INCREASING ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN READING CLASSES BY READING TO ACT

Wienny Ardrivati **Dosen Tetap FBIB UNISBANK Semarang**

Abstract

This research is about one of the methods in teaching English in Reading Class in Language Faculty at University of Stikubank. It aimed at using an interactive method to improve oral communication skills.

It is a qualitative research and employs five data collection methods, namely: class observation, teaching journal, document collection, questionnaire and interview.

The population was the language students of STIKUBANK University. There were thirty one students. They attended the Reading Class in the semester. They read a narrative text, find out the roles then they act based on the plot of the narrative text.

The results show that the students are highly motivated to have a role play as one of the methods used in reading class. They feel that they get enough practice to use English actively besides their understanding in reading a narrative text. The process of reading the text is satisfactory. The students can understand the plot and they can transfer it into a scenario of a play. Having got the scenario the students perform their play with enjoyable performances. Their oral communication in acting the role is tolerable too. Thus, reading to act by a role play can be used a Reading Class.

In addition, it is suggested that in reading class the lecturer should give another interactive method besides a role play. She or he may apply many different activities to make a reading class more interactive.

Keywords: role play, plot, scenario, action research, teaching journal.

Introduction

Most English teachers teaching reading skill basically apply the conventional method in teaching reading skills. They select a passage or text for the students to read, introduce the reading selection to the students, and have the students read



it. To evaluate whether the students understand the text or not, the language teachers mostly, first, ask the students to go over the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases which will be encountered in the text; sometimes review particular structures that might be new or confusing; break long or complex sentences into shorter segments. Secondly, they tell the students to do cloze test model or ask questions to see if they have understood the texts. The third is comprehension check; the teachers ask questions about the information in the reading text or selection. The students have few opportunities to speak. They do not have opportunities to have oral interaction with each other. The teachers teach the reading skill separately from other skills, such as listening, writing, and speaking.

That's why in that condition we can see the conditions of the students who learn the language are incapable of communicating in English. They have limited time and no chances to express their knowledge from what they read. They experience the environment of having difficulties to interact with each other, although, perhaps they know and understand what they listen or what they read. To make matter worse, students in English as a foreign language environment have few chances to speak English outside of the classroom. It is no wonder that after years to study English, students are often incapable of effectively communicating with anyone in English. This phenomenon is known as mute English. (Yun Zhang, 2009)

Now, the impact and development of the era have influenced not only on technology advancement but also in language teaching, for example in teaching English language skills. Teaching reading skills, for instance, is possible not to be taught separately from listening and speaking. It should be integrated with other skills, such as Ur (1996, 120) stated that "of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important".

In teaching reading which is integrating with oral communications skills, the language teachers should know some integrated approaches where speaking is added to reading lessons.

Considering the teaching of reading that most students who study English often face difficulties in understanding English text interactively. I find out that students need to receive essential practice in oral communication. In this case I want to put forward some questions whether the students can implement an oral communication skill in reading Class through a role play. Those questions are:

- 1. How does read to act improve students' communication skills in reading class?
- 2. Is there a gap between what the students wanted to mean and what they said?

I hope that through those two questions I can find out that reading to act through a play can be interactive and effective for the students to increase their oral communications.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Reading Class

In reading class, conventionally, the focus is often on the concrete aspects of the text, the facts, what is easily visible on the page, and understanding about reading requires only that they restate basic information. It focuses that they understand the content of the reading text.

For some language students in university or college, reading is a required subject. It is academic reading which can be overwhelmingly difficult for those whose skills are less than excellent. College reading, on the other hand, requires meta-cognition, the ability to arrange their learning. They need to think about how their learning style interacts with the text they are reading, and perhaps change their reading strategies to meet the challenges of that text. Academic reading is not easy. Part of learning to use reading strategies is to try out new and



different ways of reading. Even professors read, think, write, reread, puzzle over ideas. No one gets it the first time. Successful students learn how to read effectively and remember what they read. You need to learn ways to leap into reading, keep going, finish up, summarize, and connect the new information to other knowledge you have acquired. (Dr. Kathleen King)

To increase the students' activities to read the text given, it can be applied three main stages of reading: previewing, whilst reading, and post reading.

The first activity is Read to act. This activity is designed to let the students act out a story they read from a passages/text provided. Students should create a group and appoint the director. After that, they skim the text and focus on the plot. The students do the rehearsal by memorizing the plot. This activity can be said as previewing.

The second activity is "Read to debate". This activity requires students to preview the text by focusing on the controversial topic. They form pairs and debate the issue. In the post activity the students do a whole class debate. It means the students conduct previewing, whist reading and post reading steps.

Finally, the last activity is "Read to interview". It has the similar steps as those in the previous activity. The focus of the third activity is that students preread, read and re-read then finally act (interview) the other students. This activity is organized to evaluate the students' understanding of the given text that they read.

It is expected that the students will be encouraged to perform the task and activities as they are rooted from real life events. It is believe that the more authentic the material is the more encouraged the students will be.

Communicative Language Teaching

A reasonable solution is to support a more integrated approach where speaking is added to reading and writing lessons to encertain that students receive essential practice in oral communication. Since the listening skill is natural complement to any true speaking activity, adding speaking opportunities to a reading or writing lessons automatically lets students integrate at least three skills. This integration has many benefits, as it adds variety, covers students' different strengths and creates interactive possibilities and receptive skills. Moreover, the interesting topics associated with reading and writing lessons lead the students well to speaking tasks. (Zhang, 2009)

In many cases, some language teachers teach the four language skills separately. To associate with such a change, this study introduces an oral language component or communicative language teaching into any reading classes. The communicative language teaching (CLT) help students use the target language in a variety of contexts and places great emphasis on learning language functions. CLT is usually characterized as a broad *approach* to teaching, rather than as a teaching *method* with a clearly defined set of classroom practices. As such, it is most often defined as a list of general principles or features. One of the most recognized of these lists is David Nunan's (1991) five features of CLT: (cited from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communicative_language_teaching)

- 1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
- 2. The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
- 3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the Learning Management process.
- 4. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.



5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

Thus, in the classroom CLT often takes the form of pair and group work requiring negotiation and cooperation between learners, fluency-based activities that encourage learners to develop their confidence, pair works, debate or interview in which students practice and develop language functions, as well as careful use of grammar and pronunciation focused activities.

Action Research

To establish the changing approach in using oral communication in reading classes, this study applied Classroom Interaction Research. This Action Research is conducted to find an alternate way to encourage the students to be more active in speaking class. In this action research, the action plan that is going to implement is a role play. Richard (1992) defines Action Research as:

- 1. Research which has the primary goal of finding ways of solving problems, bringing about social change or practical action, in comparison with research which seeks to discover scientific principles or develop general laws and theory.
- 2. Teacher (in teacher education) initiates a classroom research which seeks to increase the teacher's understanding of classroom teaching and learning and to bring about improvements in classroom practices.

Role play

A role play technique is one of other interactive techniques that are effective and interactive. It can motivate learners to learn a language actively. Incorporating role-play into the classroom adds variety, a change of pace and opportunities for a lot of language production and also a lot of fun! It can be an integral part of the class. If the teacher believes that the activity will work and the necessary support is provided, it can be very successful. Rebecca Teen in her article also explained

that "Role-playing is simultaneously interesting and useful to students because it emphasizes the "real-world" side of science. It challenges them to deal with complex problems with no single "right" answer and to use a variety of skills beyond those employed in a typical research project." In particular, role-playing presents the student a valuable opportunity to learn not just the course content, but other perspectives on it. Thus, a role play technique can be applied to teach a language, such as in Reading Class. The reading Class will be more fun and interactive.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

This research is a qualitative research. It uses five data collection methods, namely: class observation, teaching journal, document collection, questionnaire and interview. The use of the five methods is meant to triangulate data that is to collect information using a variety of methods. Maxwell (1996:75-76) points out that triangulation reduces the risk that the conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific method, and it allows you to gain a better assessment of the validity and generality of the explanations that you develop. The analysis of data was done throughout the study; once it is gathered it is analyzed right away. The following paragraphs discuss how the four methods will be used in the research.

Population

The research was conducted the Language Faculty of STIKUBANK UNIVERSITY. The population was taken from the students of Reading Class III, containing 36 students of regular classes. The sample population was all students who take the reading class. However, only thirty one students attended the lecture and joined every activity for the purpose of the research.



Data Collection and Procedure

There are some steps for obtaining the data.

First, reading silently; the student in reading class, each was given a narrative text. They read the text by heart. They could consult in the dictionaries if they didn't understand the difficult words or they could discuss with their friends.

The second step, reading to debate, they could discuss by asking and answering about what they read from the text. After they were sure about the content of the text, they prepared to transfer the idea of the text into a scenario. They should find out who and how many roles there were. Then, they noted what they have discussed and composed into dialogue for the scenario. They could make up a play based on the characters which were discovered in the text. They wrote the conversation of each character. Then, they practiced the dialogue. Finally they acted based on the conversation they composed.

While they students were doing that, the teacher had a role as an observant. He or she could help the students if they faced difficulties. The teacher could take note of what the students did during the discussion. At the time the student acted in the play the teacher recorded the conversation.

The last step was reading to interview. In this case the teacher interviewed the students to check whether the students' answers were really right or not. When the teacher was not sure with the answer in the questioners she could interview them.

Class Observation

The setting was in one of the Reading class III at UNISBANK Language Faculty. The role of the teacher in charge in the class observation was as participant observer. The teacher noted of analysis, interpretation, and inference of the class observation.

Teaching Journal

The notes were about important classroom details, some students' expressions during the lesson, and research-related thoughts coming during the lesson. Teaching journal, as a matter of fact, also contained teaching reflection, e.g. the activity did not work as expected, most of the students were passive. However, they co operated one another to complete a given task, such as reading the narrative text. The teacher approached the students in each group whether they wanted to ask their difficulties or not.

Document Collection

Document collected includes teacher's reports; and students' works during the debate and interview activities in the reading class. The reading materials used in the discussion and debate were about the narrative texts. From the text the students composed a scenario. For purpose of analysis, the students' role play process was recorded and reviewed.

The tasks made by the students were some scenarios of the play from one of the text given in the reading class. The text was The Crow Prince.

Role play

The students read the text given silently for about 10 minutes. The teacher told them by finding out all the characters in the text and made up a scenario for a play. After that they discussed with their friends and they discussed about the plot of the story until they found out who the characters/roles were. Next they made a group. In the group they created a dialogue for the play for about fifty minutes. After finished making up the dialogue then, they performed the play in front of the class. Their performance was attracting they could present well.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered on the last meeting. It consists of some openended questions in Bahasa.



Those questioners consist of three parts. The first part is about the material of the reading text. The questions were based on the basic idea about the reading The second part was about the process of reading to act, how the students cooperated with their friends in the group, do they made discussion, do they translate from Bahasa into English. The questions in the second part were how read to act improve the students oral communication in reading class. The last was about the students' hopes, whether they could get benefit or not.

Interview

Some students were interviewed by the teacher in charge to cross check their answer in the questionnaire. The interview was noted for the purpose of the analysis. The interviewees were chosen randomly. They were asked one by one in turn. The questions asked were the same with those in the questioners.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the discussion were that the students did not have difficulties to understand the narrative text. They could transfer the text into dialogue by working in a group. All the data taken from the questioners and were analyzed and interpreted. The questioners were divided into three parts. The first part was about the reading materials that were simple and easy.

Table 1. Part I. Reading Materials

No	Description	Yes	No
1.	Do you think the text is easy to understand?	90.32 %	9.68 %
2.	What do you think about the plot? Is it simple	77.42 %	22.58 %
3.	Do you encounter many new words when you read the text?	61.30 %	38.70%
4.	Do you look them up in the dictionary/	25.80 %	74.20 %

The second part of the questioners was about Reading to Act. In this case, I wanted to know the students' abilities to express their understanding into activities by discussing and debating. (See Table 2)

Most students did interactive reading. They could find the roles in the text easily. They cooperated well with their friends in a group. There were 11 students found difficulties to create the dialogue. It was 35.48 %, and 54.84 % or 17 students found no problems in creating a dialogue.

In creating the dialogue there were 19 students used English directly or 61.29%, there were 10 students or 32.25% first translated into Indonesian. However, there were 2 students or 6.45 % did not give responses in this question.

There were 15 students or 48.39% made the dialogue by reading understanding and discussing with their friends in the group. They discussed interactively. Where as 13 students or 41.94% did not do the same as those.

The last question of part 2 showed that most students made discussion to create the sentences for the dialogue.

Table 2. The Process of Reading to Act

No	Description	Yes	No	No Response
1.	Can you find the roles involves in the reading text?	100%	-	-
2.	Do you cooperate with your friends in a group to create a dialogue based on the text?	100 %		
3.	Do you find difficulties to create the dialogue?	35.48%	54.84 %	9.68 %
4.	How do you make the dialogue? Do you write in English directly?	61.29 %	32.25%	6.45%
5.	Do you discuss interactively to create the dialogue?	48.39%	41.94%	9.67 %
6.	Do you make a discussion to compose the sentences for the dialogue?	100 %		

The third part was about students' hopes. The table showed that all students took benefit of the reading class with the method of a role play. There were 25 students or 80.65 % thought that the role play was interactive. There were five students or 16.13 % stated that it was not interactive. Only one student did not give a response

Table 3. Students' Hopes

No	Description	yes	No	No Resp.
1.	Do you think a role play is an interactive method in reading class?	80.65 %	16.13 %	3.23 %
2.	Do you think reading to act give you benefit?	100 %		

Interviews

The participants were interviewed by the teacher in charge to cross check the answer in the questioners. The interviewees were chosen randomly. The interview activity was noted for the purpose of the analysis.

The result showed that in reading class the students enjoyed to have a reading class with a story that could be made into a play. They thought it was not boring. Most students stated that they like reading to act because they could get the benefit. In reading class they thought they only read and understand the content of the text, that's why when they had reading to act in the form of a role play they were really excited. They could make a discussion and debate to create a dialogue.

Finally, it could be stated that the method of teaching reading could apply a role play that was very interactive. They could perform and express the ideas of the narrative text into a play.

CONCLUSION

It is found out some initial findings that are important to share. Reading to act can improve the communication skill through an interactive method that is a role play by;

- 1. reading a narrative text that can be discussed and debated
- 2. using the text as a source to practice
- 3. finding out the characters or roles in the narrative text
- 4. creating sentences of each role to compose a dialogue with their own sentences
- 5. practicing the dialogue
- 6. performing the play

In answering the second questions; whether there is a gap between what the students wanted to mean with what they said, it is found out that there is a small gap in performing the play. They could create the dialogue well. However when the performed they could not express the sentences well. They forgot with what they had written in the scenario. Thus, for the second question the students needed improvement such as

- 1. They lack of vocabularies
- 2. They lack of time



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