The Use of Puppet in Teaching Speaking to Young Learners

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Abstract: As a demand of English learning, EFL for young learners in Indonesia still has gaps; namely the limitations of teaching aids. For this reason, this study was aimed to investigate how puppets could give benefits in teaching speaking to young learners and students' responses toward the implementation. Nine seventh-grade students of Junior High School in Bandung were participated in this study. Moreover, this study employed case study as the methodology. The data included classroom observation, teacher's field notes, and interview at the end of the teaching and learning activities. The results revealed that the use of puppets was an appropriate and effective approach in teaching speaking to young learners. It helped the teacher to teach in ease situation, particularly in engaging the students, creating great atmosphere, and organizing the class. It also created students' high participation, helped students to speak in front of others, and encouraged students to improve their speaking ability. In other words, the use of puppet has significant influence on young learners' speaking activities.

1 INTRODUCTION

Indonesian people nowadays put high interest to introduce English to their children starting from the early age, through formal or informal education. The statement shows the emerging trend in the world of English language learning and teaching, that is teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). Cameron (2001) stated that young learners will get some benefits when they start to learn foreign language earlier in order to produce the language skills. In Indonesian EYL classroom, Indonesian government tends to increase the quality of education through the 2013 curriculum that one of the focus is productive skills which consists of speaking and writing skills (Permendikbud, 2013). Therefore, teaching EYL in Indonesia seems like quite challenging than others since there are lack of social uses of the English language in the real situations and life. Moreover, young learners in our Indonesian classes have very small opportunities in using English to communicate with others. Speaking skills as of the productive skills should include some new innovation toward teaching media.

Puppet is well known as an appropriate teaching media in teaching young learners. Puppet can help young learners to internalize language patterns, enhance listening skills, develop risk-taking skills and student confidence, and provide opportunities (Lepley, 2001). Combining puppet with young learners can be one of good ways to ease passive learners to share their feeling with and participate in group lessons and discussion. Moreover, puppets have the ability to engage and encourage young learners and allow them to use imaginary play to express themselves during free play (Lippoff, 2011). It means that puppets are quite equivalent with the characteristics of young learners. Diyani (2011) offers some benefits in using puppets, as the teaching media, such as: (1) develop language; (2) enables better learning; (3) develop creative skills; (4) develop social skills; and (5) enhances family relationship. In accordance with that, puppet can also be used to provide young learners to communicate in English.

Furthermore, Hammer (2010) offers appropriate ways in using puppet as teaching media, for instance (1) choose the lesson you want to teach; (2) select the puppet you intend to use; (3) select the prop you intend to use; (4) develop the characters of the puppets; (5) practice teaching the lesson with your puppets without any audiences; (6) set the stage for your puppet; (7) teach the lesson using your puppets in a style similar to the one of your practiced earlier. Some previous studies such as Özdeniz (2000), Lepley (2001), Setyarini (2010), Reidmiller (2008),

and Brown (2009) stated that puppet give several benefits in increasing speaking skills of young learners.

Reflecting to the previous elaboration, this study aims to describe the use of puppet in teaching speaking to young learners, and the young learners' responses of using puppet in their speaking activity. Therefore, those concerns are within the context of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia. This study attempts to answer the research questions formulated as follows:

- What are the benefits of using puppet in teaching speaking to young learners?;
- How do young learners respond toward the use of puppet in their speaking activity?.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

In order to answer the initial questions, this study employed qualitative method by involving a case study. Thus, a case study can be implemented to one individual, one classroom, one school, or one school district (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1990). Similarly, Emilia (2005) states that a case study design could be employed in "a small scale, a single case", or only focus on one particular instance of educational experience or practice. The choice of using this method considers the research questions and the aims of this study that is to go in-depth understanding. This is relevant to Merriam's (1988) statement that case study can be classified as an evaluated study because it involves description, explanation, and judgments of people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions.

2.2 Research Site and Participant

The study was conducted in a public junior high school in Bandung. This school was chosen for three reasons. First, the school authorities allowed the researcher to conduct this study in their school; hence, this enhances the feasibility of this research. Second, the curriculum of grade 7 is suitable with the purpose of the research; therefore, this provides more opportunities to conduct an observation. Third, the chosen school belongs to the criteria of the research. This also enhances the feasibility of the present study which focuses on investigating speaking skills.

This study took nine seventh grade students. The nine students were classified into three levels of achievement, namely, low, middle, and high

achievers. This categorization was based on their English course in the previous semester, indicated by their grades in speaking.

2.3 Data Collection

Three instruments were used; they are classroom observations, written documents, and interview. Since case studies also allow one to present data collected from multiple methods (i.e. interview, document review, and observation) to provide the complete story (Neala et al., 2006). Those instruments were aimed to gain the data accurately and to answer the research questions proposed. The research was conducted along with the regular schedule in the school. The data were collected in three weeks.

Furthermore, classroom observation was used to gain data during the implementation of using puppet in teaching speaking. The classroom observations were conducted six times. The type of observation in this study was participant observation (Merriam and Clark, 1991) since the researcher took part as the teacher who implemented the use of puppet in teaching speaking to young learners. Each meeting spent 60 minutes per meeting. Video recording was used in each meeting to be observed by the researcher to gain more data about the speaking situations.

Written document is also one of the instruments that was used to gather the data in order to answer the research questions. The written documents are in the forms of (1) lesson plans during the observation in six meetings, (2) students' checklist and teacher's field notes, and (3) video recording transcriptions. Moreover, interview was aimed to collect the information about the students' thought, feelings, responses, difficulties, and expectation towards the use of puppet show in their speaking activity during the observation.

2.4 Data Analysis

After gaining the data which were collected from classroom observations, written documents, and interviews, the data was analysed by following some steps. Those instruments will be presented in a form of descriptive explanation. Furthermore, the data gained from three instruments were cross-checked using triangulation to enhance research reliability and validity (Vidovich, 2003). Video recording transcriptions were analysed to find out some evidences in using puppets by the students whether it runs appropriately or not during the observations.

Then, the transcription compared to the document analysis, and interview result.

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Teachers' Benefits

Based on the data gained, the use of puppet in teaching speaking to young learners provides three positive benefits to the teacher. The teacher is helped by the use of puppet in teaching speaking skills for several reasons, those are (1) puppets encourage students to engage with the learning activities, (2) puppets have a positive impact on students' participation in the classroom, and (3) puppets can create great atmosphere in the classroom.

Firstly, puppets encourage the students to engage in the learning activities. It supported teacher to implement puppets in classroom observation regarding to the efficiency of time and energy. Since the participants had afternoon class, puppets also helped teacher to make them engaged in the activity even when they looked tired. Learning some activities in the afternoon was not easy, and puppets helped the teacher to manage that situation. It could be seen from the observation sheet that observed student's response during the activities below:

The students are motivated to learn English. They made their own puppet enthusiastically in group. They put their name on the puppet. They gave attention to the teacher's instruction and kind to follow the activities even in the afternoon time.

In addition, in the fourth meeting, the puppets could engage the students in introducing the vocabularies of family. The teacher used animal puppets and those helped the students to engage with the activity during the learning because they used puppets to pretend as one family in group. It can reveal in the teachers' field notes:

The students argue with their group to choose who was father, mother, or even grandfather. They want to come forward with their own puppet and pretend as the character of Reza's family. The puppet is more useful for the students to engage with the activities because they take role play at the end of the learning.

Secondly, related to the teacher's benefits, puppets have a positive impact on students' participation in the classroom. In this meeting, the teacher brought the photo of Reza's family while telling the story. The students identified the members of the family. The students loved the puppet of Reza's character since they still remembered the way Reza introduced himself. This activity was quite similar to the activity in the second meeting that encourage the students to acquire the materials very well. Thus, the data from classroom observation transcription showed that the students took participation in the main activity when the teacher told story. It can be seen from video transcription during the observation:

T: "How many members are there in the family?"
Ss: "eight, miss, eight."
T: "which one is the brother?"
Ss: "that one miss, the one with glasses and blue shirt"
T: "Ok, good. Which one is the uncle?"
S1: "beside aunt miss, above lulu"

The teacher asked couples of students to give example in introducing themselves. By using the puppets, students had to be capable of introducing one self and others. By this activity, the students showed great participation in the last meeting. They came forward and were capable to do the activities that given by the teacher. It is supported Harmer's (2007) statement that student's understanding comes not just from explanation, but also from what they see and hear, crucially, have a chance to touch and interact with.

Thirdly, the findings showed that the use of puppet in teaching speaking to young learners could create great atmosphere in the classroom. A great classroom's atmosphere gave energy and motivation to the teacher in the learning process. It was found that the teacher felt comfortable, happy, and relaxed in this atmosphere resulted from the use of puppet in the classroom for six meetings because the students were enthusiastic on animals' puppets and human puppets. It was revealed from teacher's field notes:

The students wanted to get their turn to use puppet in storytelling. The students laughed a lot, they enjoyed the story telling. The student would like to participate in the role play because they want to play the puppet.

Furthermore, the students did not feel under pressured when they were learning with the teacher. They learned in fun situations and great atmosphere. The excerpt below shows their real feeling and happiness during the learning process. Interview

Since I like to talk in English, when I use puppet, I could be more confidence and tend to be more active in the learning process. For example, when the puppet visits the neighborhoods.

It supports what Harmer (2007) said that when the students start to learn something, they generally display an enthusiasm for learning and a curiosity about the world around them. Concerning to the benefits gained by the teacher by using puppet in teaching speaking to young learners, it is similar to the results of study conducted by Reidmiller (2008) that the use of puppet can encourage students to try out ideas and investigate on their own.

3.2 Students' Benefits

The benefits are presented below that focused on the speaking aspects benefits and speaking strategy benefits which also followed by some evidences of the benefits during the learning process.

3.2.1 Speaking Aspects Benefits

The speaking aspects are related to the use of vocabularies and students' speaking product. Teaching speaking means to teach language patterns to produce the English speech sounds and sounds patterns (Nunan, 2003). Regarding to the statement, it is found that students produced sounds pattern when they introduced themselves by using puppets. The following table is the evidence of the findings which taken from the teacher's field notes and students' checklist.

Table 1: Relevance of students' participation and Development with Speaking Aspect Benefits.

Students (Participants)	Participation in each meeting					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Student 1	X	√	√	√	√	√
Student 2	X	√	√	X	√	√
Student 3	X	√	√	√	√	√
Student 4	X	X	X	√	√	√
Student 5	X	X	√	√	√	√
Student 6	X	√	X	√	√	√
Student 7	X	√	√	√	√	√
Student 8	X	√	√	√	√	√
Student 9	X	√	√	√	√	√

From table 1, almost of the participants participated and developed their speaking skills in the learning process in each meeting. Therefore, student 5 did not show good attention in the first and second meeting since she was not really engaged to the use of puppet in the speaking activities. However, in the next following meetings, student 5 took more participation in meeting three, four, five, and six, especially in the meeting 4. Additionally, the others student showed great attention from the second meeting until the last meeting.

3.2.2 Speaking Strategy Benefits

From the students' checklist and teacher's field notes, it can be seen that the use of puppet in teaching speaking to young learners encouraged students to be able to speak in front of their friends. In this case, speaking strategies related to the use of puppets in the learning process. Since teaching speaking is more about how the process is implemented, the teacher implemented puppet to encourage the development of speaking strategies (Brown, 2001). The following evidence from the data gained during the observations and interview session:

I like to talk in English Saya because I want to be a master in speaking. So, I am so happy to speak English in your class especially when I use puppet to introduce myself.

It shows that the students were willing to speak English but they did not get chance and good media to speak well in the regular class. The teacher helped them to develop their speaking ability by using puppet through some speaking activities provided. It can be seen from the interview transcription below:

When I didn't use puppet, I feel more nervous. But when I use puppet, I feel more comfortable, especially the gesture of my hands.

The findings above showed that puppets helped the students towards their strategies to control themselves in speaking. Encouraging students' speaking skills tends to be an appropriate way to ease shamefulness when the students share their feeling and participate in group lesson and discussion. Other findings related to the student's speaking strategies from the interview transcription are stated below.

Puppet help us to memorize the learning material. For example, when Reza (the character of the puppet) visited the neighbors, we can see and know it directly.

3.3 Students' Response

The findings from students' responses were gained from the classroom observation data and interview data. In the classroom observation, the data is

described in the form of observation sheets consist of the learning activities, responses, and evidence. Moreover, the data from interview was aimed to attain students' responses related to the classroom speaking activities by the teacher. This interview was conducted at the end of the classroom observations. Ten students were involved as interviewee who asked with similar questions.

Moreover, the students' responses towards the implementation of using puppet in teaching speaking to young learners were dominated by enthusiasm and attractiveness. The students were enthusiastic to follow the activities during the learning process. They enjoyed the activities but sometimes they were too enthusiastic on to the material given. However, the teacher could handle the problem. It can be seen from the excerpt of students' answer from the interview transcription below.

I really like the puppets, indeed. Especially when we made our own puppets. I just imagine that my puppets are my little sister. Hihi. Thus, I also can remember the material easily when I use puppets.

It showed that the students were enthusiastic with puppet; especially they made their own puppet in the first meeting. Moreover, it showed a very positive toward the implementation of puppet. The excerpt below supports the previous statement.

I like your teaching and I don't feel bored in the classroom since I never made puppets and played games before. Since the classroom is in the afternoon, sometimes I feel sleepy and bored. Firstly, I feel nervous but I can enjoy it later on. I love your teaching, miss.

Generally, the students enjoyed the learning process with the teacher. They responded passionately to the activities. In addition, the results are equivalent to the result from a study conducted by Setyarini (2010) which shows how puppet can make young learners happy and enthusiastic to learn English. Furthermore, she found that young learners were brave to pretend to be the characters of puppet in the teaching and learning process.

In line with this study, the use of puppet in teaching speaking to young learners brought positive responses from the students. It is because the common teaching model only focused on the result of product and did not lead the students to the process of speaking that provided an appropriate teaching media.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study was concerned with the use of puppet in teaching speaking to young learners. The purpose of the study was to find out the benefits of the use of puppet in order to help students to speak, and to discover the young learners' responses toward the use of puppet in their speaking activity. The findings of this study showed that the use of puppet is an appropriate and effective approach in teaching speaking to young learners. The argument was supported by the data gained from the classroom observations, written documents, and interviews.

This study came up with some benefits related to the use of puppets in teaching speaking to young learners, as follows: (1) puppets help teacher in organizing the class, (2) puppets help teacher to teach in ease situation, (3) puppets tend to create students' high participation in the learning process, (4) puppets make students happy and enthusiastic, (5) puppets create the great atmosphere in the classroom, (6) puppets help students to speak in front of others, (7) encouraged students to improve their speaking ability.

Regarding the findings of the study, this study proposes some recommendations regarding to the speaking class activity for young learners. For the teachers who are interested in applying puppet in speaking activity, they should act out with good gestures and body language to make the puppets alive. To gain more objectivity, the upcoming research can be conducted in different method and approach but still use triangulation because several data will help the research. For those who are interested in conducting the similar research, they are advised to collect the data from more perspectives to yield a more comprehensive result as well others skills such as listening, reading, and writing.

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