

Investigating the Effects of Story Retelling Technique as a Closed Task vs. Story-Completion as an Open Task on EFL Learners' Speaking

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Abstract: *This paper discusses a learning medium, especially for English language teaching to EFL students through retelling stories and story completion tasks. By using these methods, they can be one of the exciting activities for bringing students interested in learning English with confident. In these activities, students are able to convey their ideas and all students obtain the same opportunities to speak at every meeting. The activities are oral activities that make student relax, happy and fun. These techniques are expected to be useful for English teachers, so that they will enrich the teaching of speaking techniques. They are also for the students are expected to be able to improve English language skills, motivation and self-confident, and adoring the English language in school and outside of school. The study first examines the story retelling technique; then it discusses the story completion technique. The discussion ends with a conclusion in which the similarities and differences of two methods are mentioned.*

Keywords: *Story Retelling Technique, Closed Task, Story Completion, Open Task*

1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the important skills that should be mastered by the students besides three other skills in learning a language. Speaking is quite different from other language skills, because speaking requires the ability to perform in public. It means that speaking requires a lot of more power when it performs in public. Through speaking people could express and deliver feeling and ideas directly. They make speaking be more natural than other forms of communication. However, to speak well is not easy because someone who wants to speak should be able to give understanding to people who listen to them and express their ideas.

“A lot of people use English as an international means of communication because English is truly international language meeting more than just national needs. Many countries have accepted it as a second language. Above and beyond this, science, trade, sport and international relations of various kinds have given the English language the status of one of the world's most important languages” claims Agamdžanova (1986:15). Based on Kurikulum Bahasa Inggris, KTSP (2006), English is firstly taught to learners as a local curriculum lesson since elementary school. In this stage learners began to introduce with four basic skills of English in the simplest

way such as introduced them with it vocabulary, how to communicate with it vocabulary, learned to read, etc; which all of those are important to mastering English. Then, for the junior high school stage, English is taught to achieve the functional stage that learners will be able to communicate in written and orally. And to the next step that will be explain further in this paper, the senior high school learners will be taught English to achieve the informational stage that they will be able to access knowledge with their language capability.

Moon's theory states that "students need to know that the language they are going to learn will enable them to communicate their needs, ideas and opinions. Motivation comes from knowing that language activities in the classroom are at all times meaningful and aimed at real-life communication" (Moon 2000:8). Students are supposed to know grammatical patterns, proper use of vocabulary and sentence structures to fulfill properly their communicative activities. As communication takes a considerable amount of knowledge, time and specific skills to be able to communicate in the world, it is essential to show a learner his/her strengths and weaknesses.

Speaking is an oral communication which is used more by people in their social community. Through speaking people can express their thought, idea, and feeling to others. Clark (1997) says that speaking is fundamentally an instrument act for communication. The aim of speakers to do speaking is in order to have some effects of their listeners. Speaking is very crucial for people in sharing their ideas, opinion, or feeling to others. The speakers try to use the effective way to do speaking, so that the listeners can understand what they mean. To create a successful communication or interaction, the listener also has to pay more attention and listen carefully in order to be able to understand what the speaker say.

As it was explained by Widdowson "An effective conversation in a class involves active participation of students expressing themselves orally and confidently what they in mind" (1978:43). But, as soon as the bell rings for the end of the conversation in a class, students burst out with a surging storm of talk in their mother tongue as if they have finally found an outlet for their voices.

According to Harmer (2003), "teachers should focus their attention on those features that reflect the students' speaking ability of English proficiency" (Harmer 2003:89). Such factors as pronunciation, intonation, fluency, tone of voice, stress, choice of words and effectiveness of communication should be taken into consideration. Moon (2000) adds that "students have a real desire to speak English more effectively not only in the EFL classroom but also in out-of-class situations" (Moon 2000:33).

In teaching Junior High School Students, teachers have to consider their background knowledge. In this case, Students still want to play in learning English. They need a kind of situation that is interesting and fun which can motivate them to study. Based on what the writer were searching

at school, teachers still use the “classic way” in teaching and learning process which is monotonous and boring. They lack of creativity in improving their technique. Moreover, they are lazy to use some tools or media to support their teaching. As a result, the atmosphere of the class is so flat even bad. It can also influence interest of the students and it can cause boredom among class.

Traditional classroom speaking practice often takes the form of drills in which one person asks a question and another gives an answer. The question and the answer are structured and predictable, and often there is only one correct, predetermined answer. The purpose of asking and answering the question is to demonstrate the ability to ask and answer the question.

In contrast, the purpose of real communication is to accomplish a task, such as conveying a telephone message, obtaining information, or expressing an opinion. In real communication, participants must manage uncertainty about what the other person will say. Authentic communication involves an information gap; each participant has information that the other does not have. In addition, to achieve their purpose, participants may have to clarify their meaning or ask for confirmation of their own understanding.

To create classroom speaking activities that will develop communicative competence, instructors need to incorporate a purpose and an information gap and allow for multiple forms of expression. However, quantity alone will not necessarily produce competent speakers. Instructors need to combine structured output activities, which allow for error correction and increased accuracy, with communicative output activities that give students opportunities to practice language use more freely. In this article two ways of developing speaking are examined and discussed, the retelling story technique and the story completion technique.

2. Teaching Speaking Through Story Retelling task

Oral storytelling performances directly support the development of literacy by enriching the teaching of speaking and listening skills. You cannot write a language unless you can speak it. You cannot speak a language unless you have listened to it. Listening, speaking and literacy are mutually enhancing, interdependent activities that should be advanced without a hierarchy of value.

Language is demonstrably acquired through modeling. If there is little culture of 'talk' in the home, then it behooves educational establishments to develop a culture of constructive talk. Articulacy grows through dialogue and exercise. Listening models language use and develops the 'muscles' of the imagination; speaking establishes synaptic pathways between the imagination and the selection of language.

Many teachers and early educators are familiar with the wealth of research indicating that reading aloud to students enhances literacy development. However, studies have shown that the learning experiences that occur before, during and after reading aloud have an equally important impact on literacy development.

Story retelling - the process by which a student listens to or reads a story and then summarize, or "retells", the story in his or her own words - is a technique that ties into these learning experiences and is an effective way to improve students' reading comprehension and consequently their speaking. For beginner students who are just starting to develop their reading skills, this exercise can be extremely helpful.

Studies on story recall have found that extended use of the technique of story retelling leads to large improvements in story comprehension, making inferences, and understanding of story structure. Stoicovy (2004) also points out that based on several studies, retelling has positive influence in language learning as it promotes students' ability in rearranging information from the text that they have read. In addition, Brown & Cambourne (1987) mention that during the retelling process students apply and develop their language knowledge through the internalization of the texts' features Rather than having children answer specific questions about story details, story retelling requires students to focus on the bigger picture of the story and therefore allows the teacher to see how well a child understands the story as a whole. By having students tell the story in their own words, educators can identify students' strengths, and specific areas of difficulty that arise for individual students.

While a student is retelling a story, the teacher can help by asking open-ended questions when the child pauses or seems confused. Questions such as "what happens next?" and other general content questions can help the child without influencing how they respond. The goal should be to encourage students to think critically about the story and to improve their comprehension and vocabulary by having them articulate their thoughts. As students become more comfortable with retelling stories, their language and speaking and listening skills will improve.

Comparing students' retellings over time can be useful in monitoring their progress in comprehension and their speaking. In addition, story retelling can also be a helpful technique to assess a student's comprehension and speaking.

However, it should be added that story retelling is a closed task and students in this method could not have any creativity. They just summarize what they had read or listened. In this method they do not need to use other words that they do not know; students are able to use the vocabularies that were in the story.

In this type of teaching speaking students must speak according to that story they had read or listened. It can be said that retelling story is good for EFL students in their beginnings. So, this type is a closed task. Consequently, it may be said that retelling can also be used to determine students' understanding of story structure (O'Malley and Pierce, 1996:83). In retelling, choosing to read a story or text orally to students means that you will be assessing both listening comprehension and speaking skills. Retellings are appropriate for individual assessment of students at the beginning and intermediate levels and require no preparation on the part of the student.

Story retelling can also be performed through watching movies or cartoons. . Retelling stories from cartoon or movie is a good strategy in teaching speaking because this activity is very interesting to students because they are going to watch movie first and after that they are supposed to speak in front the class after watching that cartoon movie. In this activity the students have to focus while watching the movie before they get a chance to retell the stories in front of the class. However, this kind of activity is doing in group because that cartoon movie consists of some characters. It gives maximum language practice and the students have opportunity to see how effective they can communicate in English. The students also feel enjoyable while studying because the activity is watching a movie and the students also feel fun.

In this type of teaching the role of the teacher is important. The teacher plays one of the parts of the movie about five minutes duration of the movie itself. Students have to watch and listen carefully. They also can take a note of the part of the movie before do the conversation. After that, teacher asks the students to perform or speak in front of the class after they watch it. They can do the conversation the story with their chair mates. The activity that students have to do is to repeat as what the two of characters of say on the movie. In this activity, the teacher also motivates the students to be active, and gives enough chance to be initiative, creative, and independence. At this time, there are three phases that are appropriate to the students' characteristics: Exploration, Elaboration, and Confirmation.

Exploration means that teacher needs to inform the students that in retelling stories can use they own words. It means, the students can retell the story based on their understanding. Before the students retell their own stories, the teacher guides the students or accompanies them when they are retelling the stories. Here, the teacher gives a time to the students so that they can prepare themselves to be ready to retell the story.

Elaboration refers to that the students have to be ready in order to do the conversation or retell the stories. There are some students that are chosen by the teacher or even volunteers that perform in front of class.

The aim of Confirmation is that teacher can give some appreciations for the student who can retells the stories such as by giving a gift, additional mark, or even achievement orally. In contrast, the teacher should motivate the students who do not participate or are passive in learning process. It is expected to increase the students' motivation and self-confidence. Besides, the teacher also discusses about all of the students mistakes and makes correction of it.

At the end of the session and/ or this activity teacher and the students conclude about the lesson and the teacher asks the students if they have some difficulties in retelling stories speaking, they can solve it together. Besides, the teacher also might tell about their opinion of the learning process of the day. Next, the teacher tells the students about the new topic for the next meeting. Then, the teacher closes the lesson.

Overall, story retelling helps students develop important reading skills while allowing the teacher to easily assess their progress over time. Incorporating this teaching technique into an early education setting can greatly improve students' reading comprehension and vocabulary as well as help them become more engaged in the reading process. It can be added that improving the reading comprehension will help students to speak better.

3. Teaching Speaking Through Story Completion

Now many linguistics and EFL teachers agree on that students learn to speak in the second language by "interacting". Communicative language teaching and collaborative learning serve best for this aim. Communicative language teaching is based on real-life situations that require communication. By using this method in EFL classes, students will have the opportunity of communicating with each other in the target language. In brief, EFL teachers should create a classroom environment where students have real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language. This can occur when students collaborate in groups to achieve a goal or to complete a task.

Story completion is a very enjoyable, whole-class, free-speaking activity for which students sit in a circle. For this activity, a teacher starts to tell a story, but after a few sentences he or she stops narrating. Then, each student starts to narrate from the point where the previous one stopped. Each student is supposed to add from four to ten sentences. Students can add new characters, events, descriptions and so on.

This technique helps students' speaking skills improving. In this type of teaching students creativity also improve; in contrast to story retelling, in this technique students must use vocabulary of their own. This is an open task and it is students who manage the story and try to complete it.

There are a number of ways in which story completion can enhance intercultural understanding and communication. Stories can:

- allow students to explore their own cultural roots
- allow students to experience diverse cultures
- enable students to empathize with unfamiliar people/places/situations
- offer insights into different traditions and values
- help students understand how wisdom is common to all peoples/all cultures
- offer insights into universal life experiences
- help students consider new ideas
- reveal differences and commonalities of cultures around the world

There are other benefits of story completion such as stories promote a feeling of well-being and relaxation, increase children's willingness to communicate thoughts and feelings, encourage active participation, increase verbal proficiency, encourage use of imagination and creativity, encourage cooperation between students, and enhance listening skills.

There are some advantages of using story completion technique in teaching speaking. According to O'Malley and Pierce story completion gives students an opportunity to speak at length, if they can, without teacher interruption in an informal setting (O'Malley and Pierce, 1996:106). Teacher can ask students to tell a story as if they were telling it to someone who is not familiar with it. Routman stated in O'Malley and Pierce book for English language learners, completion helps developed oral language proficiency as well as reading comprehension (1996:106). Furthermore, telling stories often measures other skills such as reading comprehension, memory and organization . In their book of Authentic assessment O'Malley and Pierce (1996:12) said that story/text completion has many advantages. There is:

- Students produces oral report
- Can be scored on content or language components
- Scored with rubric or rating scale
- Can determine reading comprehension, and speaking development

4. Conclusion

As it has been clarified, in the story retelling method students can briefly summarize a tale or story they heard from somebody beforehand, or they may create their own stories to tell their classmates. Story telling fosters creative thinking. It also helps students express ideas in the format of beginning, development, and ending, including the characters and setting a story has to have. Students also can tell riddles or jokes. For instance, at the very beginning of each class session, the teacher may call a few students to tell short riddles or jokes as an opening. In this way, not only will the teacher address students' speaking ability, but also get the attention of the class.

In the contrast to story retelling, story completion is a very enjoyable free-speaking activity for which students sit in a circle. For this activity, a teacher starts to tell a story, but after a few sentences he or she stops narrating. Then, each student starts to narrate from the point where the previous one stopped. Each student is supposed to add from four to ten sentences. Students can add new characters, events, descriptions and so on.

Consequently it can be said that story completion seems better than story retelling for developing students' speaking skills. It seems students in the story retelling method are not creative and use the vocabularies of the story, but in the story completion method students are more creative and use their own vocabularies and also they pay more attention to the grammar of their speaking. Both techniques improve students' speaking skill; moreover, story retelling develops students' comprehension skill too.

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