Investigating the Teacher's Strategies in EFL Speaking Class

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the strategies used by the English teacher of SMP Methodist, Banda Aceh in teaching speaking class. It also tried to find out the teacher’s reasons why she used those strategies in teaching speaking class. A descriptively qualitative study was undertaken by observing the teaching and learning process in the classroom and interviewing the teacher in order to attain the needed data in this study. The results of the study showed that there were some strategies in communicative approach that the teacher used in teaching speaking class namely role-plays, discussion, storytelling, games. Meanwhile, to make the students speak up in the classroom was the main reason why the teacher more often used those strategies in speaking class. In conclusion, the strategies that have been used by the teacher could help the students speak up and be more active in learning English in the classroom, because all of the students were involved in the speaking activities.

Key Words: Teaching Speaking Strategies, Speaking skill, Communicative Approach

1. INTRODUCTION

In the world of education, there are many things that can support the teaching and learning process either at schools or at colleges. Some of them are the teachers, media, materials, activities, strategies in teaching etc. Hence, the teachers are the ones who really have an important role in this part, this is because teachers have the opportunity to change and influence their students through their position, and therefore their students might follow them. One of the most interesting aspects of being a teacher is, she/he has to be able to choose what things she/he really needs for his/her job as a teacher, for example choosing the appropriate strategies in teaching.

What teachers really want are useful ideas, suggestions, explanations and examples of teaching strategies that have been supported by leaders and have succeeded in the field of modern language teaching. They want strategies that are relevant to real-life circumstances in which most teachers work and can make their students successful in learning English.

Besides teachers having full control in the classroom, there is another aspect that can really influence the process of teaching and learning such as the methods, strategies, techniques and activities. According to Jarvis (2010) a professional teacher
should be able to efficiently use many different teaching strategies in order to reach the teaching goals.

Based on the preliminary study that the researcher conducted on January 10, 2017 at the Junior High School (SMP) Methodist Banda Aceh, where she interviewed one of two English teachers at SMP Methodist Banda Aceh. The teacher said that the students’ performance in English subject was good. The students’ average score was 85 (above the minimum criteria). They also often win many English competitions such as debates, storytelling, scrabbles, etc which are held by various educational institutions.

To strengthen the teacher’s opinion, the researcher gave a speaking test on February 18, 2017 for five out of 20 students of IX class. The result revealed that the students’ speaking ability was good. Looking into the facts, the researcher assumed that the English teacher at SMP Methodist uses some strategies in teaching speaking that make her students’ speaking ability good.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 The Definition of Speaking

Speaking is a crucial part in the foreign/second language teaching-learning and it is very important to be mastered by every foreign learner. The success of the language learning is mostly evaluated through students’ spoken English proficiency. According to Chaney and Tamara (1998, p.13), “Speaking is the process of building and sharing meanings through the use of verbal or non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts.” It means that the speaker can produce the sounds to deliver the messages and the listener can receive, process, and respond to the messages. Speaking is the action of delivering messages and it always occurs between the speaker and the listener. In other words, the main point of the action of speaking is that the speakers can communicate or convey their messages to the listeners. In this case, the speaker and the listener should be able to understand the language used in order to avoid misunderstandings in conversation.

2.2 The Aspects of Speaking Skill

According to Richard et al (2002) there are two factors that can determine the successful learners in learning languages namely accuracy and fluency. They are the major criteria to measure both linguistic ability and speaking/communicative competence in using the language.

2.3 The Definition of Teaching Strategy

According to Stone and Morris (1972 cited in Isaac 2010) teaching strategy is a generalized plan for a lesson which includes structure, instructional objectives and an outline of planned tactics, necessary to implement the strategies. Isaac (2010) also explains that teaching strategies are the behavior of the teacher which he/she manifests in the class i.e., the developments of the teaching strategies, giving proper stimulus for timely responses, drilling the learnt responses, increasing the responses by extra activities. Choosing the procedures for training in relation to the trained subject is the teaching strategy. It is well known that the teaching strategy is the key tool in the instructional design (Reiser & Dempsey, 2011).

The teaching strategy results in an approach to teaching and learning, combining and optimal organizing of the methods, mean and form of grouping of
the participants (Cerghit, 2006). These elements are integrated into the operational structures and are based on a systemic vision to ensure an active and creative learning of knowledge and to rationalize the training process. Adopting a strategy means adopting a guideline for action, and associating it in a certain global way of organizational teaching and learning conditions.

2.4 Types of Teaching Strategies

According to Wehrli (2003) there are some kinds of teaching strategies that can be applied in the language teaching process.

2.4.1 Brainstorming

According to Al-khatib (2012), “Brainstorming is a group creativity forum for general ideas.” He also purposes some importances of brainstorming for the students namely helping students to solve problems, helping students to benefit from the ideas of others through the development and build on them and helping the cohesion of the students and building relationships among them and assess the views of others.

2.4.2 Case-based Small-group Discussion

In this teaching strategy, small groups of 5-10 students address case-based tasks, exchange points of view while working through a problem-solving process. In this teaching strategy process, the group focuses on creative problem solving, with some advance preparation.

2.4.3 Demonstration

Demonstration is an activity that asks learners to give their thoughts in front of their friends so that learners can observe how it is done in order to help learners to transfer theory to practical application. Moreover, demonstration strategy involves the teacher showing learners how to do something (Adekoya & Olatoye, 2011). There are several advantages of demonstration those are helping learners who learn well by modelling others, promoting the learners’ self-confidence.

2.4.4 Games

Games are used to bring competitions, participations, drills, and feedbacks into the learning experience as a motivator and opportunity for application of principles. Game can encourage the learners to be involved in the activities, add motivation, promote team learning and collaborative skills and create a fun learning environment.

3. METHODS

According to Seliger and Shohamy (1989), qualitative research deals with human behavior in certain context where behavior is naturally done by the subject without the researcher's interference. Therefore, the researcher wanted to find out the strategies which were used by the teacher during teaching speaking in the classroom and the reasons why the teacher used those strategies in teaching speaking.

Pertaining to the method that the researcher used to obtain the data in this study, observation and interview were employed as the research method. Regarding to the research method in this study, according to Burns (1990 cited in
Basrowi & Suwandi 2008, p. 93) by observing, the researcher can document and reflect systematically on the activities and interactions of research subject. It means observation is a suitable method for looking at the teachers’ strategies in the classroom. Another method that was also used in this study to collect the data was interview. Pertaining to this, Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) stated that interview is a meaningful communication in which one side is trying to attain information from another. This means that the interview can be used to obtain the data from the subject of this study.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

As stated on research method section, one of methods used to collect the data in order to answer the first research question of this study is by means observation. To support the data from the result of observation, the researcher interviewed the teacher. Furthermore, the explanation of the results of the research will be deeply explained in the following section.

4.1.1 The Result and Discussion of the Observation

4.1.1.1 Observation Day 1

Based on the result of findings from the observation 1 that the researcher conducted on October 26, 2017 in the VIII-b class, there were some strategies that the teacher used while teaching speaking in the classroom, namely discussion, games, and roleplay.

4.1.1.2 Observation Day 2

The second meeting, was conducted on November 16, 2017. The researcher found discussion and games as the teacher’s strategies in teaching speaking in the classroom.

4.1.1.3 Observation Day 3

For the last meeting, it was conducted on November 21, 2017. There were discussion and storytelling that the teacher applied in teaching speaking in the classroom.

4.1.2 The Result of Interview

Question for discussion
Interviewer : Why did you use discussion in your speaking class? Why is it appropriate to your topic? And what do you expect from your students through this strategy?
Teacher : I used discussion because students are expected to be able to use English in any field, including when they enter a university or in their job. Therefore, when they must have a discussion, in English, they will already be used to speaking in English.

Question for games
Interviewer : Why did you use games in your speaking class? Why is it appropriate to your topic? And what do you expect from your students through this strategy?
Teacher : I used games in order to avoid the students becoming bored in class. I like playing games while teaching, but it is always connected to the topic that
we are studying. So the students feel like they are having fun, but actually they are learning something at the same time.

Question for storytelling

Interviewer: Why did you use storytelling in your speaking class? Why is it appropriate to your topic? And what do you expect from your students through this strategy?

Teacher: I use storytelling for teaching narrative text or other texts. I use this strategy in order to make students more active in understanding the topic, such as when they re-tell the story they have just read.

Question for roleplay

Interviewer: Why did you use roleplay in your speaking class? Why is it appropriate to your topic? And what do you expect from your students through this strategy?

Teacher: I used this strategy in order to make students able to use English in daily conversation, in any situations they may have. Because they get to play other roles in real life situations through this strategy.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Regarding the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there were seven kinds of strategies related to the communicative approach that the teacher used during teaching speaking class i.e. discussion, games, storytelling and roleplay. The most frequent kinds of strategies used by the teacher were group discussion and games. Moreover, the main reason why the teacher applied those strategies during teaching speaking class was to make students become more proficient in speaking English.

Based on the research findings of this study, the researcher would like to put forward some suggestions that can be useful for either English teachers or future researchers.

REFERENCES


