PROSIDING

SEMINAR NASIONAL PENDIDIKAN FISIKA DAN BAHASA INGGRIS 2014

CARA PRAKTIS DAN INOVATIF DALAM PEMBELAJARAN FISIKA DAN BAHASA INGGRIS

Surabaya, 17 Mei 2014

Judul Buku

Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Fisika dan Bahasa Inggris: Cara Praktis dan Inovatif dalam Pembelajaran Fisika dan Bahasa Inggris.

Redaksi

Ketua Prof. Dr. A. Ngadiman

Anggota

1. Prof. Dr. Veronica L. Diptoadi.
2. Prof. Drs. Soegimin W. W.
2. Y.G. Harto Pramono, Ph.D.
3. J.V. Djoko Wirjawan, Ph.D.
4. M.N. Siti Mina Tamah, Ph.D.
5. Dr. Ruruh Mindari
6. Dr. B. Budiono
7. Drs. I Nyoman Arcana, M. Si.

Cetakan Pertama
Mei 2014

9 786029 683950

MINI-STORY FOR TEACHING SPEAKING
TO SLOW LEARNERS

Oleh
Lailatul Musyarofah
Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo
Jalan Kemiri Sidoarjo
ibu_laila78@yahoo.co.id

Abstract: *Speaking can be a scared activity for slow learners. Negative beleifs about English learning ability such as English speaking is difficult, I am not good at English, I must speak English perferctly and so forth have a great influence on learners' competence. Furthermore, slow learners are rarely declare their problems in speaking. Thus, teacher should be sensitive detecting students' condition and find a way out. This action research aimed at finding out the implementation of mini-story technique for teaching speaking to slow learners'. Mini-story technique was adapted from www.EffrortlessEnglishClub.com in which the materials were created by the teacher. after a placement test without any designation which indicated they were in fact "slow learners" 5 participants joined this class. Planning, action, observation, and reflection were documented through field notes, assessments, and questionnaires. The result suggests that mini-story technique can be applied for teaching slow learners hence it had been well implemented.*

Key Words: *speaking, mini-story, slow learners*

INTRODUCTION

"Years ago, many teachers would teach to the majority of the class and the slow learners were often left behind. Teachers are now being forced to find a way to teach the slow learners." [1] This statement opens my eyes towards what happens in my institution.

One day, after teaching, a student came to me and told her problem. Being sweaty, she told me that she was frustrated by her speaking skill. She had problems with the strict and very discipline lecturer, the technique the lecturer had, and the way the lecturer motivated his students by saying "You must speak English anytime!.", "In English, please!". As a result, any time she met her lecturer she got 'headache'. To solve such problem, a small group to train students' English (whether in class or outside the class) should be made because learning by doing is really important in learning speaking. A small group can mediate learners to share information through the group, make conversation, and check others' error. This also can give extra additional

vocabulary to the persons [2]. Then I made an irregular speaking class by inviting my students who wanted to develop their speaking ability.

Done on Thursdays, 90 minutes per meeting, I started the class by doing placement test. To avoid any indication of differentiating between fast and slow learners, I asked each student to introduce themselves as long and as many information they had. Then, I asked fast learners to sit in the left row and those whom I considered as slow learners in the right row. Off 20 students, 5 students were categorized slow learners.

A "slow learner" is not a diagnostic category, it is a term people use to describe a student who has the ability to learn necessary academic skills, but at rate and depth below average same age peers. In order to grasp new concepts, a slow learner needs more time, more repetition, and often more resources from teachers to be successful [3]. This kind of students need extra supports such as; repetition to help students make a concept more concrete, encourage other activities in which learners can experience success and keep them connected, differentiate

instruction, tutoring to help fill in gaps in basic skills and it helps a student stay caught up, teach study skills to help a student become more efficient in studying, teach the most important concepts and leave out some of the less important details, and peer tutoring. Teachers should leave more time for slow learners in classroom talk and provide elicitations when it is necessary [4].

I realized that slow learners need special approach so that I browsed some techniques for teaching speaking to slow learners. The technique should cater above extra supports so the result would be optimal. I was interested in a technique called mini-story proposed by Effortless English. The basic concept of mini-story technique is the story is told in a special way. In questioning the story, grammar and vocabulary are repeated many times. In real conversation we do not repeat but respond. Here, learners have to try to answer the question quickly by one or two words only and repeat each mini-story as many as possible.

There are some rules in applying mini-story technique; (1) learn English phrases - not individual words, (2) do not study grammar rules, (3) learn with your ears - not with your eyes, (4) learn deeply, (5) use real English materials, (6) and use listen-and-answer mini stories[5].

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used action research design. Action research uses mainly qualitative research data-collection methods, but particularly observation, interviews, questionnaires, diary studies, and may also use discourse analysis. The essential stages as a self-reflective action research cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Those stages were applied in each cycle [6].

I collected the data through field notes, questionnaires, and students' performance. Those were to measure the process and the product which had been determined in the planning stage.

Planning
Hence planning must be a forward looking action, in this stage; firstly I set the learning outcome: students are able to respond/ answer the questions and retell the story in their own way, and then I prepared the instruction materials for mini-story, preparing the instruments, and determining the criteria of success. Two sets of criteria of success were needed; process and product. The criteria of process were achieved successfully or not can be observed from the field notes while to determine students' success in products, it can be checked through the students' performance and questionnaires. The following are criteria of success.

Table 1: Criteria of Success in Action Research

The criteria of success	Data Collection Techniques
The Process: Students' were actively did the speaking activities in the class.	Field notes
The Product: More than 75% of students achieved the learning outcomes. More than 75% students agreed the course was done successfully.	Students' performance Questionnaires

Action
Mini-story technique was applied in this phase. Hence the purpose of mini-story is training students to be able to respond/ answer the questions and retell the story in their own way while learning new vocabulary and practice grammar, the material had to be well prepared to cater the whole aspects.
The procedures of teaching speaking by using mini-story are: (1) teacher tells mini-story once, twice, or three times based on students' response, (2) teacher asks as many questions as possible deal with the topic, (3) students answer/

respond the questions in turn, (4) teacher asks students to retell the story.

There were three cycles for the action; each cycle consisted of two meetings. Below is the materials stated in lesson plan.

Table 2: Mini-story Materials

Meeting	Mini-story
1	I get up at five every day, then take a bath, have breakfast and go to campus. I study English at campus and go home at one p.m.
2	Susan is my friend. She lives in Malang. She is a teacher. She teaches English for Junior High School students. She goes to school by motorbike.
3	About a year ago I went to Malang with my students joining NUDC. There, we also visited Jatim Park and Batu Night Spectacular.
4	Three months ago I met my old friend. Her name is Eni. We talked about our family and work. We had lunch in a small cafe and promised to meet again someday.
5	My young brother who lives far away from me has a great plan. He will go for a wild adventure in a jungle this semester with his classmates. My mother worries like crazy but my brother will do what he wants.
6	Last year Susy failed to reach her plan to continue her study abroad. This year, she tries her own fortune by applying scholarship. She will be a student by the end of this year if her application is accepted. I am happy for her.

Observation

In carrying out action research to improve teaching and learning, an important role of the researcher/instructor is to collect data and evidence about the teaching process and student learning.

Tests, examinations and continuous assessment can provide valuable data for action research. Therefore, for my teaching course, I have set up the techniques to observe the action phase those were lesson plan and closed-ended questionnaires.

Reflection

To know whether the outcomes achieved or not, regular, critical and systematic reflection is needed to have more confidence in the research conclusions. In reflection phase, I could check which did not fit in with what I expected or assumed. During reflection I first examined what happened previously (What worked? What did not? What have I learned? How might I do it differently next time?), then I reviewed and decided what to do next. Through reflection I re/formulate the treatment to the class

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mini-story technique is telling a story for many times while asking some questions deal with the story. The purpose of the technique is mainly to stimulate students' response. Below is the result of the mini-story technique implementation for teaching speaking to slow learners.

Table 3: Mini-Story Implementation

Action	Reflection
Cycle 1	Students mostly did not respond well at the first meeting. They needed long time for answering the questions. There was progress in the second meeting. They were familiar with the simple present tense.
Cycle 2	Dealing with past tense students (again) did not respond well, they even did not understand some words. I repeated mini-story many times to make them understand the meaning. At the third meeting, their

	response increased.
Cycle 3	Clauses made them confused at first, but they were familiar with simple future. Then, the learning outcomes achieved.

Before I applied mini-story, in English and Bahasa, I told my students how the technique implemented in their class. I also told them that I only used English in telling story and asked the questions so did they. They had to speak English whenever they answer the questions.

At the first meeting, when I told my students about daily activity, they needed long time to answer my question after the story ended. For example I ask them, "When do I usually get up in the morning?", "What do I do after having breakfast?", or "What do I study at campus."

After the class was over, I interviewed the students why they needed long time to answer the questions, they said, they were not ready for being asked right after the story, the needed some time to absorb the story.

They were right, at the second meeting; they could answer the questions enthusiastically. Their gesture was more relax than the first meeting. When they got difficulty in answering the question, they asked others, and the student that was asked helped by giving clue.

At the third and the fourth meeting, I gave past event mini-story. Students got difficulty in applying the grammar. For example, when I asked, "When did I go to Malang?" they answered, "I go to Malang last year," knowing this error, I repeated my story, especially, the part in which they got the error. They understood what I meant, so the rest class was good enough.

The fifth meeting was about future tense. They had no problem except the clause. They got difficulty in retelling the story by using the clause. Even though I permitted them to use their own words to retell the story, they tended to imitate the

original. Finally, at the last meeting, the class run smoothly, students could answer the questions and retell the story. In other words, the learning outcomes were achieved.

Mini-story technique particularly could solve students' problems in speaking. The first problem deals with inhabitation. Unlike reading, writing or listening activities, speaking requires some degree of real-time exposure to an audience. Learners are often inhibited about trying to say thing in foreign language in the classroom: worried about mistakes or simply shy of the attention that their speech attract. By using mini-technique, students were explored with real-time exposure, with the teacher (me) and friends.

Second is the problem of 'nothing to say'. Even they are not inhibited, learners sometimes complain that they cannot think of anything to say: they have no motive to express themselves beyond the guilty feeling that they should be speaking. In this case, mini-story provided the topic for speaking so learners had idea to say something; moreover, they just needed to respond.

The third problem is low or uneven participation. Only one participant can talk at a time if he or she is to be heard; and in large group this means the each one will have only very little talking time. This problem is compounded of some learners to dominate, while other speaks very little or not at all. This problem did not happen in my class because the class was small and each student had same chance to speak (respond the question and retell the story).

The last problem is mother tongue use. It is easier for the student to use their mother tongue in their class because it looks naturally. Therefore, most of the students are not disciplined in using the target language in the learning process. Mini-story, in this case did not allow students to hear and speak mother tongue language. They were only provided with

the target language. That is why. Students, even though did not know the meaning of a certain word, avoided speaking Bahasa and forced themselves to speak English.

After the whole class, I distributed questionnaires aimed to measure whether the technique was well implemented or not. The questions dealt with the mini-story basic rules proposed by A.J. Hoge. Below is the result of the questionnaires.
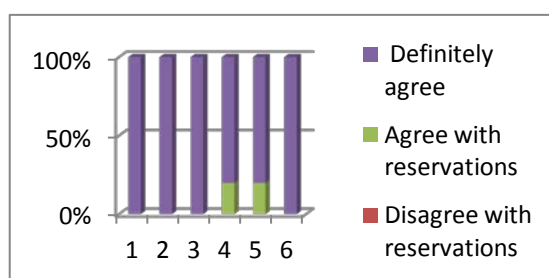
Graph 1: Students' Perception towards Mini-story

The questions were about whether they learned mini-story as the basic principles of mini-story technique or not. The numbers showed in the graph stand for: (1) learn English phrases - not individual words, (2) do not study grammar rules, (3) learn with your ears - not with your eyes, (4) learn deeply, (5) use real English materials, (6) and use listen-and-answer mini stories.

Most students definitely agreed that mini-story technique was well implemented. Supported with students' responses toward the questions and the result of retelling the story, I can say that the process and product criteria are achieved because from the field notes, it is found that students were actively did the speaking activities in the class (process). More than 75% of students achieved the learning outcomes and more than 75% students agreed the course was done successfully (product).

CONCLUSION

Teaching speaking for slow learners is somehow challenging. Mini-story technique, particularly, can be applied for this case. Some problems deal with speaking can be solved through this technique.

Based on the result of the study, it is recommended that the teachers who have same problem apply the technique for teaching slow learners. For the next researcher, downloading the real mini-story can be done to expose students with the native speakers so they get accustomed to listen to the authentic material.

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APPENDIX 1

Questionnaires to evaluate the course
Please respond to the following questions
by ticking the most appropriate answer.

QUESTIONS	1	2	3	4
I learn English phrases - not individual words				
I do not study grammar rules				
I learn with ears - not with your				
I learn deeply (repeatedly)				
Teacher uses real English materials,				
I listen-and-answer mini stories				

Notes:
1: Definitely agree
2: Agree with reservations
3: Disagree with reservations
4: Definitely disagree

APPENDIX 2
Mini-story Topics and Possible Questions

Mini-story Topic	Possible Questions
I get up at five every day, then take a bath, have breakfast and go to campus. I study English at campus and go home at one p.m.	When do I get up every day? What do I do after taking a bath? What do I do before going to campus? What do I do study at campus? What time do I go home? Do I have breakfast before going to campus? And so forth.
Susan is my friend. She lives in Malang. She is a teacher. She teaches English for Junior High School students. She goes to school by motorbike.	What is my friend's name? Where does she live? What is she? Where does she teach? How does she go to school? Does Susan live in Sidoarjo? Is she Math teacher? And so on.
About a year ago I went to Malang	When did I go to Malang?
with my students joining NUDC. There, we also visited Jatim Park and Batu Night Spectacular.	Where did I go last year? With whom did I go to Malang? What did we do at Malang? What did we visit in Malang? And so forth.
Three months ago I met my old friend. Her name is Eni. We talked about our family and work. We had lunch in a small cafe and promised to meet again someday.	What happened three months ago? Whom did I meet three months ago? What is my friend's name? What did we talk about? Where did we have lunch? Did I have promise to meet again some day? And so on.
My young brother who lives far away from me has a great plan. He will go for a wild adventure in a jungle this semester with his classmates. My mother worries like crazy but my brother will do what he wants.	Who has a great plan? Where does my young brother live? Where will he go? When will he go? With whom will he go? How is mother? Does my young brother think of my mother's feeling? Will he do his plan no matter happens? And so on.
Last year Susy failed to reach her plan to continue her study abroad. This year, she tries her own fortune by applying scholarship. She will be a student by the end of this year if her application is accepted. I am happy for her.	What happened to Susy last year? Where did she want to continue her study? Did she reach her plan last year? What does she try this year? What does she apply for? What happens to her if her application is accepted? Am I happy for her success? and so on.