SPEECH CONTEST TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' FLUENCY IN SPEAKING

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Abstract. This study is aimed at implementing speech contest to improve students' fluency in speaking. The subject of this research was 15 students of intermediate level of speaking class. The preliminary study indicated that fluency was students' problem in speaking since they tended to produce incomplete sentences with many pauses in performing speaking task. The instruments used to collect the data were test, questionnaire and interview. This technique was a real world speaking task in which it required students to deliver speech on a stage in front of audiences individually. The analytical scoring rubric with four criteria, including fluency, accuracy, content, and method of delivery, was used by three raters to determine students' score. This technique was successfully done in 1 cycle since it met the criteria of success, that was 80% students (12 students), got score 80 or above and 84% students (13 students) showed positive response toward speech contest. Speech contest helped students to show their potential and directed students to work hard eliminating their negative feelings that might hinder their confidence to speak fluently.

Keywords: fluency, speech contest, speaking skill

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is essential skill that students need to master in order to communicate internationally. The purpose of teaching speaking in higher level of education is basically to improve students' fluency and accuracy in speaking. Fluency is the ability to speak smoothly, without any hesitation, using natural language. Accuracy is the ability to speak with clear and accurate use of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and intonation.

Both fluency and accuracy are equally important, however, Brown (2007:267) states that "... *fluency* may in communicative language course be an initial goal in language teaching, accuracy is achieved to some extend by allowing students to focus on the element of phonology, grammar, and discourse in their spoken output". This statement gives view that in the beginning

level of teaching speaking, the focus should be directed to build students fluency. In this present study, the speaking course that is investigated by researcher is called survival speaking course. The main goal of this course is to build students' fluency in speaking.

Brown (2000) defined fluency as the ability to speak in natural and flowing language. Later, Thornbury (2005) noticed that to speak with natural and flowing language the speaker must consider pause as 4 principles, those are: (1) pauses may be long but not frequent, (2) pauses are usually filled, (3) pauses occur at meaningful transition points and (4) there are long runs of syllables and words between pauses.

However, based on the result of preliminary study, the goal was hard to reach since most students were reluctant and shy to speak. It can be seen from the result of speaking test that was taken in the

beginning of the course. The test required students to tell their most interesting experience in 5 minutes. The minimum score to pass the course is 70 and only 20% (3 students) got score above 70. The chief difficulties found by students in speaking were hard to express their idea in spoken language, and were not confident in speaking English. Because of that, students tended to produce incomplete sentences with many pauses.

Several studies have been done to improve students speaking skill with various learning strategies, such as think-pair-share (Usman, 2015), retelling (Rachmawaty & Hermagustiana, 2010) and 4/3/2 (Yingjie, 2013). Think-pair-share is a cooperative learning strategy in which students work in pair to discuss questions given by the teacher. This is done in three steps, students think independently about the question, students shares ideas with their partner about the questions and students share the result of their discussion in front of class. Students feel more comfortable presenting their ideas in front of class with the support of a partner.

Usman (2015) implementing think-pair-share to the twenty students at the first year of the Islamic Education Department of STAIN Ternate in 2010/2011 academic year majoring in Islamic Studies who attended English course. This strategy met the criteria of success when it is implemented in cycle 2 where students average score is 81.68 (with the minimum standard score 70). Cycle 1 was failed because most students share their ideas by writing on a paper and not doing discussion. In implementing this technique Usman (2015) suggested the teacher to carefully manage students' activity.

Next, focusing on individual performance, Rachmawaty & Hermagustiana, 2010) investigated the use of retelling technique to the six English

students in a remedial class. The data were the record and the transcript of students' performance. Based on the result of data analysis they draw conclusion that retelling technique is effective to improve students speaking skill. In applying this technique there are two aspects to be considered, Comprehensibility and vocabulary. The problem students encountered is content since they lack of idea to say something. Retelling technique helped students to understand text deeper. In pre-test student understand story less than 80%, yet in post-test they could finish the story. Whereas the familiarity of vocabulary is considered as important aspect to increase students' fluency, Rachmawaty & Hermagustiana (2010) noticed that in retelling a story began with rewriting the text by deleting some unknown words, then memorizing it. When they had trouble recalling the words in their draft, they tried to continue the story in some ways: by skipping the forgotten words, or trying to speak in a halting manner. In short, when applying this technique, it is important to choose text that is easier to understand by students.

Different from Rachmawaty & Hermagustiana (2010), Yingjie (2013) faced different problem in teaching speaking. Although most students have a good grammar background, rich vocabulary, and some basic language knowledge, their speaking skill did not improve. The problem was there were too many students in class that were 50 students in class. Students had limited time to do individual speaking practice.

To overcome this problem, Yingjie (2013) implemented 4/3/2 activity in every week for three months. This technique was repeated in every week by different topics and contents. Yingjie (2013) noted that there are three principles in conducting this technique, the content and language items

must be understandable, there is time for students to do repetitive tasks, and students must speak with different people in a limited number of times. Based on the finding it can be concluded that this technique can increase speaking speed and reduce the pause during conversation and thus, can improve students' fluency.

These three studies give insight that a good technique to improve students' fluency in speaking is the one that gives students chance to gain knowledge; to help them with the content in speech practice, and gives students room to practice. However, the previous studies lack of chance for students to perform task individually. The purpose of this present study is to improve students' fluency by implementing speech contest.

Speech contest is one of types of public speaking in which students deliver speech in front of audience. According to Templeton & Fitzgerald, public speaking is having a speaker to stand before the audience to deliver a speech in a structured manner, with the purpose of either persuade, inform or entertain the audience. In this case, speech contest challenge students to increase their confident, speaking in front of many people.

Speech contest is considered as good task for students since it promote autonomous speaking task. Thornbury (2005) stated that "at there are six criteria for autonomous speaking task, those are productivity, purposefulness, interactivity, challenge, safety, and authenticity. Productivity is speaking tasks need to be maximally language productive for autonomous language use". In speech contest students are expected to deliver speech in full English. They are not allowed to use L1 (Bahasa Indonesia) in speech production. Moreover, purposefulness means that the task has clear outcome (ibid.). The purpose of speech contest is to

make students speak more confident so that students' fluency will be increase. Next, interactivity "should be performed in situations where there is at least the possibility of interaction" (ibid.), the interaction is between students and the audience. Challenge, "the task should force learners to draw on their available communicative resources to achieve outcome" (ibid.). In this case, students work hard to compose speech text and practice before delivering speech. Further, safety, "learner should feel confident in performing task and they can do so without too much risk. The classroom should provide the right conditions for experimentation, including a supportive classroom dynamic and a non-judgmental attitude to error" (ibid.). To make students confident in delivering speech, the lecturer guides students to write text for speech and trains students one by one in delivering speech. The last aspect, authenticity is "speaking tasks should have some relation to real-life language use" (ibid.). The choice of theme for speech contest is related to the students' life that is "Strategy to Learn English". Besides, speech contest develops students' public speaking skill. This skill is useful for students' future career.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed classroom action research which consists of four stages namely planning, action, observation and reflection (Latief, 2010: 86-88). The subject was 15 students of intermediate level of speaking class. The planning was to assign students to join speech contest that was conducted in University. Students competed with other students from different classes and departments to deliver speech under the theme "love" in 15 minutes. Before joining

this competition student was given time to practice in two meetings with the guidance from the lecturer. In meeting 1 student practiced to compose a good speech text while in meeting 2 students practiced to deliver speech in front of class. They learned some methods of delivery in speech including practice the gestures, recite poem or song lyric, or use eye contact.

The speech contest was done at university's hall so that students could speak on a stage. There were three adjudicators that evaluated students' speech. Two adjudicators were the lecturers and one was lecturer from other university. The students' speech was evaluated based on four criteria, fluency, accuracy, content and method of delivery. The data of students' score from the three raters were collected to know students' score. In addition, a questionnaire was used to discover students' response or opinion toward the application of speech contest. This technique is successful if 80% students get score 80 or above and also 80% students show positive attitude toward this technique.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Planning

In speech contest, 15 students who became the subject of this research competed with 25 students from other classes and department to win the contest. In this case, most of the competitors were generally the best students that have good speaking ability. Conversely, not all 15 students were having a good speaking ability background, 13 students (80% students) were considered low, seeing from the result of their speaking performance in the preliminary study. Based on this condition, students might feel discourage. To help students overcoming this condition, in the planning the lecturer

gave material and practice about speech, while in other classes the lecturer did not give any practice, students did preparation themselves.

The preparation included teaching students how to compose a good script of speech under the theme "Love". Students did not find difficulty in developing the content, yet they found it difficult to construct sentence grammatically correct. In this case the lecturer gave feedback on students' text so that the content as well as grammar of the text would be improved.

After this, the lecturer trained students to apply a good strategy to deliver speech. The strategy included how to speak fluently by teaching students to remember they key point in their speech. Besides that, the lecturer taught students to use speech aids including gesture, yes/no question to communicate with audience, and song or slogan to close the speech. During this practice, most students worked hard to speak fluently in front of their classmates (as the audience).

Action

After done with the preparation step, in the next meeting students performed to deliver speech on a stage. Each student was given time 10-15 minutes to deliver speech. Students' speech was evaluated by three adjudicators, one of which was the lecturer. The adjudicators used analytical scoring rubric that consisted of four criteria, namely fluency, accuracy, content and method of delivery. There were 4 scales for each component: 1, 2, 3, and 4. Score 1 was the lowest while score 4 was the highest. Table 1 showed students score. The average score was 84. The highest score was 95 while the lowest score was 79. There were three students who got score above 90, yet none of them became the winner. This was because

many students perform well and the score for the winner was 98.

Table 2 showed students score for each component. Among frequency, accuracy, content, and method of delivery; students' score on frequency was the highest, the three adjudicators gave highest score (4) for most students, it can be seen from the average score for each components on the Table 2. The average score for frequency was 3.7, accuracy was 3, content was 3.5, and method of delivery was 3.2. On the interview, one of the adjudicators explained that most students perform well, they speak fluently but not all speak with correct pronunciation and grammar.

No	Name	Score			
		Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Average
1	LB	81	81	75	79
2	PA	75	81	75	76
3	MKD	81	87	87	85
4	NA	81	81	81	81
5	RP	93	87	93	91
6	MK	100	93	93	95
7	SS	81	81	81	81
8	BO	87	81	81	83
9	YO	81	75	81	79
10	NT	81	81	81	81
11	LS	87	87	87	87
12	MYY	93	87	93	91
13	DA	93	93	93	93
14	S	81	81	87	83
15	MRF	81	87	81	83
				Mean	84

Table 1. Students Score on Speech Contest

No	Name	Score														
		Rater 1					Rater 2					Rater 3				
		f *	a*	c*	d*	mean	f*	a*	c*	d*	mean	f*	a*	c*	d*	mean
1	LB	4	3	3	3	81	4	3	3	3	81	3	3	3	3	75
2	PA	3	3	3	3	75	4	3	3	3	81	3	3	3	3	75
3	MKD	4	3	3	3	81	4	3	4	3	87	4	3	3	4	87
4	NA	4	3	3	3	81	4	3	3	3	81	4	3	3	3	81
5	RP	4	3	4	4	93	4	3	4	3	87	4	3	4	4	93
6	MK	4	4	4	4	100	4	3	4	4	93	4	3	4	4	93
7	SS	4	3	3	3	81	4	3	3	3	81	4	3	3	3	81
8	BO	3	3	4	4	87	3	3	4	3	81	3	3	4	3	81
9	YO	3	3	4	3	81	3	3	3	3	75	3	3	4	3	81
10	NT	3	3	4	3	81	3	3	4	3	81	3	3	4	3	81

No	Name	f	a	c	d	score	f	a	c	d	score	f	a	c	d	score
11	LS	4	3	4	3	87	4	3	4	3	87	4	3	4	3	87
12	MYY	4	3	4	4	93	4	4	3	3	87	4	3	4	4	93
13	DA	4	3	4	4	93	4	3	4	4	93	4	3	4	4	93
14	S	4	3	3	3	81	4	3	3	3	81	4	3	4	3	87
15	MRF	4	3	3	3	81	4	3	4	3	87	4	3	3	3	81
	Mean	3.7	3	3.5	3.3	85	3.8	3	3.5	3.1	84.2	3.6	3	3.6	3.3	84.6

Note that f=fluency, a=accuracy, c=content, and d=method of delivery

Table 2. Students Score on Speech Contest Based on 4 Criteria

Observation

Data derived from speech contest performance showed students ability in delivering speech. Another set of data were needed to discover students' attitude toward the implementation of the technique. Table 3 showed students responses on the questionnaire.

No	Statements	Responses				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I feel confident joining speech contest	13.3%	73.4%	13.3%	0%	0%
2	I perform well in the speech contest	6.6%	80%	0%	13.4%	0%
3	I am satisfied with my performance	6.6%	73.4%	0%	20%	0%
4	I speak fluently during speech	20%	6.6%	0%	13.4%	0%
5	It is easy for me to express my idea in front of audience	6.6%	73.4%	0%	20%	0% summary
6	My speaking ability improved after joining speech contest	20%	66.6%	13.4%	0%	0%

Table 3. The Result of Questionnaire "Students' Response toward Speech Contest"

In statement 1, most students (86.7%, 13 students) agreed that they felt confident in joining speech contest. Motivation played important role to make them confident. The lecturer motivated them to join the contest by giving them reward. The reward was a special gift for the winner. Besides, on the interview, some students revealed that they also got motivation from their close friend.

The Researcher : How do you prepare to join speech contest?

Student (R P) : My friends give me inspiration to follow the speech contest and I prepare myself by doing a lot of practice to perform well today.

Recorded on March 22, 2016

In statement number 2 and number 3, most students agreed that they performed well (86.6%, 13 students) and were satisfied with their performance (80%, 12 students). During performance, some students revealed that the feeling of nervous was inevitable since this was the first time they performed speech contest on a stage with many audiences. Fortunately, most students can handle this feeling by keeping being relax and just enjoyed talking in front of audiences. Also, when students began to feel nervous, they remembered their reason to join speech contest.

The Researcher : how do you feel when you deliver speech?

Student (YO) : I feel so nervous in the beginning, but I try to be confident because I want people to remember my speech, I want all people remember that parents are everything.

Recorded on March 22, 2016

Besides that, another student explained that he was satisfied with his performance because he felt confident and he learned something important from this event.

The Researcher : what do you think about your performance? Are you confident enough to become the winner?

Student (LB) : winning something is not my focus. My focus is to catch valuable time to get a new experience. For me, it is more important than being the winner.

Recorded on March 22, 2016

The Researcher : what do you feel when you join speech contest?

Student (DA) : I feel happy, proud, and little nervous joining speech contest. What I like most was the audience enjoyed and followed my speech.

Recorded on March 22, 2016

In statement number 4, most students revealed that they speak fluently during speech (86.6% = 13 students). Most of them prepared well. They applied good strategy to speak fluently, that was by understanding what they were going to say, by making summary and not memorizing all words on the script. Thus, most of them also stated that it was easy for them to express their idea in front of the audiences (80%, 12 students).

The Researcher : How do you prepare to join speech contest?

Student (S) : I did a lot of preparations. I prepared the text myself and then consult it to the lecturer. I tried to understand my speech, I just made outline of the speech and the more I prepare was my confidence. I practiced speaking in front of mirror in my room.

Recorded on March 22, 2016

In statement number 6, most students explained that their speaking ability improved after joining this contest (86.6%, 13 students). The lesson they got after joining this contest was the ability to speak confidently and the strategy to speak in front of many people, therefore they speak more fluent than before.

The Researcher : What lesson have you got after performing on the speech contest?

(Student) BO : I got really interesting and unforgettable experience. At first I was weary, but I tried to perform well and the audiences love my speech. I was really happy and proud of myself. Now I am confident in speaking.

Recorded on March 22, 2016

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Seeing from the result of students' score, questionnaire, and interview, it could be concluded that speech contest could improve students' fluency in speaking. 80% students, 12 students, got score 80 or above, although none of them became the winner. Additionally, 84% students, 13 students, showed positive response toward speech contest; therefore, this technique met criteria of success in 1 cycle.

At the beginning students hesitated and not motivated to speak in front of class, after joining speech contest they had valuable lesson and experience, that was speaking in front of people was not daunting experience. Students worked hard and prepared well to deliver speech, thus, most of them spoke well and they got positive responses from the audiences. This activity boosted their confidence.

Speech contest helped students to show their potential and directed students to work hard to make it real. In this case, students eliminated their negative feelings that might hinder their confidence to speak fluently. They focus on performing well and entertain the audiences. They focus on seeking this valuable experience rather than winning.

This technique work best when it is supported with reward and good guidance from the lecturer. In this case, the reward could be medium that motivated students to experience real world speaking practice. The reward should be the thing that most students like best. Besides, since most students speaking ability were low, the lecturer should help them to prepare to perform better by giving lesson on how to compose good speech, how to deliver speech, and also give feedback during practice in a class.

The good impact of speech contest gives insight to the lecturers who teach speaking course that is they should motivate students to join speech contest and motivate them to gain experience from this. The lecturer should help students to prepare by giving them training and reward based on students interest and competences.

This study revealed the use of speech contest to improve students' fluency in speaking, yet it did not address the correlation between students' confidence and fluency in speaking. Therefore, for the future researcher it is good to analyze the effectiveness of speech contest from this angle.

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