

WEST KALIMANTAN FOLKTALE AS A MODEL OF SPEAKING PERFORMANCE IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' SPEAKING AND SOFT SKILLS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to enhance students' speaking performance and soft skills using West Kalimantan folktale "Batu Menangis". The sample of this study was 21 students of Early Childhood Education department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Pontianak. This study used a Classroom Action Research (CAR). The data collection tools were observation sheet of speaking performance and soft skills, video, and questionnaires of students' perception on the use of drama technique. The study shows significance enhancement on the students speaking performance from 58% in the first cycle to 71% in the second cycle. The students' soft skills improved markedly from 62% in the first cycle 81% in the second cycle. Thus, performing drama using West Kalimantan folktale is effective to enhance students' speaking performance (fluency, comprehension, pronunciation) and soft skills (responsibilities, teamwork, confidence) as it contains authentic materials and fun.

Keywords: Batu Menangis, Folktale, Enhancement, Soft skills, Speaking performance

INTRODUCTION

University students as learning agents require to have good spoken English. However, most of them, especially the non-English department students, do not get adequate English exposure in their daily social interaction. Specifically, most students of Early Childhood Education department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Pontianak have low ability to communicate in English, especially in using functional language. That is why the English lecturer needs to implement a proper method to not only trigger their attention and motivation to learn English, which is learnt as a foreign language, but also to enhance the students speaking ability.

One of the activities that can facilitate students in speaking class is role-play. (Tompkins, 2001) emphasizes role play as an effective activity to give EFL students opportunity to be active in teaching learning process. In enhancing speaking ability, drama as the role play activity stimulates students to practice target language in context similar to real life. They can maximally deliver the story by using natural expression and intonation. Drama provokes students to learn how to use spoken English properly. At the same time, teacher can consider this activity to assess students speaking performance, in terms of pronunciation, intonation, body language, comprehension, and accuracy, etc.

In this study, an English folk drama of 'Batu Menangis' (the Crying Stone) was selected because it promotes either speaking opportunity or soft skills. Students learn and develop cultural awareness of West Kalimantan pluralism which is reflected from the plays, dialogue, habits, costumes, properties, etc. Folk drama also offers students an authentic learning which is

important in teaching English as foreign language and directs students to preserve local culture. In developing the soft skills, the process of performing drama trains and enhances students' confidence, responsibilities, and teamwork (collaboration). This is in line with the learning goals that all students should involve the teaching learning process actively.

The Nature of Speaking

Speaking skill plays a significant role in measuring one's English ability. It is a productive skill which is important for students. Parel (2008) stresses the important goal of learning English is being able to communicate and think critically. Speaking triggers relationship in social life. In this study, students are expected to be actively interact and involve with other students in drama performance activity. The speaking process takes place before, whilst, and after the real speaking events occurs; how to interpret the message of the drama, how to present the script dialogue., and how to ensure the audience with the characters play. This is the point of the speaking function as a tool of communication tool as suggested by Richards (2001) that the significance of speaking is not only for transactional matter but also to strengthen the social relationship. That is why role play as a model of speaking performance becomes the focus of this study as it includes in one of the categories of speaking performance by Brown (2007) which categorizes speaking performance into imitative, intensive, responsive, transactional, interpersonal, and extensive. Students' role in playing different characters indicates the ability in doing social interaction which is one of the speaking goals. It is in line with constructivism theory proposed by Koohang et al., (2009) that states students can negotiate about any difficult things they face with their own personal experience.

Role Play

Drama comes from the Latin word "Drau" which means "action" or doing something. Prochazka (2006) identifies drama as a multi-sensory mode from a learning process that involves mind, body, senses and emotions to connect personal and to enhance understanding. Almond (2005) considers the importance of drama activity to strengthen the structural classroom language learning and language learning situation in students' real life as drama is expected to be motivated and a fun role-play activity. For audience, drama should be an interesting show because it provides an entertaining audiovisual story. Therefore, to present a great show of drama performance Almond (2005) includes several components of drama such as plot, theme, character, dialogue, and music. In addition, Endraswara (2008) highlights two important values of performance. Firstly, drama as an effective media to describe certain social life, moral dilemma, and personal matter without involving the social consequence of the plays. Secondly, drama player can hypnotize audience attention to the character of the story: protagonist, and antagonist.

Soft Skills in Language Teaching

In teaching foreign language, measuring students' hard skill is easier than soft skills. Students hard skills are often the reflection of their comprehension of the lesson/ teaching materials. Otherwise, students' softs skills are affected by either peer environment or social media. As a language teacher, the need of assessing students soft skills is demanding because students' attitude and character determines one's personal quality. When students' soft skills are good,

both teachers and students can conduct the teaching learning process effectively. Robles (2012) identifies soft skills as character traits, attitude, and behavior. Soft skills are not technical aptitude or knowledge. It needs to be improved and practiced.

Shakir (2009) & Tevdovska (2016) categorize interaction, communication, cooperation, ethics, problem solving, and self-management as a group of soft skills. Therefore, in conducting speaking activity in language teaching, a teacher requires soft skills assessment to measure student’s involvement, participation, cooperation, and interaction, as well as attitude awareness, conflict handling and tolerance. The better students interact, and cooperate the better students’ soft skills. When hard and soft skills are in line, students can attain satisfying language learning achievement.

METHOD

This study was conducted using a Classroom Action Research (CAR) with a total sample of 21 students of Early Childhood Education department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Pontianak. CAR was selected as it aimed at enhancing students’ speaking performance and soft skills. The CAR model used was a Kemmis dan McTaggart spiral model. The study employed two cycles. Each cycle was done in four phases. They were planning, action, observation, and reflection.

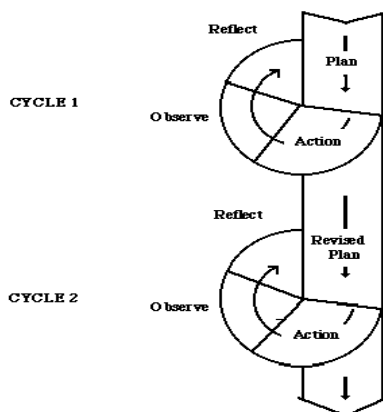


Figure 1. Kemmis & McTaggart Spiral Model

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the speaking performance on the first cycle which includes pronunciation & comprehension, body language, dan fluency are as follow.

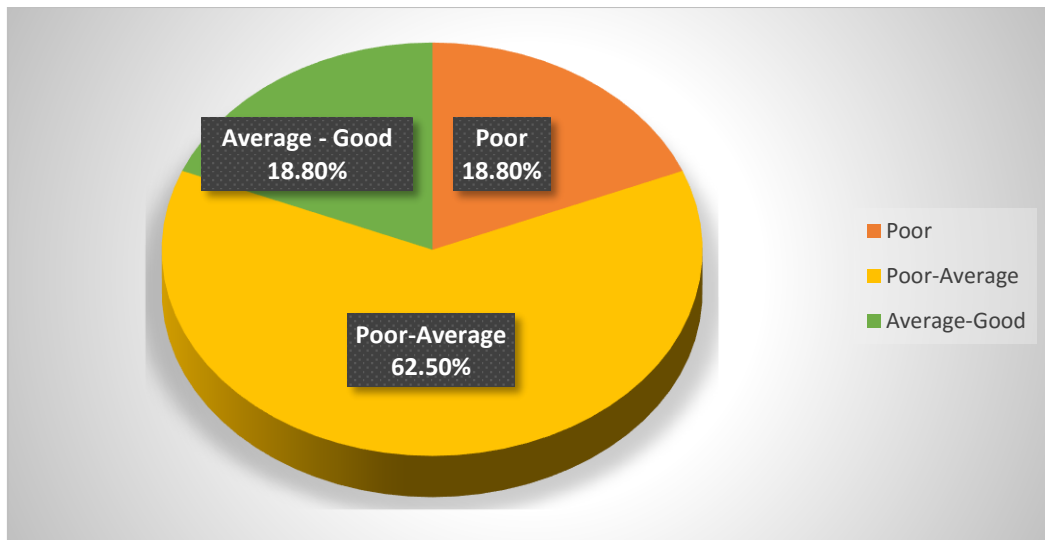


Figure 2 Students' Qualification on Speaking Performance (Cycle 1)

The figure showed the students' speaking performance in the first cycle was considered poor to average by 58%. It is under the minimum standard of 65. As many as 18.80% students were regarded as poor level as they were still difficult in pronouncing many words from the dialogue or the drama script. They were even not familiar with the English words from the script. The students who were considered poor to average were 62.50%. The students who were in average to good category were 18.80%. Specifically, in terms of speaking performance scoring components, the student's comprehension and pronunciation were 56.25%. The use of proper body language when performing drama was 62.5%, and the fluency was 56.25%.

Meanwhile, the results of the students' speaking performance in cycle 2 indicated significant improvement as shown in the following figure.

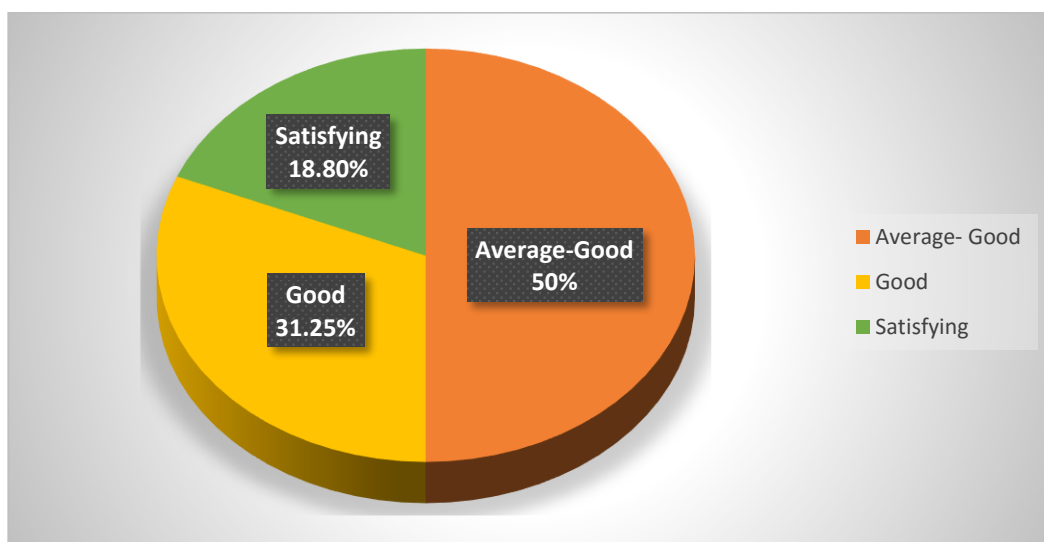


Figure 3 Students' Qualification on Speaking Performance (Cycle 2)

As displayed in figure 2, the students' average score in cycle 2 reached 71.67 and was considered good-satisfying. It is far above the minimum standard of 65. The student qualification in average to good category was 50%, good category was 31.25%, and satisfying category was 18.80%. In detail, their pronunciation & comprehension improved by 70%, body language increased by 77.50%, and fluency rose by 68.75%.

Furthermore, the results of observational assessment on students' soft skills showed significant improvement. There were three components of soft skills assessed in this study: teamwork/collaboration, confidence, and responsibility. The students' score on team work component was still low in the first cycle by 62.50%. the component of responsibility increased from 56.35% in cycle to 87.50% in cycle. Similarly, the students' soft skill of confidence rose from 50% to 81.25%.

Discussion

The low score of the students' speaking performance in cycle 1 were affected by a number of factors. First, they were not familiar with the words in the script dialogue of the drama, such as 'cruel-hearted', 'embarrass', 'approach', 'grumbling', 'beg', 'smell up', 'bump into', etc. They did not know either the meaning and the pronunciation. Even they had no idea what was the story about. When students have been introduced and explain about the story and the meaning of the difficult words, they still required a number of meetings to improve the pronunciation. In this case, teacher asked them to pronounced the words for many times until they were pronounced correctly. Second, some students couldn't use proper intonation. This caused by the students' minimum exposure in practicing the expressions. Third, almost all students had problem with fluency. Most students depended on the script. They read during the practice in cycle1, meeting 1 and 2.

After having three meetings of practice in cycle I, they improved better in cycle 2. Most students acted out their character maximumly. They used more expressions and body languages. They even changed their intonation and played the script dialogue with surprising improvisation. The students' speaking performance (pronunciation, fluency, body language) improved slowly after they have practiced the dialogue for 6 meetings. In other words, the enhancement of the speaking performance in cycle 2 was due to the students' consistence and commitment in practicing the drama. They slowly built their confidence in performing the drama and in practicing the 'difficult words'. They also became more open-minded in responding their friends' correction during the drama practice.

Meanwhile, the obstacles on students' soft skills faced were due to the lack of role-play exposure and the passive participation when they were having group discussion. They did not aware that one member in a group affected the whole. That is why they could not make any correction when their friends were making mistakes during the performance, especially the mistake on the dialogue turn-taking. The lack of responsibility in cycle 1 is shown by the lack of preparation before performing the drama. They just waited for their friends' performance and their turns without practicing the script. Lastly, component of confidence which dominated the lowest score in soft skills improved significantly. In cycle 1, most students were still nervous in performing the drama as they were not familiar with this activity and have never been exposed with before. They always laughed at themselves before starting the performance. They were pessimistic they could play role in English drama. When they started laughing at

themselves, their friends also laughed at them. This resulted in time consuming. However, as they have been accustomed doing this for several meetings, they started building their confidence in cycle 2. As proven by Doqaruni (2014) in his study that instructed and repeated activities can reveal in great confidence, and the confidence can trigger the better improvements. In addition, improvement in each meeting of drama practice were based on the reflection in cycle 1 and in every group performance. The improvements were dialogue simplification, cast switching, and stage blocking.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of drama performance using West Kalimantan folktale which is conducted in two cycles provides students with various activities and satisfying results. The student's pronunciation, comprehension, and fluency enhanced significantly. Their soft skills also improved importantly. They become more confident and aware on the importance of working together actively in a group and be responsible in doing the task. However, role-play activity should be conducted frequently and creatively to give students opportunities to enhance vocabulary and to practice English, particularly on pronunciation and fluency.

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