

Related to the importance of the skill of speaking, the national curriculum has set this skill to be taught and applied in the teaching and learning process. As a matter of fact, the national curriculum has put English as one of the important subjects to be taught at school beginning from play group, kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, senior high school and up to university. However, even though the National curriculum obliges students to learn English, the implementation of teaching and learning of this skill at school is still problematic. Many students still have only limited ability to use English both inside and outside the classroom.

There are several factors which cause this problem. There are both external and internal factors. The external factors are mostly related to the teachers and their ability in handling the teaching-learning process, such as their teaching strategy, class management, mastery of materials, evaluation, and media. The internal factors come from the students themselves. Most of the students are afraid to make mistakes, are shy to speak or do not want to speak.

In fact there are some students who are still not able to use English as it is expected in the curriculum. For their daily activities in school, the researcher found that most students still use their mother tongue for communication. Only a very small percentage use English for some of their daily communications. This was proven from the findings of a preliminary study with observations and interviews done by the researcher. The scores of the students in a trial speaking test were below the passing grade criteria of the school which is 65, whilst their mean score was only 45.

To improve the speaking ability of the students, there are many techniques that can be used such as practicing dialogues, playing games, singing songs, storytelling, oral reporting, role playing, small group discussions, giving speeches, news reading, poetry reading and debates. This study chose to use storytelling as a technique to try to improve the speaking abilities of students from SMPN 27 Takengon, Aceh Tengah.

Cameron (2001:11) says that storytelling can be an enjoyable tool for practicing both listening skills and for verbal expression. Besides, storytelling as a teaching technique has been extensively used in preschools and elementary schools up until university level where the teacher can choose stories from folk tales, guide books, literary tales, real life stories, festivals, and mythology.

Related to the implementation of storytelling in teaching, several previous studies have been conducted. First, a research was done by Herminda (2013); this was an experimental design to study the effectiveness of using story telling technique to improve the speaking ability of second year students at SMPN 1 Boyolangu, Tulungagung. The purpose of this study was to find out if there were any significant differences in speaking ability before and after the students were taught by using the storytelling technique. The data analysis used a t-test. After analysis, it could be concluded that the difference between the two means was significant. Thus, the use of the storytelling techniques was effective in improving the speaking ability of the students in the sample.

Another study, by Kusumastuti (2010), was an exploratory study to study the effect of storytelling on growth reading interest in kindergarten students in Pabelan, Semarang. The purpose of this study was to determine the extent of the effect of storytelling on growth in reading interest of children in a kindergarten. The population in this study were kindergarten students, groups A and B, amounting to 52

respondents. The whole of the population was used as the sample because it was less than 100. The data collection technique used questionnaires, interviews, and literature. Based on this research, the use of storytelling gave a great boost to the growth in reading interest, more than 91% of the students really enjoyed the storytelling activities at the school. The objective of the storytelling activity was to encourage the students to love reading and to be able to capture the knowledge and experience of positive things that are told from an early age. The results of this study were expected to be useful for teachers to further improve the methods of storytelling to be even better. Schools should get more story material for their libraries featuring stories in different media. In conclusion this study showed that storytelling activities in kindergarten had a very big influence on the growth of reading interest in young children.

A third study was conducted by Irawan (2011); it was a collaborative action research project to study the use of Picture-Based Story Telling Technique to improve the speaking skills of the eleventh graders at MAN Kisaran. This study was designed to improve the students' speaking skills by using a picture-based story-telling technique. The objective of this study was to study how a picture-based story-telling technique can improve the speaking skills of eleventh grade students at MAN, Kisaran. The findings from this study indicated that using a picture-based story-telling technique was successful in improving speaking skills. Thus it could be concluded that using a picture-based story-telling technique was effective in improving the skills, the participation and the motivation of the students.

Related to these previous studies, the researcher wanted to conduct research on the possible benefits of using storytelling for teaching-learning speaking. In conducting this research, the researcher used a narrative text as the teaching material in teaching speaking because a narrative text is a story that relates to the use of the storytelling technique. The aspects of speaking that were to be examined were the fluency, accuracy and comprehensibility of students in retelling the story. Those three aspects are taken from Heaton's assessment (1988:100) of speaking skills.

The Research Problems

Considering the above, the research problems are stated as follows:

1. Is there any significant difference in the improvement in ESL speaking skills of students taught using the storytelling technique and those taught using the conventional technique?
2. What are the perceptions/opinions of the EG students on the use of the storytelling technique for teaching-learning speaking ESL?

Objectives of The Study
1. To find out whether the storytelling technique is more effective than the conventional technique for developing ESL speaking skills.
2. To describe the perceptions of the EG students towards the use of the storytelling technique in teaching-learning ESL speaking.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking
Speaking is a productive skill in which people produce words and send messages orally. This skill is closely bound up with receptive skills at work. As Harmer (2001:251) states, in many situations productive skills are combined with the practice of receptive skills. A conversation between two or more people is a blend of listening and speaking where the comprehension of what has been said is necessary for what each participant says next.

Both kinds of language skills, receptive and productive, need to be practiced by students in teaching-learning ESL. Receptive skills are the ways in which people extract meaning from the discourse they hear and/or see. Besides listening, reading is included in receptive skills. While productive skills are the skills that involve the process of language production either in oral or written forms (Harmer, 2001:246). Speaking is one of the productive skills that must be mastered by students in order that they can carry out a conversation with other people with ease.

Chaney and Burke (1998:3) have said that "the model of the communication system for interpersonal communication is through speech". In this model, an information source emits a message, which is encoded for transmission as a signal. This signal passes through a channel to a receiver, which decodes the message for use at its destination. Besides, O'Malley and Pierce (1996:60) defined speaking as a process in which information is transmitted from a source, the sender to a goal, the receiver. The process involves five steps: encoding the information into a symbolic system, selecting a mode of

communication, delivering the symbols through a medium, perceptual processing of the symbols by the receiver, and decoding the symbols to obtain the information.

Chi (1999), as cited in Jondeya (2011:215) described the act of communication through speaking performed in face-to-face interaction that occurs as part of a dialogue or other form of verbal exchange. Therefore, what is said depends on understanding of what else has been said, whether by the speaker or by another interlocutor in the interaction.

Another theory related to speaking is proposed by Kramsch (1993:367). He explains that "speaking means negotiating intended meaning and adjusting one's speech to produce the desired effect on the listener." Both speaker and listener have to work together to handle the interaction in speaking and they must pay attention to what is being said. This is to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation during the event of speaking itself. In this case, the speaking interaction between a speaker and a listener is an event that gives information which they must take care to handle well to ensure understanding of the oral communication.

Storytelling

Storytelling has great value for teachers in fostering a relaxed and intimate atmosphere in the classroom. Stone (1996:104), an experienced Australian teacher/storyteller, describes how using the techniques of storytelling can bring other benefits, such as introducing children to a range of story experiences; providing young students with models of story patterns, themes, characters, and incidents to help them in their own writing, oral language, and thinking; nurturing and encouraging a sense of humor in children, helping children put their own words in perspective; increasing knowledge and understanding of other places, races, and beliefs; leading to discussions that are far ranging and often more satisfying than those arising from formal lessons; and serving as the most painless way of teaching children to listen, to concentrate, and to follow the thread and logic of an argument. Through storytelling techniques, individuals can learn to express themselves and make sense of the external world.

Furthermore, in 1992, the North Dakota Center for the book also began to promote storytelling and festivals (or "tellebrations"). They have stated that:

Storytelling is an art form through which we have preserved our heritage, passed on traditions, learned skills, and most importantly, developed our limitless imaginations. Storytelling is at the heart of human experience; a means by which we gain a better understanding of ourselves and our world (Storytelling On-line). (North Dakota Center, 1992:212)

The statement above shows that with storytelling we can use our imaginations to develop our background knowledge. The use of storytelling to communicate ideas and to express one's experiences is obvious. Stories are frequently passed between people. And also, storytelling is a good means of developing speaking skills. According to Iverson and Lancey (1961:130), engaging students in storytelling activities develops communication skills and encourages shared learning experiences. Storytelling is a universal function of language and one of the main ingredients of casual conversation. Using storytelling, students can practice listening and speaking skills in a fun and interactive way. When the teacher tells stories to the students, she communicates with them, entertains them, and passes on information. Besides that, many students still have problems when they have to speak in front of the class, getting confused and losing the theme, even losing their train of thought so that their speaking becomes unclear, so one way of overcoming these problem is by using storytelling which has been proved is an effective way of improving the speaking skills of students.

Telling stories is a good way to combine instruction and entertainment. Stories are an effective tool for teaching languages (Malkina, 1995:1, as cited in Fitria, 2000). Children usually love stories. While listening to stories, children develop a sense of structure that will later help them to understand the more complex stories of literature. Through storytelling the teacher can create an atmosphere in which the students can learn English whilst being entertained.

Procedures of Teaching Speaking with Storytelling Technique

There are some procedures that can be followed by teachers in applying storytelling in teaching speaking. They are as the following (Scott, 1985:263):

a. Teaching divides the teaching material into two parts.

b. Before the lesson material is given, the teachers give an introduction to the topics to be discussed. Teachers should write the topic on the

white board and ask the students what they know pertaining to the topic. This brainstorming activity is aimed to activate their schemata in order to be more ready for the new learning materials. In this activity, teachers need to emphasize that providing correct guesses is not the point. The important thing is students' readiness in anticipating the instruction that will be given.

c. Teacher put the student into pairs.

d. The first part of the material is given to the first students, while the second material will be given to the second student.

e. Then, the students are ordered to read or listen to their respective parts.

f. While reading or listening, students are asked to take notes and enlist some key words or phrases in their respective parts. The number of words or phrases can be adjusted in accordance with the length of reading text.

g. While remembering or paying attention to parts that have been read or heard.

h. The students own version of the composition is, of course, not necessarily the same with the actual material. When students complete their writing, some students may be given the opportunity to read their essay result.

i. This activity can be ended with a discussion on the topic of the instruction material. Discussions can be carried out between a couple (a pair) or with the whole class.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is an experimental study with some additional data to support the results. The study is intended to obtain information about the benefits from using the storytelling technique in teaching speaking. Experimental research is done by manipulating variables, in this case teaching speaking using the storytelling technique was the independent variable that could affect the experimental group (EG). The effect that the writer is interested in is whether the speaking ability, which is the dependent variable of the EG students will become better than that of the control group (CG) taught using the traditional technique for teaching speaking ESL. The study population was two classes of year VIII students attending SMPN 27 Takengon. Besides, the researcher wanted to find out the responses of the students towards the storytelling technique when it was used for teaching speaking.

An experimental research design was used in order to answer the first research problem. Whereas, to answer the second research question, the researcher used a questionnaire with the EG students. The research used was a narrative text. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out the responses from the EG students toward the storytelling technique. Babbie (1979:259) has written "this method can be used for units of analysis, such as groups or interaction, it is necessary that some individual persons be used as respondents or informants."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The mean score of the EG from the pre-test was 48 while for the CG the mean was 47. the result of t-test on the pre-tests showed that the differences between two means were not significant so the EG and the CG were similar in terms of their initial speaking ability in the pre-tests.

Based on the means of the post-test scores for each group, the mean of the post-test scores of the EC was 76 while that of the CC was 57. When the two means are compared through the independent sample t-test, the result showed that the differences between two means was significant Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was accepted showing that there was a significance improvement in the speaking abilities of the EC students taught using the storytelling technique compared to the CC, who were taught with the conventional technique.

This agrees with the results reported by Herminda (2013) in her thesis after studying the effectiveness of using storytelling technique to teach speaking to second year students at SMPN 1 Boyolangu, Tulungagung where she also found it was an effective technique for improving the speaking skills of her students.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the theories, findings, and discussion above, two conclusions can be drawn. First, there was a significant improvement in the performance of the EC students taught using the storytelling technique compared to the CC taught conventionally. In other words, the use of the storytelling technique helped to significantly improve the speaking ability of the EC students. The storytelling technique

encouraged the EG students to develop their speaking abilities and they considered it a very helpful technique to improve their speaking ability.

Second, the EC students give a positive response toward the implementation of storytelling for teaching-learning EFL speaking. This was shown by the results from the questionaire where most students (80% of the EC students) were excited to practice this technique while learning speaking. They said that they enjoyed learning speaking through storytelling since they could improve their vocabulary as well as their pronunciation. By using storytelling, the students got the opportunity to speak at length. Also 75% of the EC students said that storytelling helped them to develop their oral language proficiency as well as their reading comprehension. In fact, storytelling allowed the EG students to gain knowledge about important aspects of stories: beginnings and endings, settings, characters, and plot lines.

SUGGESTIONS

Some suggestions for further research and for practical purposes are proposed to enhance and find better techniques for teaching-learning speaking for teachers, students and reseachers

It is suggested that EFL teachers at junior high school be creative in selecting techniques and media that their students will find interesting for the teaching-learning process. Teachers should use many and various techniques for teaching speaking since this can lead to innovative and creative thinking from the students and can make classes more lively and interesting. In addition, the teacher should always improve his or her skills and knowledge by exploring ways to improve results from teaching English. Therefore, the teacher should be creative in making or searching for stories that the students will love, and use them in teaching speaking so that the students will always be interested and enthusiastic when learning English.

Students should not be shy to practice speaking English and should not worry about making mistakes, they should be active and creative in enriching their speaking, besides that, students should practice speaking inside and outside of the classroom at every chance they get and lastly students should ask the teacher if there is something that they do not understand.

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