

DEVELOPING STUDENTS' RETELLING STORY ABILITY THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES

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ABSTRACT

The ability of speaking English has become very important in this global era. To facilitate junior high school students to gain the competence, English teachers employ various techniques to reach the goal with the curriculum as the guideline. The research was conducted by employing two Collaborative Learning (CL) techniques – *Think Team Share* and *Chain Work*. The objectives of this study are (1) to investigate to what extent CL can enhance the ability of the VIII A students of SMPN 2 Semarang to retell stories and (2) to investigate that CL can develop manner of the VIII A students of SMPN 2 Semarang to retell stories. The research was conducted through Action Research with two cycles. Each cycle consists of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The results of the research can be concluded as follows: (1) CL techniques implemented during the research – *Think Team Share* and *Chain Work* – had successfully developed students' retelling story ability. Before the research, students' speaking average score is 72.26, and at the end of the research it is 82.30. The score has exceeded the speaking passing grade, 76. Before the research, 69% of the students gained the passing grade, while - at the end of the research- 88%. This proved that the two techniques had developed students' retelling story ability to the extent of 19%. (2) Based on the second requirement of the research, the two CL techniques could not successfully develop students' manner in retelling stories to 85%. Before the research there are 16 (62%) students who could retell stories in appropriate manners, while – at the end of the research – there are 20 (77%) who could do so.

Key Words: retelling story ability, collaborative learning techniques

INTRODUCTION

In this global era good speaking ability plays an important role to express one's ideas, thoughts and opinions to interact with others. To help students survive in global interaction, teachers have to facilitate their students to be able to gain such speaking competence using the curriculum as the guideline. In the English curriculum of Junior High School for Pilot International Standard School (RSBI) for grade eight of semester two (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional: 2007, 17), one of the speaking basic competence is stated as "to express meanings in forms of spoken recount, narrative and exposition accurately, coherently and appropriately to communicate with surrounding and/or in academic contexts." This target competence has to be obtained by the students. However,

problems may occur during the process of teaching and learning. The problematic situation occurred when my students learnt how to present spoken narrative texts. It took place when they did a spoken assignment. They did not present their stories accurately and fluently. The following facts were seen to indicate such problems: (1) Some spoke shyly. Their self esteem was low. (2) Some looked nervous. They spoke softer than usual. (3) Some did not speak fluently. They used fillers like *hmm... eee...* when retelling stories. (4) Some who could tell their stories confidently, they did not speak naturally. They memorized their stories while presenting them. The facts found during the process of teaching and learning spoken narrative texts shows that the students found difficulties to complete the assignment. This influenced their attainment to

the target competence. It was obvious that students need more guidance from their teacher and support from their peers to gain their optimum competence.

To facilitate the students to gain their optimum competence, I was motivated to make some changes to solve the problems. The changes I designed to solve the problems are by applying animated films and collaborative learning techniques. The films chosen were downloaded from British Council website. The films are short. It takes 5 minutes to play. They are also interesting to attract the students' interest to learn spoken narrative texts eagerly. Watching the films, they also had an opportunity to learn the moral values presented through the films. Considering the facts, I chose the films to facilitate the students to gain the target competence.

Another change I applied to solve the problems is by using collaborative learning techniques in my teaching. Barkley, Cross and Major (2005) define collaborative learning as follows:

... collaborative learning has come to mean students working in pairs or small groups to achieve shared learning goals. It is learning through group work rather than learning by working alone... collaborative learning methods emphasize the importance of promotive interaction and individual accountability. Students must not only learn to work together, but they must also be held responsible for their teammates' learning as well as their own.

In this research, collaborative learning is defined as an instructional method carried out by assigning students to work together with the whole class, in small groups or through chain work to achieve a shared learning objective. The learning objective to achieve is to present

narrative texts orally based on the stories of animated films.

In this study, the classroom activities designed based on the method are carried out in stages. Some of the activities are conducted using the adaptation of *Think-Pair-Share* (Ibid. 2005: 61) with the following elaboration.

CoLT1: Think-Pair-Share After lecturing on a topic, present a prompt such as *Explain the main idea behind*

_____.
How does what I just talked about (or demonstrated) compared _____ with _____?

Summarize in your own words _____.
Ask students to think individually for a few minutes, and then pair up with a classmate to discuss and compare their responses in pairs before sharing with the entire class.

For this research, CoLT1 is modified into *Think-Team-Share*. The modification is as follows.

After students watch an animated film, I ask each of them to think individually for a few minutes and then make teams to create a part of the story of the film based on a picture cut from the film. After that, all the representatives of the groups shared their parts in turns to the entire class to retell the story of the film.

Based on the problematic situation and the changes designed to solve the problems elaborated previously, the research questions examined through this study are as follows: (1) to what extent can CL develop the ability of the VIII A students of SMPN 2 Semarang to retell stories? (2) can collaborative learning (CL) develop manner of the VIII A students of SMPN 2 Semarang in retelling stories?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

CL has been applied to present materials using various classroom activities. Brown (in http://www.esp-world.info/Articles_17/PDF/collaborative_learning.pdf) elaborates his research on CL in the English for Academic Purposes classroom from the viewpoint of students' perception. The research was aimed at providing depth and detail on students' perceptions of what they have gained from the process and possibly indicate what areas might need to be improved or changed. Analyses of data shows that most students claim to have derived academic benefits such as better comprehension and improved performance, and acquired generic skills – enhanced communication and problem-solving skills. They found CL enjoyable and made new friends.

Another research on CL undertaken at the college level was conducted by Gokhale (in <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JTE/jte-v7n1/gokhale.jte-v7n1.html>.) whose study was aimed to examine the effectiveness of individual learning versus CL in enhancing drill-and-practice skills and critical-thinking skills. He concludes that CL fosters the development of critical thinking through discussion, clarification of ideas, and evaluation of others' ideas. However, both methods of instruction were found to be equally effective in gaining factual knowledge. Therefore, if the purpose of instruction is to enhance critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, then CL is more beneficial.

Hanson (in http://www.macalester.edu/education_reform/action_research/HansonAR.pdf) implements CL dealing with peer reviews in special education. The aim of her study is to examine whether or not CL through the use of

peer review improve students' classroom experience and academic performance. The result of the research indicates that CL through the use of peer reviews in special education classroom improves the content of students' writing. Writing content was evaluated based on the length of the students' writing (in number of words) and number of descriptive details.

Unlike researches on CL described previously, my research study has different aims from the ones elaborated above. It was carried out to investigate to what extent CL can develop junior high school students' retelling story ability and their manner to do so.

More advantages of the implementation of CL experienced by students (in Middlecamp, <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/archive/C11/CL/story/middlecc/TSCMC.htm>) are described as follows: the method can support students in solving problems more efficiently as more students get involved in the activity by contributing to each other. This makes the problems be solved easier and faster. The contribution they provide can be in forms of ideas to cope with the problems. It can also be in the form of feedback and/or encouragement provided by students to their peer facing difficulties to contribute to the group. Such feedback and/or encouragement can be given through peer tutoring. This activity enables faster students to share what they understand to their peers in the group who may not understand. This makes the concept they have understood be implanted deeper in their mind. The process gets other people to help keep each other on track.

Narrative is one of the genres taught in junior high school. This genre is presented to develop the four skills of language, listening, speaking, reading and writing. In this study, the text was used to develop students' speaking competence. The purpose of the text is to amuse people.

To facilitate students to gain spoken narrative text competence, a teacher has to introduce the structure of a narrative text first before asking them to express their ideas, imagination and creativity. The structure of narrative text consists of a beginning (orientation), middle (complication and series of events), ending (resolution) and a reorientation (optional).

A narrative text is constructed not only by following a particular structure but also language features. Derewianka (1995) states the language features of the text as follows: (1) Specific, often individual participants with defined identities. Major participants are human, or sometimes animals with human characteristic. (2) Mainly action verbs [*material processes*], but also many verbs which refer to what the human participants said, or felt, or thought [*verbal and mental processes*]. (3) Normally past tense. (4) Many linking words to do with time. (5) Dialogue often included, during which the tense may change to the present or future. (6) Descriptive language chosen to enhance and develop the story by creating images in the reader's mind. (7) Can be written in the first person (I,we) or third person (he,she,they).

Various media like story books, cassette, films, the Internets and others can be employed for teaching narrative texts to develop students' language skills. In this study, the media chosen to meet the purposes are animated films. Harmer (2002) states the advantages of films/video as teaching media as follows: (1) Seeing language – in use: one of the main advantages of video is that students do not just hear language, they see it too. This greatly aids comprehension, since for example, general meaning and moods are often conveyed through expression, gesture and other visual clues. Thus, we can observe how intonation can match facial expression. All such paralinguistic features give valuable meaning

clues and help viewers to see beyond what they are listening to, and thus interpret the text more deeply. (2) Cross-cultural awareness: video uniquely allows students a look at situations far beyond their classrooms. This is especially useful if they want to see, for example, typical British 'body language' when inviting someone out, or how Americans speak to waiters. Video is also of great value in giving students a chance to see such things as what kinds of food people eat in other countries, and what they wear.

Films are not only useful to introduce a foreign language to students but also to provide them with valuable cultural information. The introduction of both the language and the culture where the language is applied can be meaningful experience for students for later use in real interaction in global society outside the classroom.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

The problems of the study are investigated through a classroom action research. It was carried out in the second semester of academic year 2009/2010 for 5 months from the second week of March to July 2010. The subject of the study was the VIII A students consisting 26 persons, 14 girls and 12 boys. The class was chosen purposively as the subject of the study because their score of the first semester is low compared with the average score of year eight. The average English score of year eight of the first semester is 84.59, while that of class VIII A is 82.30. This poor condition encouraged me to conduct the study in class VIII A with the hope the actions done during the research could help them improve their speaking competence.

To conduct this research, the following instruments were utilized: (1) teaching documents consisting of the curriculum, syllabi, lesson plans, speaking test item and scoring

rubric, (2) observation sheet, (3) journal, (4) outside collaborator, and (5) photographic evidence.

The design of the research is action research with each cycle consisting of plan, action, observation and reflection. The research was conducted after preliminary study was held. Having found the problems in the preliminary study, I started the first cycle of the research. With the collaborator, I designed some plans to solve the problems. I conducted the actions using the animated films as teaching media to attract students' interest to learn spoken narrative texts. The activities were presented through CL. In the first cycle, the CL technique implemented is *Think Team Share*. The technique was applied as follows: (1) Students watched an animated film entitled *Jack and the Beanstalk* twice. (2) Then, students were required to think about the film carefully. (3) Next they were assigned to make six groups. Each group had to retell a part of the story of the film based on a picture cut from the film. Guidance and feedback were given to the students whenever they faced difficulties in the group work by both the teacher and faster learners in the group. The group work was designed to help students develop their manner to be able to speak in front of audience well. (4) Finally, students were assigned to retell the complete story individually. They were scored when doing this. During the implementation of the action, an outside observer and me as the English teacher observed the process. At the end the first cycle, reflection was conducted. It was intended to know whether or not the actions done using *Think-Team-Share* technique had weaknesses or problems. It was also meant to identify what points were well done. Therefore, the results of class observation, the observation result of students' manner in retelling a story, the speaking scores of the first cycle were reflected

to inform the strength and the weaknesses of the implementation of actions during the first cycle. If the results of reflection do not reach the research requirements, the research will be continued to the second cycle. The research requirements are as follows: (1) If at least 85% of the students are able to acquire the speaking passing grade, then the implementation of actions using collaborative learning is considered successful to develop students' speaking ability. (2) If at least 85% of the students are able to employ appropriate manners in retelling a story, then implementation of actions using collaborative learning is considered successful to develop their manners. A student is considered able to employ an appropriate manner if he/she shows one of the following (a) Speaks very confidently, loudly and naturally (with no indication of memorizing a text), and uses appropriate non-verbal language (gestures and mimic) to strengthen messages. (b) Speaks confidently, loudly and quite naturally (with some indication or memorizing a text), and occasionally, uses appropriate gestures and mimic to messages).

The second cycle of the research also consists of plan, action, observation and reflection. Plans were designed based on the results of reflection of the first cycle. These were intended to overcome the problems of the first cycle. Then, actions were conducted using *Chain Work* as the CL technique chosen. The technique was implemented as follows: (1) Students watched the animated film entitled *Little Red Riding Hood* twice. (2) Each student had to retell the story by creating a spoken sentence. (3) The student sitting next to him/her had to continue the story by creating another spoken sentence. (4) The rest students did like the second student to complete the story. (5) Finally, students were assigned to retell the complete story individually. They were scored when doing

this. During the implementation of the action, an outside observer and me as the English teacher observed the process. Then, reflection was conducted like in the first cycle.

At the end of the second cycle, the results of reflections of the pre cycle, the first cycle and the second cycle were compared and analyzed to find the development of (a) the students' speaking ability in retelling the stories and (b) the students' manner in retelling stories of the animated films.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In this part, the findings found in each cycle will be presented.

Pre Cycle

This cycle was conducted before the research. Intervention done during the implementation of action was not conducted yet. A test was administered to find students' retelling stories ability. The scoring was done using the speaking scoring rubric with the following assessment aspects: grammar, vocabulary, accent and fluency. The table below shows the results of the speaking test administered during the pre cycle.

Table 1
The Speaking Scores of the VIII A Students of SMPN 2 Semarang in Retelling a Story in Pre Cycle

| No | Aspect of Assessment | Maximum Score | Passing Grade | Average Score | Number and Percentage of students who gained speaking passing grade | Number and Percentage of students who didn't gain speaking passing grade |
|----|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---|--|
| 1. | Grammar | 30 | 22.8 | 20.53 | 11 (42%) | 15 (58%) |
| 2. | Vocabulary | 30 | 22.8 | 23.07 | 22 (85%) | 4 (15%) |
| 3. | Accent | 25 | 19 | 18.46 | 18 (69%) | 8 (31%) |
| 4. | Fluency | 15 | 11.4 | 12.23 | 16 (62%) | 10(38%) |
| 5. | Speaking | 100 | 76 | 71.12 | 18 (69%) | 8 (31%) |

Based on the data presented through the table above, it is found that two average scores did not reach the passing grades – those of grammar and accent. The average score of grammar is 20.53, while the passing grade is 22.8. There are 11(42%) students gaining the passing grade, while 15 (58%) failed. The average score of accent is 18.46, while passing grade is 19. There are 18 (69%) students passed the accent passing grade, while 8 (31%) students failed. These facts show that students' competence of the two aspects is still low. Another fact shown through the table is that the average score for speaking did not gain the passing grade, either. The speaking average score is 71.12, while the passing grade is 76. There are 18 (69%)

students who could gain the passing grade, while the rest – 8 (31%) students failed.

Another students' weakness I found before the research is that some of them presented their stories in inappropriate manners. They were not confident when doing so. They memorized their stories and did not retell them naturally. There were 10 (38%) students who showed the inappropriate manner when completing the spoken test. The rest – 16 (62%) - could do it appropriately.

The facts described previously motivated me as an English teacher to facilitate the students to gain better competence. To realize this, I applied CL activities using two different techniques: *Think*

Team Share and *Chain Work*. For the first cycle the first technique was used.

First Cycle

Having found students' weaknesses, I conducted the research by implementing *Think Team Share*

during the action in the classroom. The results of the research in the first cycle are presented as follows.

Table 2
The Speaking Scores of the VIII A Students of SMPN 2 Semarang
in Retelling a Story in the First Cycle

| No | Aspect of Assessment | Maximum Score | Passing Grade of Each sssessment Aspect | Average Score | Number and ercentage of students who gained speaking passing grade | Number and Percentage of students who didn't gain speaking passing grade |
|----|----------------------|---------------|---|---------------|--|--|
| 1 | Grammar | 30 | 22.8 | 21.69 | 15 (58%) | 11 (42%) |
| 2 | Vocabulary | 30 | 22.8 | 23.76 | 25 (96%) | 1 (4%) |
| 3 | Accent | 25 | 19 | 19.03 | 21 (81%) | 5 (19%) |
| 4 | Fluency | 15 | 11.4 | 13.61 | 26 (100%) | 0(0%) |
| 5 | Speaking | 100 | 76 | 75.03 | 20 (77%) | 6 (23%) |

According to the data, it is found that 2 average scores did not gain the passing grades. They are the average score of grammar and that of speaking. The average score of grammar is 21.69, while the passing grade is 22.8. There are 15 (58%) students gaining the passing grade, while 11 (42%) students failed. The average score of speaking is 75.03, while the passing grade is 76. There are 20(77%) students could gain the passing grade, while 6 (23%) students failed. Again, students still found problems in applying correct grammar in presenting the spoken narrative text. This influenced their speaking ability.

Another finding found during the first cycle is that there were 7 (27%) students who showed the inappropriate manner in presenting their stories. The rest – 19 (73%) – could present the stories using appropriate manners.

As the target requirements of the research had not been reached, the research was continued to the second cycle. To solve the weaknesses found in the first cycle, *Chain Work* as the CL technique was implemented.

Second Cycle

After conducting the action in the first cycle and reflecting the results of the test and the observation, the data found are presented as follows.

Table 3
The Speaking Scores of the VIII A Students of SMPN 2 Semarang
in Retelling a Story in the Second Cycle

| No | Aspect of Assessment | Maximum Score | Passing Grade of Each sssessment Aspect | Average Score | Number and Percentage of Students Who Gained Speaking Passing Grade | Number and Percentage of Students Who Didn't Gain Speaking Passing Grade |
|----|----------------------|---------------|---|---------------|---|--|
|----|----------------------|---------------|---|---------------|---|--|

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------|-----|------|-------|-----------|---------|
| 1 | Grammar | 30 | 22.8 | 24.23 | 20 (77%) | 6 (23%) |
| 2 | Vocabulary | 30 | 22.8 | 23.54 | 24 (92%) | 2 (8%) |
| 3 | Accent | 25 | 19 | 20 | 25 (96%) | 1 (4%) |
| 4 | Fluency | 15 | 11.4 | 14.54 | 26 (100%) | 0 (0%) |
| 5 | Speaking | 100 | 76 | 82.30 | 23 (88%) | 3 (12%) |

The data found in the second cycle are presented through the table above. Based on the data, it is found that all assessment scores have gained the passing grades. The average score of grammar is 24.23, while the passing grade is 22.8. There are 20 (77%) students gaining the passing grade, while 6 (23%) failed. The average score of vocabulary is 23.54, while the passing grade is 22.8. There are 24 (92%) students passing the passing grade, while 2 (8%) failed. The average score of accent is 20, while the passing grade is 19. There are 25 (96%) students gaining the passing grade, while 1 (4%) failed. The average score of fluency is 14.54, while the passing grade is 11.4. All students gained the fluency passing grade. The average score of speaking is 82.3, while the passing grade is 76. There are 23 (88%) students

passing the passing grade, while 3 (12%) students failed.

Another finding is that there are 6 (23%) students who showed inappropriate manner when presenting their spoken stories. The rest – 20 (77%) – retold the stories with appropriate manners.

Discussion

The discussion of the findings will be presented in two parts: The Development of Students' Retelling Story Ability and The Development of Students' Manners in Retelling Stories.

The Development of Students' Retelling Story Ability

Having conducted the research in two cycles, the development of students' ability in retelling stories is presented through the following table.

Table 4
The Development of Retelling Story Ability of the VIII A Students
Of SMPN 2 Semarang

| Assessment Aspect | Average Score | | | Development of Retelling Story Ability | | | Students Who Gained the Passing Grade (%) | | | Development of Students Who Gained the Passing Grade (%) | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-------|-------|--|-------|-------|---|-----|-----|--|-------|-------|
| | PC | C1 | C2 | PC-C1 | C1-C2 | PC-C2 | PC | C1 | C2 | PC-C1 | C1-C2 | PC-C2 |
| 1. Grammar | 20.53 | 21.69 | 24.23 | 1.16 | 2.54 | 3.7 | 42 | 58 | 77 | 16 | 19 | 35 |
| 2. Vocabulary | 23.07 | 23.76 | 23.54 | 0.69 | -0.22 | 0.47 | 85 | 96 | 92 | 11 | -4 | 7 |
| 3. Accent | 18.46 | 19.03 | 20 | 0.57 | 0.97 | 1.54 | 69 | 81 | 96 | 12 | 15 | 27 |
| 4. Fluency | 13.38 | 13.61 | 14.54 | 0.23 | 0.93 | 1.16 | 62 | 100 | 100 | 38 | 0 | 38 |
| 5. Speaking | 72.26 | 75.03 | 82.30 | 2.77 | 7.27 | 10.04 | 69 | 77 | 88 | 8 | 11 | 19 |

Based on the data in the table above, it can be seen that grammar average score (24.23) could exceed the passing grade (22.8) at the end of the

research. 77% of the students gained the passing grade. For vocabulary, the average scores reached the passing grade (22.8) in all

cycles of the research. At the end of the study, 92% of the students reached the passing grade. The accent average scores had gained the passing grade (19) since the first cycle. 96% of the students reached the passing grade at the end of the research. For fluency, the average scores gained the passing grade (11.4) in all cycles. At the end of the study, all students retold the story fluently. At the end of the research, the

speaking average score gained the passing grade (82.30). 88% of the students succeeded in gaining it. This percentage shows that the result had reached the first research requirement.

Development of Students' Manner in Retelling Stories

After conducting the observation on students' manner in retelling stories, the results are presented through the following table.

Table 5
The Development of Students' Manner in Retelling Stories

| Aspect Being Observed | Students who Showed Appropriate Manners | | | | | | Development of Students who Showed Appropriate Manner | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|-------|---|-------|----|
| | PC | % | C1 | % | C2 | % | PC-C1 | % | C1-C2 | % | PC-C2 | % |
| Manner in Retelling Stories | 16 | 62 | 19 | 73 | 20 | 77 | 3 | 11 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 15 |

Based on the data above, it can be seen that – before the research - there are 16 (62%) students who could retell stories in appropriate manners, while the rest – 10 (38%) - could not. At the end of the research, there are 20 (77%) students who could present stories in appropriate manners, while the rest – 6 (23%) could not. The percentage shows that the result had not reached the second requirement of the research. Because of limitation of time, the research was not continued to the following cycle.

CONCLUSION

CL techniques implemented during the research – *Think Teams Share* and *Chain Work* – had successfully developed students' retelling story ability. Before the research, students' speaking average score is 72.26, and at the end of the research it is 82.30. The score has exceeded the speaking passing grade, 76. Before the research, 69% of the students gained the passing grade, while - at the end of the research- 88%. This proved that the two techniques had developed

students' retelling story ability to the extent of 19%.

Based on the second requirement of the research, the two CL techniques could not successfully develop students' manner in retelling stories to 85%. Before the research there are 16 (62%) students who could retell stories in appropriate manners, while – at the end of the research – there are 20 (77%) who could do so.

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