TEYL: Fun Speaking with Foreign Teachers

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ABSTRACT

In regard to the current innovation on multi-dimensional learning systems in industrial era 4.0, teachers and educators worldwide strive for students to have a strong foundation in mastering English, one of which is speaking skills. Teachers help students build self-confidence and provide innovative technology that enables them to practice and focus on their own unique needs outside the classroom. There are alternatives to bring these goals into reality: first is to create a positive, fun learning environment both at school and at home. Second, to provide new experiences for students to directly interact with foreigners who teach and use English as their first language. This research investigates students' speaking skills in the lower-class group of elementary school (28 second graders, aged seven to eight years old). The study also thoroughly explored how foreign teachers' fun activities during classroom hours can affect students' speaking. In order to find answers to the research problems, simple conversation to test the speaking ability was conducted. After the test, the teacher helped students fill out a questionnaire to know their perception of learning with foreign teachers and their opinion on doing interactive games and outdoor activities during classroom-hour. The speaking ability of the second graders in SD Negeri Jember Lor 3 is sufficient, and they can pronounce some vocabularies correctly and conduct simple conversations with foreigners. The adequate mastery of the conversation may be following the pattern of various determinants, especially factors concerning the help from foreign teachers who model pronunciation, sentence stress, grammar, intonation, and vocabulary in a valid and veritable accent.

Introduction

Modern, up-to-date parents want their children to start learning things that will benefit their future, early as it could be; learning English in their early childhood, for instance. However, children generally prefer playing to studying (Foundation, 2018). It does not mean children cannot be interested in studying. The material and teaching system applied to the lower-class group will be adjusted to the child's age, so parents will not need to worry that their children will find it difficult to learn (Foundation, 2018; Moore & Piaget, 1971).

Learning a new language can become a source of stress for immigrant youth when coping with their new society (James, 1997), as they have to adapt to a new culture and adjust to a new

community. Later in 2013, Igoa, in his book about the journey of a teacher who was involved in the life of youth immigrants, stated that children could easily adjust to a new language (Igoa, 2013). Both were done in a community where children have to interact with many people from different cultures. The results from these two studies are contradictory: one said that children could adapt well to learning a new language, and the other said that learning a new language is stressful. In this study, the researcher wants to fill this gap and see how young learners react to the role of a foreign teacher in helping them learn a new language.

English is officially taught at school as the first foreign language in Indonesia (Lauder, 2008; Rini, 2014). English is a compulsory subject learned at an early level of education (Nikolov & Moon, 2000; Shin & Crandall, 2013). In the teaching and learning process during classroom hours, the lower-class groups of children in grades 1, 2, and 3 are usually influenced by moods and feelings (Qu & Ong, 2016). Although children need to acquire English inside the classroom and in a real-world learning experience, e.g., in Jember, it is rarely used in society except in a formal institution like school (Harmer, 2007).

For that reason, we would like to develop a program to accommodate new experiences for the second graders and provide them opportunities to interact with foreigners from various English-speaking countries around the world. This hopefully has benefits for improving one's language skills (Wang, 2011; Werdiningsih, 2019). In addition, it is hoped that learners will also be more creative because they are given the freedom to express themselves. The problems in this study are formulated as follows: (1) Can foreign teachers help young learners speak better English? (2) How is the speaking ability of the students? and (3) Why are fun activities able to draw students' attention?

The researcher would like to reveal how foreign teachers can help improve students' speaking, investigate why students are attracted to fun activities, and measure the speaking ability of the second graders. This research covers materials taught in simple conversations for lower-class groups, including self-introduction, introducing a friend, greeting, parting, and talking about family members.

1. Foreign Teacher's Role in Teaching Speaking for Lower Class Students

English-learning activities done at an early age will produce different results from those undergone in adulthood (Moore & Piaget, 1971; Phillips, 1993). We may picture early learning as writing on a rock, while adulthood learning as writing on water. In this post-modern era of technology, teaching English to young learners has become common worldwide. It is significant to deepen our perception of Teaching English to Young Learners in diverse situations where English is taught (Rich & Pinter, 2016).

Given research done by Lightbown & Spada (2013) and Rose et al. (1995), new languages are learned after acquiring our first language: "We intuitively learn to communicate with others by forming an understanding of the words and rules of our mother tongue, which later provides the template for our understanding of other languages. After acquiring our first language, we learn all new languages related to what we first learned." This also applies to learning English. Young learners who administer English are believed to be more skillful, which leads to an easier way for them to have an amusing school period (Cameron, 2001), apparently for the reason that English skills are considered beneficial even in elementary school. Numerous English-based institutions hold an English contest, and the students who join and win the contest will have more value in the eyes of the school boards and their teachers (Moore & Piaget, 1971).

Foreign teachers help widely open the gate of knowledge (Werdiningsih, 2019). English is commonly used as the instructional language in online and offline books and references. Armed with mastery of English, the gate of information will be widely accessible, and they can get the latest, most modern, up-to-date information on scientific development (Aizat & Assem, 2016). If the young learners want to pursue a higher-level education abroad, mastering English skills earlier would be beneficial (Moon, 2005; Nikolov & Moon, 2000).

Boers et al. (in Frank et al., 2006) mentioned in their study regarding activities that can be introduced to lower-level learners to develop their confidence: "Teachers can facilitate this learning process by devising classroom activities that give learners a chance to use what they have memorized whilst attempting to improve their pausing patterns". Controlled activities may be introduced to lower-level learners to increase learners' confidence while practicing faster speech. For example, some words, phrases, and formulaic sequences in a given text may be selected for a repetition drill to train learners' pronunciation at the word- or phrase-level. Learners will seem more fluent by improving pronunciation and imitating pausing and chunking. Furthermore, it does not take a long period to improve learners' fluency significantly." In accordance with this study, Huang and Gráf (2018) agreed that fluency, self-confidence, and pronunciation could undoubtedly be acquired better when students learn under the supervision of a foreign teacher.

Native English speakers have many things and benefits that local teachers probably do not acquire (Medgyes, 1992, 1994). Despite their ability to understand their students' culture and needs, local teachers cannot pronounce English words ideally as native teachers do. Wardak (2014) added the use of the grammaticality and idiomatic English language accent (this is the one we cannot have from non-native teachers), teaching ability, and teachers' competence in dealing with EFL learners' spontaneous responses during learning activities as the advantages of having native teachers in the classroom.

Native speakers also have superiority in English skills, performance, and English personality

(Ansarin & Morady Moghaddam, 2016). Local teachers usually have better grammar skills than native speakers, but they cannot speak English naturally, while it is one of the crucial things during the process of acquiring it (Braine, 2012; Medgyes, 1994). Some students may even speak fluently; however, the sentences they compose often sound awkward. Many foreign language learners tend to create sentences based on their L2 patterns, which are not always the same as English language patterns.

2. Fun Activities during Classroom-Hours

Some children who learn something from an early age will eventually feel bored. It happens to children who do not want to come to their course, trying to find an excuse, so they do not need to attend. To overcome this, parents can discuss with their children what they want. A child's instinct is to play, so one of the solutions offered is learning by playing and doing other fun activities in the classroom (Foundation, 2018). Students want to engage more in the learning process when the teacher involves activities that create a fun learning environment. Fun activities during learning also enable students to remember English material better (Baid & Lambert, 2010; Deller, 1990). Here are some games that can be used as a reference.

a. Simon Says

Simon Says is an interesting game for young learners (Akin, 2001). During the practice, all students gather and stand up to make a big circle, and the foreign teacher stands in the middle. The teacher is in charge of giving commands by saying examples of sentences such as "*Simon says* close the right eye" or "*Simon says* lift the left leg". If the teacher does not say the word "*Simon says* ......" at the beginning of the sentence, the students must not obey the command because it is not Simon who says it. If the students follow the order, they will receive a penalty. The penalty is to replace the teacher's position in giving orders.

In playing, *Simon says*, children must focus and listen to instructions. They then applicate and implement the instructions correctly (Akin, 2001). More than 500 preschoolers between 3 to 6 years old from America and South East Asia who participated in playing similar games like *Simon says* got higher academic results. This is proven by some studies that *Simon says* and other games improving students' focus can surely develop their self-regulation (Hislop, 1998; Puspita et al., 2018).

b. The Mime

The Mime game can be used as an ice-breaking in a boring classroom. Classrooms will become much more fun, alive, and interactive (Werdiningsih, 2020a, 2020b). This game is suitable for elementary school children. The content displayed is speaking and vocabulary. This is stated by

Ross Mia Nabila & Saun that when young learners enjoy what they learn, they will remember the lesson easier because they feel comfortable and happy (Ross Mia Nabila & Saun, 2016)

Before the speaking class begins, do some preparation. First, write down some animal names on paper: elephants, lions, giraffes, birds, etc. Then, divide students into two teams and choose which one will play first. Ask the team representative to choose a paper. Each team has a representative to demonstrate the words on paper; for example, selected students can mimic the elephant's voice so that their friends can guess the word correctly. Every time a team member can guess the word, the team will get points.

Playing The Mime will make students happy, especially when they can guess the word correctly. This will trigger their curiosity. When students guess words, this can sharpen their brains and think harder to find answers and ultimately develop intelligence and confidence, especially in speaking (Werdiningsih, 2020b).

Method

This is considered case study research which tends to discover a phenomenon occurring in a specific unit or group (Punch, 2004). The rarity associated with this study includes the following problems: (1) How foreign teachers can help improve students' speaking, (2) The reasons students are attracted to fun activities, and (3) The speaking ability of the second graders.

The researcher employed a method that combined quantitative and qualitative research. To answer the question, "How is the speaking ability of the students?" a quantitative research method was used, with a test as the instrument. Meanwhile, the researcher used a questionnaire as an instrument to answer the question "How is a foreign teacher able to help improve students' speaking?" and "Why are students attracted to doing fun activities?". These were some steps taken in this study: first, the researcher determined the research subject and then conducted the research together with foreign speakers in the selected school. After doing so, the researcher conducted tests to measure students' English-speaking ability, calculated the score and analyzed the results, distributed questionnaires to the research subjects, and analyzed the result of the questionnaires. The last is concluded the results of the study.

During the test, 28 second graders aged seven to eight years old must conduct conversations with the foreign teacher based on the situation given. The time to carry out the test was 5-10 minutes. The researcher used the questionnaire to find out the research subjects' perception and their point of view on what foreign teachers can do to help them develop their English-speaking skills. After collecting the data, the speaking test was analyzed using the speaking rubric and the questionnaire through data reduction, data display, then drawing and verifying the conclusion. This research not only reports students' speaking skills but also explains factors that underlie foreign teachers' role in helping students in lower-class groups develop their English speaking.

Results and Discussion

1. Speaking Skill

The data acquired from the speaking test on daily conversations conducted with the foreigner confirms that most students in class 2 C have adequate speaking skills. They can communicate well during the conversation and answer some questions correctly and are also able to mention and tell the teacher about their family members.

Table 1. The Score Category for Speaking

Score Categories	Interpretations	Frequencies	Percentage	Notes
80 to 100	Excellent	7	25%	Pass
70 to 79	Good	18	64.3%	Pass
60 to 69	Fair	3	10.7%	Fail
40 to 59	Poor			Fail
0 to 39	Failed			Fail

From table 1, we can see that 18 out of the 28 students (64.3%) who did the speaking test achieved the score category of 70-79, which can be interpreted as good; seven students (25%) achieved the score category of 80-100 or interpreted as excellent. Three students (10.7%) interpreted it as fair and failed the test because their score category was less than 70. This means that the English conversation mastery of class 2 C students was categorized as good, most probably caused by their love and interest in English lessons. Most of the students (64.3% of 28 students) could proceed with the test well; however, only 25% can be interpreted excellently. Students who talk about familiar topics usually have the image of the situation in their brain, which makes it easier to recall the vocabulary needed and catch up with the conversation (Becker & Roos, 2016; Buckingham & Alpaslan, 2017; Klancar, 2006; Shin, 2006). When students have higher self-confidence (Goto Butler & Lee, 2010), better literacy (Farver et al., 2009), and morphological awareness (Lam et al., 2012) seems to have better English achievement. These children in SDN Jember Lor 3 are quite happy during classroom hours and actively involved in the classroom activities, which led to high achievement in Speaking scores. Elyildirim and Ashton-Hay (2006) believe that teachers who create a positive learning environment for their students and build positive attitudes toward English as a foreign language will better understand the language. Their study is supported by the result of research conducted by Hopwood et al. (2017), which indicated that students should have good literacy skills and teachers must have well-acknowledged pedagogical content knowledge to create a supportive learning environment, a comfortable and

fun classroom for students. However, some students in SDN Jember Lor 3 (three out of 28) could not catch up to what the teacher was instructing them, young learners, who are low in language, science, and mathematics. There are some possible causes of this matter; one of which is due to students' (and teachers') bad grammar and pronunciation (Arifin, 2018), anxiety, and negative attitudes toward the class (Liu & Chen, 2013; Yim, 2014), and not having a good command of the language (Psaltou-Joycey & Kantaridou, 2009).

2. Students' Experiences in Learning Speaking with Foreign Teacher

Derived from the results acquired on the distribution of the questionnaire to 28 students of class 2 C aged seven to eight years old, one of the items requested information on the help of foreigners in developing their speaking skills: "Did the foreign teacher help you to speak English?" and "How?" From these questions, 100% of the participants answered yes. A major part of 2 C students assumes the answer to the "how" question, as mentioned in the following: "Learning English with foreigners helps me a lot with the pronunciation. She also helps by giving clues during the conversation practice. I can tell my friends about myself and my family members because she gave a clear example before asking us to practice the conversation." In line with her statement, some other students believed that foreign teachers might help them with some ideas for the topic and context of the dialogue and guide and accommodate students to speak English with proper grammar and with correct pronunciation (Kamenetz, 2016). With the fun activities and interactive games involving students, students seem to look eager and motivated during classroom activities; conversation practice is specific (Foundation, 2018).

One of the students' responses to how she loves conversation practice is that she loved when teachers asked them to practice role-play in dialogue (in pairs or groups), mainly if the topic is based on real-life situations or students' own experiences. To be able to practice a conversation well, both children and adults have to engage in meaningful writing experiences, have an adequate vocabulary, and most importantly, understand well what the children "want" (in this case, how they want to study in a fun learning environment (Bond & Wasik, 2009)). When the researcher asked about how students think the foreign teacher may help them with speaking, they said by following the pattern and the pronunciation of the words said. This aligns with Bond & Wasik's research result, which states that children will follow the modeled language shown to them by the adults - as the foreign teacher does it during classroom hours (Bond & Wasik, 2009). Further research by Bjur supports this research by suggesting that when adults and older children ask to have a conversation (Bjur et al., 2017).

Within the scope of learning speaking, students must be provided the chance to utilization of language components inside the boundaries of real-life communication. Harmer aimed to construct language learning in the classroom to resemble language learning settings in their

natural environment (Harmer, 2007). He further stated in his study: "Like language learners outside schools, students and teachers will need to be motivated, be exposed to language, and given chances to use it". Teachers need to provide a safe and supportive classroom environment at school for students to engage in interactive learning (Rosenfield et al., 2019; Werdiningsih, 2020b), and they had better be effectively involved in maintaining consequential feedback and advice for pupils in the classroom to such an extent that the learning situation conceivably worthwhile and practical as well (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020), concerning to the enhancement of their awareness about English in general and also their skills in speaking because it can be ascertained that without the feedback and direction from the teacher, students will face confusion that can lead to a feeling of laziness or a decrease in the spirit of learning (Napoles & Bowers, 2010). On the other hand, teachers' positive feedback will provide specific reinforcement for students' development. Teachers' quality feedback and direction will foster students to grow better in their learning process (Feeney, 2007; Hirn & Scott, 2014; Lee et al., 2016; Silverman et al., 1992). In this case, a constructive learning environment is needed (Herrington & Standen, 2000; Neo, 2003; van den Bergh et al., 2013).

Questionnaires responses from students on how foreign teachers can help develop their English speaking are summarized as follows: first, students can learn a more extensive, broader vocabulary used in both informal and formal situations. Second, English, as the language used by foreign teachers as a means of communication during classroom hours, uses a proper grammatical structure. This helps students to speak English using correct and appropriate grammar. Third, the foreign teacher implemented immersion teaching in the classroom by facilitating a structured learning environment which leads students to learn more effectively.

Conclusion

Referring to the questions stated in the research problems, we conclude that the second graders' speaking ability in SD Negeri Jember Lor 3 is sufficient, and they can pronounce some vocabulary correctly and have simple conversations with foreigners. The adequate mastery of the conversation may be following the pattern of various determinants, especially factors concerning the help of the foreign teachers who showed how to pronounce words correctly, how to use correct intonation and sentence stress, how to use proper grammar, and new vocabulary using the veritable and valid accent. Here, the researcher cooperates with the foreigner to implement immersion, distributed practice, social learning, practice tests, and provide much information for the students, which seems to work well. Future researchers are suggested to conduct a study involving more foreigners over a longer period in the upcoming research.

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