

# STRATEGIES TO TEACH SPEAKING AT AN INTERNATIONAL CLASS PROGRAM

Ayu Fitrianingsih, Dewi Rochsantiningsih, Diah Kristina

Sebelas Maret University Surakarta

Surakarta, Indonesia

Email: [ayu.fitrianingsih@rocketmail.com](mailto:ayu.fitrianingsih@rocketmail.com)

## Abstract

This article aims at describing the strategies to teach speaking at an International Class Program: the implementation, and the impact of the strategies toward the quality of the students' speaking fluency. This qualitative research was conducted on the sixth grade of an elementary school at the International Class Program. The data were taken through in depth interview, classroom observations, and document analysis. The result of this study shows that 1) the strategies to teach speaking include pair work, story telling, and group work; 2) the teacher implements her strategy in elaboration step in which the students are assigned to do the worksheet. In implementing the strategies, the teacher inserts motivation to encourage the students such as giving reward; 3) Implementing the strategies in the speaking class drives the students to have speech rate around 110 – 130 wpm, silent pauses in 1 – 3 seconds and some fillers. The strategies used by the teacher provide more opportunities for students in producing oral language that influence their speaking fluency. Thus, in teaching English to young learners, teachers need to be able to facilitate the students to success.

**Keywords:** *teaching strategy, young learners, speaking fluency, case study*

## INTRODUCTION

Strategy in teaching a language plays a central role in the process of teaching and learning. In order to use an appropriate strategy, the teacher needs to consider teaching objectives, material, and teaching-learning activity. Suryosubroto (cited in Sary, 2006) defines teaching strategies as a procedure that is applied by a teacher as a way to reach a certain objective. It is a broad outline needed in teaching and learning process to reach the goal (Djamarah and Zain, 2010: 5).

However, in practice, not all language teachers – in this case, EFL teachers – recognize and use good language teaching strategies. Many private courses and public elementary schools have applied teaching English for several years. But, the results of previous studies reveal shortcomings in the teaching of English to young learners (TEYL). As Suyanto cited in Sary (2006) who says that the teaching of English at the elementary schools has been unsatisfactory. What the teachers taught to the students and what they assess on the part of the students are incongruent. The teachers could not apply most of the principles of TEYL even if they shared the understanding. The teachers did not consider principles of assessing young learners appropriately.

According to Harmer (2002: 38), children love to discover things and teachers need to provide learning experiences from different sources. In this case, Ur (1991: 288) mentions three strategies to teach children; 1) colorful pictures (sketches, magazines cuts, etc.), 2) stories which offer pure language, and 3) games as the time-out activities. These three strategies can be combined or adjusted accordingly. Teaching English to young learners needs to consider a lot of things, including the teachers, methods, and facilities (Musthafa, 2008). If the strategy used does not meet the students' learning nature, it will become their burden and their learning will be failed. Besides, young learners are still learning their mother tongue; therefore the difficulties might be doubled.

In teaching English, the school implements Cambridge Primary English toward the students. Cambridge Primary combines a world-class curriculum with high-quality support for teachers and integrated assessment. The curriculum is dedicated to help schools in developing learners who are confident, responsible, reflective, innovative and engaged. Cambridge Primary has curriculum frameworks for English, Mathematics and Science which have been designed to engage learners in an active and creative learning journey. Its programs reflect the principles and are regularly reviewed to

keep them up to date and focused on the learners' needs. The English curriculum framework provides increased speaking and listening opportunities to help students develop a competency in English compare with the learning objectives to help lesson planning and help teachers understand the learners' progress.

The school is one of the best elementary schools in Bojonegoro. The name of International Class Program (ICP) suggested that this school offers different ways in their teaching and learning than other schools. In the teaching and learning, this school applied Cambridge Curriculum. All materials of the subjects were served in English except the Indonesian language subject and both the teachers and the students using English to communicate in teaching and learning process. There are a lot of parents who want to send their children to study there because they believe their children can master not only common lessons, but they are also able to communicate in English.

The research problem of this article are: 1) what strategies are used by the English teacher in teaching speaking at the International Class Program, 2) how is the implementation of the strategies that are used by English teacher, 3) how is the impact of the teacher's strategies to the quality of the students' speaking fluency. The purpose of the article is to answer the research problems above. Related to the concept of teaching speaking to young learners, Nunan and Linse (2005) propose some activities that can be applied in the speaking class include dialog, using puppets to introduce the dialogs, games, rhymes and tongue twister, pair work, group work, and story telling.

Rosdiana (2013) reported a study that aimed at describing the instructional guideline of jigsaw to teach speaking in the context of young learners. The instructional guideline consisted of three sections: introduction, theoretical review, and the classroom implementation. It was also completed with the related lesson plans which designed properly with the syllabus and the materials available at schools. However, to create the right kind of teaching atmosphere was not an easy task. It needed a lot of thinking, restructuring and choosing the right materials as well as the right delivery instruments.

Like another study conducted by Azam (2013), the result shows that language interference in children's second language acquisition always occur, yet they are able to cope with it while completing the acquisition process. Besides, there are many studies that investigate strategy in teaching speaking to Junior and Senior High Schools. However, the study does not report specific strategy used by teachers in teaching English speaking to young learners.

Fluency is the learner's capacity to produce language in real time without undue pausing or hesitation (Thornbury, 2005: 3). Communicative tasks which develop fluency are those where the focus is on the message not on the form. Fluency and acceptable language should be the primary goal in these activities rather than accuracy. Meanwhile, according to Brumfit (1984: 56), fluency is regarded as natural language use. Moreover, Richard, Platt, and Weber (1985: 108) define that fluency is the features which give speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including native-like use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, rate of speaking and use of interjections and interruptions.

In addition, Fillmore (1979: 93) states that fluency is ability to talk at length with few pauses, talk in coherent, reasoned, semantically dense sentences, have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts, be creative and imaginative in language use. Fluency is also helped by having students say phrases and sentences to perform dialogue and play extract if we spend some time coaching them will also make them aware of speaking customs and help them to improve their overall fluency.

It can be stated that fluency is the learner's capacity and the features which give speech the qualities of being natural and normal in language use. It covers the ability to talk at length, talk in coherent way and have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts. On the other hand, the disfluency covers lack of vocabulary, grammatical error, pauses or hesitation, ineffective ideas, and problem on pronunciation and intonation. Then, the important of taken aspect in disfluency will be semantic density (fillers), the speed (rate of speech), and too much hesitation (pause).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study took place at an elementary school from August to December 2015. This school is chosen because it has International Class Program which uses English in delivering the materials started from the first grade. The school is potential to be studied because the students are used to speak in English.

The subjects of the study are the sixth grade students and the English teacher. Most of the students are from outside of the city. They come from middle to high level economic families and have been known as active students. Actually, the students have already accustomed to use English since the first grade but they seems to be reluctant to present their oral language. In speaking class the teacher has to encourage them by giving motivation that is inserted into the strategies. The English teacher is S1 degree of English department. She has ever got teacher training from the school committee in order to prepare how to teach English to young learners effectively. The design of this study was a qualitative case study, since it dealt with the characteristic of case study; examining a specific phenomenon. The specific phenomenon can be a teaching program, an event, a person, a process, an institution or a social group (Merriam, 1988).

Thus, research data are collected in the form of information about the strategies and its implementation in speaking classroom. The data is extracted from three sources: events, respondents, the documents. Events are what happen in the setting observed. It is the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. The events are all activities during teaching and learning process of English in which the teacher implements the strategies in teaching speaking to her students. From events, the researcher got some information about the implementation of the strategies, and the students' responses. The respondents of this study were the English teacher and 24 students of the sixth grade. The documents were secondary data in the form of materials important in describing the strategies to teach speaking where the research was being conducted. It includes teacher's lesson plan, the students' worksheets, and the English syllabus.

The data is collected by conducting classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. In observing, the researcher acted as a non-participant observer in the classroom in which English lesson is taking place. The researcher sat at the back of the classroom, took notes on, and videotaped what was said and done by the students and the teacher. Having an observation in the teaching and learning process in the classroom is the way of fulfilling the information needed. The speaking activities were observed many times to get the validity of the study.

In this study, the researcher interviews the English teacher and some students of the sixth grade. The other instrument used in the collection of qualitative data is video recording of the activities. For each observation, the researcher recorded students' activities when completing the given tasks. The researcher further examined the recording to support the findings of the observation. This document is necessary to complete the data obtained in the classroom.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this article, the result of the study is divided into three main focuses based on the structure of problems stated in the previous section:

### 1. Strategies to teach speaking at an ICP

Based on the data collected through classroom observations, interviews and document analysis, there are three strategies that are most used by the English teacher in teaching speaking at ICP namely pair work, story telling, and group work.

#### *a. Pair work*

Pair work is a very useful and efficient way of working in language teaching. It refers to students working together in pairs. One of the main motivations to encourage pair work in English classroom is to increase the opportunities for learners to use English in the class. The students are assigned to answer comprehension questions in pairs after reading a text. This allows them to compare answers, and clarify problems together using English.

As stated by Teacher H the idea of pair work is to improve students' speaking skill by requiring students to exchange information with each other. Pair work has two important advantages:



it offers intensive, realistic practice in speaking and listening; and it promotes a friendly classroom ambience that is conducive to learning. Besides, the teacher believes that pair work is a way to make everyone in a classroom speaking and listening at the same time. In other words, it is an efficient, productive way of spending precious classroom time. As supported by Teacher N who says if teacher wants to spend three minutes talking individually to each student in a class of twenty four students, the whole procedure would take an hour. Working in pairs, those twenty four students can get the same amount of practice in three minutes.

#### ***b. Story telling***

Teacher H states that story telling is a great way of sharing experiences and ideas. It will also help the students understand how stories are constructed and what makes a story interesting, which help them develop self confidence in sharing their opinions individually. In the classroom observation, it could be analyzed that most students were eager to tell their stories. This condition demonstrated how excitement about learning is easy to arouse when subjects are presented within the context of story telling.

Teacher N (a co-teacher) says that storytelling is interactive. It can be seen from the audience's reactions clearly and can adapt the story. Because the student as a teller is involved in the story, storytelling becomes a shared experience. Thus it brings a sense of intimacy and community. An extraordinary connection is made between the teller and the listener. In the teachers' point of views, it can extend the students' motivation. If students are encouraged to choose a story and make it their own in the retelling, they learn to be creative and to think on their feet. Students can then build on their adaptive skills by writing and telling their own stories. This creativity inevitably carries over into their other work. Students will also learn that they have a unique sensibility and method of presentation and that no two students ever tell a story in the same way.

#### ***c. Group work***

The reason for choosing group work is because the teacher believes that it is a significant strategy in supporting the development of speaking and listening skills. It affords children the opportunity to listen to the language being spoken by a number of their groups in discussion. During group activities, students hear more language than they do in whole-class or individual working, therefore the input increases. When the strategy is implemented in the speaking class, students seem to interact more with the others in the group which increases their language usage or output.

Supported by Teacher H's opinion that group work in teaching speaking makes students active to speak. They are sometimes grouped randomly or self selection, so students can decide who will be in their groups. Besides, group work can give a good respond for students because the students can learn while they listen to others. Teacher provides the pictures for the students and asks the students to discuss together to make a narrative story. It allows the students to discuss in completing and then practice it with their friends in group.

## **2. The Implementation of the Teaching Strategies**

The concept of the curriculum adopted by the elementary school is the combination between National curriculum and Cambridge curriculum. Cambridge curriculum as home based curriculum of this school tend to give the point on the problem solving paradigm, the outcome is enable the students to identify the problem and solve the problem. This curriculum try to give a real digest in the teaching and learning such real object and practice in order the students not only imagine the object but also can touch the real object. It differs with Non Cambridge curriculum (National curriculum) with less of practice.

The teaching documents such as syllabus and lesson plan are made based on Cambridge curriculum and National curriculum. The syllabus is used by the teacher to organize and design the teaching and learning process and also the materials that will be taught in the classroom. Their syllabus covers some elements, standard competence; basic competence; indicators; learning goals; time allocation; learning activities; and assessment.

In composing syllabus and lesson plan based on the data taken by interview and the hard file, it is known that the syllabus is developed in English and then the lesson plans were in Indonesian language. Strategies are closely related with the process of teaching and learning, but it is not mentioned in syllabus. It will automatically appear in the teaching and learning process.

The teacher developed lesson plan based on the syllabus. It was developed from one standard competence and also one basic competence. She provides some elements in her lesson plan, they are; identity of the school, standard competence, basic competence, learning goals, materials, learning method, teaching step, learning source, and the last is assessment. In fact, teacher does not always make lesson plan for every meeting. She believes that worksheet is more important for students, and lesson plan is only useful for teacher. It is in line with the principal's statement that he did not ask the teacher to make lesson plan for every meeting.

From the observations, it can be seen that the teacher has implemented the strategies. The implementation covers three stages: *opening*, *main activities*, and *closing*. The teacher stated that in the opening step, she possesses some activities such as appreciation and motivation. In appreciation step she gave information to the students about learning goals, while in the motivation step she presented the importance of learning current material.

Moreover in the main activities she possesses three sub steps, they are exploration, elaboration, and confirmation.

(1) *In the exploration step*, she gave some stimulus toward the material. She sometimes gave a game or reward related to the material taught at that day to get the student's attention. But the kinds of the game were not mentioned in the lesson plan. It was a kind of additional activities to make the students interested on the teaching. In this step, the teacher acted as facilitator to facilitate intern-students interaction and teacher-students interaction.

(2) *In elaboration*, the teacher acted as facilitator for the students. In this step, the strategies are implemented in teaching speaking. The teacher distributed worksheet contained of material and assignment that the students have to do. This is a way to promote the new ideas. Then, the students started to do the worksheet with the guidance from the teacher. The teacher here facilitated the students to make cooperative and collaborative learning. Furthermore, she also facilitated the students to present the result individually as well as in group.

(3) Afterwards, *in the confirmation step* the teacher gave feedback orally as well as body language toward the students' success. Moreover, the teacher also facilitated the students to make reflection on the learning experience have been done. She also acted as problem solver toward the problem faced by the students. In addition, she also motivated the less participant students.

In the closing step as stated in the lesson plan, the teacher together with the students make summary deals with the material of that day. The teacher also assigns the student's understanding about the material and gave some assessment and reflection towards the learning activities. In the end of the meeting she gave a task or home work, and also gave information what must be prepared for the next meeting.

### 3. The Impact of the Teaching Strategies towards Students' Speaking Fluency

In this article, there were no any written sources of the data for describing students' speaking fluency. And there was no any document that could provide the description for the students' speaking fluency. These data were mostly collected through the observation, interview and other personal communications with the teacher and students.

The indicators of fluency that has been constructed cover the speed (rate of speech), semantic density (fillers), and hesitation (pauses). The teacher uses the strategies to provide more opportunities for students in speaking because the time to teach English lesson is limited only one meeting in a week. In speaking class, most students can speak in normal speed, around 110 – 130 words per minute. They sometimes use fillers in telling their stories, it is supported by Teacher H who said that in practicing speaking some students still use fillers such "emm", "uh", "yak" twice until four times only. The teacher said that it is normal because they are still in the level of elementary students. When they search for the correct manner to express their ideas, they may pause their speaking 1 – 3 seconds and then continue it.

## DISCUSSION

From the findings that has been found, it is obvious why teaching strategy is important. Particularly, in teaching language, strategy is a broad outline needed in teaching and learning process to reach the goal (Djamarah and Zain, 2010). Stevick (cited in Dornyei & Malderez, 1997, p. 67) also maintains

that the success of teaching language depends less on materials, strategies, and linguistic analyses and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom.

It can be said that the strategies that are implemented in the speaking class of ICP are very useful and helpful for the students' speaking fluency. In teaching speaking at ICP, Teacher H mostly uses three strategies namely pair work, storytelling, and group work. Pair work in language class is a cooperative activity, during which students share aims and responsibilities to complete a task assigned by the teacher in pairs (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1991: 15).

Burling in Bruner (1986) states that storytelling develops fluency. Learners acquire language in an amusing way, which enables them to speak it. In the process, they develop their hearings for what sounds right. As a result, they learn how to speak the language that way, whether it sounds right or not to them. This process closely resembles that of first language acquisition.

Brown (2003: 15) states that teachers set up activities and then get out of the way that many students can be talking at the same time. There is another research by Ur (1996) noting that the use of group work activities can create many opportunities for students to practice speaking fluency. In grouping the students, Teacher H uses random selection or student self-selection. However, Johnson, et al (1991) believe that there are two ways for assigning students to groups and pairs: student-selected and teacher-selected.

Children's language skill development and their overall developments are related, but they are developed separately (Freeman, 2004). That is why, to get a good result using the strategies to teach speaking, the teacher must have a plan before giving a lesson to the students starts from the preparation, implementation, and closing. The first step is preparation; the teacher has to do a preparation before she comes to the classroom in order to make the teaching and learning process runs well. In fact, Teacher H does not always make a lesson plan but she always makes worksheet based on the syllabus. In short, teacher should prepare and plan well the material before coming to the class.

The second step is the implementation of the teaching strategies. In the classroom, there are three stages of teaching speaking: pre-teaching, whilst teaching and post teaching. In pre-teaching, the teacher builds students background knowledge about the topic that will be learned. In whilst teaching, teacher explains about the lesson. In this stage, there are three processes: exploration, elaboration, and confirmation. The last, in post teaching, teacher concludes the lesson and checks students' understanding.

In pre-teaching activities, the teacher greets and motivates the students. Greeting the students is very important to know how the students are. Motivating is also useful to increase students' enthusiasm. In line with Bantjes (1994: 118), he argues that the motivation of the teacher in the classroom affects the learning of English. Keeping students motivated and interested are two important factors. Motivation and interest are crucial in supporting student success with challenging, informative activities that support success and which help the student learn complex skills (Grabe & Stoller, 1997: 45). When students are motivated and interested in the material they are learning, they make greater connections between topics, elaborations with learning material and can recall information better (Alexander, Kulikowich, & Jetton, 1994: Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992: 5).

In whilst teaching activities, it is the stage where the topic is introduced, delivered, and practiced during the class. This stage is divided into three stages: exploration, elaboration, and confirmation. In exploration section, the teacher builds the students' knowledge by showing the pictures or videos. According to Herrel and Jordan (2004), visual scaffolding is a strategy in which the language used in instruction is made more understandable by the display of videos that allow the students to hear English words and connect them to the visual images being displayed.

In elaboration, teacher gives an example of the text that students going to learn by showing the videos that related to the text. If necessary, teacher may play the video performance twice. After giving an example, teacher asks students to explain some information that they get based on videos. Then teacher may give them several of guided questions. Halliwell (1992) mentions that when students are working with controlled and guided activities, teachers want them to produce correct language.

In confirmation, the teacher gives feedback, conclusion and encouragement to their activity to reflect students' performance. It is supported by Celce-Murcia (1979) who said one of areas affecting classroom interaction that the teacher should attend is feedback and correction; when a teacher allows for positive student participation, his /her responsibility to provide useful feedback and



correction to the students becomes even greater. In this step, the teacher and the students will discuss the mistakes that they have made and correct the mistakes together.

The overall implementation of these strategies influences the students' speaking fluency. As stated by Richard, Platt and Weber (1985) that in foreign language learning fluency includes speaking with a good but not necessarily perfect command of intonation, vocabulary and grammar. In this study, the students are stated as fluent in speaking after they have assessed by using Linse's indicators. Most students are able to talk in coherent way and have appropriate things to say. They speak in normal speed around 110 – 130 words per minute. According to Pyo (cited in Richard, et al, 1985) the average speech rate of elementary school is 130 wpm, which is considerably slower than the natural speed of native speakers (about 160 to 190 wpm).

When they search the correct manner to say their words, they may use fillers such as 'uhm', 'emm' and have silent pause or silent period in 1 – 3 seconds. Stahl (1995) constructed the concept of 'think time', defined as a distinct period of uninterrupted silence by the teacher and all students so that they both can complete appropriately information processing tasks, feelings, oral responses, and actions. Moreover, Mary Budd Rowe (1992) found that periods of silence lasted more than 1,5 seconds in typical classrooms.

After observing the students' speaking activities in the classroom, it can be concluded that most students are able to speak English fluently when the teacher implements the strategies. They can speak in everyday conversation and classroom discussions generally fluent, with occasional lapses while they search for the correct manner of expressions. Moreover, students are able to produce spoken language to communicate ideas with ease but not necessarily perfect command of intonation, vocabulary and grammar.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the research findings and its discussion, there are several things to be concluded. Firstly, the teaching documents such syllabus and lesson plan that are applied in English class which implemented some strategies in teaching speaking. The syllabus is different with the regular school because it uses Cambridge International Curriculum. But, the lesson plan is the same as regular school that there is no different objectives and language in making the lesson plan. Secondly, the strategies that are used by English teacher in teaching speaking are pair work, group work and story telling which is used in different situation. The strategies are chosen to make all students have opportunities to speak up in a limited time.

In order to introduce English to young learners, they need to get exposed to the language much. Being exposed to the English language teaching instruction will accommodate the language use. Additionally, the main goal of International Class Program is enable the students to use English as their communication language through various learning activities and learning materials. From the implementation of strategies to teach English speaking, it can be drawn important point that it gives impact to students' fluency.

Thirdly, the implementation of strategies in English teaching and learning brings positive effects toward the students themselves. Based on the previous discussion, it can be concluded that (1) the implementation of the strategies makes students speak and interact actively with their peers or their groups (2) the student's intention to speak is increased when the teacher implements the strategy. It can make students to be fluent because they have opportunities to produce more spoken language.

Therefore, especially for International school program, in using Cambridge International Curriculum, the school must have a good preparation and always evaluate the curriculum of this program, the supporting staffs, supporting facilities, and supporting teaching documents. All of those factors should appropriately set to accommodate their students' level of development and the program needs.

Being a teacher in the International Class Program is a good challenge for the teacher where English is the only communication language used. It drives the teacher to have a good English ability in order that the teacher is able to be a good role model for the students. Especially in teaching young learners since young learners will memorize well everything they obtained, so that the teachers should be able to encourage themselves in improving their English ability. Teachers need to learn how to monitor their oral interactive practices in and across their lessons, and to develop the ability to lead

conversations with their students that reflect a cohesive academic topic and conversational features of interpersonal communication.

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