FOUR LITTLE DUCKS: INTEGRATING STORY AND ROLE-PLAY IN TEACHING SPEAKING TO ENGLISH YOUNG LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT
Teaching speaking to English young language learners is believed to be the most difficult thing to do by most of English teachers at this level due to the pupils’ limitation as the true beginners of foreign language learners. Some teachers even tend to think it an impossible skill to teach to these learners. This article convinces the teachers that by using story and role play and integrating them makes teaching speaking possible and interesting. Furthermore, Four Little Ducks shows how story encourages the pupils to take part and role play the story where the achievement of teaching speaking skill can be facilitated. This article also provides some basic understanding on how to use story and role play in teaching speaking to young learners and presents sample of lesson plans and instructional materials as well.

Index Terms— storytelling, role play, teaching speaking, young learner

INTRODUCTION
The aim of introducing English to young language learners (YLLs) is to familiarize them with English as a foreign and an international language, and to develop their positive attitudes toward the language. Dealing with the urgency of introducing English to YLLs, Cameron (2001, in Zulhermindra and Suzanne, 2015) claims that there are many advantages for starting to learn a foreign language in primary years. Based on the data, it was found that YLLs can get benefit in listening particularly in terms of pronunciation accuracy in natural context. In addition, Pufahl et al (2001 in Zulhermindra and Rahmawati, 2015), based on their research writes in their article “Whart We Can Learn from Foreign Language Teaching in Other Countries” that many respondents found that beginning foreign language study early promotes achievement of higher levels of language proficiency. This implies that the early years language learners introduce to a foreign language, the more proficient they are in that language.

Speaking is one the language skill that YLLE should master. There are some reasons why speaking should be the EFL teachers’ concern in teaching English to YLLs. Konomi (2014) writes that kids are natural chatterboxes and they love to talk and look for chances to communicate meaningfully. Similarly, Klancar (2006) illustrates that young learners are like sponges; they soak up everything they hear and how to say it. These two illustrations convince that speaking skill one of the language skills that will be potentially successful when it is introduced and practiced in early ages. Some studies also reveal that the earlier YLLs is introduced to spoken English, the better they comprehend and communicate orally in English.

However, the importances of teaching speaking to English YLLs do not seem to attract EFL teachers of YLLs to teach speaking to their students. The teaching of this skill tends to be ignored or even avoided by them. There are some reasons why the teachers ignore or avoid teaching. To them, teaching speaking skill to YLLs seems to be something that is hard to implement and the goal of teaching speaking is something difficult or impossible to achieve. As a result, expecting YLLs to be able to speak in English becomes something that might not realized.
Realizing the importance of mastering speaking skill by YLLs and some benefits that can be revealed when YLLs are able to speaking and the tendency to ignore or avoid teaching this skill, this paper tries to convince the EFL teachers of YLLs that teaching speaking to YLLs is possible and predictably promising for the achievement of teaching goals and language proficiency as well. One the activity that the teachers can conduct is by integrating story and role play in teaching speaking to English YLLs that this paper concern with.

**YOUNG LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

1.1. Definition of Young Learners

Several experts share their definitions about who young learners are. Mc Kay (2006) states that young learners are children who are in primary and elementary school. Cameron (2001) points out that young learners are those who are less than 14 years old. Philips (Nagy, 2011) and Nunan (2005) define young learners as children from the first years of formal schooling i.e. five or six years to eleven or twelve years of age. Suyanto (2007) states that young learners are students in elementary school by the age around 6 to 12 years old. Slatterly dan Willis (2001, in Shin, 2006) differentiate the term young learners that refer to those who are in age of 7-12 and very young learners who are under 7 years old. In addition, Ersöz (2007) classifies young learners into three age groups. They are: 1) very young learners (3-6 years old), 2) young learners (7-9 years old) and 3) older/late young learners (10 – 12 years old).

It can be understood that young learners are those who are 5 to 12 years old or younger that 14 years old. Specifically, the are also classified into very young learners, young learners and. older/late young learners.

1.2. Characteristic of Young Learner

Dealing with the characteristics of young learners, Suyanto (2007) points out that, in general, young language learners in their initial stage of learning like lessons that closely related to their life especially in age of 5 to 7 years old. Furthermore, it is difficult for them to differentiate concrete from abstract things. However, they are very imaginative. They like games, stories and songs. Ersöz (2007) adds some points dealing with the characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Young Learners</th>
<th>Young Learners</th>
<th>Older/ Late Young Learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age: 3-6 years old</td>
<td>Age: 7-9 years old</td>
<td>Age: 10-12 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade: Pre-school Education</td>
<td>Grade: 1st – 3rd grade</td>
<td>Grade: 4th- 6th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics:</td>
<td>Characteristics:</td>
<td>Characteristics:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Low concentration span but easily excited</td>
<td>• Low concentration span: Wide variety of activities needed</td>
<td>• Longer attention span but still children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High motivation; active involvement</td>
<td>• Short memory: frequent revision is needed</td>
<td>• Taking learning seriously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Love talking but problems in sharing</td>
<td>• Logical-analytical: Asking questions</td>
<td>• World knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Short memory: Learn slowly Forget easily</td>
<td>• Problems in sharing in group work</td>
<td>• More cooperation in groups and in pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Repetition and revision is necessary</td>
<td>• Developing confidence in expressing themselves</td>
<td>• Developed social, motor and intellectual skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Limited motor skills (using a pen and scissors) but kinesthetic and energetic</td>
<td>• Developing world knowledge</td>
<td>• Learning strategies are used and developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learn holistically</td>
<td>• Limited motor skills (left-right)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Love stories, fantasy, imagination, art, drawing and coloring</td>
<td>• Reasonable amount of input</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Love stories, fantasy, imagination, drawing &amp; coloring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3. Young Learners and Foreign Language Learning

In relation to the nature of how YLLs learn a foreign language, Cameron (2001) writes that young learners have incredible potential to master certain language and their mastery beyond what can be expected. It is quite misleading to believe that young learners can only acquire simple language only, such as colors, songs dan simple dialogues. In fact, they can even perform better in more challenging task. In addition, Halliwell (2009) points out that young learners basically love to share their experiences; they will be happy if other people pay attention to them and to what they are talking about.

To be specific, Harmer (2003) points out that the way young learners learn a language is different from adult. He classifies the way how young learners learn a language differently in the following ways: 1) They respond to meaning even if they do not understand individual words. 2) They often learn indirectly rather than directly that is they take in information from all sides, learning from everything around them rather than only focusing on the selected topic they are being taught. 3) Their understanding comes not just from explanation, but also from what they see and hear and, crucially, have a chance to touch and interact with. 4) They generally display an enthusiasm for learning and a curiosity about the world around them. 5) They have a need for individual attention and approval from the teacher. 6) They are keen to talk about themselves, and respond well to learning that uses themselves and their own lives as main topics in the classroom. 7) They have a limited attention span; unless activities are extremely engaging they can easily get bored, losing interest after ten minutes or so.

In line with the characteristics above, Ersöz (2007) elaborates certain characteristics of young learners in learning a foreign language in the following table.

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<td>Grade: Pre-school Education</td>
<td>Grade: 1st – 3rd grade</td>
<td>Grade: 4th- 6th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Focus/ Skills Used:</td>
<td>Language Focus/ Skills Used:</td>
<td>Language Focus/ Skills Used:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening &amp; Speaking</td>
<td>Listening &amp; Speaking</td>
<td>Listening/Speaking/Reading/Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Items (concrete &amp; familiar objects)</td>
<td>Vocabulary Items (concrete &amp; familiar and new objects)</td>
<td>Vocabulary Items (concrete &amp; abstract)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Grammar Teaching or metalanguage (can’t analyze language but may be exposed to chunks through songs, classroom language)</td>
<td>New in Reading and Writing (word to sentence level)</td>
<td>Grammar (inductive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reading &amp; writing (may recognize letters or short words)</td>
<td>No Grammar Teaching or metalanguage (chunks through songs and classroom language)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Characteristics of Young Learners’ Foreign Language Learning

TEACHING SPEAKING TO ENGLISH YOUNG LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Bailey (2005, in Konomi (2014) proposes three main reasons why young learners should be encouraged to speak in English class. Those reasons are: 1) to provide young learners with opportunity to use English in real life situations, 2) to provide the teachers and young language learners as well with sufficient informations dealing with the young learners’ progress, and to figure out problems that are potentially encountered by young
language learners in their efforts to speaking English in class.

Dealing with teaching speaking to English young language learners, based on study conducted to teachers in Albania, Konomi (2014) releases some findings as follow:

a. Teachers should encourage young language learners to practice speaking English as much as possible by providing a wide range of opportunity to to experience with English. Such opportunities will make young language learners more familiar with the language and in turn will make the process of internalization more automatic and natural. Furthermore, it also improves their confidence to use the language and motivation to learn and know more about the language.

b. Teachers must give young learners a reason for speaking. This can be done by choosing topics or themes that are related to their needs to use English for speaking. Talking about themselves, family, hobbies and other similar ones will be interesting for them to participate in speaking and in turn will convince themselves that English is actually a tool for communication; not just another subject to study.

c. Teaching speaking in the language classroom can be challenging. For many EFL young learners speaking English is such a challenging activity for them. They tend to use their mother tongue due their limited English. In some cases, they tend to keep silent rather to risk themselves of making mistakes. Dealing with these issues, a teacher of EFL for young learners need to be careful so that the young language learners feel encouraged to speak in English and feel comfortable as the same during speaking activities.

d. Teachers should provide appropriate feedback and correction. Learning a new (foreign) language for EFL young learners can be excited and anxious at the same time. They realize that they are learning something new that might be different from their mother tongue. They are worried they will not be perfect in articulating the new language well. Therefore, they need some feedbacks from their their teacher about their progress and some corrections as well to make them better.

e. Teachers should focus on both fluency and accuracy. That the teachers foster fluency is a good effort. However, the students also need a perfect model their EFL teacher in terms of correct pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and other relevant aspects.

In order to achieve the goal of teaching Speaking to EFL young learners, there are several activities that can be carried out by an EFL teachers for young language learners. Those activities can be listed as follow: Recitation (Grade 3-4), Pronunciation Drills (Grade 3-5), Choral Reading (Grade 3-6), Role Play (Grade 3-6), Storytelling (Grade 4-6), Songs (Grade 3-6), Questionnaires (Grade 3-6), Talking and Writing Box (Grade 3-4), and Tongue Twisters (Grade 3-5). Two of those activities will be discussed in details.

**STORYTELLING**

Children love story very much. It can be said that stories cannot be separated from their life. It can be understood why stories play a significant role in their growth. Stories not only help in stimulating their imagination and understanding of the world, but also in developing their language ability and appreciating literature (Aiex, 1988; Cooper, 1989; Koki, 1998; Zobairi & Gulley, 1989, in Jianing, 2007).

Furthermore, Jianing (2007) recommends that there are three reasons why EFL teachers for YLLs should use of stories and storytelling. The first reason deals with the fact that stories are motivating and interesting, can attract listeners and promote communication. Dealing with this issue, Cooter (1991) and Bla (1998) point out that "The excitement and drama of storytelling provide a context that holds students' attention." (Jianing, 2014). The second reason convinces that stories are enormous language treasure. This issue is at various language levels and age groups can find suitable stories to read and tell. The last reasons deals with the...
lively atmosphere and real life environment created by stories encourages the students to talk and discuss with each other. Furthermore, Colon-vila (1997, in Jianing, 2007) also commented that storytelling helps EFL learners become more self-confident to express themselves spontaneously and creatively.

**ROLE PLAY**

According Budden (2004) role-play is any speaking activity where students play somebody else’s roles, such as as teachers, shop keepers, etc., or play their own roles in imaginary situations, such as at the restaurant, checking in at the airport, looking for lost property, etc. In addition, Stern (1983, in Huang, 2008) points out that through role play, L2 learners can experience many kinds of situations in which they will use the language and be able to apply the language more easily to new situations.

Huang (2008) suggests the procedure of role play that can be elaborated as follow:

1. **Deciding on the teaching materials**
   
   In this step, the teacher should decide what teaching material is going to be presented or introduced through role play. Dealing with this step, the topic that is going to present in this paper “asking and giving permission”. This material is created based on a song entitled “Four Little Ducks”. This topic is believed to appropriate with the students level of age, interest, and the objective of teaching.

2. **Selecting situations and creating dialogs**
   
   In this step, the teacher creates situation where the expressions of asking and giving permission are presented and how those expressions are presented. In this paper, the situation is conversations among mother ducks and her four little ducks where the little ones ask permission to go to a hill far way from their village and play there. The dialogs are chosen in such a way that are easily understood by the students.

3. **Teaching the dialogues for role plays**
   
   In this step, the teacher presents a story and emphasizes expressions for asking and giving permission with the help of non verbal language throughout the presentation of story in a storytelling activity. In addition, during the storytelling, the teacher help students get familiar with the expression by inviting them to continue the dialogs. It is expected that they can get the point of what, why and how to use expressions of asking and giving permission. For example, the teacher: “Mommy, .... (while giving signal to continue the dialogue) students continue the dialogue: .... can we go to the hill and play there?

4. **Having students practice the role plays**
   
   In this step, the teacher assigns the students to practice the role play in group. In this paper, they are assigned to practice the role play in group of five. They have to play the role of a mother duck and four little ducks. They can change roles so that they can use different expressions for different roles. It is expected that by having this step, they are going to get familiar with the expressions and be able to internalize them for real situations.

5. **Having students modify the situations and dialogs**
   
   After the students get familiar with the expressions, they are assigned to carry out a dialogue based on situations given to them by using flash cards.

**INTEGRATING STORY AND ROLE PLAY IN TEACHING SPEAKING TO YOUNG LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

1.4. **Introduction**

This part discusses about how to use story and role play in teaching speaking to young language learners. The story and role play are inspired by a kid song entitles “Four Little Ducks” which tells about four little ducks who went to a hill far away from the village where the ducks live. Every time they went to the hill, one of them did not come back.
When finally none of them came back, mother duck decided to go to the hill and brought all four little ducks home with her.

There are two main activity that will be carried out in this part. The first activity deals with story where the teacher introduces and familiarizes the students with the context of the story, such as characters (a mother duck and four little ducks), place (a village and a hill), time (one day) and various expressions of asking permission (Can we…….? May we ....? Is all right if I...? Do you mind If I ...?) and giving permission (Of course, sure, certainly, go ahead, etc). The second activity focuses on giving the students opportunity to practice using various expressions of asking and giving permission (Of course, sure, certainly, go ahead, etc) in imaginary situations.

1.5. Teaching Preparation

In order to make teaching process effective and efficient, several things should be prepared. This teaching process requires: 1) an audio song entitled “Four Little Ducks” which is used to attract students interest to follow the story. 2) Visual presentation by using laptop and LCD for presenting the story. Visual presentation of the story is needed to help the students to understand the story. The visual presentation in this story is the creation of the writer by making use of available clip art images. 3) Flash cards to guide the students to carry out role play.

1.6. Teaching Procedure

This paper offers a suggested procedure that can be elaborated as follow

- Teacher and students do questions and answers to lead the students to the topic. For example

  *Class, look at these pictures. Mention each of the pictures.*

  Now, I have a story about animal. Listen to this song. What animal is in the song? Why?

- Teacher presents a story of *Four Little Ducks* with the help of visual presentation and non-verbal expressions by emphasizing the context and the expressions of asking and giving permission. In this paper, the story is presented in italics and the expressions are given in bold type.

  *Once upon a time, there was a village.*
  *Far away from the village there was a hill.*
  *In the the village there were a mother duck and her four little ducks.*
  *One morning, the four little ducks came to their mother and asked:*
  *“Mommy, can we go to the hill and play there?”*
  *Mother duck answer:* "Of course, but be careful."

  (the complete story is attached)

- Teacher repeats the story several times to make students aware of the expressions introduced in the story. In repeating the story, the teacher invites students to participate to continue the story, especially in the parts that emphasize the expressions for asking and giving permission. For example

  *Teacher: One morning, the four little ducks came to their mother and asked:* "Mommy, ....

  (Teacher stops and gives signal to students to continue)

  *Students : .... can we go to the hill and play there?"

  *Mother duck answered :” Of course, but be careful.*

  *Teacher assigned students in a group of five to role play the story of “Four Little Ducks. One of them plays the role of mother or father duck and the rest of them play the roles of four little ducks. The students are also assigned to change the roles so that they can
practice various expressions of asking and giving permissions

• Teacher assigned students in a group of five to role play the situations provided for them. For example, they are in museum. One of them plays as museum keeper while the others are visitors. The visitors will ask permission to do things as shown by each of their flash cards. The museum keepers will decide to give permissions or reject based on the visitor questions. For example:

Visitor: May I sing here?/Can I eat here?/Is all right if I take picture?
Keeper: Of course/Sure/Why not/No, you can’t/l’d rather you didn’t.

• Teacher ends the class by inviting students to watch video of “Four Little Ducks” sing it together while watching.

DISCUSSION

Teaching English as foreign language to young language learners should provide the learners with the ability to speak in English. One of the most important goals of teachers is to enable learners to use English for communication. According to many theories, speaking skill can be improved by games, role play, etc. Evidence shows that speaking should incorporate activities in a group work (Oradee, 2012, in Derakhshan et al, 2016). In addition, most children associate learning the second or foreign language with learning to speak it (Girard et al., 2003, in Inawati, 2013). Spoken interactions for young learners become the ‘medium through which language is encountered, understood, practised and learnt’ (Cameron, 2001, in Toledo and Steven, 2016).

The model presented in this paper shows how to get YLLs to speak through interesting and challenging activities but fun as well. Listening to audio song (Four Little Ducks), YLLs are invited to guess what animal was introduced in the song. The up beat but easy listening song creates fun atmosphere for them for breaking the ice. Next, presenting story supported by visual presentation helps YLLs to understand the story and know what expressions used to ask and give permissions and know how to use each of the expressions. This is quite reasonable since role-play is one of the methods that enable learners to improve a range of real life spoken language in the classroom (Cook, 2001, in Derakhshan et al, 2016). This activity can help students to overcome their shyness, fears and anxiety. Learners can listen and practice phrases that are used in speech acts (Celce-Murica, 2001, in Derakhshan et al, 2016). Inviting YLLs participate in continuing the story also helps them familiarize with the expressions which in turn help them to internalize for real use. Dealing with this point, in The Storytelling Handbook (Ellis and Brewster, 1991, in Žigárdyová, 20106)) state that listening to stories allows the teacher to introduce or revise new vocabulary and sentence structures by exposing the children to language. Then, roleplaying the story and and the task (in museum) help them to practice how to use the expressions in real life. Finally, by having those activities YLLs have got involved in speaking activities without forcing them to speak.

REFERENCES


