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Teaching English to Achieve Students' Competitiveness in the Global Market

Hero Gunawan

English Department, Widyatama University, Indonesia
hero.gunawan@widyatama.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to find out the effective approach for English teaching-learning, which is still problematic in the country like Indonesia where the status of English is as a foreign language. Most English teachers seem not to realize that the position of English as such, not to mention students. Besides, English learning orientation/priority sometimes is not obviously defined. This will potentially implicate to the learning process due to the lack of orientations/priorities. At least two of four language skills, if not possible for the four language skills, should be established vis a vis: speaking-listening or writing-reading. The two couples of the skills, where a language is perceived as a skill leading to fluency, are not free from 'the knowledge about' that will potentially lead to accuracy. The approach of two pathways, DECPRO (DEClarative to PROcedural) and PRODEC (PROcedural to DEClarative), seems to be an appropriate academic attempt to improve students' ability in English. The process carried out in DECPRO pathway, proceduralization, focuses on learning, while the process performed in PRODEC pathway, declarativization, emphasizes what the so-called acquisition. This approach, which also employs the principles for teaching speaking, is seemingly realistic to be implemented in indonesian universities where English is accentuated to equip students in this global competition. The study which can be a significant contribution to the teaching and learning of speaking-listening, and structure seems to improve fluency and accuracy. In turns, the results of the study can encourage students to achieve their competitiveness, in terms of English mastery, in this global market.

Keywords: *Teaching-Learning, Language Skills, DECPRO, PRODEC, Fluency, Accuracy, Competitiveness, Global Market*

1. INTRODUCTION

In much traditional language teaching, teachers start by giving learners a set of rules what the so-called grammar on the chosen topic, telling them *about* what they have to do. They (teachers) focus more on the accessability in terms of grammatical rules. They seem not to teach English both *as* and *for* communication coming up with notional and functional aspects (Widdowson, 1984: 216). It is necessary to have objective perspective on English language teaching (ELT). In this perspective, the issues on ESL (English as a second language) and EFL (English as a foreign language) should be proportionally perceived in the indonesian context.

The difference between EFL and ESL, in teaching-learning context, should be theoretically and practically figured out. In this paper, EFL is positted in the perspective of global competition. In the global context, people compete to grab success both in science-technology and in business. To win the competition in many contextual levels, we have to have 'tools' as keys for success, and one of them is English mastery (Alwasilah, 2000:6).

Actually, the mastery of English in this global market is absolutely required not only in Indonesia but also across other global countries like Malay and Morocco. Research revealed that many managers prefer hiring applicants with foreign language skills to better serve the growing influx of travelers from abroad. Besides, most employers (87%) said English skills would be a plus in applying for a job and would earn them a higher starting salary (Bouzidi, 2009:11). In line with this issue, as revealed in *The Malaysian Insider*, AmBank Group chairman, Tan Sri Datuk Azman Hashim, said that English mastery is crucial to achieve *Vision 2020*.

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Perceiving the aforementioned issues and challenging, EFL teaching-learning seems to be redefined, and an effective approach providing the proportional balance in English teaching-learning in terms of upgrading skills should be immediately created from notional to functional point of view.

2. DECLARATIVE AND PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE

Language Teaching-learning cannot be free from, if perceived as a skill, declatarive and procedural knowledge. Johnson (2001:104) illustrates the two knowledge respectively as knowledge about and knowledge how to. Further, he used an analogy of driving training to explain declarative and procedural knowledge. Indeed, driving which concentrated on declarative and not procedural knowledge would be a recipe for disaster.

Declarative knowledge is illustrated as 'knowing about' driving such as what a steering wheel is and what function it performs, etc., while procedural knowledge is illustrated as 'knowing how to' drive. Both the 'knowing about' and 'knowing how to' are interrelated each other. They are important to language learners not only to be developed, but alsoto be maintained. Thus, it is insufficient, in terms of process, to have declarative knowledge without procedural knowledge, and vice versa. The two concepts, declarative and procedural knowledge, are related to the notions of automization, the process of 'making automatic'. This process is perceived to be important as a fundamental component of skill development, playing a vital role in the development of any skill including the skill of using a foreign language (Johnson, 2001:105).

3. OVERVIEW ON THE LANGUAGE SKILLS (PRODUCTIVE & RECEPTIVE)

Johnson (2001:269) and Bailey in Nunan (2003:48) divided language skills into two big categories: productive and receptive skills. The productive skills cover speaking and writing, while receptive skills consist of listening and reading. The four skills cannot be separated each other, and this is obviously exemplified from the kinds of English proficiency test like TOEFL and IELTS. Such the two internationally-acknowledged tests assess test-takers' ability in speaking, writing, listening, and reading. At least, in language learning context, two skills vis a vis: speaking and listening or writing and reading should be well developed.

Writing is not merely a physical act, committing writing words or ideas onto a piece of paper or an email message into a computer, but rather than a mental act, inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and parapraphs that will be clear to a reader. Further, writing is also a kind of social activities because wrting is a process to create a product in the form of an essay, letter, story, or research report, which will be read by wide range of readers (Nunan, 2003:88).

Reading, according to Anderson (1991) in Nunan (2003:68) is a fluent process of readers combining information from a text and their own background knowledge to build meaning. It is relevant to accessing information through listening. One of the ways to process information is relying on the prior knowledge that listeners may have. This process is then known as top-down process. However, if listeners exhaust their linguistric cabapilities such as vocabulariy and grammar in accessing information, then it is called bottom-up process.

Speaking, from the structural viewpoint, tends to be more flexible. For example, in asking a friend about what to eat, we might just ask ask "Pizza?" instead of "Would you like pizza?" Although this is not a grammatical sentence, it is an utterance happened in the real world. It is in line with the statement saying that spoken language is composed of utterances (Nunan, 2003:51).

However, of the aforementioned skills, speaking, from the language learning point of view, seems to be more challenging due to some factors that do not belong to the other three skills. (Un)luckily, many people perceive that

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someone's English ability is determined by the performance of English-speaking ability. It is in line with the results of the research conducted in Morroco (Bouzidi, 2009) saying that speaking and listening skills are far more important than reading and writing skills. In a nut shell, prowess in demonstrating spoken English ability both in academic and non academic context in nature is becoming a common standard of judgement whether or not s/he master the English language.

4. SPEAKING SKILL, MORE CHALLENGING ONE

Based on the teaching experience I had in English Department and even the learning experience when I was an English student, speaking is deemed harder than the other three language skills (writing, reading, and listening). It is in line with what Bailey in Nunan (2003:48) said that speaking is considered to be more difficult than writing, reading, or listening for two reasons. Firstly, speaking, unlike reading or writing, happens in real time: the person we are talking to usually waits for us to speak right then. Secondly, speaking cannot be editted and revised: we cannot edit or revise when we speak, as we can if we are writing.

5. PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHING SPEAKING

Five principles for teching speaking proposed by Bailey in Nunan (2003:54) may interestingly be applied in the Indonesian context where the status of English is a foreign language. They cover:

1) Be aware of the differences between second language (SL) and foreign language (FL) learning context.

FL learning context is very different from SL learning context. FL learning context is the context where the target language is not the language of communication in the society, for instance, learning English in Indonesia. Learning speaking skill is very challenging for learners in FL context because they have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Therefore the potential problem will be is concerning fluency rather than accuracy. So, to minimize such a problem, it will be advisable, for example, to invite English native speakers to create regular dialogic forum for sharing and caring regarding speaking English naturally. Thus, my English lecturer's experience, unable to communicate in English for approximately three month when he first came to America, is not repeated anymore.

Unlike FL learning context, SL learning context is the context where the target language is the language of communication in the society such as English in Singapore, or Indonesian in Indonesia. In other words, it is studied inside the classroom and spoken outside the classroom. The potential problem for SL learners is not about fluency but accuracy dealing with errors in grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation, and enhancing declarative knowledge is the very possible solution.

2) Give students practice with both fluency and accuracy.

The issues on fluency and accuracy should be realized by both teachers and learners. The term fluency is related to the extent to which speakers use the language quickly and confidently, with few hesitations or unnatural pauses, false start, word searches, etc. Thus, the fluency focuses on the functional appropriateness and the smooth flow of the target language. Relying on the fluency only is not sufficient in communication, it should be followed by the so-called accuracy which is orientated to explicit grammar teaching and more intense error correction. Grammatical knowledge, therefore, underlying accuracy, becomes transformed into fluent performance in the target language (Mitchell, 1998: 92).

3) Provide opportunities for students to talk by using group work or pair work, and limiting teacher talk.

Research result revealed that teachers talk more (50 to 80 percent) than students do in the classroom (Nunan, 2003:53). To give sufficient exposure to students, based on the research result, language teachers should provide more

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opportunities for them to talk instead of taking up the students' time of speaking. They should create various activities to increase the amount of time that learners get to speak in the target language such as pair work and group work activities.

4) Plan speaking tasks that involve negotiation for meaning.

Negotiation for meaning is the process of trying to understand and make ourselves understood through interactive communication in the target language (Nunan, 2003:55). This process covers checking to see whether or not we understand what someone has said, clarifying our understanding, and confirming that someone has understood what we mean. Through conducting clarification, repetition, or explanations during conversations, learners get mutual understanding.

5) Design classroom activities that involve guidance and practice in both interactional and transactional speaking.

Interactional and transactional speech is an effective inside-classroom practice to improve spoken language. Interactional speech is a form of communication for social purposes such as establishing and maintaining social relationships. This kind of communication is relatively unpredictable in nature. In contrast, transactional speech is a form of communication for certain purposes to get something done such as the exchange of goods or services. This kind of communication is highly predictable in nature like telephoning for a taxi. The two types of oral production skill enable to put into role play as the possible practice conducted by students.

6. CONCLUSION

EFL Learning needs balance between enhancing fluency and accuracy. The proportional exposure is needed without putting aside grammatical knowledge in terms of accuracy. Creative teaching can encourage students to improve oral production skill. Therefore, they can perform their speaking ability through maintaining fluency and accuracy leading to create self-confidence, and in turns, potentially achieve their competitiveness, in terms of English mastery, in the current and forthcoming global market.

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