

THE STRATEGY OF TEACHING SPEAKING TO THE LOW VISION STUDENTS

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Abstract

This article discusses about some strategies of teaching speaking to the low vision students. The suggested teaching strategies conform to the principles of teaching and learning to the students. The three principles that must be understood by the teachers especially the English teacher are concrete experiences, unification concepts and learning by doing. These teaching strategies aim to obtain the content instruction, language development and to encourage active involvement in learning process. It is expected that by using these strategies can achieve the graduate competency standard of speaking skill as stated in the role of education and culture Minister No 23/2006 and 2006 curriculum.

Key words : Low vision, strategy, competency standard.

A. Introduction

In the regulation of education and culture minister no 23/2006 stated that the graduate competency standard of all subjects are the same for all education unit, those are regular, vocational and special school. English is one of compulsory subjects that must be mastered by the students in a special school and the graduate competency standard for this subject must be achieved.

In fact, physical impairment is not a prevention to learn a language as Gardner said that one of the human intelligences is language intelligence (Intelligent Language) as an example Helen Keller, a blind and deaf woman who could master four languages, France, German, Greek and Latin. There are many other proves that people who have the physical impairment able to do something better than one who is in normal condition such as Ludwig Beethoven, he was deaf but became the biggest classic composer in the world, Stevie Wonder, a famous blind pianist and singer and many others.

One of the special schools is the school for the low vision students. Carney, et al (2003) explains that the low vision refers to a significant loss of

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vision, even though the person may wear corrective lenses. Vision is a sense to connect us to the world where we know everything around us, imitate someone or something, learn something from gestures or body language and obtain information easily.

In language learning, the sighted students obtain a language from hearing, reading, imitating someone voice and looking at the movement, facial expressions, gestures and body language. How about the low vision students? They are able to hear and imitate the voice they hear but they are not able to see all movement, facial expression, gestures and body language well. They are not easy to get information because most of information is in script and they are too dependent upon very big script.

The low vision is a part of the visual impairment, other part is totally blind. Generally the definition the low vision student is the student who hindered the proper function of their vision. Low vision is reduced central acuity of 20/70 or less in the better eye after correction. Most students with visual impairments have low vision and they should be encouraged to use their residual (remaining) vision, when appropriate, using the necessary optical aids and adaptations. Students who are described as blind may have some usable vision (Cartney, et al:2003).

The classification of the visual impairment students based on the visual sharpness in Snellen Test (Ganda : 34) as follows, a. 6/6 meters – 6/16 meters or 20/20 feet – 20/50 feet. Visual acuity of 6/16 meters or 20/50 feet means that the individual sees at 6 meters or 20 feet what is normally seen at 16 meters or 50 feet. It is stated that those who are in this level still able to use education tools so that they are able to obtain the education in general school and enable to see the small things such as coins or matches, b. 6/20 meters – 6/60 meters or 20/70 feet – 20/200 feet is called low vision or partially vision. Those who are in this level able to see by assisting a lens, c. 6/60 meters more or 20/200 feet more is called the heavy visual impairment which has three levels, i) enable to count the fingers in 6 meters , ii) enable to see the movement of hands and the last iii) enable to differentiate day and night, d. Those who has zero (0) vision is called blind. Those who are not able to accept the stimulation of light and see anything.

The explanation above describes that the categories of the low vision are students who are able to use their residual vision and possible to do the visual tasks by using special educational aids.

The low vision students are not similar to the sighted students who have chances to move easily in their environment, play with many friends, or see and imitate everything around them in their activities. Different condition will have an impact on learning development, social skills and behavior. According to DjajaRaharja (2009), there are four characteristics of the low vision students, first, cognitive characteristic that Lowenfeld's explanation in Ganda (2009) describes the impact of blindness and low vision on cognitive development by identifying the basic limitation of the student with the impaired vision in three areas as follows, (i) The level and variety of experiences, when a child gets the impaired vision, he/ she must obtain his experiences by using other functioning sense, especially touching and hearing. (ii) The ability to move on, it is not easy

for the low vision students to move on safely and efficiently. It is required to give them orientation and mobility skills learning in order to make them feel free in their environment, (iii) The interaction with environment, the low vision students are not able to control their movement in the environment because of the visual limitation even though they have had the mobility skill, the environmental description is not intact. Second, academic characteristic, the impaired vision also influences the development of academic skill especially in reading and writing. These students are able to read and write something if the special media such as braille or very big printed are available for them. This condition makes them slower in obtaining a knowledge or information. Third, social and emotional characteristic, which is typically developed by observing the habitual and the social events and imitate them. On the contrary, these students have the limitation on learning through observing and imitating, so that these students face some difficulties to behave the right social behavior. It is needed to learn the social skill directly and systematically in various social relationship. Fourth, behavior characteristic, some of the students with impaired vision frequently indicate the stereo typed such as making sounds from their fingers, shaking and circling their head and body. Some theories reveal that such behavior is probably caused of lack of sensory stimulation, the limitation of activity and movement in the environment, also the social limitation. It is needed to reduce or eliminate the behavior by assisting them using certain behavioral strategies, such as learning positive behavior or giving a praise for the good things they have done.

It is also important to know the principles of the teaching and learning to the low vision students. Generally, in the regulation of the education and culture minister no 1/2008 stated that it is needed to take into account the individual differences of learners such as type of disorder, intellectual level, talent and so forth and encourage the learners to be active, inspirational, initiative, interesting, in learning process. Based on three major limitations due to impaired vision experienced as proposed by Lowenfeld (1973) which includes limited in terms of mobility, limited in terms of interaction with the environment to meet their educational needs required three principles include: (1) concrete experience, the learning process should perform the original models that focus on the concrete sample and not verbal explanation, (2) the unification between the concepts, because of the limitation of vision, the explanation for these students should be systematically and completely in order to obtain knowledge and skill of unification concept, and (3) learning by doing. In teaching and learning process, the activities should be focused on practicing, that is doing a direct activity.

Furthermore Carney, et al (2003) explains that the instructional process must include opportunities for the student to explore new objects and places and be exposed to a variety of experiences. The students must experience a variety of textures, shapes, weights, temperatures, sounds, smells and tastes to build meaningful relationships and concepts about the environment as well. Moreover, it is required to provide opportunities to practice and reinforce skills in natural settings throughout the day and repetition is necessary for the student to master new skills. The teacher should talk while teaching because the students miss visual cues and information from the environment. It is useful to use tactile,

concrete and real life material as much as possible in order to provide opportunities for kinesthetic and tactile learning.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the low vision students' teacher requires to think and decide proper strategy that the teacher should use in teaching and learning process for these students which conform to the students characteristic, interests, and needs.

Jodi Reis (2005:40) explains that teaching strategies are used by teachers to facilitate understanding of knowledge and to make content more accessible to the students. These are included the techniques, approaches (methods), media, activities and assignments that teachers use to help students understand and learn information. These strategies are immediately visible and identifiable. Herrel and Jordan (2012) write fifty strategies for teaching English language that some of them can be used in teaching speaking English and conform to the low vision students' needs and characteristic. The strategies can be parted into three objectives which are to obtain the content instruction, language development, and encourage active involvement. Each of them consist of some strategies those are a) Preview/Review, b) Small groups and partners c) Realia Strategy, d) Total Physical Response, e) Modeled Talk, f) Communication games, and g) Dictoglos,

The low vision students are demanded to learn English as stated in 2006 Curriculum and the role of education and culture minister No 23/2006. English is taught within four aspects listening, speaking, writing and reading. Speaking skill is focused on language accompanying actions. It means, teacher is not only responsible to make students able to pronounce certain expressions, but the teacher encourage the students to practice some actions based on the expressions which are taken from daily conversation. They are in school context for elementary level, learners' environment context for junior high school and daily life context for senior level. The teaching of English in the elementary school is meant to develop the language ability that is used to accompany actions. Focusing on the speaking skill, there are four basic competencies that the students have to master the competency standard of expressing some simple information and instruction in the class and school environment context. The learning materials that the students learn are how to introduce one self and someone else, greet someone, say goodbye, and give instructions. The students will be also taught asking for help/service/things/information, giving help/service/things/information, thanking people, apologizing, complimenting and inviting someone. Finally, the students will learn how to express politeness; thank you, sorry, please and excuse me. The students are also demanded to imitate simple utterance and learn how to ask permission, permitting someone, agreeing, disagreeing, denying and ask for clarifications.

English is compulsory subject for junior and senior high level. The students are expected to be able to interact in English in daily life context. In 2006 curriculum for English, it is also stated that there are three learning objectives of teaching English to junior high school those are to develop students' communicating competence in oral and written form in learners' environment context in order to obtain functional literacy level and build the students' awareness about the essence of English and the significance of learning English to

improve the nations' competitiveness in the global society and also to develop the learners' understanding of the relationship between the language and the culture. Focusing on the speaking skill, there are four basic competencies that the students have to master the competency standard of expressing simple transactional and interpersonal information and instruction in the learners' environment context. The learning materials basically have been learned in elementary level. Additional learning materials for junior high school students are expressing simple functional and monologue texts which are included advertisement, announcement, notice, descriptive, procedure, recount, narrative and report texts.

The senior school students' competence is seen as the same as the junior students but to prepare the students learning English in the university. There are three learning objectives of teaching English to senior high school are also the same but the communicating competence development in oral and written form in daily life context for literacy. Focusing on the speaking skill, the students have to master the competency standard namely expressing transactional and interpersonal information and instruction in the daily life context. Some of learning materials have basically been learned in junior high level. Additional learning materials are expressing the feeling of love, sad, anger, ashamed and annoyed. Some of literature works such as, poem, songs, drama in English and public speaking context such as, speech, debate and presentation are also mastered by the students. Additional functional and monologue texts which are included spoof, hortatory exposition, review, and news item text.

From the explanation above it can be concluded that some proper strategies of teaching speaking can improve the speaking skill and build the character and self-confidence to the low vision students.

B. Discussion

1. The Strategies of Teaching Speaking to The Low Vision Students

The writer suggests some strategies that conform to the characteristic of the low vision students, the characteristic of the strategies and the uniqueness of teaching speaking to the low vision students..

Two strategies are used to obtain the content of instruction, they are (a) Preview /review strategy, that is a teaching strategy where a teacher gives a preview of the lesson in the students' home language, then it is taught in English, the last the lesson material is reviewed in the home language to ensure content understanding. (b) Small groups and partners strategy, is the act of arranging students in group based on their need for instruction in a specific skill and for a short period of time, usually for only a few lessons. The criterion for grouping is based on teacher's observation of a specific instructional need.

It has three strategies to obtain the language development, namely (a) Total Physical Response, is an approach to second language acquisition based on first-language acquisition research where students listen and acquire receptive language before they attempt to speak. Gradually, the teacher's demonstration removed and the students respond to the verbal commands only. They develop understanding through moving their bodies and they are not forced to speak until

they are ready. (b) Realia Strategy is a term for the real things or concrete objects that are used in the classroom to build background knowledge and vocabulary which provides students with opportunities to use all the senses in learning which allows students to see, hear, feel, smell and even taste the object being explored that could be helpful in comprehension. (c) Modeled Talk is the concurrent verbal explanation and physical demonstration of directions or concepts, is one of the simplest and the most powerful strategy to use with English language learners. Modeled talk is the use of gestures, visuals and demonstration as explanations are made.

To encourage active involvement, the writer suggest two strategy, (a) Communication Games are activities set up in the classroom to create opportunities, purpose for verbal communication practice and convey information or cause something to occur as a result of the activity. (b) Dictogloss is focused on the fluent of academic language and supports the learners in listening and recalling good English language models. It involves students in listening to be repeated, fluent reading of English text.. The activity provides and authentic reason for communication.

Beside using the strategies, the teacher should understand some teaching tips for the low vision students as follows first, the teacher should mention his or her name when he or she comes to the students because the students do not always recognize the teacher's voice. Then, talk directly to the students, using direct eye contact and use normal tone of voices After that , be specific with descriptive language when explaining the location of a person or object. Next, verbalize praise and disapproval or use gestures such as a hand on the shoulders. And feel comfortable using terms such as "look" and "see" because they will be parts of students' vocabulary.

2. Using The Strategies in Teaching Speaking to The Low Vision Students

It is necessary to know how to implement the strategies in teaching speaking to the low vision students in the classroom. The steps are :

a. Preparation

The teacher must do the following preparation, (i) Determining the learning material, that the learning material for the senior high level is chosen by the writer as example giving instruction and the theme is I am lost. The learning material and the theme are contextual and everybody can be in the situation 'get lost'. It presents the real life context of the conversation to the students and conforms to the low vision students' needs , characteristic and interest. (ii) Selecting the strategy, the teacher will use all strategies and also prepare the miniature map or tactile map which describe some places and set the area in the classroom or around the school to be safe for the students. The teacher limits the use of expression asking and giving the direction which really familiar to hear by the students and easy to understand. The area to be shown in this expressions only the class and school area, the expressions are (1) Asking for the direction they are (a) How can I get to the library? (b) Where is the headmaster room? 2) Giving the directions such as (a) Go straight ahead to the west/east/north/south, (b) Go straight one block/two blocks (c) Turn left or right,

(d)It's on your right or left side, (3)Prepositions namely next to or beside, in front of , behind, between, across from, at the corner of, as examples "The toilet is next to the canteen" and "The library is in front of the teacher room".

3. The Procedure of Teaching Speaking Using The Strategies

The teaching of speaking using the strategies above is divided into three phases, pre teaching, whilst teaching and post teaching.

a. Pre -Teaching

In this stage, it activates students' background knowledge and engages their interest.To obtain the content instruction, the teacher uses the preview or review strategy in which using learner's home language, then teaches it in English. Started by greeting the students, teacher should make sure that the way he or she greets the students is encouraging the students to learn.. The teacher approaches each students and touches their shoulders or arms to inform her/his presence, then greets the students and call their names one by one. After that, to activate students' background knowledge, the teacher asks some questions that refer to the theme 'I am lost' in the learners' home language. The questions are the expressions of asking the directions to someone when they are lost and the responses to show the direction to a place. The teacher lets them free giving responses in the learners home language as many as they know.Then teacher reviews all expressions and responses of asking and giving the direction still in learners' home language. The last step of pre-teaching stage is the students being informed that they will study about asking and giving the direction by playing the role.

b. Whilst Teaching

This is the core part of the teaching, where the teacher explains the learning material and language target to the students in English. In this stage, there are three strategies used namely the realia , the total physical response and the modeled talk which to obtain the language development, in some points as follow;

(i) Exploration

The writer suggests to divide the whilst teaching into two parts, the first part will be the exploration stage and the second part that can be done in the next meeting will consist of elaboration and confirmation stages. This is done due to the reason that in exploration, the teacher explains the language target by using all the strategies. In this stage.therealia strategy is used to provide experiences on which to build and provide the students with the opportunities to use all senses in learning. In this phase, the school environment is used as realia by the teacher. The next strategy is total physical response in which the students listen and acquire receptive language before they attempt to speak , they develop understanding through moving their bodies and they are not forced to speak until they are ready.The last is modeled talk that the teacher explains verbally and demonstrates the expression of giving the direction concurrently.

In teaching the low visionstudents , the teacher models the expressions of asking direction to student by speaking and demonstrating the dialogue as if there are two people speaking . the teacher uses two voices , expresses as follow ;

Teacher : "Excuse me, where is the toilet from here?"
Teacher : "The toilet? Oh it is next to the library,
Teacher : "Next to the library? How do I go there?"
Teacher : "Go straight to the north two blocks , then turn left. The toilet is on your left hand".

While explaining the direction, the teacher asks a student to follow her or him. The student holds the teacher's arm and follow her or him and listen to the expression of each direction the teacher says. When walking through the direction, the student's other hand touch the wall in order to inform where they are. Next, the teacher reviews the direction she or he has already shown to the student by asking the students to act in pair. The teacher guides the students one by one and does the same way until the students comprehend and say both expressions fluently. To introduce more vocabulary of giving the direction in English, the teacher shows the direction from some more places around the school by using modeled talk. This modeling provides examples for students to follow and can be lower the students' anxiety about speaking in English because they have demonstrated the directions or content modeled together with the teacher and friends.

(ii) Elaboration & Confirmation

The teacher uses a tactile map which describes the location of a town and the strategies are the realia, the dictogloss and the small groups and partners. First, while touching the replica of the tactile map by the students, the teacher informs the name of each place on the tactile map. After familiarizing with the direction of each place, the teacher continues to play the recording from a dialogue of asking and giving the direction based on the tactile map. The students listen to the recording many times. After that , the teacher asks the students to practice the dialogue. The steps will be described in some points as follows:

(ii.a) Students' group performance.

The student and friend will practice the dialogue they have already heard based on the tactile map. The teacher mention one place on the map, next the students touch the map and practice the dialogue. The teacher listens to the students dialogue until finish, then washes back by restating the correct direction. The teacher asks another pair to do the same activity so that they comprehend the directions on the tactile map. At the end ,while touching the students shoulders , the teacher says the praise words for all students of the best effort for speaking activity that day.

(ii.b) The random pair performance,

The teacher continues activity by pairing the students randomly. This is done to create new combination of students, so there will be no gap between the students. The last step of this whilst teaching is the assessment. Teacher calls students' name randomly to perform their role play of asking and giving the

direction on the tactile map in front of the class. The role play will approximately last for two until three minutes each pair.

(iii) Post Teaching

As the closing phase, the teacher should make this phase as memorable as possible in order to make the students remember the day's lesson and wait for the next lesson. In this phase, the teacher leads the students to summarize the material that has been taught by asking some questions to recall the students' memory.

4.. The Advantages Of Using The Strategies In Teaching Speaking To The Low Students

The following is the advantages of using the strategies of teaching speaking the low vision students, those are (1) To familiarize English to students and reduce the anxiety feeling about speaking (2) To increase students' interest to the lesson by providing students with some realias or replica and tape recorder in learning activities can ease students to comprehend the concept of the lesson and motivate students to learn English. (3) To fulfill the students' need as a kinesthetic learner to obtain the real life experiences since it is learning by doing which demands the students to move their body to obtain the life experience as a unit, (4) To facilitate students' social interaction and fulfill their need of communication as a social learner when the students have to cooperate with their friends in doing activities, (5) The strategies are easier used in teaching to the low vision students because there are only few of students approximately only four to six students in the class.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

1. Conclusion

From the explanation and theories related, it can be conclude that first, the strategies of teaching speaking above conform to the characteristic, needs and interest of the low vision students and enable to improve the speaking skill and achieve the graduate competence standard of speaking skill. Second, the total of students in the class no more than eight people. By using those teaching strategies, the teacher and especially English teacher are able to make them as good as the sighted students in speaking skill

2. Suggestion

Based on the conclusion, it can be suggested that the teacher specially English teacher should have strong motivation, full attention, innovation and varied strategies in teaching and learning process to the low vision students. It also needs co-operation among the teachers, parents and government to provide the low vision students with better facilities and good quality of knowledge so that they are able to do the best for themselves and for their nation.

Note: this article is written based on the writer's paper with advisor Dra.

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