

PROFILE OF SPEAKING INSTRUCTION: A CASE STUDY AT ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN BANDAR LAMPUNG

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Abstract

This paper is part of the writer's dissertation entitled, "The Development of Instructional Materials for Improving Students Speaking Skills at Elementary School."

This paper is aimed at describing English language instruction (ELI) at elementary schools in Bandar Lampung, especially on teaching speaking. This paper is written based on the qualitative study conducted by the writer in elementary schools in Bandar Lampung. The study involved English teachers and students of elementary schools in Bandar Lampung.

The data collecting method used in this study were: (1) classroom observation, (2) interview, (3) questionnaires, and (4) documentations. The classroom observations were focused on the instructional features that the teachers employed in the classrooms and the students' activities in learning speaking. He also observed the phenomena such as classroom interactions, the teacher's activities, the students' activities, the students' motivation in learning English, and the problems encountered both by the teachers and students in developing students' speaking skills. Questionnaires and interviews were used to know the problems encountered in teaching speaking at elementary schools. To know the actual problems encountered by students, the writer distributed questionnaires to students and interviewed them from different elementary schools in Bandar Lampung.

The study shows that speaking instruction at English language instruction at elementary schools in Bandar Lampung has not been conducted well. It happened because of some factors include: (1) lack of materials for speaking instruction, (2) the English teachers have lack of self confidence in using English when conducting instructional activities, (3) lack of students' motivation to speak English, and (4) there is no speaking test for summative test.

Keywords : local content subject, adjacency pairs.

I. BACKGROUND OF PROBLEM

Nowadays, many elementary schools in Bandar Lampung teach English to their students. It happens since the 1994 Curriculum of elementary school allows Elementary Schools to teach English to their students as a local content subject. Most of elementary schools in Bandar Lampung teach English to their students starting from the fourth year. However, in certain elementary schools in Bandar Lampung English has been taught since the first year through the sixth year.

English is a new elective subject for students of elementary school. It needs a good preparation and instructional management so that the teaching learning process can be conducted successfully. English language teaching at elementary schools involves the establishment about at what classes English should be taught, the appointment of the English teachers, the instructional media, and the availability of the English textbooks used in the classroom.

In line with the requirements of English language teaching in elementary school, Sinaga in Sadtono (1997: 173) states that one of the most important requirements is the availability of qualified teachers. At least there are two qualifications are needed from the teacher: (1) a qualification in English and (2) a teaching qualification. The first qualification is essential as the teacher is the model for his/her students. He/she relates to them and they learn to speak from him/her. The second qualification includes a sound knowledge of how to teach children and the ability to implement it in the classroom.

Based on the classroom observations, questionnaires, and the interviews with the English teachers of several elementary schools in Bandar Lampung, the writer found that most of students could not speak English well. Even they could not make simple utterances that are grammatically correct and communicative. The writer also found that the English teachers have not conducted teaching speaking well. Some of them did not teach speaking at all in English language teaching at their schools.

II. THE REASONS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

There are some reasons underlaying the English language teaching at elementary schools. Brewster (2003:3) states one reason for starting to learn a foreign language several earlier (at age six or nine instead of eleven or twelve) was simply to increase the total number of years spent learning the language. Another reason most commonly put forward was the fact that young children seem to have a greater facility for understanding and imitating what they hear than secondary school pupils. It is also supported by Moon (2005) that younger is better in the long term. This reason is based on the argument that 'longer is better': that by starting in primary school you increase the overall time to English and in the long term achieve a higher level of proficiency than those starting later.

Based on the statements above, the writer concludes that the reasons underlaying the English language teaching at elementary schools are: (1) communicative competence develops rapidly during the childhood, (2) the longer students learn English, will be the better their communicative competence, and (3) the children have greater facility for understanding and imitating what they hear than secondary school students.

III. THE PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING ENGLISH AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Educational Unit of Curriculum (KTSP) for elementary school allows elementary schools to teach English as a local content subject to their students. It means that English now becomes a legitimate subject in elementary school; therefore, some elementary schools are trying to teach English in their students. In line with English language teaching in elementary school, Suyanto in Sadtono (1997: 166) states that teaching English in the elementary school has now come to be carried out as a legitimate subject, because it is supported by an official policy, that is the decree of Minister of Education and Culture Republic of Indonesia (No. 060/U/1993) which states that English can be introduced to the fourth grade students of elementary school.

Since English is a new subject to the students and teachers of elementary school, we should consider some requisites for achieving the objectives of English teaching at elementary school. Alwasilah (1997: 90) proposes four requirements that should be fulfilled by the elementary schools in teaching English. The requirements are: (1) Having good instructional management; (2) Qualified teachers who know the characteristics of children; (3) Appropriate teaching materials, and (4) Using interesting teaching techniques.

The 2006 Local Content Curriculum for elementary school (Kemendiknas, 2006:1) states that the objectives of English instruction at elementary school is that students are expected to (1) develop limited oral communicative competence to accompany action (Language accompanying action) at school contexts and (2) be aware of the importance of English for increasing the nation power in the competition of the global era.

In line with the objectives of English language teaching at elementary school, some experts state as follows:

Pinter (2006: 38)

- 1) Develop children's basic communication abilities in English
- 2) Encourage enjoyment and motivation
- 3) Promote learning about other cultures
- 4) Develop children's cognitive skills
- 5) Develop children's metalinguistic awareness
- 6) Encourage 'learning to learn'.

Paul (2004: 76)

The children need to speak, speak, and speak. The children can listen to English at home, read English at home, and even write English at home, but most of them have few opportunities to speak English at home. If we want children to learn to speak English, each of them must have many opportunities to speak during the lessons. They need to practice, practice, and practice. If a class is large, we need to divide it up into pairs and groups so that each individual child will be able to speak more, and in all classes the children need to play games where they speak English a lot.

Sadtono (1997:173)

Children learn English in order to speak it. In other words, they want to speak the language. It is true that they learn English because of their parents. But soon, as they start learning it, they wish to speak it. These children are not interested in how language works and therefore its function.

Based on the statements above, the writer concludes that the main objective of English instruction at elementary school is that enables students to use English for the purpose of communication orally in simple

English. To achieve the communicative competence, students should be trained with various adjacency pairs that function as the basic for the more complex communicative competence.

Adjacency pairs are the examples of conversation in pairs. An adjacency pair is constructed from two utterances by two speakers, one utterance appears after the other utterance. The first utterance uttered by the first speaker requires the response from the second speaker. For example, a question “*What’s your name?*” requires an answer from another speaker. The appropriate answer, for example, “I’m James”. The following are the examples of adjacency pairs:

- Greeting → greeting
“Hi!” → “Hi!”
- Offer → acceptance/rejection
“Would you like to go to the movies with us?” → “I’d love to!”
- Request → acceptance/rejection
“May I borrow your dictionary?” → “Sure.”
- Question → answer
“What do you want to do?” → “I want to call my father.”
- Complaint → excuse/remedy
“It’s awfully cold in here.” → “Oh, sorry. I’ll close the window.”
- Degreeting → degreeting
“See you!” → “Yeah, see you later!”

The main function of English instruction at elementary school is to motivate students to enjoy learning English. Therefore the main emphasis on English instruction is how to motivate students to learn English so that they like English and its instruction. Huda (1999: 135) adds that the function of the teaching of English in elementary school is to prepare the students for further education in secondary school.

The 2006 Curriculum suggests that the four language skills; speaking, listening, reading, and writing should be taught integrately. Integrated skills unit can be interpreted as variety of learning different points connected together. It is underlined that in presenting integrated skills, teachers integrate the four language skills as well as the language components like grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation. It means that in teaching English the teachers should not teach merely one language skill, but they should cover the other language skills or language components.

The integration of teaching language skills is clearly stated by Brown (1994: 217) that there is recent trend toward skill integration. That is, rather than designing a curriculum to teach the many aspects of one skill, say, reading, curriculum designers are taking more of whole language approach whereby reading is treated as one of two or more interrelated skills. A course that deals with reading skills, then, will also deal with related listening, speaking, and writing skills. Under this new paradigm, a lesson in a so-called reading class might, for example, include: (1) A pre-reading discussion of the topic to activate schemata, (2) listening to a lecture or a series of informative statements about the topic of a passage to be read, (3) A focus on a certain reading strategy, say, scanning, and (4) writing a paraphrase of a section of the reading passage.

Since the time available for teaching English is so limited, it is impossible to integrate all language skills and all language components in one session. The teachers of English should be careful in selecting the language skills and the language components in their teaching. They may apply two language skills like reading and speaking, and one language component, like grammar or vocabulary. Teaching English in integration is more effective than teaching English in isolation like what we used to do it in the past. It is expected that through the integration of the language skills and the language components in English instruction, the English teachers can create an interesting classroom interaction that encourage students to communicate in English.

Teaching English to young learners is very much different from teaching English to students of junior high school and senior high schools. Scott (1990:3) characterizes some characteristics of the young learners in learning a foreign language as follows:

- Their own understanding comes through hands and eyes and ears. The physical world is dominant at all times.
- They have a very short attention and concentration span. The lessons should be interesting, lively, and fun.
- Young children love to play, and learn best when they are enjoying themselves.
- They rely on the spoken word as well as they physical world to convey and understand meaning. Don’t rely on the spoken word only. Most activities for the younger learners should include movement and involve the senses. You will need to have plenty of objects and pictures to work with, and to make full use of the school and your surroundings. Demonstrate what you want them to do.
- Varieties in the classroom

Since concentration and attention spans are short, variety is a must __ variety of activity, variety of pace, variety organization, and variety of voice.

In line with teaching English to children, Brown (2001) puts forth some important aspects that should be considered by English teachers. The aspects are as follows:

1. Intellectual development
Children have many limitations. Rules, explanations, and other even slightly abstract talk about language must be approached with extreme caution. Children are centered on the “here and now,” on the functional purposes of language.
2. Attention span
Since language lessons can at times be difficult for children, the teacher should try to make them interesting, lively, and fun.
3. Sensory input
Children need to have all five senses stimulated. The teacher’s activities should strive to go well beyond the visual and auditory modes that we usually feel are sufficient for a classroom.
4. Affective factors
Children are often innovative in language forms but still have a great many inhibitions. They are extremely sensitive, especially to peers. Children are in many ways much more fragile than adults. Their egos are still being shaped, and therefore the slightest nuances of communication can be negatively interpreted. Teachers need to help them to overcome such potential barriers to learning.
5. Authentic, meaningful language
Children are focused on what this language can actually be used for right here and now. They are less willing to put up with language that doesn’t hold immediate rewards for them.

Based on the statements above, the writer assumes that English instruction at elementary school necessitates quality teacher who knows much about children psychology so that he or she can successfully encourage students to learn English. This means that successful English teacher at junior or senior high school may not succeed in teaching English to the students of elementary school.

In teaching English to students of elementary school, the teachers should do the following: (1) use interesting instructional media in giving the meanings of new English e.g. using real objects, pictures or charts; (2) motivate students to be active in learning English; (3) interact with the students in English that is related directly to activities in which students are engaged; and (4) provide students with ample opportunities to practice or use their English in real-life situations so that they can develop their English rapidly.

The teacher should also provide students with communicative tasks so that the learners are actively involved in using the target language they are learning. Nunan (1989) defines that the communicative task is a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. It means that any communicative tasks given to the students should always involve the language use even in the very simple one. The tasks may consist of verbal form, for example performing dialogues, reading passages, and retelling stories, or non verbal form, for example sequencing pictures, arranging words into correct sentences, and writing sentences.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was descriptive and qualitative in nature. It was designed to identify and to describe the observed phenomena of English Language teaching at elementary schools in Bandar Lampung. The classroom observations, questionnaires, and interviews were focused on the instructional features that the teachers employed in the classrooms. This study was expected to portray the teaching speaking at elementary schools. To achieve this goal, the study was conducted in three stages. They were: exploratory stage, descriptive stage, and explanatory stage.

The research was conducted at 12 elementary schools in Bandar Lampung that have taught English to their students, namely those schools that regarded to have established English instruction programs as recommended by the Chief of Dinas Pendidikan Nasional Kota Bandar Lampung.

The data resources of the study were the teachers of English and the students of those elementary schools. The methods of collecting data used in this study were: (1) interviews, (2) classroom observation, (3) and questionnaires.

The writer analyzed the data inductively soon after he had finished carrying out the first interview or observation and continued to analyze the data as long as he was working on the research. The data were analyzed

qualitatively through the following phases: (1) identifying the data; (2) coding the data, (3) categorizing the data, and (4) interpreting the data.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the data obtained in the research through classroom observation, questionnaires and interviews with English teachers and students, the writer can elaborate the teaching speaking in English language teaching at elementary schools in Bandar Lampung as follows:

1. The Teachers don't conduct Teaching Speaking at all
Although the syllaby of speaking instruction are clearly stated in the English curriculum, most of English teachers (80%) do not conduct the speaking instruction in English language instruction at elementary school. The English language instruction focuses on reading skills, vocabulary, and little about grammar. The reasons that the English teachers do not conduct speaking instruction because of the lack of suitable materials available for speaking instruction and they have lack of self confidence in using English when conducting instructional activities in speaking instruction.
2. The Teachers Give Limited Speaking Exercises
The teachers give limited speaking exercises through reading dialogues and repetition drills.
3. Lack of students' motivation in learning speaking
Most of students have lack of motivation in speaking. They were afraid of making mistakes and too shy to speak.
4. There is no speaking Test in the summative test
There is no speaking test in summative test. The summative test usually consists of reading test, vocabulary and little about grammar.

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