

Filmmaking for English Speaking Skills Enhancement at Tertiary Level

Meita Lukitawati Sujatna

English Departmen, Widyatama University

Jl. Cikutra 204 A, Bandung, Indonesia

meita.sujatna@widyatama.ac.id

ABSTRACT

To date, the learning process of English speaking skills have benefitted from the facilities information and computer technology have to offer. The abilities to record, edit and present the work of the students have been expedient in regards to capturing, monitoring, and evaluating the progress of the students. It is due to the fact that the necessary equipment is accessible in terms of price and availability. Also, it is common to assume that students may have developed adequate skills in utilizing the equipment to cater for recording and editing audio-visual material needs. With the points in mind, the question of incorporating audio-visual materials into a collaborative learning experience at the tertiary level is no longer a difficult issue, but rather to what extent such cooperation can be explored and manipulated to suit the needs of the teaching learning process. At Widyatama University, the first level students had undergone an initial work of collaborative learning using filmmaking activities for a final project for the Spoken English courses. The group work consisted of 3-4 people composing short films about some themes such as fairy tales, fable stories, or even a short drama of real life. Completed work was then graded based on the items related to the syllabus rather than cinematographic elements to maintain its main objectives. During the process of making the films, the students were motivated to engage in brainstorming with and consulting the lecturer in English, unaware of the secondary objective which was to reinforce their speaking ability and confidence.

Keyword: English speaking skills, collaborative learning, filmmaking

1. INTRODUCTION

Students need a lot of self-exposure in fulfilling the job competition. Learning using a conventional method is not popular anymore. The paradigm has changed, namely from the teacher-centered to the learner-centered approach. Using Technology based equipments as supporting media has become one of the ways to improve quality of language exposure for the individual learner as well as students' experience in the classroom. The use of the technology is unavoidable since it can play a very important role in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process. As technology develops and becomes closer to people's daily life, the challenge to use technology for learning and teaching purposes becomes stronger. In this paper we share our experience in enhancing English speaking skills at tertiary level students in Widyatama University and we propose this as an alternative method to improve student's learning.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1. Paradigm shift

The purpose of language teaching has changed a lot from time to time. Linguists, for example Allwright [1] and Kumaradivellu [2] criticized that the model of Teaching English has shifted from improving learning to improving methods.

This paper proposes an alternative method to improve the ability of students' in enhancing speaking skills. Educational conditions and facilities supported by technology in Indonesia are extremely heterogeneous, ranging from those institutions that use conventional methods to very modern ones. Inevitably, every educational institution must compete to improve the methods and educational facilities to support their students in pursuing job in the future, especially those candidates who are willing to work. Educational institutions should prepare graduates who are ready to compete in the real world.

Kumaradivellu (2006) [3] said that Post method teacher education should experience change. Learners are familiar with technology: computer games, internet, iPod, video camera, and others. They expect their teachers to be good not only the subject alone, but they also understand them and their world. Teachers are supposed to be critical that they can teach in the complex social, political, economic, and cultural environment. They must be able to relate their personal knowledge to the professional knowledge so that they can practice and teaching experience become the teacher's method to improve learning.

Further, Palmer (1998) [4] pointed out that the wholeness of personal and professional knowledge is possible if the teacher is aware of her own identity and integrity. Otherwise she could not understand learners and the subject she teaches. Teachers and learners must have a dialog, not a monolog (teacher speaks, learners listen). They are in a learning community of truth, where they are critical and dare to face conflicts to improve knowledge or truth.

Lack of English competence is often still a handicap for our students. Learning English at school since primary school to university level is not a guarantee for the students to be able to absorb and use English optimally. Most of the time both learners and teachers as well as the curriculums are not in

their best condition. They are constrained by the many limitations, such as time and opportunity to expose their speaking ability using technology or equipments as a media for enhancing their English.. The situation is worsened in classes with large numbers of students. Many of the students are lacking in motivation. How then can we encourage our students to learn and to communicate properly? Therefore, to encourage them we should be more innovative in supporting and providing conditions for learning.

2.2. Teaching Models

“Learning is Fun,” is the spell word of the 21st Century education. To make this true, teachers can use various methods to improve learner’s English. There are some that I’ve been using with my students, and one of them is by making film as a final project for the first level students of Spoken English I and II.

Leland and Krathwohl (2002)^[3 &4 &5] pointed out that there are two models of teaching and learning namely the industrial model and the inquiry model which describe the teaching learning process through the characteristics of the participant’s engagement. The industrial model suggests that students are expected to be submissive towards the teaching approaches, and the teacher holds a dominant role in determining the course of process. The inquiry model, however, reflects a more active role of the students in enriching their knowledge and experience. Another point to make about the model is how IT has an equally strategic position in the process.

With the revolution of technology and our increasing dependency in IT in almost all aspects of people’s lives today, Leland and Krathwohl also emphasized the need to shift from the former to the latter model to synchronize the approach to education with the way we operate in the real world. The inquiry model has the objective of gearing the students to exploit technology in performing their duties at work. In their preparation, the learners and instructors are demanded to engage in social constructivist collaboration to construct their knowledge and skills and incorporate technology to make their tasks easier to perform. A curriculum of this method typically accentuates the integration method and the media relevant to the education and profession.

2.3. Spoken English I and II

Spoken English is a compulsory subject in English Department, Language Faculty, Widyatama University. Spoken English is available for 6 Semesters applied in the first three levels/years of courses. The goal of the subject is to reinforce their confidence and speaking ability or communication properly in English in class under teacher’s guidance and supervision.

Every level of Spoken English subjects has different focus:

Spoken English I, II and III are aimed at developing students; confidence and vocabulary, training their pronunciation and grammar so that students can practice in more relaxed and informal way, and still talking about common topics such as: favorite things, holidays, life story, falling in love, around

town, community services, shopping, learning styles, on vacation, gender roles taking care yourself, etc.

As a subject, Spoken English I, II and III is aimed at developing learners confidence in using informal and more formal English especially in daily conversation, lecture and discussion. The assessment is divided into two parts; mid test and final test. It will be supported by students' participation in the class activities and speaking performances (in this case making films as final project).

In this paper, the writer will discuss about the final project for Spoken English II.

Spoken English IV, V and VI

Spoken English III is the initial phase of academic and public speaking. The class activities are those of introduction to paper presentation, speech delivery, interviewing and even about how to cope with audience or to be a smart presenter on the stage.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

In response to the theories above aforementioned, it was decided that making a film was a suitable activity for the final project for Spoken English II courses. The whole process took one semester for 14 meetings for each course to complete and was carried out in three steps. The first half semester was dedicated to the introduction speaking skills reinforcement and the last part of the second semester was allocated for shooting, editing and presenting the films.

The first step was the evaluation of the student's level of speaking and writing skills. During the first half semester, the lecturer let the students to elaborate the topics based on syllabus and used those activities as an opportunity to practice their pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and confidence in more relaxed and informal way. They were encouraged to start choosing the topic or the story which would be performed as their final project and then measured in the mid test.

The second stage focused on script writing and discussion. In this stage, the students prepared the script under lecturer guidance and supervision. These activities were conducted in three steps: first, making groups and discussing what and why choosing the title. Second, script writing phase, they were given two weeks to finish it.

The last step was the process of film making. During the last five meetings was the discussion of the methods of the transformation and problems faced during the whole process.

Before the second last meeting, the groups were expected to submit their work and prepare a short presentation. On the last meeting, the students viewed the films and gave comments on the films.

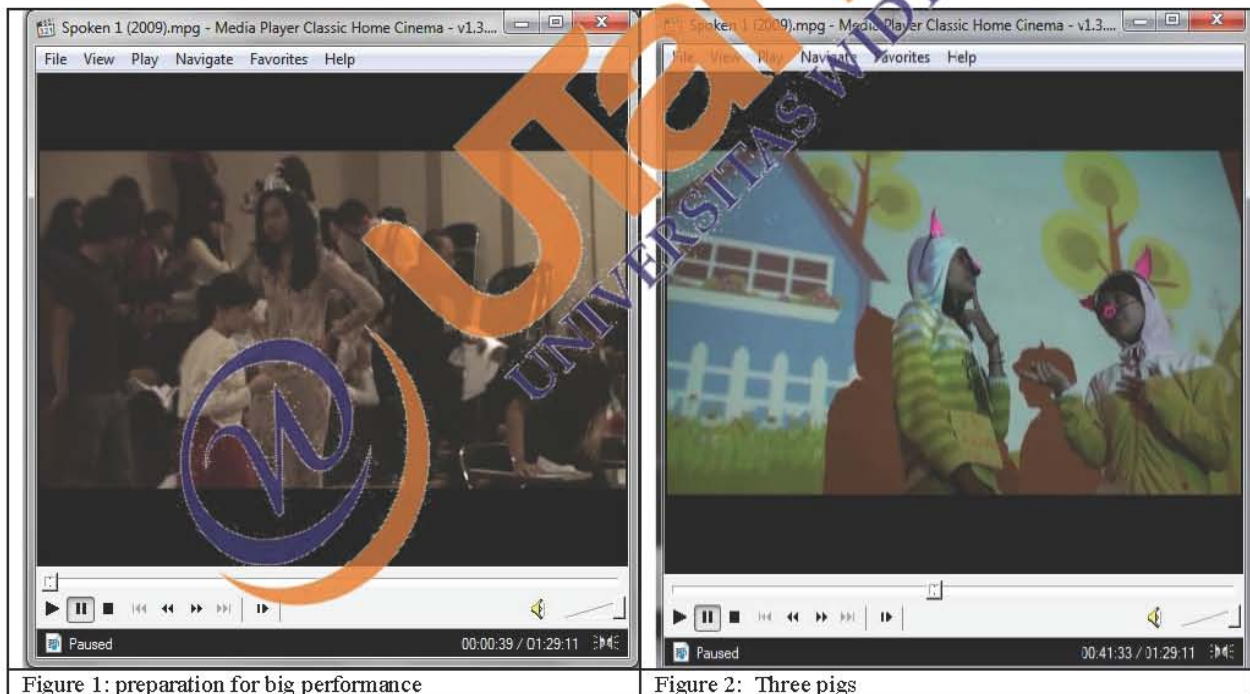
4. DISCUSSION

The goals of the study are to explore the student's speaking ability and confidence to be performed in the final projects and to develop the most suitable procedure in conducting this subject.

The ultimate goal of the study is to develop an alternative way of teaching methods in trying to give a differentiation of the subject in more real situation.

The whole process of the study was conducted in English Language Department, Faculty of Languages Widyatama University, but the location of the film makings were done in some places either in Bandung and outside Bandung.

In the first semester, Spoken English I, the students had conducted a similar project, but it was not a real film making but more role playing conducted in a big performance. They did the same stages but at the end of the semester they performed their projects in one day show, in theatre room at Widyatama University. All the groups showed a great enthusiasm in performing their project since the students of both subjects are from the same classes, so in this case, they had had pre- experience in doing the projects. We could see from their preparation like; well-prepared costumes, characters chosen, props and stages background etc. As we can see from the picture below:



The film making as the final project of Spoken II is the next stage of the former project. In this course the students are required to move to higher level, that is making real short film.

In the first semester the students had been informed that they would have to continue the projects in the second semester so when doing this second project the writer found some improvements and also produced other achievements:

1. The collaboration established among the students included brainstorming, task distribution, and

presentation. Discussions beyond the classes were also common: students talked about how they could make improvements even although semester was already over.

2. The students kept active communication with the lecturer to consult about their script and the filmmaking process.
3. The quality of the films were adequate to be viewed by other than the students, others were adapted as materials for the Self-Access Center. The films were also suitable to be used as references for the next class.
4. The students appreciated the opportunity to conduct field research and present their findings in an entertaining way.
5. Students were able to master (to a certain level) editing skills using various editing software. Some students have even established small editing business.

On the last meeting, the students filled out questionnaires regarding the project. Most of the students (72%) were happy with their work. The same can also be said about their overall views on film-making as an activity for their course and portfolio building: 78% of the students stated that they were highly motivated to complete the final project for the aforementioned purposes. In regards to the technical details of the film, a few points were agreed upon:

1. The final product is presented in DVD quality.
2. The genre of the film is short story.
3. The duration of the film is between 10-15 minutes, including opening and closing credits.
4. The accepted filming equipment is either a video camera (disregarding its recording quality) or a hand phone camera.
5. Special effects and background sound are not mandatory. Editing is done by the students by using basic programs like Windows® Film Maker, or corel video studio, adobe premier, pinnacle or ulead video studio

The content was restricted to the following agreements:

1. The topic does not contain any derogatory issues.
2. The topic relates to social or environmental issues around the vicinity of the students (in Bandung or outside Bandung).
3. The topics elaborated in the film derived from the essays chosen by the lecturer.
4. The spoken versus non-spoken ratio of the materials is 60:40, which entails 60 percent comprised of narration and interviews and 40 percent comprised of visual materials.



Figure 3



Figure 4

5. CONCLUSION

1. User-friendly IT played an important role in facilitating the technical needs and the students can concentrate more on the content of the work.
2. The project had given more fun activities in some conditions, They could explore their environments (campus area, neighbourhood or even out of Bandung city) .
3. The students had more confidence when they talked with their friends in English.
4. Other factors such as clear objectives and commitment of the parties involved tend to lessen the workload because each student comprehends their particularized role.
5. The projects had shown that teaching and learning could be delivered in more fun activities and could be an alternative methods for teaching.
6. Another point worth considering is giving further training on writing film scripts.

6. REFERENCES

- [1]. Allwright
- [2] Kumaradivellu
- [3] Christine H. Leland and Wendy C. Kasten, (2002). "Literacy Education for the 21st Century: It's Time to Close the Factory," *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, vol. 18.
- [4] Anderson, L.W., & Krathwohl (Eds.). (2001). *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. New York: Longman.
- [5] Alvii Siregar (2010) Making Documentary Films: Beyond a Final Writing Class Project
- [6] Amir Bazrafshan presents on the LeftLion guide to making a short film - <http://www.leftlion.co.uk/articles.cfm/id/901>, accessed on 28/07/10, 1.34 WIB (GMT+7)

