

## TEACHING ENGLISH EMPHASIS FROM READING TO SPEAKING

Abdillah

### Abstrak

*Globalisasi membuat dunia semakin terasa kecil, hal ini disebabkan mudahnya akses masyarakat baik melalui media maupun transportasi yang menghubungkan antar masyarakat dunia. Penomena ini berimplikasi pada pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah yang sekarang ini menekankan pada reading menuju penekanan pada speaking. Perubahan ini untuk mengantisipasi intensnya komunikasi yang dilakukan pada masyarakat global. Oleh karena itu penyiapan peserta didik di sekolah untuk dapat berkomunikasi dengan baik dengan bahasa internasional menjadi sangat mendesak untuk dilakukan.*

**Kata kunci :** *teaching english, from reading to speaking*

### A. BACKGROUND

English as the main foreign language, some people said that english now become second language, taught from elementary/primary - event from play group in some schools - until university all over Indonesia is aimed at developing the students's ability in communication covering the abilities to listen, speak, read, and write in English proportionally in compliance with the need to face globalization era.

The aim is very comprehensive which implies that in the end at school study, the students will have good command of English both written and spoken according to the level of the schools. This is very difficult task for both teachers and students to accomplish for so many inherent factors that need attention not only from

teachers but also from other school authorities and government whose decision and support in form of ideas and fund are highly needed. Some of the factors are classroom size which nowadays averagely exceeds 40 students in one classroom, while the ideal size or number of students in one classroom or group is 20 students (H. Douglas Brown, 1994)<sup>1</sup>, very short time allocated for English subject as well as the weaknesses inherent with the English teachers themselves, such as their inability to present and explain the English teaching materials as communicatively as possible so that the students really understand what they say or explain and they become able to communicate in English as has been stated in the curriculum.

The aim of teaching English at every level as mentioned above sounds very interesting and challenging to carry out the program in order to reach the aim, but in practice it is not an easy job to be realized because the teachers are often faced with difficulties or handicaps, such as students have less attention given to English for so many subjects they have to study and master at the same time. In other words, such handicaps are not easy to be eliminated since each is important and needs full attention. That means the teachers' handicaps and failures in making the students able to communicate in English must be reduced to the minimum level. One of the possible solutions is to give big portion to the practice of speaking. When the students have obtained or mastered speaking skill, it will become much easier for them to manipulate the skills. Therefore, the students should be encouraged to be willing to put English into real practice or use through active speaking either in the classroom with the classmates and outside the classroom with the society although it will have some consequences in realization.

The result of present English teaching is very low, although this is still reading which gets big portion of attention and time in the classroom. Mohammad Ansyar (2002)<sup>2</sup> shows in his research report that the English teaching at school is not successfully reaching and accomplishing the target, that is the students cannot communicate in English in the end of the program, as follows: 60% test participants could not answer the questions on "interpreting or inferring meanings from contexts, deriving general description about the contexts of reading passage as well as finding out implied main alternatives available".

This failure may be caused by the factors already mentioned above. So it is urgently needed to find out alternative solution as proposed before that is by regulating the procedure of prioritizing the language skills to be focused. It will be much better if speaking ability is emphasized and that means speaking practice is enhanced so that when the students have finished school and cannot continue their study to

university because they are not strong in economy and have to work for life they will get good job rather easily. This speaking skill or ability will help them a bit in finding good job and of course they will not be treated unwell by their boss or employer. This speaking skill emphasis will demand more time and finance to make it run as expected.

## B. DISCUSSION

### 1. SPEAKING OVER READING

The whole of human history is built upon communication. From the first story told in prehistoric times through the mass media of today, verbal communication has built the foundation of who we are, where we came from, and what we hope to become. Throughout time, many orators, philosophers, and educators have tried to capture the essence of human communication

The functions of communication of spoken language are interactional and transactional. The primary intention of the former is to maintain social relationships, while that of the latter is to convey information and ideas. In fact, much of our daily communication remains interactional. Being able to interact in a language is essential. Therefore, language instructors should provide learners with opportunities for meaningful communicative behavior about relevant topics by using learner-learner interaction as the key to teaching language for communication because "communication derives essentially from interaction" (Rivers, 1987:xiii).<sup>3</sup>

Ackersold and Field (1997)<sup>4</sup> said that the goal of teaching speaking skills is communicative efficiency. Learners should be able to make themselves understood, using their current proficiency to the fullest. They should try to avoid confusion in the message due to faulty pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary, and to observe the social and cultural rules that apply in each communication situation.

Estimated, the unsatisfactory result obtained by the students in learning English may be also related to boring activities, such as reading and writing which are passive in nature. That means it will make them have less interaction with other students and that is not wanted by people of their age, teenagers, who are mostly active and dynamic to negotiate and argue with other people, especially of the same or similar interest and activities. Therefore, the change of stress from reading to speaking ability will strongly motivate them to achieve higher grade which is indicated by the ability to put English into practice, and it is well known

that oral communication will help the majority of learners, that is those who financially may not be strong to join outside (extra) English course to strengthen what they also have achieved.

I think the school policy makers should encourage the determination of speaking ability to be of paramount skill to be had in order to make them be able to cope with the development and improvement of life. Speaking is of nice activity which enable them to actively express their needs and wants not only to people whom they have already known but also to foreigners they meet during they have morning jogging, and such activity is felt very essential and useful because the advantage of speaking ability can instantly be enjoyed, but that is not found in reading because it is only self-enjoyed.

## 2. SPEAKING FOR LANGUAGE LEARNER

Many language learners regard speaking ability as the measure of knowing a language. These learners define fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than the ability to read, write, or comprehend oral language. They regard speaking as the most important skill they can acquire, and they assess their progress in terms of their accomplishments in spoken communication.<sup>3</sup>

As mentioned above that speaking mastery has direct effect on the students because they can instantly use it to express their feeling, ideas, and so on to their interlocutors. That means that the result of learning is directly felt and enjoyed that is they can communicate in English orally. However, teaching and learning-speaking effectively demands smaller size class, that is the member of students for each class or group should not be more than 14 students. This small member students in one classroom or group practically will enable them to have frequent opportunity to interact each other and with the teacher. This smaller size group formation will automatically result in more groups to appear and in consequence there have additional hours needed as well as more funds to be prepared and more teachers to be recruited. The question now is who will be responsible to finance this activity. Of course it is the responsibility of government, especially regional government which is hoped to allocate more funds to support the program. If not, this bright interesting idea will mean nothing when there is no concrete action to be taken by Bupati (regent).

It is understood that regional government in autonomy is independent to manage almost all the activities they plan, covering all kinds of businesses and services. Thus, autonomy means not only designing and carrying out the activities

but also has responsibilities to search for enough funds to finance the program and its activities. Determination of recruitment of teachers and other supplement personals are under the control of regional government. The regional government deserves right to select and recruit qualified and talented teachers as needed. In autonomy era, every regional government has authority to make its region in all aspects of life develop and improve to become better including in education, particularly in mastering English.

### 3. TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS FOR SPEAKING

Teaching speaking skill for Indonesian students students is not an easy task. This is caused by several factors such as environment, students' attitude and motivation towards the language. Kang Shumin (1997:8)<sup>6</sup> said that there is a possible way of stimulating learners to talk might be to provide them with extensive exposure to authentic language through audio-visual stimuli and with opportunities to use the language. Likewise, teachers should integrate strategy instruction into interactive activities, providing a wealth of information about communicative strategies to raise learners' awareness about their own learning styles so that learners can tailor their strategies to the requirements of learning tasks

Discussion here is only restricted to teaching speaking skills as an emphasis in teaching and learning process. The ability to speak fluently, as said by Harmer (2001) presupposes not only a knowledge of language features but also the ability to process information and language at any situation. This implies that other skills, such as listening, reading, and writing, must not be neglected because they have, however, great contribution to speaking ability.

Communication in the classroom is embedded in meaning-focused activity. This requires teachers to tailor their instruction carefully to the needs of learners and teach them how to listen to others, how to talk with others, and how to negotiate meaning in a shared context. Out of interaction, learners will learn how to communicate verbally and nonverbally as their language store and language skills develop. Consequently, the give-and-take exchanges of messages will enable them to create discourse that conveys their intentions in real-life communication.

The four skills, in fact cannot be separated sharply for they are interdependent each other. When one speaks he may not escape from listening to his interlocutor. Howatt and Dakin (1974)<sup>7</sup> said that listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and his vocabulary, and grasping his meaning. An able

listener is capable of doing these four things simultaneously, and what he wants to express in speaking is originally derived from reading, and reading itself is the result of writing. Therefore, the four skills synergically work together to make one become competent in using the language. What I suggest here is we give more time for speaking practice.

Language learners need to recognize that speaking involves three areas of knowledge:

- Mechanics (pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary): Using the right words in the right order with the correct pronunciation
- Functions (transaction and interaction): Knowing when clarity of message is essential (transaction/information exchange) and when precise understanding is not required (interaction/relationship building)
- Social and cultural rules and norms (turn-taking, rate of speech, length of pauses between speakers, relative roles of participants): Understanding how to take into account who is speaking to whom, in what circumstances, about what, and for what reason.<sup>8</sup>

In the communicative model of language teaching, instructors help our students develop this body of knowledge by providing authentic practice that prepares students for real-life communication situations. We help our students develop the ability to produce grammatically correct, logically connected sentences that are appropriate to specific contexts, and to do so using acceptable (that is, comprehensible) pronunciation.

#### 4. STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS

Students often think that the ability to speak a language is the product of language learning, but speaking is also a crucial part of the language learning process. Effective instructors teach students speaking strategies, using minimal responses, recognizing scripts, and using language to talk about language, that they can use to help themselves expand their knowledge of the language and their confidence in using it. These instructors help students learn to speak so that the students can use speaking to learn.

##### a. Using minimal responses

Language learners who lack confidence in their ability to participate successfully in oral interaction often listen in silence while others do the talking. One way to encourage such learners to begin to participate is to help them build up a

stock of minimal responses that they can use in different types of exchanges. Such responses can be especially useful for beginners.

Minimal responses are predictable, often idiomatic phrases that conversation participants use to indicate understanding, agreement, doubt, and other responses to what another speaker is saying. Having a stock of such responses enables a learner to focus on what the other participant is saying, without having to simultaneously plan a response.

### **b. Recognizing scripts**

Some communication situations are associated with a predictable set of spoken exchanges — a script. Greetings, apologies, compliments, invitations, and other functions that are influenced by social and cultural norms often follow patterns or scripts. So do the transactional exchanges involved in activities such as obtaining information and making a purchase. In these scripts, the relationship between a speaker's turn and the one that follows it can often be anticipated.

Instructors can help students develop speaking ability by making them aware of the scripts for different situations so that they can predict what they will hear and what they will need to say in response. Through interactive activities, instructors can give students practice in managing and varying the language that different scripts contain.

### **c. Using language to talk about language**

Language learners are often too embarrassed or shy to say anything when they do not understand another speaker or when they realize that a conversation partner has not understood them. Instructors can help students overcome this reticence by assuring them that misunderstanding and the need for clarification can occur in any type of interaction, whatever the participants' language skill levels. Instructors can also give students strategies and phrases to use for clarification and comprehension check.

By encouraging students to use clarification phrases in class when misunderstanding occurs, and by responding positively when they do, instructors can create an authentic practice environment within the classroom itself. As they develop control of various clarification strategies, students will gain confidence in their ability to manage the various communication situations that they may encounter outside the classroom.

## 5. DEVELOPING SPEAKING ACTIVITIES

In designing activities, teachers should consider all the skills conjointly as they interact with each other in natural behavior, for in real life as in the classroom, most tasks of any complexity involve more than one macro skill (David Nunan 1989)<sup>9</sup>. Effective interactive activities should be manipulative, meaningful, and communicative, involving learners in using English for a variety of communicative purposes. Specifically, they should (1) be based on authentic or naturalistic source materials; (2) enable learners to manipulate and practice specific features of language; (3) allow learners to rehearse, in class, communicative skills they need in the real world; and (4) activate psycholinguistic processes of learning.

Traditional classroom speaking practice often takes the form of drills in which one person asks a question and another gives an answer. The question and the answer are structured and predictable, and often there is only one correct, predetermined answer. The purpose of asking and answering the question is to demonstrate the ability to ask and answer the question.

In contrast, the purpose of real communication is to accomplish a task, such as conveying a telephone message, obtaining information, or expressing an opinion. In real communication, participants must manage uncertainty about what the other person will say. Authentic communication involves an information gap; each participant has information that the other does not have. In addition, to achieve their purpose, participants may have to clarify their meaning or ask for confirmation of their own understanding.

To create classroom speaking activities that will develop communicative competence, instructors need to incorporate a purpose and an information gap and allow for multiple forms of expression. However, quantity alone will not necessarily produce competent speakers. Instructors need to combine structured output activities, which allow for error correction and increased accuracy, with communicative output activities that give students opportunities to practice language use more freely.

## 6. STRUCTURED OUTPUT ACTIVITIES

Two common kinds of structured output activities are *information gap* and *jigsaw* activities. In both these types of activities, students complete a task by obtaining missing information, a feature the activities have in common with real communication. However, information gap and jigsaw activities also set up



practice on specific items of language. In this respect they are more like drills than like communication.<sup>10</sup>

#### *a. Information Gap Activities*

Filling the gaps in a schedule or timetable: Partner A holds an airline timetable with some of the arrival and departure times missing. Partner B has the same timetable but with different blank spaces. The two partners are not permitted to see each other's timetables and must fill in the blanks by asking each other appropriate questions. The features of language that are practiced would include questions beginning with "when" or "at what time." Answers would be limited mostly to time expressions like "at 8:15" or "at ten in the evening."

Completing the picture: The two partners have similar pictures, each with different missing details, and they cooperate to find all the missing details. In another variation, no items are missing, but similar items differ in appearance. For example, in one picture, a man walking along the street may be wearing an overcoat, while in the other the man is wearing a jacket. The features of grammar and vocabulary that are practiced are determined by the content of the pictures and the items that are missing or different. Differences in the activities depicted lead to practice of different verbs. Differences in number, size, and shape lead to adjective practice. Differing locations would probably be described with prepositional phrases.

These activities may be set up so that the partners must practice more than just grammatical and lexical features. For example, the timetable activity gains a social dimension when one partner assumes the role of a student trying to make an appointment with a partner who takes the role of a professor. Each partner has pages from an appointment book in which certain dates and times are already filled in and other times are still available for an appointment. Of course, the open times don't match exactly, so there must be some polite negotiation to arrive at a mutually convenient time for a meeting or a conference.

#### *b. Jigsaw Activities*

Jigsaw activities are more elaborate information gap activities that can be done with several partners. In a jigsaw activity, each partner has one or a few pieces of the "puzzle," and the partners must cooperate to fit all the pieces into a whole picture. The puzzle piece may take one of several forms. It may be one panel from a comic strip or one photo from a set that tells a story. It may be one sentence from a written narrative. It may be a tape recording of a conversation, in which case no two partners hear exactly the same conversation.<sup>11</sup>

In one fairly simple jigsaw activity, students work in groups of four. Each student in the group receives one panel from a comic strip. Partners may not show each other their panels. Together the four panels present this narrative: a man takes a container of ice cream from the freezer; he serves himself several scoops of ice cream; he sits in front of the TV eating his ice cream; he returns with the empty bowl to the kitchen and finds that he left the container of ice cream, now melting, on the kitchen counter. These pictures have a clear narrative line and the partners are not likely to disagree about the appropriate sequencing. We can make the task more demanding, however, by using pictures that lend themselves to alternative sequences, so that the partners have to negotiate among themselves to agree on a satisfactory sequence.

More elaborate jigsaws may proceed in two stages. Students first work in input groups (groups A, B, C, and D) to receive information. Each group receives a different part of the total information for the task. Students then reorganize into groups of four with one student each from A, B, C, and D, and use the information they received to complete the task. Such an organization could be used, for example, when the input is given in the form of a tape recording. Groups A, B, C, and D each hear a different recording of a short news bulletin. The four recordings all contain the same general information, but each has one or more details that the others do not. In the second stage, students reconstruct the complete story by comparing the four versions.

With information gap and jigsaw activities, instructors need to be conscious of the language demands they place on their students. If an activity calls for language our students have not already practiced, we can brainstorm with them when setting up the activity to preview the language they will need, eliciting what they already know and supplementing what they are able to produce themselves.

*Structured output activities can form an effective bridge between instructor modeling and communicative output because they are partly authentic and partly artificial. Like authentic communication, they feature information gaps that must be bridged for successful completion of the task. However, where authentic communication allows speakers to use all of the language they know, structured output activities lead students to practice specific features of language and to practice only in brief sentences, not in extended discourse. Also, structured output situations are contrived and more like games than real communication, and the participants' social roles are irrelevant to the performance of the activity. This structure controls the number of variables that students must deal with when they*

are first exposed to new material. As they become comfortable, they can move on to true communicative output activities.

### c. Communicative Output Activities

Communicative output activities allow students to practice using all of the language they know in situations that resemble real settings. In these activities, students must work together to develop a plan, resolve a problem, or complete a task. The most common types of communicative output activity are *role plays* and *discussions*.

In role plays, students are assigned roles and put into situations that they may eventually encounter outside the classroom. Because role plays imitate life, the range of language functions that may be used expands considerably. Also, the role relationships among the students as they play their parts call for them to practice and develop their sociolinguistic competence. They have to use language that is appropriate to the situation and to the characters.

Students usually find role playing enjoyable, but students who lack self-confidence or have lower proficiency levels may find them intimidating at first. To succeed with role plays:

- Prepare carefully: Introduce the activity by describing the situation and making sure that all of the students understand it
- Set a goal or outcome: Be sure the students understand what the product of the role play should be, whether a plan, a schedule, a group opinion, or some other product
- Use role cards: Give each student a card that describes the person or role to be played. For lower-level students, the cards can include words or expressions that that person might use.
- Brainstorm: Before we start the role play, have students brainstorm as a class to predict what vocabulary, grammar, and idiomatic expressions they might use.
- Keep groups small: Less-confident students will feel more able to participate if they do not have to compete with many voices.
- Give students time to prepare: Let them work individually to outline their ideas and the language they will need to express them.
- Be present as a resource, not a monitor: Stay in communicative mode to answer students' questions. Do not correct their pronunciation or grammar unless they specifically ask us about it.
- Allow students to work at their own levels: Each student has individual language skills, an individual approach to working in groups, and a specific role to play in the activity. Do not expect all students to contribute equally

to the discussion, or to use every grammar point we have taught.

- Do topical follow-up: Have students report to the class on the outcome of their role plays.
- Do linguistic follow-up: After the role play is over, give feedback on grammar or pronunciation problems we have heard. This can wait until another class period when we plan to review pronunciation or grammar anyway.

Discussions, like role plays, succeed when the instructor prepares students first, and then gets out of the way. To succeed with discussions:

- Prepare the students: Give them input (both topical information and language forms) so that they will have something to say and the language with which to say it.
  - Offer choices: Let students suggest the topic for discussion or choose from several options. Discussion does not always have to be about serious issues. Students are likely to be more motivated to participate if the topic is television programs, plans for a vacation, or news about mutual friends. Weighty topics like how to combat pollution are not as engaging and place heavy demands on students' linguistic competence.
  - Set a goal or outcome: This can be a group product, such as a letter to the editor, or individual reports on the views of others in the group.
  - Use small groups instead of whole-class discussion: Large groups can make participation difficult.
  - Keep it short: Give students a defined period of time, not more than 8-10 minutes, for discussion. Allow them to stop sooner if they run out of things to say.
  - Allow students to participate in their own way: Not every student will feel comfortable talking about every topic. Do not expect all of them to contribute equally to the conversation.
  - Do topical follow-up: Have students report to the class on the results of their discussion.
  - Do linguistic follow-up: After the discussion is over, give feedback on grammar or pronunciation problems we have heard. This can wait until another class period when we plan to review pronunciation or grammar anyway.
- Through well-prepared communicative output activities such as role plays and discussions, we can encourage our students to experiment and innovate with the language, and create a supportive atmosphere that allows them to make mistakes without fear of embarrassment. This will contribute to their self-confidence as speakers and to their motivation to learn more.

## C. CLOSING

Speaking a language is not difficult not only for second language learner but also for foreign language learners. It is depend on how the teachers and student manage the activities in the classroom and out side class in forming conducive environment. Effective oral communication requires the ability to use the language appropriately in social interactions. However, due to minimal exposure to the target language and contact with native speakers and also because of classroom size, Students in general are relatively poor at spoken English, especially regarding fluency, control of idiomatic expressions, and understanding of cultural pragmatics. Few can achieve native-like proficiency in oral communication. Therefore teacher of English at schools should spend more time in speaking activities with variation method and authentic material.

### Catatan:

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