

LEARNING COMMUNITY AS STRATEGY IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL

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ABSTRAK

The goal of this writing is to explore the learning speaking through learning community. Learning community is of element of contextual teaching and learning. Contextual teaching and learning (CTL) is approaches to be most effective in student learning, teachers must plan, implement, reflect upon, and revise lessons. Such plans are based on CTL principles and approaches that require teachers to serve in the following roles: facilitator, organizer of the teaching/learning/assessment process, role model, learning mentor, content specialist, and knowledge dispenser. A learning community is a model of teaching and learning that has been consistently shown to improve students' speaking. The reason why learning community can enhance the students' in expressing idea because it has the meaning as follows: 1).Group of learning which communicate to share the idea and experience, 2).Working together to solve the problem and 3).The responsibility of each member of learning group.

Key Words: Learning Community, Strategy, Speaking Skill

A. Introduction

People can communication with one another by using language. Pinker in Browns (2000) states that language is a complex specialized skill, which develops in the child spontaneously without conscious effort or formal instruction deployed without awareness of its underlying logic, is qualitatively the same in every individual, and distinct from more general abilities for process information or behave intelligently. Language can also be defined as a system of arbitrary, vocal symbols which permits all people in a given culture, or other people who have learn the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact. English is one of thousands languages in this world. Because it is spoken by many people around the world. English has become a tool for international communication such as in commerce, banking, tourism, diplomacy, sciences, and technology.

English has different uses and functions in many countries. It is considered as a mother tongue, as a second language and as a foreign language. Richard (1985) explains that English is used as the mother tongue or first language if people in a certain country use English as their national language. English is used as a mother tongue in countries such as United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, United States, Canada, etc. English functions as a second language when the people use English in their daily language but they still have their own mother tongue. As a second language English is used alongside with other language it is commonly the most important language education, government, business, etc.

In brief, in many countries English has three major functions. The first is English as a mother tongue. It means that English is used in all fields both formal and informal. The second is that English as a second language. In the countries where English is used as a second language, it has a privileged position such as the medium of instruction in the school and college. The third is English as a foreign language. It means that English is used for science, technology, and international communication, but it is only in a small frequency.

B. Discussion

Teaching Learning English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

Toenlierson (2000) defines teaching as anything done by teachers or material developers to facilitate the learning of language. Teaching can be done to the learner and teaching indirectly is a process to help the learners to discover things for themselves. Another definition explained by Brown (2000). He says that teaching in guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learners to learn, and setting the condition for learning. The understanding of how the learner learns will determine the philosophy of education, teaching style, approach, method, and classroom techniques.

Another definition of teaching is stated by Richard and Lockhart (1994). They say that teaching in activity which is embedded within a set of culturally bound assumptions about teacher and learners. Those definitions show that teaching can not be

defined apart from learning. There will always be interrelation between the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

Brown (2006) adds that theory of teaching which is in harmony with the integrated understanding of the learners and the subject matter to be learned, will point the way to the success of some procedures on a certain situation for certain learners under the various communities of the particular context of learning. In other words, the theory of learning should "stand in the head" of theory of teaching, because the teaching process can be carried out without the process of learning. The elements of teaching and the elements of learning support each other.

According to Richard (2005), a particular justification for teaching English in a country is different from the other countries, but the common factors for teaching English is because English has the knowledge that is valued. He adds that the decision as to what the status of English will be within a society is a question of language policy. Language policy decisions are made at the highest level of national and educational planning. Such policy may specify (a) the circumstances under which English will be taught, and (b) the aims or goals that serve as justification for the teaching English such as for appreciation of foreign culture, for reason of higher education, for science and technological advancement, and for international trade and communication. Senior high school students or teenagers are categorized into adolescents' learners. In this period, teenagers like to spend their time for hanging around, friends, peers, and often

disruptive behavior in class. However, they have a great capacity in learning if the teacher can engage them.

The characteristics of adolescents' learners according to Harmer (2001) are:

- 1) They seem to be less lively and humorous than adults.
- 2) Identity has to be forged among classmates and friends; peer approval may be considerably more important for the student than the attention of the teacher.
- 3) They would be much happier if such problem did not exist.
- 4) They may be disruptive in class.
- 5) They have a great potential creativity and a passionate commitment to things that interest them.

Adolescents are torn by many conflicts and many moments of indecision, because as Harmer says that adolescent is a period where someone is searching for individual identity and that this search provides the key challenge for this age group. Identity has to be forged among classmates and friends (Harmer, 2001). Diagnosis of adolescence is complicated by the fact that the characteristics of secondary school students in general do not necessarily apply to every adolescent boy or girl. The characteristics of every individual are very heterogeneous. Harmer also states that adolescents sometimes can cause discipline problems and be disruptive in class. It because of the boredom they feel and the happiness if there is challenge found (Harmer, 2001). However, there is something which is interesting from

adolescents. As Penny Ur in Harmer suggests, teenage students are in fact overall the best language learners (Harmer, 2001). Teenagers have a great capacity to learn, a great creativity, passionate commitment to things which interest them, and a great solidarity among classmates. Thus, they have unique characteristics. Teacher has to be able to use these characteristics and dig their potency through a supportive and constructive way, so that besides achieving the goal of teaching learning process with enthusiasm the learners morally can be good learners.

Brown (2003) suggests that teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, setting the condition for learning. The teacher as facilitator should give the facility to the learners the learning process. He must select the teaching material related to the learners' need, and arrange them from the simple to the complex item. Richards et al. (2005) suggest that the principles of developing teaching materials are:

- (1) Careful selection of what to be taught;
- (2) Improving limits on what is to be taught;
- (3) Arranging what is to be taught in terms of the four skills;
- (4) Grading materials from simple to complex.

A teacher should be able to choose the effective methods of teaching to expose every particular material, since all methods have their advantages and disadvantages. This is in line with Harmer's (2001) opinion that the teacher has to be able to perform as controller, organizer, prompter, participant, resource, tutor, observer and model. Here, the teacher has acquired knowledge about curriculum,

teaching methods, subject matter, and child behavior, together with a wealth of other particular information resulting from the experience of working with students in numerous contexts and different materials.

In the teaching learning process the teacher has to pay attention to the learners' personalities or individual differences, because students have different abilities and points of view, background and experience. So that English as a foreign language can be enjoyable subject and mastered by the learners well with pleasure.

In conclusion, the process of teaching can not be separated from learning because these processes are interrelated in the real situation and the elements support each other. The theory of teaching and learning should be in harmony to reach a successful teaching and learning process. In the teaching English as a foreign language, there are several aims. They are: first, for appreciation of foreign culture, second, for reaction of higher education, third, for science and technological advancement, and fourth, for international commerce, trade and communication.

Teaching Speaking

According to Hornby (1995) teaching means giving the instruction to (a person): give a person (knowledge skill, etc). While speaking means to make use of words in an ordinary voice. So, teaching speaking is giving instruction to a person in order to communicate. Tarigan (1990) defines that speaking is a language skill that is developed in child life, which is preceded by listening skill, and at that period speaking skill is

learned. It means that speaking is the basic language. The process of speaking skill has happened or proceeded by listening skill. Increasing listening skill is very beneficial for speaking ability.

The goal of teaching speaking skills is to communicate efficiency. Learners should be able to make themselves understood, using their current proficiency to the fullest. They should try to avoid confusion in the message due to faulty pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary, and to observe the social and cultural rules that apply in each communication situation (Burnkart, 1998). Teaching speaking, in my opinion, is the way for students to express their emotions, communicative needs, interact to other person in any situation, and influence the others. For this reason, in teaching speaking skill it is necessary to have clear understanding involved in speech.

Methods of Teaching Speaking

A researcher needs to know the definition of method and technique in teaching English. Fauziati (2002) has pointed out that method is treated at the level of design in which the roles of teachers, learners, and instructional materials are specified.

There are ten methods of teaching foreign language (Fauziati, 2002) such as: Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Direct Method (DM), Audio-lingual Method (ALM), Situational Language Teaching (SLT), Community Language Learning (CLL), Total Physical Response (TPR), Natural Approach (NA), Silent Way (SW), Suggestopedia, and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).
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However, in this research the writer wants to describe the Communicative Language Teaching method as the way of teaching speaking. To get a clear description of what CLT, the writer has adapted the theory of CLT from Brumfit (1979) in Fauziati (2002). CLT attempts to communicative activities may be encouraged from the very beginning. Thus language learning is learning to communicate. Language is created by the individual often through trial and error, and fluency and acceptable language is the primary goal: accuracy is judged not in the abstract but in context. Through this method the students are expected to interact with others.

Harmer (2001) explains that the aim of Communicative Language Teaching as follows: The communicative approach or CLT have now become generalized terms to describe learning sequences which aim to improve the student's ability to communicate, in stark contrast to teaching which is aimed more at learning bits of language just because they exist and without focusing on their use in communication. Related to the expert contribution, the writer concludes that the goal of CLT method is to create and improve the student's ability in communication.

Techniques of Teaching Speaking

Fauziati (2002) describes that technique is classroom practice done by the teacher when presenting a language program this is the way the classroom activities are integrated into lessons and used as the basis for teaching learning.

In this research, the writer wants to describe the dialogue as teacher's technique in
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teaching speaking. However, dialogue is the interaction between people with different view points, intent on learning from one another. The purpose of this learning is to lay the foundation for creating new solutions (Phillips, 2004) any reasons practicing dialogue because it is an effective way of providing conditions for the appropriation of newly encountered language features. A balance needs to be found, however, between security and challenge. Making the task too easy, as when students are given unlimited time to simply read a dialogue aloud, is unlikely to motivate the students to make the kind of adjustments in the current state of their knowledge that are needed in order to integrate new knowledge.

On the other hand, placing too much performance pressure on learners too soon may have the risk taking that is necessary if their competence is to be extended, one way to ease pressure on learners is to give them sufficient time to rehearse before asking them to perform in front of the class (Thornbury, 2005). Finally, the writer concludes that dialogue is one of teacher's techniques in teaching speaking. Dialogue is the conversation between two or more people to share ideas or view points. Today dialogue is used in educational program. Fact, dialogue used in such school to improve the students' speaking ability by treat

The Principles of CTL

1. Constructivism

Constructivism is the foundation of CTL. The basic premise is that an individual learner must actively .build knowledge and

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skills. However, all advocates of constructivism agree that it is the individual processing of stimuli from the environment and the resulting cognitive structure that produce adaptive behavior rather than the stimuli themselves³³. In the classroom teaching learning process, the application of constructivism are applied in five step of learning that are activating knowledge, acquiring knowledge, understanding knowledge, applying knowledge and reflecting on knowledge³⁴. The constructivism paradigm has led us to understand how learning can be facilitated through certain types of engaging, constructive activities. This model of learning emphasizes meaning making through active participation in situated context socially, culturally, historically, and politically.

2. Inquiry

Basically, inquiry is a complex idea that means many things to many people in any contexts. Inquiry is asking, asking something valuable that related to the topic discussed. Inquiry is defined as .a seeking for truth, information or knowledge seeking information by questioning. in applying inquiry activity in the classroom teaching, there are several steps that should be followed that are formulating problem, collecting data through observation, analyzing and presenting data (through written form, picture, report and table) and finally, communicating and presenting the result of data to the readers, classmates, and the other audients

3. Questioning

Questioning is the mother of contextual teaching and learning, the

beginning of knowledge, the heart of knowledge and the important aspect of learning. Sadker and Sadker, as quoted by Nurhadi, mentioned the important of questioning technique in classroom teaching. They said,

To question well is to teach well. In the skillful use of the question more than anything else lies fine art of teaching; for in it we have the guide to clear and vivid ideas, and the quick spur of imagination, the stimulus to thought, the incentive to action. What is in a question, you ask? Everything. It is the way of evoking stimulating response or stultifying inquiry. It is in essence, the very core of teaching. The art of questioning is the art of guide learning.

Sometimes, the teacher asks to the students before, during and after the lesson. At other times, they are posed effectively by the students to focus their own lesson, keep them engaged and help them monitor their understanding of what was learned. In a productive teaching learning, questioning activity are useful for checking students comprehension, solving problem faced by students, stimulating responses to the students, measuring student's curiosity, focusing student attention, and refreshing students prior knowledge.

Learning Community

In learning community, the result of learning can be gotten from gathering others and also can be taken from sharing with friends, other groups, and between make out

person and not. Actually, learning community has the meaning as follows: 1).Group of learning which communicate to share the idea and experience, 2).Working together to solve the problem and 3).The responsibility of each member of learning group. It is sometimes forgotten that language classes operate as communities, each within its own collection of shared understandings that have been build up over time. The overall character or each language class is created, developed, and maintained by everyone in room. Each class member has a specific role to play, even those with ostensibly low profile such as .onlooker or observer. (noticing what is going on), .knower. (being privy to shared class understanding) and follower (reacting in the same way as everyone else to certain teacher or student initiatives).

Modeling

Basically, modeling is verbalization of ideas, teacher demonstrates to students to study and acting what the teacher need to be implemented by students Modeling activity can be summarized into demonstrates the teacher's opinion and demonstrates how does the teacher want the student to learn

Reflections

Reflection is the ways of thinking about what the students have learned and thinking about what the students have done in the past. Reflection is figuration of activity and knowledge that just have received. Teacher need to do the reflections in the end of teaching learning process. In the end of teaching learning process, teacher spends a

little time and ask student to do the reflection. The realization of reflection can be done by giving direct statement about the information that acquired in the lesson, some notes or journal on student book, some impression and suggestion from students about the learning process and discussion.

Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment is a procedure of achievement in the CTL. Assessments of students, performance can come from the teacher and the students. Authentic assessment is the process of collecting the data that can give the description of student learning development. In the process of learning, not only the teacher that can be placed to provide accurate assessments of students' performance, but also students can be extremely effective at monitoring and judging their own language production. They frequently have a very clear idea of how well they are doing or have done, and if we help them to develop this awareness, we can greatly enhance learning. Meanwhile, authentic assessment has some characteristics that are :(a) Involves real world experience, (b) Allows access to information, (c) Encourages the use of computer, dictionary and human resources, (d) Engages the students by relevance, (e) Uses open-ended format, (f) Includes self-assessment and reflection, (g) Warrant effort and practice, (h) Identifies strength to enable students to show what they can do and (i) Make assessment criteria clearer to students. Essentially, the question that needs to answer by authentic assessment is .Does the students learn something?. Not What have they already

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known?. So, the students are assessed through many ways, not only assessed their examination test.

The Terms of Speaking

Jeremy Harmer (2003) states that the ability to speak English presupposes the elements necessary for spoken production as follows language features. The elements necessary for spoken production, are the following:

- 1) Connected speech: in connected speech sounds are modified (assimilation), omitted (elision), added (linking), or weakened (through contractions and stress patterning). It is for this reason that we should involve students in activities designed specifically to improve their connected speech
- 2) Expressive devices: native speakers of English change the pitch and stress of particular parts of utterances, vary volume and speed, and show by other physical and non-verbal (paralinguistic) means how they are feeling (especially in face to – face interaction). The use of these devices contributes to the ability to convey meanings.
- 3) Lexis and grammar: teachers should therefore supply a variety of phrases for different functions such as agreeing or disagreeing, expressing surprise, shock, or approval.
- 4) Negotiation language: effective speaking benefits from the negotiator language we use to seek clarification and show the structure of what we are saying. We often need to ask for

clarification when we are listening to someone else talk and it is very crucial for students.

Mental or social processing Success of speaker's productivity is also dependent upon the rapid processing skills that talking necessitates are: (1) Language processing: Language processing involves the retrieval of words and their assembly into syntactically and propositionally appropriate sequence. (2) Interacting with others: effective speaking also involves a good deal of listening, an understanding of how the other participants are feeling, and knowledge of how linguistically to take turns or allow others to do so. (3) (On the spot) information processing: quite apart from our response to others feelings, we also need to be able to process the information they tell us the moment we get it.

Learning Community

In education circles, the term *learning community* has become commonplace. It is being used to mean any number of things, such as extending classroom practice into the community, bringing community personnel into the school to enhance the curriculum and learning tasks for students, or engaging students and teachers in simultaneously learning. In CTL, as C-STARS (2001) explains, learning community can be form as the willingness of the students to speak and share ideas, and understanding that collaborate with others to create learning is greater than if they work alone.

Obviously, the process or concept of learning community is not something new both

for teachers and students. The concept of making the best of social interaction in the learning process has been introduced by the two famous cognitivists, Piaget and Vygotsky (Jacobs et.al., 1996). Based on this concept, they believe that interacting with others could be an important aid in learning process. This view, then, become the basic theory of some approaches, such as Task-Based Language Teaching, Communicative Language Teaching, Content-Based instruction, and Cooperative Language Learning.

From the approaches above, the concepts of learning adopted by Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) is the most relevant with the concept of learning community in CTL approach. The characteristics of CLL which are (1) uses small groups of three or four students, (2) focuses on tasks to be accomplished, (3) requires group cooperation and interaction, (4) mandates individual responsibility to learn, and (5) supports division of labor are in line with what proposed in Learning) Community in CTL. Based on that consideration, it is reasonable if said that Learning Community is the bridge to apply cooperative learning in a classroom (Wilson 2002).

The notion of *community*, according to Reynolds (2004: 117), acknowledges that as well as the teacher's contribution, learner's skill, knowledge and experience are also available as a resource of learning. Here, experience refers to what the learners have had in their real life this term, as Ornstein (1990:494) states, connotes a large concept, including classroom and school activities, as

well as out- of-school and community activities.

Pedler (in Reynolds, 2004), then, summarizes the essential principles of the learning community as follows;

- 1) That each individual takes primary responsibility for identifying and meeting their own learning needs;
- 2) That each person is responsible for helping others identify and meet their needs and for offering themselves as flexible resource to the community.

In other words, whatever the role of the teachers in initiating the activities and whatever their contribution is, its control is shared with the learners. Working in groups or cooperating with others is the core of learning community activities.

There are many quite different methods in forming the groups. Most involve students in four- member, mixed ability groups, some base on the same interest of the students and some use varying group sizes. Somehow, an article written by Dumas (2002) seems to be 11 wise consideration to form groups. He said that cooperative learning should involve small, heterogeneous teams, usually of four or five members, working together towards a group task in which each member is individually accountable for part of an outcome that can not be completed unless the members work together; in other words, the group members are positively interdependent.

Positive interdependence is critical to the success of cooperative group, because there will be a process of an

interconnectedness among the members by which it will help the students to learn how to give, to take and to share with others as well as in much of life.(Jhonson, 2002:34). She stated further that when we cooperate with others successfully, then the result of the group as the whole will be greater than the sum of its part. In the groups, students can share strength and also develop their interpersonal skills. They learn to deal with conflict. Based on the statements above, it can be concluded that when cooperative groups in learning community are guided by clear objectives that allow students to develop their positive interdependence, the students will engage in numerous activities that improve their understanding of subjects explored.

Learning Community in Improving Speaking Skill

One of the most important aspects of speaking is that it always occurs within a context. When someone speaks means that she/he is both using language to carry out various social functions and choosing forms of language which relate in a relevant way to the cultural and social context. In order to fulfill these requirements in the learning process in the classroom, teacher needs to create activity that have social in it and enable the students to practice speaking in classroom activities, social context can be realized through group works. About this, Reynolds (2004: 24) says that if learning is essentially a social process then using groups for learning is more likely to be effective than if it is limited to more individualistic approaches.

In learning community, speak and share ideas in the group works are the core in designing the activities of learning. Group discussion among the members is supposed to exist in accomplishing the tasks. Here, the members can express and exchange the ideas freely with friends to get a better understanding about a topic discussed. In relation with speaking skill, the activities proposed by learning community such as group discussion, problem solving, neighborhood walk, role-playing, and simulation can facilitate the requirements need to practice speaking. Dillon (in Orlich, 2008:25) stresses this clearly by saying that besides promoting meaningful personal interaction, discussion promotes a variety of learning, including content, skills, attitudes, and processes. He went on to say that it is an appropriate way to improve both the thinking and the speaking skills of student. Discussion can, also be a means of enhancing student' analytical skill.

From the description of the concepts above, both speaking and learning community have a close relationship. Through the activities of learning community, the learners get the chance to practice speaking in order to fulfill a number of social functions within social contexts language used.

Conclusion

One of the most important aspects of speaking is that it always occurs within a context. When someone speaks means that she/he is both using language to carry out various social

functions and choosing forms of language which relate in a relevant way to the cultural and social context. To fulfill these requirements in the teaching learning process in the classroom, teacher needs to create activity that have social in it and enable the students to practice speaking. Learning community is as strategy to overcome these problems. In classroom activities, social context can be realized through group works. The group works can improve the students' ability in speaking, by working in groups, the students can share ideas and help each other to comprehend their speaking with. The application of Learning Community element direct students to express, share ideas, in the group works are the core in designing the activities of learning. Group discussions among the members are supposed to exist in accomplishing the tasks. By following the rules in learning community will help the teacher in teaching speaking and further will get the positive effect of using it.

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