

THE USE OF VISUAL RESPONSE SYMBOL TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING FLUENCY IN SUMMARIZING READING TEXTS OF INTERMEDIATE 3 CLASS IN LB LIA PALEMBANG

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Abstract

This study describes a group of intermediate three students' experiences in learning to make and share meaning about reading text through the creation of visual representations. This interpretative strategy, known as "visual response symbol," involves learners in creating symbols, pictures, and other non-linguistic signs to signify ideas generated through reading. The focus of the study was to investigate if visual response symbols technique could improve students' fluency in summarizing reading texts. The study supports teaching practices that provide opportunities for students of all ages to make and share meaning through multiple sign systems. The sample was 17 students of IN 3 level of LBPP LIA Palembang in term II/2016. The data were obtained by means of observation, teaching journals and video recordings. Based on the result of the data analysis, it was found out that there was a significant difference of students' fluency in speaking up their summary of the reading texts after implementing the visual response symbols. It was also found out that the samples had positive attitude toward the use of visual response symbols. They also, subconsciously, developed their 4Cs (Critical thinking and Problem solving, Communication, Collaboration, Creativity and Innovation) as they should find any strategy in order to produce words to tell their friend the summary of the reading texts they have read. Despite its satisfied finding, this class action research should be considered a preliminary technique that needs to be furthered by applying methods that are more comprehensive in order to promote students' fluency in speaking as well as develop their 4Cs.

Key Words: Visual response symbols, summary, fluency, reading text, the students of intermediate 3

1. Introduction

Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts (Chaney, 1998, p. 13). Speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching. Despite its importance, for many years, teaching speaking has been undervalued and English language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of

dialogues. However, today's world requires that the goal of teaching speaking should improve students' communicative skills, because, only in that way, students can express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriate in each communicative circumstance. In order to teach second language learners how to speak in the best way possible, some speaking activities are provided below.

Now many linguistics and ESL 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 ESL classes, students will have the opportunity of communicating with each other in the target language. In brief, ESL 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.

Teaching an intermediate three class was kind of a gift for me since the students were supposedly already active enough to use English to share their thought orally during the teaching and learning process. In fact, my prediction was incorrect. I just realized it when I came to the first reading text. After giving some activities to help the students comprehend the text, I check their understanding by asking them what the text was about. Then they started to answer my question by copying any single words written down in the reading text. They did not use their own words to summarize the reading text. The others just kept silent. They seemed just let their other friends retell the story. I noticed only some students that answered my questions again and again. I, then, questioned myself why the students did not want to share their ideas, why they just neglected the questions and wished other friends to answer. I wondered why some of them did not use any different words to retell the text and the rest just kept silent. Hence, I thought that I needed something to boost the students' fluency in the speaking skill that is visual response symbols.

Based on this problematic experience, I felt it was very urgent to find the solution for this problem. Then, I came up with this technique, called ‘Visual Response Symbols’. This technique was hoped to help the students to improve their fluency in summarizing reading texts. Moreover, I had high expectation that this technique could improve the students’ achievement in lessons.

Research Objective

The purpose of this classroom action research was to find out whether the visual response symbol could be used to improve student’s speaking fluency in summarizing reading texts.

2. Theoretical Background

Visual Response Symbol

Wileman (1993) defines visual literacy as “the ability to ‘read,’ interpret, and understand information presented in pictorial or graphic images” (p. 114). Associated with visual literacy is visual thinking, described as “the ability to turn information of all types into pictures, graphics, or forms that help communicate the information” (Wileman, p. 114). A similar definition for visual literacy is “the learned ability to interpret visual messages accurately and to create such messages” (Heinich, Molenda, Russell, & Smaldino, 1999, p. 64). The ERIC definition of visual literacy is “a group of competencies that allows humans to discriminate and interpret the visible action, objects, and/or symbols, natural or constructed, that they encounter in the environment” (<http://searcheric.org/>). Robinson (as quoted in Sinatra, 1986) describes visual literacy as “an organizing force in promoting understanding, retention, and recall of so many academic concepts with which students must contend” (p. v). And lastly, Sinatra defines visual literacy as “the active reconstruction of past visual experience with incoming visual messages to obtain meaning” (p. 5), with the emphasis on the action by the learner to create recognition. The use and interpretation of images is a specific language in the sense that images are used to communicate messages that must be decoded in order to have meaning (Branton, 1999; Emery &

Flood, 1998). If visual literacy is regarded as a language, then there is a need to know how to communicate using this language, which includes being alert to visual messages and critically reading or viewing images as the language of the messages. Visual literacy, like language literacy, is culturally specific although there are universal symbols or visual images that are globally understood.

Fluency

Nunan (2003) defines fluency as the use of the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses. Fluency means the smoothness or flow with which sounds, syllables, words and phrases are joined together when speaking quickly. Language fluency is the degree to which one is fluent in a language. Someone is said to be fluent if he has a high level of [language proficiency](#), most typically [foreign language](#) or another learned language, and more narrowly to denote fluid language use, as opposed to slow, halting use. In this narrow sense, fluency is necessary but not sufficient for language proficiency: fluent language users (particularly uneducated native speakers) may have narrow vocabularies, limited discourse strategies, and inaccurate word use. They may be illiterate, as well. [Native language](#) speakers are often incorrectly referred to as fluent. Fluency is basically one's ability to be understood by both native and non-native listeners. A higher level would be [bilingual](#), which indicates one is capable of speaking in two languages, either having learned them simultaneously or one after the other. In the sense of proficiency, "fluency" encompasses a number of related but separable skills. In [reading](#), it means the ability to easily read and understand texts written in the language. In [writing](#), it is defined as the ability to formulate written texts in the language. In speaking, Fluency is the ability to produce speech in the language and be understood by its speakers. While in listening, the ability to follow and understand speech in the language is called fluency.

Summary

A summary is a short retelling of a longer written passage, containing the author's most important ideas. Summarizing helps improve both your reading and writing skills. To summarize, you must read a passage closely, finding the main ideas and supporting ideas. Then you must briefly write down those ideas in a few sentences or a paragraph. It is important to understand the difference between a summary and a paraphrase. A paraphrase is simply a rewriting of a passage in your own words. A summary, on the other hand, contains only the main idea and the supporting ideas of a passage. A summary will be much shorter than a paraphrase.

Reading text

We live in a rapidly changing world, where both the quantity and type of written materials are increasing and where more and more people are expected to use these materials in new and sometimes more complex ways. It is now generally accepted that our understanding of “reading literacy” evolves along with changes in society and culture. The reading literacy skills needed for individual growth, economic participation and citizenship 20 years ago were different from those of today; and it is likely that in 20 years' time they will change further still. Reading requires material for the reader to read. In an assessment, that material – a text (or a set of texts) related to a particular task – must be coherent within itself. That is, the text must be able to stand alone without requiring additional material to make sense to the proficient reader. While it is obvious that there are many different kinds of texts and that any assessment should include a broad range, it is not so obvious that there is an ideal categorisation of kinds of texts. (PISA, 2015)

3. Method

1. Subject of research

The subject used for this classroom action research was Intermediate 3 class, LBPP LIA Palembang term II/2016. The class is consisted of 17 students.

2. Plan of action

This research was conducted in 4 meetings, from May 24 to June 10, 2016. There were some texts I assigned the students to read. For this purpose, 'visual response symbols' technique was executed in some meetings. Here are the steps of applying the technique:

- a. Group the students into 4 or 5 groups
- b. Apply this technique in whilst stages
- c. Distibute each group a text
- d. Ask them to read it
- e. Assign them to find out pictures that represent the idea in the text (it can be from any sources or they may create it by themselves)
- f. Let them practice telling the summary by using pictures
- g. Ask them to present the summary with pictures in front of the class.

3. Data collection

a. Class Observation

It was done to observe the students' involvement in every meeting, the activity was videotaped and recorded in teaching journal entry.

b. Video Recording

It was done to see whether or not the students have progress during the intervention observed by the teacher.

4. Data analysis

All data obtained from all instruments to collect the data, which were teaching journal and video tapes were analyzed by using descriptive method.

4. Result And Discussion

Based on the analysis of the data collected, the result was accomplished as follows:

MEETING	DATE	TEACHING JOURNAL
1	May 24	<p>I planned to have a reading text today. I had taught two reading texts in this class before. The results were always the same. Every time I asked them to tell me the summary of those two texts, they would keep silent. Only some of them answered it but they repeated the words from the texts. Today would be a bit different. I put them in groups. Cutting the original text into 4. A student would be responsible for one or two paragraphs. I gave them time to read and tell other members what the paragraph was about. After that, I gave them some questions related to the text and they competed to answer my questions. Finally, I asked them to summarize the story. After minutes, they were ready to tell the class about it. The result was shocking me. Almost everyone copied and pasted any single words from the text. They did not use their own words.</p>
2	May 27	<p>I came to the class with some pictures. I put them on the board and told them the summary of a narrative text (I took it from old version book of elementary 2). After that I assigned them to find out pictures that represented the text they had read. The pictures could be based on their perception since they would be the person who would tell others about it.</p>
3	June 3	<p>When I entered the class, I saw them practicing the picture telling. The class was so crowded. But I was glad because they were so enthusiastic to be in front of the class telling their summary with the pictures. I</p>

		started calling the group one by one to present in front of the class. The result was great. They were able to tell it without seeing any text and they started using their own words in summarizing the text. I could see that the pictures really helped them. The next task was another reading text. I assigned them to summarize the reading text again with the pictures. I just wanted to make sure that this technique worked very well.
4	June 10	Today was the show time. They perfectly prepared the pictures in the cartoon. And finally they nailed it. Each group presented the summary well.

As seen from the journal entries, it can be concluded that the students gradually accepted “visual response symbols” as their routine which encouraged the students to actively and creatively tell the summary with pictures. They might get bored at the beginning but little by little they complained less because they were not confused with the procedure anymore and they could finish it in short time.

Another benefit of applying this technique is that from the observation for the whole session, I noticed that this technique apparently helped my students with the reading text discussed in the class. When they had difficulty in remembering the text, they just needed to see the pictures. Ultimately, the time they spent for doing the exercises was less than before and they independently did their tasks.

5. Conclusion And Remark

Teaching speaking is a very important part of language learning. The ability to communicate in a foreign language clearly and efficiently contributes to the success of the learner in school and success later in every phase of life. Therefore, it is essential that language teachers pay great attention to teaching speaking. Rather than

leading students to pure memorization, providing a rich environment where meaningful communication takes place is desired. With this aim, various speaking activities can contribute a great deal to students in developing basic interactive skills necessary for life. These activities make students more active in the learning process and at the same time make their learning more meaningful and fun for them.

Based on the analysis of the data, the conclusion that can be drawn is that the visual response symbol can be applied to support the students to be active, creative, communicative and fluent in speaking. It is also proven from the result of their test that the students have gained the benefit of this technique by showing their improvement in fluency, vocabulary and sentence structure. In addition, the visual response symbol can also be utilized to help student. Knowing these benefits, for my fellow teachers who are also experiencing this kind of problem, “the Visual Respons Symbol” can be recommended for the alternative activity for providing the information about the text the students need to retell. To make permanent impact for the students and make it as their habit, it is suggested that this technique be done in longer period of time. Hopefully, by making this as their habit, the students can be a self and independent learner.

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