

ENGLISH CARTOON TASK TO HELP JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ENGLISH ACQUISITION: FOCUSING ON LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Dian Eka Putri, S. Pd¹
Kartika Harda Putri, S. Pd²
Universitas Negeri Padang
Padang, Sumatera Barat
dian_potter91@yahoo.com
kartikahdp@gmail.com

Abstract

Language acquisition is started from listening then mimicry and finally the ability to speak. Exposing students with authentic English will help them acquiring, understanding and getting the sense of English better. If the goal is to reach native-like level, being exposed to the authentic English is very important. There are several stages of language acquisition: the receptive or preproduction stage, the early production stage, the speech emergence stage, the intermediate language proficiency stage, the advanced language proficiency stage. English Cartoon Task is meant as extensive activity for the students outside of the school environment. The procedure to be followed in giving this task: teacher picks a cartoon, teacher distributes the cartoon and task to the students, the students are given some time to watch the cartoon and do the task, students are asked to present their task. There are several reasons of choosing English Cartoon Task to help students acquiring English. The first reason of using this activity is because it is a fun way to learn English. Second reason is that English cartoon has clear pronunciation. The third reason to use cartoon task is because it uses real life conversation. The fourth reason is because cartoon show has short duration. Several cartoons recommended : *Martha Speaks*, *Word Girl* and *Adventure Time*.

Keywords: *Cartoon, Task, English Acquisition, Listening, Speaking.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition is started from listening then mimicry and finally the ability to speak. Those are the steps to be followed in acquiring the language. First, the students will have to have the chance to listen to the language they are learning. After that they will be given the opportunity to produce the language similar to what they have listened. Finally, they will be able to produce the language. This means that in order to achieve the speaking ability, first the students have to be exposed with the language they are learning.

Exposing students with authentic English will help them acquiring, understanding and getting the sense of English better. If the goal is to reach native-like level, being exposed to the authentic English is very important. That

will be the source of language for the students. They can listen and copy the utterances spoken by the native. One source of authentic English which is appropriate for junior high school students is cartoon.

Cartoon is an appropriate tool to learn English for junior high school students. Cartoon has interesting content. It also pronounce words clearly and it uses real life examples. Teacher can be creative and use cartoon as a tool for the students to help them acquire English.

There are several stages of language acquisition according to Cummins (1981, 1996):

Stage one: The receptive or preproduction stage. This stage can last from ten hours to six months. Students often have up to 500 “receptive” words (words they can understand, but may not be comfortable using) and can understand new words that are made comprehensible to them. This stage often involves a “silent period” during which students may not speak, but can respond using a variety of strategies including pointing to an object, picture, or person; performing an act, such as standing up or closing a door; gesturing or nodding; or responding with a simple “yes” or “no.” Teachers should not force students to speak until they are ready to do so.

Stage two: The early production stage. The early production stage can last additional six months after the initial stage. Students have usually developed close to 1,000 receptive/active words (that is, they are able to understand and use words). During this stage students can usually speak in one-word or two-word phrases, and can demonstrate comprehension of new material by giving short answers to simple questions of yes/no, either/or, or who/what/where.

Stage three: The speech emergence stage. This stage can be last up to another year. Students have usually developed approximately 3,000 words and can use short phrases and simple sentences to communicate. Students begin to use dialogue and can ask simple questions, such as “Can I go to the restroom?” and are also able to answer simple questions. Students may produce longer sentences, but often with grammatical errors that can interfere with their communication.

Stage four: The intermediate language proficiency stage. Intermediate proficiency may take up to another year after speech emergence. Students have typically developed close to 6,000 words and are beginning to make complex

statements, state opinions, ask for clarification, share their thoughts, and speak at greater length.

Stage five: The advanced language proficiency stage. Gaining advanced proficiency in a second language can be typically taken from five to seven years. By this stage students have developed some specialized content-area vocabulary and can participate fully in grade-level classroom activities if given occasional extra support. Students can speak English using grammar and vocabulary comparable to that of same-age native speakers. Understanding students who are going through a predictable and sequential series of developmental stages helps teachers predict and accept a student's current stage, while modifying their instruction to encourage progression to the next stage.

B. LISTENING

a. The Nature of Listening

Using language to communicate is a necessary part of our daily lives. Listening is one aspect of this process and is comprised of many sub-skills. It is important to note the distinction between listening and hearing. As Rixon (1986) states, "Hearing is only the recognition of sound, as we say, 'I am sorry. I did not hear exactly what you said.' Listening implies some conscious attention to the message of what was said, as when we say, 'Are you listening to me?'".

b. Listening Process

It is useful to understand the process of listening. Rost (1991) divides the process into two parts. First, listeners integrate component skills such as discriminating between sounds; recognizing words; identifying grammatical group of words; connecting cues such as intonation and stress to gestures; using background knowledge; and recalling important words and ideas. Second, listeners must make decisions about what is being listened to such as determining the situation; making a plan for listening; determining the important words and units of meaning; and asking if the message makes sense.

c. Learning and Developing Listening Skills

Several researchers have investigated additional factors to be considered when designing lessons for the development of listening skills of second language learners. Most are related to the special characteristics of spoken language such as

colloquial language, idioms, slang, reduced forms, and shared cultural knowledge (Ur, 1984). In addition, the learners' perception that native speakers speak too quickly can block comprehension. Students need to be exposed to language delivered at varying rates and speeds in a natural context without pauses (Brown, 1994).

C. SPEAKING

a. The Nature of Speaking

Chaney and Burk (1998), considered speaking a process: "speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal or non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts". Sharing the same view point, Gate (2007) added that speaking is an "interactive" process, which consists of three main stages "producing, receiving and processing information". It means that speaking is a process someone to share their ideas or information. Gate also stated that "speaking is the productive oral skill. It consists of producing systematic verbal utterance to convey meaning."

In language teaching and learning, speaking is considered as a skill to be mastered. To be a good learner of speaking, studying grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation are important. Speaking is an action, a process and a skill to communicate to other people to share ideas and information.

D. ENGLISH CARTOON TASK

a. What is English Cartoon Task?

English Cartoon Task is a task to be given to the students of junior high school students. It is meant as their extensive activity outside of the school environment. The aim of this task is to increase their language exposure towards English.

The procedure of giving this task to the students are as follow:

- The teacher picks a cartoon to be given to the students.
- The cartoon and the task are distributed to the students. Can be in flashdisks or CDs. The cartoon has to contain subtitle. The task contains to write a summary of the cartoon and to prepare a spoken presentation of the summary. The students are also asked to include their favourite

scene/scenes from the cartoon and explain why they choose it/them as their favourite.

- The students are given three days to watch the cartoon and finished their task or until their next meeting with the teacher. This means that the activity will be done twice a week.
- At the meeting, some students are asked to present their summary of the cartoon in front of the class. This activity can be done on the beginning of the class or at the end of the class. The students presenting will be chosen randomly. Teacher can choose 3-5 students to present their summary. It depends on the time allocated or available for the activity.

b. Why Using English Cartoon Task?

The first reason of using this activity is because it is a fun way to learn English. This is important because this will help the students to maintain their motivation to learn English. This will shape their perspective of learning English as fun and enjoyable. To have this perspective is also important. it will determine their interest in learning English in the future. Since they already enjoy learning English at the very beginning, it is hoped that they will enjoy learning English in the future. Thus, they can overcome more complicated problem arise in the future from learning English.

Second reason is that English cartoon has clear pronunciation. Watching English cartoon and any other English series or movies has great difference in its pronunciation. Cartoon has clear pronunciation. It is generally aimed for the children that the creators adjust the level of their content for the children, one is the pronunciation level. Clear pronunciation will help the student to acquire the words, then they can copy it. As they get used to it, they will be fluent in their speaking.

The third reason to use cartoon task is because it uses real life conversation. The cartoon includes conversation which is likely to happen in real life. This will have a good effect for the students. They can immitate the conversation and use it in their daily life. Thus, they will utter natural English in their daily life.

The fourth reason is because cartoon show has short duration. Cartoon task will not waste the students time. One episode will only be around 20-30 minutes.

After they watch the cartoon they can do other things. They can continue study or socialize with their friends.

c. Recommendation of Cartoons

The first cartoon which can be used in the beginning of this task is *Martha Speaks*. The goal of *Martha Speaks* is to increase oral vocabulary, the words we use when we talk. The shows are not trying to teach kids how to read. They are designed to help kids understand what words mean when they hear them; words like *retrieve*, *sprout*, and *crave*. Vocabulary is one thing that predicts if children will be good readers. Once they are in school and they see these words, children will need to know what they mean. If children have heard the words before, that familiarity will help them as they learn to read. *Martha Speaks* is designed to teach up to 20 words in each show.

The second recommendation is *Word Girl*. It is another show that teaches vocabulary words. In this show, a girl superhero fights bad guys through the power of words. This series introduces grade-schoolers to the pronunciations and definitions of advanced vocabulary words like "temptation," "gigantic," and "vegetarian." There's a little bit of cartoon violence, but that pales in comparison to the fact that kid viewers will unknowingly expand their literary repertoire while enjoying the empowered young superheroine's adventures. The episodes are drawn in a very unique style and they explain new English vocabulary words as they use them. It's another silly show that's very fun to watch at any age.

The third recommendation after the children completed the first two cartoon series is *Adventure Time*. It is an energetic cartoon about a young boy and his very stretchy dog, who go on adventures in a magical land together, fight monsters and learn the importance of friendship. "Adventure Time" is one of those "layered" shows—sometimes it doesn't feel like a kid's show. It also has some made-up words, so watch out for those! Otherwise it's a great fantasy show with natural dialogue. This cartoon can be used to improve students listening and speaking skills after they finished the first two series.

E. CONCLUSION

To acquire a language, exposure towards the language is needed. The perfect exposure for beginner such as junior high school students would be through something that they like. For example cartoon series. This will help them maintain

their motivation in learning English. Hopefully this motivation will be carried on when they further study English.

The cartoon task is created to give students extensive activity outside the school. This will be the language exposure needed by the students in learning English. There are several steps that are needed to be followed in using this task. The teacher can also see the recommendation of cartoons that can be used in this task.

REFERENCES

- Brown, H. D. (1994). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Chaney, A.L. and T.L. Burk. (1998). *Teaching Oral Communication in Grades K-8*. Boston: Allyn&Bacon
- Cummins, J. (1981). *Bilingualism and Minority Language Children*. Ontario: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
- Cummins, J. (1996). *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society*. Ontario: California Association for Bilingual Education
- Gate.(2007). *Languageteaching speaking skills*. New York. Edinburgh: Longman
- Rixon, S. (1986). *Developing Listening Skills*. London. Macmillan Publishers Ltd
- Rost, M. (1991). *Listening in action: Activities for developing listening in language teaching*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Ur, P. (1984). *Teaching Listening Comprehension*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.