

A Teacher's Perspective on The Techniques of Teaching Speaking to Young EFL Learners

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Abstract

Teching EFL speaking to young learners need a wide range of techniques which makes them willing to learn and engage in their learning. The aim of this study is to investigate an English teacher's perspective in the techniques of teaching speaking for young EFL learners within the context of an intenational primary school. A descriptive qualitative method was employed by using interview questions as the instrument for data elicitation. The participant was a female English teacher in an international primary school at grade 1. The findings revealed that the use of various teaching techniques in speaking can help the teacher to gain student's motivation and create student's new learning experience. The technique of teaching speaking to young EFL learners used by the teacher which were identified is a combination of the police of English and getting good stars as a reward repetition drill technique, and translation which were perceived by the teacher scaffold young learners' learning process in speaking. It is recommended that the teacher's best practice in implementing a wide range techniques should be sustained in supporting young learners learn how to speak in English. **Keywords**: teaching english, speaking skill, EFL context

INTRODUCTION

English plays an important role in society, many schools in Indonesia include English as a subject in primary school. Even though English is used as a foreign language, more and more young learners start to learn English since they are in primary schools, whereas in the past, English was introduced in junior or senior high school (Liyaningsih, 2017). One argument that supports teaching English to young learners is that the young learners learn faster because they consider it as something new which ignites their curiosity. McKay (2006) defines that young learners are between the ages of approximately five and twelve. Young English language learners in Indonesia are foreign language learners because the students learning English in a situation where English is seldom spoken and heard outside the classrooms.

In terms of cognitive and social emotional capacity, McKay (2006) describes some characteristics of young learners as followed :

The attention span of young learners in the early years of schooling is short, as little as 10 to 15 minutes; they are easily diverted and distracted by other pupils. They may drop out of a task when they find it difficult, though they are often willing to try a task in order to please the teacher. As children progress from 5

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years old to 12 years old, they are developing abilities to think in new ways and are moving towards being able to reason in a systematic and logical fashion in adolescence. Children are novices as they learn, with help from others, to become more expert in solving problems, in reading and in many more activities (McKay, 2006, p.6).

During the observation in one of the primary schools when I enrolled in assessment to young learners coursework, I found that teaching English to young learners was challenging, especially in teaching speaking skills. In line with McKay (2006)'s description, some problems I identified when I did my observations were : young EFL learners loved playing when learning and lack of vocabulary even in their mother tongue. As a consequence, they have limited expressions to speak in English. Therefore, in teaching EFL for young learners, the teacher must arrange and prepare the techniques especially in speaking skill in order to achieve the objective of the study. There are several studies on EFL young learners in Indonesia and abroad (Nurvia, 2016; Pratama & Awaliyah, 2016; Rahmani, 2017; Fadhilah & Nuraeni, 2019).

Nurvia (2016) conducted a qualitative research and the participant was the teacher of elementary school at MI Madinatunnajah Cirebon and focused in 5th grade. The findings of this study discussed the process of using the song in teaching-learning speaking for Young Learners, advantages, disadvantages, and problems of using songs. Even though there were problems in learning and teaching speaking using songs, but there is no problem that cannot be resolved. Therefore, teachers must be creative to solve that problem.

Pratama & Awaliyah (2016) conduct the study with this context and focus on strategies, techniques, problems and solutions for teaching speaking to young learners. This study using the qualitative method and the setting of this study is in an elementary school in West Java, and the participant was teachers taught in 4th- grade students. There are several techniques used by the lecturer there that were identified in this research such as role-play, using videos, jazz chant, digital storytelling, games, and repetition. The results of this study show that the teacher might face several barriers when teaching in the classroom such as reluctant students, missing pronunciation, and lack of vocabularies, but in some way, the teacher can use the appropriate and various strategies and techniques to overcome those barriers.

Another study also conducted with this context of teacher's strategies and techniques in teaching speaking to Young EFL Learners (Rahmani, 2017). This study is qualitative research to present speaking strategies and techniques used by the teacher to motivate the learners to speak English in their lesson. The participants were five teachers in different levels of education; Elementary and lower secondary level. The results of this study present several

techniques that are frequently used by the teacher, there were group work for junior high school level and drilling in elementary school level.

Fadhilah & Nuraeni (2019)'s qualitative research aimed to find the barriers faced by the teacher and also how they overcome the barriers. The participants were two non-native English teachers who taught at the elementary level in Southern Thailand. There are several methods found in this study such as applying the Audio Lingual Method, and Communicative Language Teaching method, and also some techniques such as games, group-work, and drilling activities to enrich the students" speaking ability". The result of this study showed that most of the participants agreed that designing the appropriate strategies and techniques before learning is important to motivate young learners in learning especially in speaking. They also implemented some intrinsic strategies such as creating a fun, comfortable, and stress-free environment in the classroom because it was important to get students motivated in learning English.

The previous studies are conducted with the topic strategies and techniques in teaching speaking skills to young EFL learners in the context of a primary school. Therefore, inspired by those studies, this research is aimed to investigate the techniques used by an Indonesia teacher to teach speaking for young EFL learners. The research gap that the researchers intended to fill is the contextual gap of techniques of teaching speaking for young EFL learners in an international and Islamic-based curriculum.

Assessing speaking for young learners can be defined by assessing their language use ability in performing speaking skills. Bachman and Palmer (1996) define language use ability as :

...the ability to use the language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or objective in a particular situation (Bachman and Palmer, 1996, pp. 44).

In the context of assessing young learners, McKay (2006) further explains that language use ability is also known as the ability to use language communicatively. Therefore, in terms of teaching speaking, it is expected that in the learning process the students will be able to use the target language (English) to communicate depending on the needs of their communicative purpose in the real context and the requirements of learning output in the coursework.

There are some benefits of teaching speaking skills to young ESL/EFL learners. Rao (2019) explained that teaching speaking when the students in early ages it can help them in some way, such as: helping the learner to familiar with the new utterances, speaking fluently with their relation, helping them participate actively in the classroom discussions and debates,

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boosting their confidence levels, developing the learners' critical thinking, improving the learners' oral communication skills useful for all purposes, preparing the learners to participate well in classroom interaction, enhancing the learners' vocabulary items and grammatical structures, preparing the learners to share ideas and participate actively in speaking activities that take in the form of group work or pair work and preparing the learners to continue their higher education in foreign universities. As there are many benefits for young learners, teachers of English must pay attention to the obstacles that children face when learning and solve their problems so that students can achieve the goals in learning.

Techniques are specific procedures that the teacher designs to carry out a teaching activity, such as: explanation, demonstration, drill, dictation, lecture, performing dialogues, role play, quiz, questionnaire (Pokrivcakova, 2013). The use of teaching methods and teaching techniques were related to each other. In the implementation of the teaching process, teaching methods are integrated with several teaching techniques, activities, and procedures (Pokrivcakova, 2013), for example, audio-lingual method, direct method, grammar-translation method, communicative method, etc. Therefore, teaching techniques can also be referred to as a part of teaching methods.

The use of various techniques especially in speaking is to avoid boredom in students' learning speaking process and serve students motivation (Dhand, 1990). It means the appropriate teaching techniques will help the teacher to gain student's motivation in learning. There were some factors that make the success of the technique, such as: appropriate with the topic and the learning situation, relate with the objective of the lesson, flexible, and must have the potential to enhance and enrich the learning experience. The teacher must be familiar with the rules and procedures of such techniques in order that the techniques enhance the learning experiences of the class (Dhand, 1990). It means the teacher must be selective in implementing the teaching techniques that are appropriate with the students level. Pokrivcakova (2013) classifies teaching techniques into 3 parts: Controlled, Guided, and Free (communicative) techniques (Pokrivcakova, 2013). In Control techniques, the teacher play the important role in controls the student's language completely. These techniques focus on accuracy, which controls student's vocabulary or structure in the sentence. This is usually used in beginner classes, for example, repetition and dictation. The second technique is guided techniques, while using these techniques, the teacher is less controlled and allowed students to use their own words and expressions to create their new experience. The students are allowed to complete their exercises in more than one way but still in guide, for example, writing a message. The last techniques

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were Free (communicative) techniques. These techniques are closest to real communication in real life which focus on meaningful and spontaneous communication. The controls of the teacher were very limited if it was not needed. To complete the task, the students must use their own ideas, background knowledge, creativity, and their various language competences. (Pokrivcakova, 2013).Some techniques can be used to facilitate the learning process. Rao (2019), for example, describes 9 techniques of teaching speaking skill for young EFL/ESL learners: choral repetition, initial activities, substitution drills, Q & A drills, pictures, information gap activities, rhymes, songs, chants, and poems, language games, and collaborative aspects.

METHOD

This study was designed to investigate the techniques used by an English Teacher in teaching speaking for young learners in the context of an international primary school. An interwied study followed with thematic analysis (Braun , 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2021) was employed. The research was conducted in an Islamic Integrated Full Day Primary School in the Nusawungu region, Cilacap, Central Java . This school uses international and Islamic curriculums for teaching and learning. The participant is a female English teacher who has been teaching English for young learners for less than a year in that school. She taught around 17 students which consist of 6 boys and 11 girls in grade 1. The data of this study were collected by conducting an in-depth interview. There was no direct observation during data collection because of the school work from home policy during Covid 19 pandemic. The artifacts of speaking assessment and the example of speaking task from roleplay method as form of teaching techniques used by the teacher were used as supporting data.

The researcher did not use observation as the primary data collection because of the condition of the pandemic now, therefore, the researcher doing the in-depth interview as the primary data collection then the finding of the interview results will discuss in this research and will support with some of the documentation. In this study, the researcher used many theories including teaching a second language to young learners, techniques in teaching speaking to young EFL learners and aspects in speaking, which the researcher cited mainly the combination of construct used from (Pokrivcakova, 2013), and Leong & Ahmadi (2017)'s empirical study. The researcher adopts the interview by translates it into Bahasa Indonesia to help to get much of the data. The construct of interview questions are as seen in Table 1.



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| C1 | (Compared to a l | Comment | Call Commence | |
|---|--|------------------------|---|--|
| Subject | Conceptual Definition | Component | Sub Component | Question |
| An English teacher in one of an internation al primary school in Cilacap | Techniques are specific procedures that the teacher designs to carry out a teaching activity, such as: explanation, demonstration, drill, dictation, lecture, performing dialogues, role play, quiz, questionnaire (Pokrivcakova, 2013). | Teaching Activities | explanation demonstration drill dictation lecture performing dialogues role play quiz questionnaire audio-lingual method, direct method, grammar- translation method, communicative method | In teaching speaking to Young EFL learners, can you tell me what teaching techniques do you usually use? Why do you choose it? How do you use those techniques in your class? |
| | Aspects of Speaking (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017) | Aspects of Speaking | o Fluency | 3. In handling the fluency of Young EFL learners mam, would you tell me what kind of activities you use to motivate them to be able to speak fluently? |
| | | | o Accuracy | 4.When your students make mistakes in spelling the words, in what way you will correct them, mam? Then, how your techniques to check their accuracy in speaking skill mam? |
| | | | Grammatical structures | 5.Did you guide your students using grammatical structures or just only spelling words for the moment?6.Can you explain more to me about your ways of giving them an understanding of the correct |
| | | | • Pronunciation | grammar? 7.In learning to speak English, Did your students required to using correct and clear intonation? What kind of teaching techniques did you use to make them enjoy speaking English? |

Table 1. Interview Construct

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The researcher has done interviewing to gain information on the preparation used by an English teacher before starting to teach English. The use of teaching preparation is to assist the implementation of effective teaching and learning (Kamaruzaman & Akbar, 2014) and it usually contains teaching resources and materials. Therefore, preparation is one of the important things to support the learning process. There were many teaching resources and materials that can be applied in the lessons, includes; textbooks, lesson plans, using media, etc. The script of the interview related to this discussion is presented below.

"This school has implemented the national curriculum of 2013 and for the international curriculum, we have implement bilingual school and use the English language in English and primary maths lesson based on Cambridge's text and workbook as a resource of the materials" (I/1/TA/10).

In Indonesian primary schooling, English was an optional subject from 1994-2012, and mostly, the teachers' opinion are the government did not fully support English as the local content subject (Widodo, 2006 cited in Sulistiyo, Haryanto, Widodo & Elyas, 2019). Therefore, the challenge is the teacher must design the curriculum practices itself such as syllabus, materials, instruction, and assessment. Below, are the document analysis for assessment in speaking to young EFL Learners included in the teaching preparation.

For supporting the data of this study, the researcher also gathers the artifact of speaking assessment. Because the student is still in grade 1, therefore the teacher did not require students with high aspect in assessing them in speaking, in the implementation speaking assessment, the teacher has the file of what aspects the teacher will apply it to assess students speaking skills, then the teacher just does the simply check to students speaking practice, put it into a checklist of form assessment in a book and then move it into rapport.

" in grade 1 recently, we use a checklist as a form of assessment" (I/1/TP/78) " for assessment in the international curriculum, first we put the score of checklist assessment in notebooks then we moved it into rapport includes the daily scores." (I/1/TA/83)



| No | Students'name | Fluency | Accuracy | Pronunciation | Intonation |
|----|---------------|---------|----------|---------------|------------|
| 1 | MDH | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| 2 | NAA | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| 3 | NAS | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

| Note: | |
|-------|--|
|-------|--|

| Fluency | |
|---------|--|
|---------|--|

Accuracy

| 1. Disjointed | 1. All speech is incomprehensible |
|---------------------------|--|
| 2. Doubtful | 2. A small part can be understood |
| 3. Smooth but doubtful | 3. Mostly understandable |
| 4. Fluent | 4. All speech can be understood |
| Pronunciation | Intonation |
| 1. All words are not true | 1. The stress/rhythm of all the words is |

| 1. All words are not true | 1. The stress/rhythm of all the words is wrong |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 2. Some of the words are correct | 2. Pressure/rhythm partially correct |
| 3. Most of the sayings are correct | 3. Pressure/rhythm mostly correct |

4. All words are true

4. All pressure/rhythm is correct

The rules are firstly the teacher will teach students in writing and how to speak it by pair work, drill them 4 times, and then after that, they will go to the front of the class to practice the work (I/1/AS-F/85). So, then the teacher will take scoring in her notebooks by using a checklist and then move the score into the rapport.

"Because of my students still very young which in grade 1, so in speaking I just put the score simply such as 'fluency'. For grade 1, the important thing are they understand English, for the assessment we not yet to do a formal assessment. For example in conversation, I have been taught them in writing and how to speak it by pair work, then drill them 4 times, after that they will go to the front of the class to practice the work. So, then I will put the score in my notebooks like that, and will give the point for them." (I/1/AS-F/85)

Then, the researcher also got an example of achievement in English language competence in speaking aspects which is written in rapport's book. This form of artifact speaking assessment includes the score of each student in each KD (Kompetensi Dasar/ Indicator Competency) and then will be completed with the description of the student's competence or the student's achievement in learning speaking that they have done in each KD in one of international primary school in Cilacap.

Table 3. Form of the Achievement of English Language Competence (Speaking Aspects)

| No | Students' | S | core of PT | S | | | | | | |
|----|-----------|------|------------|-----|-------|-----------|-------------|----|-------|------|
| | | | | | Score | Predicate | Description | KD | Topic | Code |
| | Name | KD 1 | KD 2 | KD3 | | | | | | |

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| 1 | AAPN | 90 | 70 | 65 | 75 | С | APN is good in able to inform or act out the information about thing for school, need guiding in able to inform or act out the information about people | 1 | Thing for schools | 4.1.1 |
|---|------|-----|----|----|----|---|---|---|-------------------------|-------|
| 2 | FDD | 85 | 80 | 87 | 84 | В | FFD is good in able to inform or act out the information about people, average in able to inform or act out the information about toys | 2 | Toys | 4.1.2 |
| 3 | KIP | 100 | 90 | 90 | 93 | А | KIP is very good to inform or act out the information about thing for schools, toys, and people | 3 | People | 4.1.3 |

The use of artifact assessment itself is to support the interview as the data collection in this study. The other things that were also important in teaching preparation were the use of media (I/1/TA/21). In preparing the materials for the students, the teacher must have appropriate techniques in choosing the right materials as the teachers' explanation in the transcript of the interview below.

" One of the most important things in facing the low-grade students is the preparation of the media like usually I have prepared pictures, video for learning such as from native speakers, video of singing, PowerPoint or for the next days we want to do a game, so we have to prepare rewards of any kinds that make students will enjoy and not bored in learning." (I/1/TA/21)

"We have searched the materials from the book, youtube, etc. For example, I have searched the material for English about days of the week on Youtube. Although there were many resources from youtube, we have to be smart to select where is the best for them like it must be interactive. Although, in teaching young learners usually teacher use teacher-center but the teacher must involve the students themselves to participate in learning usually by the repetition model." (I/1/TA/30)

In the teaching-learning process, media such as the key to gain a student's interest in the learning process. The selection of appropriate media will motivate students in learning and make the class more interactive so the students will easily understand the materials.

In terms of techniques to overcome EFL learners barriers in speaking, the teacher uses a combination of repetition drill technique, the police of English and getting good stars as a reward, and translation technique.

Based on data obtained in an International primary school in Cilacap, one of the ways to drill the students in speaking skills is the use of the Police of English and giving stars as a reward (I/1/TA/41). This technique gives students a chance more to practice their speaking skill while playing.



"To drill students in speaking, we apply the technique of getting good stars as a reward. In our class, there was a technique of drilling called 'police of English'. The rules were; firstly, I have classified some students where the boy become the policeman and the girl become the policewoman to supervise their friends. Then, if there any students that not use English in my English class for example late in my class, an excuse to teachers, want to borrow the pen or rubber with their friends, and if they did not use English in speaking so that students that become police will taking notes, police girls noted the girls and police boy noted the boy and report to me." (I/1/TA/41)

"Using rewards such as good and bad stars, it was very motivating for my students. Because children prefer to get a compliment or reward in their learning." (I/1/AS-F/47)

" My students sometimes forget about using English in my class, therefore I always motivated and invite my students to remind each other, for example by saying 'hey, later your star will be removed loh by mam indri' like that. (I/1/TA/56)

'But, that day if I saw my students did not do wrong so I put star for them and if they good or dominant in speaking English so I will add a star for them who active" (I/1/TA/56)

Based on the data obtained from interviews, the teacher prefers to use the police of English and giving stars to gain a student's interest in learning. This technique highly motivated students because, using the rewards such as stars will motivated students to compete with others, in this case, is in positive things such as to speak English, help their classmates, be polite, etc (I/1/AS-F/47). Moreover, using a star as a reward making my students easier to speak English fluently because they will be reminded by their friends (I/1/TA/56).

This is in line with the statements of the previous study (Dhand, 1990) that the use of rewards is to increase students participation in learning, provide them the external motivation and raises student's pride when learning. Furthermore, motivation is important in learning that may change student's moods in learning.

Drilling is a technique that has been used in learning a second/foreign language for many years. According to Kartikasari, Arifin, & Salam (2015) stated that This technique is a model of the Audiolingual method which emphasizes structural pattern through an oral drill. Moreover, they explained that drill helps learners to develop quick, automatic responses using specific formulaic expressions or structures. It means drilling techniques help learners to develop speaking skill. one type of drilling that is quite popular is repetition drills, this technique is used to familiarize students quickly with the structures of expression (Doff as cited in Kartikasari, et al., 2015). Moreover, in a repetition model, "the teacher says the model (words



and phrases) or from a tape or another student in the classroom and the students repeat what is heard", it is known as the simplest drilling in learning language patterns (Tice, as cited in Kartikasari, et al., 2015). It means the repetition model facilitates learners to practice speaking oftenly.

" In my experience in teaching speaking to young learners, **the most challenges in teaching them are the way to read or pronounce words.** Sometimes because their ages still very young, they often forget the pronounce of the vocabulary such as ' buk' they read 'bok'. If we learn to recite Al-quran in our home, our parents can murajaah us, but not with English with the majority of people in Indonesia using Bahasa Indonesia as mother tongue and sometimes using region language to speak daily. So, the practice of English at home is still rare, therefore one of the ways to practice and drill their English is in the school environment by **repetition drill technique** (I/1/AS-A/59).

" in the drilling practice for the conversation we ask them to pair in work and then I have taught about how to write and speak it, and then I have to drill them 4 times, then I invited pairs to go to the front of the class and practice it if they can speak it correctly so I will give them a score such as fluency is oke (I/1/AS-F/84)

" in my practicum, one of the ways is we give them an understanding of how to read it, after that they will repeat it" (I/2/TI/102)

In the teaching speaking by using repetition drill as a technique, the teacher found that the most challenging in teaching young learners are the way to read or how to pronounce words, therefore the teacher uses the repetition drill technique to overcome the barriers in teaching speaking. And then in drilling practices, firstly the teacher gives the students understanding the materials first and divides them into pairs, after that the teacher will drill them around 4 times and then the teacher will invite students to practice it with their pairs in front of the class. **(I/1/AS-F/84)**

From the discussion above, the researcher concludes that in facing young learners, the preparation was important to help the teacher to be able to conduct the learning process according to the learning objectives. That preparation may include a lesson plan, materials, and media, assessment, and the most important thing that teachers must understand the student's needs.

Besides sharing experiences about techniques in teaching speaking to young learners, the teacher also shared her experiences strategies to overcome the barriers on teaching speaking to young learners. The use of strategies was very helpful for the teachers before doing the

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learning process. This is a line with the previous study, stated in Liyaningsih (2017) that strategies is an effort to achieve success goal. There were some strategies to overcome the barriers in teaching speaking for young learners based from a teachers perspective, such as: If there were any students making mistakes, so the teacher will repeat and asked it again to the students, such 'what did you say jo?, and then when the students feel difficult when understanding the language so the teacher will translate it into Bahasa Indonesia (I/1/AS-A/61). The most important strategies to overcome the barriers in pronounce words is by using repetition technique to drill the students (I/1/AS-A/59). And the last to overcome the barriers in teaching speaking to young learners are; first, teachers must communicative and fun in learning, second, the teacher can not be fierce to the student and must be patient, especially dealing with young learners, third, the teacher must understand the students need, the teacher doesn't have to understand all of students needs, but at least teacher knows the character of students. (I/1/TA/66). If they made mistakes in class, the teacher did not allow to judges students' fault but slowly giving them an understanding (I/1/AS-A/67).

CONCLUSION

From the findings, prominent technique is identified in handling the barriers in speaking for young learners : a combination of repetition drilling, translation, and the police of English and getting good stars as a reward perceived by the teacher scaffold young learners' learning process in EFL speaking. It is recommended that the teacher's best practice in implementing a wide range techniques be sustained in supporting young learners learn how to speak in English. For the English teacher In class, although teaching English speaking for young learners is challenges and a little difficult in handling them than adults, the teacher must keep the spirit in teaching English to children because it is important for their futures, of course, along with the development of the advance era, English use to international language communication. Then the most important thing that the teacher must understand the student's needs because each student has a special ability and characteristic and also they are different from adults. Therefore, the planning of the strategies in teaching is important in order to achieve the learning objectives. For other researchers who want to research teaching speaking techniques for young learners, the results of the study can be used as additional references, especially in the context of international Islamic-based curriculum primary school.

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