

SPEAKING SKILL IMPROVEMENT THROUGH LANGUAGE GAMES

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Abstract

The paper aims to present an idea for one problem of language teaching, namely the one aims to develop students' ability in speaking English. It is the teaching through language games. Focus of the paper is to discuss about students' ability in speaking English, especially for students of elementary schools. The writer is interested in writing this topic because she feels that speaking skill is the most important language skill when the students study General English, such as the one which is taught in general schools: Elementary, Junior, and Senior High schools. The writer, in this paper encloses the result of her research in her own school, conducted to students of Elementary School students. Here is the result, "Learning to speak English through games is able to improve students' skills in speaking. Students begin to feel confident to pronounce English words correctly".

Keywords : teaching, games, speaking skill.

Peningkatan Kemampuan Berbicara Bahasa Inggris melalui Permainan Bahasa

Abstrak

Makalah ini bertujuan untuk menyajikan suatu pendapat mengenai masalah pengajaran bahasa, yaitu untuk mengembangkan kemampuan siswa dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris, pengajaran melalui permainan bahasa. Masalah utama yang dibicarakan dalam makalah ini adalah kemampuan siswa dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris khususnya siswa sekolah dasar. Penulis tertarik menulis topik ini karena keterampilan berbicara adalah keterampilan bahasa yang paling penting ketika siswa belajar bahasa Inggris umum seperti yang diajarkan di sekolah yaitu SD, SMP dan SMA. Pada makalah ini, penulis menyertakan hasil penelitian di sekolah yang dilaksanakan pada siswa sekolah dasar. Hasilnya adalah belajar berbicara bahasa melalui permainan dapat meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam berbicara. Siswa mulai merasa percaya diri untuk mengucapkan kata bahasa Inggris dengan benar.

Kata kunci : pengajaran, permainan, keterampilan berbicara.

A. INTRODUCTION

For elementary school students who just start to learn English, speaking is so difficult that they may develop negative attitudes toward English; they don't like English. Considering the fact that English is a foreign language in Indonesia, teachers should come up with precise and effective approach to deliver fun teaching. Paying attention to the obvious problem which is how to make our students able to speak English both in school and at home, the writer would like to talk about language games by sharing the writer's experience with the students. Because playing is an integral part of children, they love to combine both playing and learning.

This study will deal with "effort to increase elementary students' English speaking skill through language games" focusing on the implementation of language games in speaking class for first grade of elementary school.

Based on the above mentioned issues, the writer would like to present the problems, namely:

1. How can teachers increase English speaking skill of first grade elementary school students through language game?
2. Are language games able to increase English speaking skill of first grade elementary school students?

In the end of study, the writer expects that the results are able to:

1. To give inputs for the development of English teaching for first grade elementary school students especially their speaking skill.
2. To give inputs for English teachers to improve their teaching
3. Especially for the writer, to improve the writer's understanding of action research as one of the alternative solutions to teaching speaking problems to first grade elementary school students.

B. DISCUSSION

Based on the topic above that it is about one technique of language teaching, so, firstly, the writer would like to present a theory of an approach, a method, and a technique. Richard, Jack C. and Rodgers, Theodore S. (1993:15) cites the statement from Anthony(1963:63-7), namely:

...an approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught

... a method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural. Within one approach, there can be many methods... .

...a technique is implementational – that which actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objectives. Technique must be consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well.

In accordance with the theories above, it can be stated that the topic the writer presents belongs to one language teaching and learning technique because it deals with what take place in the classroom, teaching and learning English through games. Speaking, as the first language skill, is considered as the most important language skill which is easily known by other people that someone has the ability of the language. So that, to teach it needs serious and perseverent effort and stratagem of English teachers in order to gain maximal students' achievement.

Due to the importance of language speaking skill, Lado states that, "speaking ability is described as the ability to express oneself in life situations, or the ability to report acts or situations in precise words, or the ability to converse, or to express a sequence of ideas fluently" (Robert Lado, 1962:240).

Bailey and Savage say that:

Speaking in a second or foreign language has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills, yet for many people speaking is seen as the central skill. The desire to communicate with others, often face to face and real time, drives us to attempt to speak fluently and correctly” (Kathleen M. Bailey and Lance Savage, p.vii).

Mc. Donough and Shaw state that:

Speaking is desire and purpose –driven, in other words we genuinely want to communicate something to achieve a particular end. This may involve expressing ideas and opinions:expressing a wish or a desire to do something:negotiating and / or solving a particular problem:or establishing and maintaining social relationship and friendship, (Jo Mc Donough and Cristoper Shaw, 1993 :151).

Referring to explanation above, the writer can conclude that speaking is the person’s ability to express things properly and smoothly by using words so that the listener can understand what has been transferred or spoken by his / her counterpart. Before children can talk, they first listen to others’ speak and then they imitate the words what they have heard. As Abe says that,”Children’s ability to mimic is extremely good, as anyone who has seen children repeat songs or television commercials (even without understanding the meaning)”. (Keiko Abe, 1989 – 1993: 226)

According to Littlewood “the child imitates the sounds and patterns which he hears around him, so that these become habits”. (William T. Littlewood, 1984:5)

Thus, the speaking ability of Elementary students is the students’ speaking ability to say the simple words in the context of class. Most of the words refer to the concrete things surrounding in the classroom.

1. Language Games

There are two kinds of language achievement processes, learning and acquiring. Krashen (1981) distinguishes the difference between them, “

acquisition refers to the the natural assimilation of language rules through using language for communication. Learning refers to the natural study of language rules and is a conscious process.” According to him, learning is available only as a “monitor”; the monitor is repository of conscious grammatical knowledge about the language that is learned through formal instruction and that is called upon in the editing of utterances produced through the acquired system.

Referring to the theory above, the witer is sure and states that the teaching and learning of speaking a language, English, must be conducted and directed to the process of aquisition. The most important in speaking is producing or practicing the language orally. If the students speak ungrammatically, it is not the problem of speaking and we, English teachers, may ignore it; but the grmmatical errors or mistakes must be corrected gradually through learning process, not aquiring. It can be said that learning to speak is the process of aquiring rather than learning. Accordingly, teaching and learning speaking skill of a language through language games is the best choice for langauge teachers to make students subconsciously aquire the language.

Discussing about the technique of language games, Lewis and Bedson state:

playing games is a vital and natural part of growing up and learning. Through games children experiment, discover, and interact with their environment. Not to include games in the classroom would be to withhold from the children an essential tool for understanding their world”. (Gordon Lewis with Gunther Bedson, 1999 : 5).

Larbacal says that,” Language games can (1) help those who play develop their inner self, (2) help them relate to others more effectively and cooperatively, (3) train them in creative freedom as they feel less embarrassed or affraid and become more self-confident, and finally, (4) bring them and the facilitators closer, which will eventually help to lower the tension and anxiety that prevents students from acquiring the language. (Rita Susana Larbacal, 1992: 28)

From the description above, it can be concluded that the language games are games that assist students in improving self-confidence and motivation in order to increase their skills in speaking. The students can improve their self confidence because there is no direct correction from their teacher when they make mistakes so that they will not loose face. Communicative atmosphere during teaching and learning process can also arise students' motivation as all students have equal position and chance to express and explore their ideas. Coorperative learning among students can make class atmosphere alive.

2. Scoring Scale for Speaking

One important problem the teachers of language must be aware is the way to score when teaching language speaking skill. The objectivity of scoring the students' achievement is difficult to measure because ideally speaking skill should be measured or tested directly by means of oral speaking practice. It will, moreover, be serious difficulty or problem when testing huge number of students in very limited time. In such condition, most teachers usually use objective tests, such as multiple choices or matching tests for meeting the target of time and number of students.

To decrease the subjectivity of scoring for testing speaking skill, many linguists present ways of scoring it; one of them is the one stated by Brown known as Brown's theory . (H. Douglas Brown, 2004 : 141).

2	Acceptable pronunciation
1	Comprehensible, partially correct pronunciation
0	Silence, seriously incorrect pronunciation

3. Method and Research Intervention

In this paper, the writer would like to enclose one design of teaching speaking skill which is usually implemented in the classroom. The design is to give description of language speaking achievement.

a. Design of Action Research Cycle:

1) Planning

This step consists of: determining the target of competence, teaching design, test design, and schedule.

- a) Determining the target of competence; the standard of speaking competence is an increasing students' competence to speak English well.
- b) Designing teaching in the first and second cycles.
- c) Designing test, which is simple oral test.
- d) Scheduling teaching – first and second teaching

2) Action

- a) Pre-assessment aims to grasp the students' competence to be compared with the test results of the first and the second cycles.
- b) The first cycle is ten-session teaching.
- c) The follow up of the first cycle is identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the process. The results of the identification will be used to plan the second cycle teaching.
- d) The second cycle teaching aims to achieve the target competence unachieved in the first cycle.

3) Observation

- a) The observation, carried out after the teaching, lasts for 1 week.
- b) During observation, the writer is assisted by collaborators who records in a field note what is seen, heard, and observed during the teaching.
- c) The writer uses teaching aids such as pictures, recording, and video camera to increase the validity of the study.

4) Reflection

- a) Analyzing the teaching; the degree of the students' behavioral change, before and after the teaching.
- b) Evaluating the success and the failures of the teaching as preparation for the next teaching.

b. Stages of Intervention Actions

1) Action Research Planning

This action research uses two cycles, with the following : planning, action, observation and reflection.

2) First Cycle Action Plan

The materials are chosen following these topics:

a) Introduction

- (1) Students introduce each other respectively by mentioning names, and greetings.
- (2) Students conduct fun activities associated with the introduction. The game is called Hello game.

b) Numbers

- (1) Students can count 1 - 10.
- (2) Students can recite the numbers in accordance with the numbers written on the card.
- (3) Students conduct fun activities related to numbers. The game is called pass the ball.

c) Colours

- (1) Students can mention various colors according to the colors in the flash cards.
- (2) Students conduct fun activities associated with colors. The game is called Feed the Sparrow.

d) Alphabet

- (1) Students can name the letters of the alphabet by looking at the pictures.

- (2) Students conduct fun activities with various materials related to the alphabet. The game is called gesture spelling.
- e) Parts of the body
 - (1) Students can name the body parts by seeing the picture.
 - (2) Students can mention parts of the body by pointing at the actual object.
- 3) Students conduct fun activities associated with the body parts. The title of the game is Simon says.

The topics chosen for the learning activities on the first cycle are: *Introduction, Numbers and Colours.*

c. Second Cycle Action Plan

Conceptually, the implementation of the action on the second cycle is the same with that of the cycle one, adding only a few of them on the first cycle where all students receive equal treatment. In the second cycle, there are some students who will receive special attention. Students whose scores are less will have an additional lesson, remedial. Enrichment is for students having more capacity. The topics chosen for the learning activities in the second cycle are: Colors, Alphabets and Parts of the body. These learning activities are selected to form the basic characteristics in accordance with the activities of the game to be understood by students.

d. Data and Sources of Data

The data consist of two types of data, namely quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data are obtained from the results of tests conducted as many as three times or more in the pre-action test, the first cycle and second cycle test. The test in action research may end when all students can pass the test. In the end of the research, there is no students fail the lesson or treatment. Whereas qualitative data are

the ones that describe the process of learning which the results are obtained through observations; such data are normative.

e. Instruments used for Data Collection

There are many kinds of instruments used for data collecting. Those instruments must be suited with the kinds of data collected. Such instruments as test (answer sheets), angket, interview notes, oral tests items, observation sheets and field notes, and language laboratory or tape recorder (for listening skill) are frequently used in the action research for data collecting.

f. Data Collection Techniques

Here are some techniques for collecting data of students' English speaking achievement: analyzing field notes, documentation, conducting written and oral test and observations. Among the above techniques, oral test through games is the more suitable for assessing English speaking skill. The data obtained from such test are as the main data to determine whether or not students have achieved the instructional objectives of learning English speaking.

g. Examples of games for learning English Speaking

Hello Game

Game Type : Movement game

Aims : Language: Names; basic introductions and greeting

Materials : Music, chair

Procedure : 1. All the children sit on chairs in a circle. You are in the middle.
2. Go up to a child, shake hands, and say Hello, my name is ...
3. You and the child now introduce yourselves to other children. Then they stand up and introduce themselves to other children.
4. When the music is on, all the children are up and moving. You and the children must run and find a seat. There will be one seat too few.
5. The child who doesn't find a seat goes to the middle and stars the game again. You sit on a seat like the other children.

Feed the sparrow

- Game Type : Movement game
 Aims : Language: Calling out colors
 Materials : Sparrow hand puppet; thick paper; colored pens; scissors
 Preparation : With the children prepare small of “corn” of various colors, using thick paper, colored pens, and scissors.
 Procedure : 1. Show the children the sparrow hand puppet, which you keep on your hand throughout the game
 2. Throw the corns into the air, one at a time, calling out the color.
 3. The children try to catch the corn. To avoid a skirmish, only two or three children may try to catch each corn. A child who has caught corns then feeds the sparrow, by putting the corn into its mouth.

Simon says

- Game Type : Movement game
 Aims : Language: Listening; imperatives; action verbs
 Materials : Real object
 Procedure : 1. The two children are standing face to face.
 2. One child calls out a command such as Simon says: touch your nose.
 3. The other one must do what his friends’ say.

C. CONCLUSION

Learning to speak English through games is able:

1. to nurture students' skills in speaking.
2. to make students feel confident to pronounce English words correctly.
3. to arise students’ motivation to speak among others.
4. to make classroom atmosphere alive.
5. to avoid students getting bored joining the lesson.

Therefore, we urge our dear fellow teachers to pay attention to the following issues:

1. In carrying out the process of teaching and learning activities, teachers should provide an element of the game, especially in fostering the ability

to speak English in grade I because the playing activities would please children. Happy heart will make students study well.

2. Ideally a teacher should have an understanding of the learning methods of early childhood education learning through play. Teachers should know learning materials and the delivery process without ignoring the individual characteristics of children as unique learners.
3. A teacher should be creative and energetic, because teachers play a very important role in the learning process. Teachers should be fun and motivating so that children enthusiastic to learn.
4. We recommend that a teacher have a sense of humor so that children do not feel tense and afraid to follow the lessons.

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