THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE
CONVERSATION CLASS OF BILINGUAL PROGRAM AT SMPN 2
MALANG

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ABSTRACT: English is the language used for global range. Mastering English
will be useless without the mastery of speaking. Some schools, including SMPN
2 Malang, have established a conversation class for bilingual program students as
a media for the students to practice their speaking skills. This study describes the
implementation of teaching English in the conversation class at SMPN 2 Malang
which has positive impacts towards the students’ speaking abilities.

Keywords: bilingual program, conversation class

Language is one of the media for communication among people. It is
learned in order to utilize it in interaction, conversation, and communication. English is the first foreign language officially taught at schools in Indonesia from
elementary schools to universities. The language environment is considered as one
of the significant factors that influences learning. Due to minimal contact with
native speakers, the students of the non English speaking countries like Indonesia,
are relatively poor in spoken English (Shumin, 1997:1). Considering the lack of
students’ exposure to English environment, some schools have established a
class as an intracurricular activity to provide the students with English learning environment.

SMPN 2 Malang has a bilingual program which uses English and
Indonesian as a medium of instruction in the teaching learning process. It has
established English conversation class which aims at improving students’ English
speaking ability and providing students with skill of using English
communicatively.

The main question of this study is “How is teaching English in the
conversation class at SMPN 2 Malang implemented?”. It elaborated into six sub
questions, they are (1) What are classroom activities conducted in the
conversation class of SMPN 2 Malang? (2) What are the materials used in the
conversation class of SMPN 2 Malang? (3) What are the instructional media used
in the conversation class of SMPN 2 Malang? (4) What are the students’ problems
in the conversation class of SMPN 2 Malang ? (5) What are the students’
strategies to overcome the problems in the conversation class of SMPN 2 Malang?

METHOD

This study was conducted to describe the teaching English in the
conversation class of bilingual program at SMPN 2 Malang which located on Jl.
Moch. Yamin 60 Malang. It applied a descriptive design which used to gain
certain information about a certain phenomenon that happens when the study is
conducted. It also describes the real condition occurring in a certain situation
thoroughly. Bodgan and Biklen (1998) mentioned several characteristics of
descriptive qualitative research which include: 1) qualitative research has the
natural setting as the direct source of data and researcher is the key instrument; 2) qualitative research is descriptive, thus the data collected is in the form of words of pictures rather than numbers; 3) qualitative research is concerned with process; 4) and qualitative research tends to analyze the data inductively.

Indeed, the descriptive-case study design is suitable with the main objective of the study, that is, to describe the implementation of teaching English in a conversation class of bilingual program at SMPN 2 Malang. The description was extracted and concluded from the observation of the some classroom activities conducted, the materials used in the class, the media used, and the students’ problems in the conversation class as well as some strategies implied by the students to overcome the problems.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented based on the five sub variables of the study. The study concerns on the some students’ activities conducted in the conversation class, the materials used in the conversation class, the media used in the conversation class, the description of the students’ problems in the conversation class and the description of students’ strategies to solve the speaking problems. Each finding is presented as following.

**Students’ Activities in the Conversation Class of SMPN 2 Malang**

To help the students achieve their mastery in speaking, the teacher provide the students with some classroom activities which enable them to practice their English, such as a story telling, blind date game, role-play, watching movie and news reading.

(a) **Story Telling**

The first activity was story telling. The teacher asked the students to retell the funny stories which has already prepared by the teacher. Then the teacher asked the students to read the story and memorize it before they presented it in the front of the class. Besides telling the story, the students should make a story about their own funny experiences.

(b) **Blind date game**

In this activity, the teacher distributed a different card for each student. The card consisted of a schedule. Then, the teacher asked the student to find out the partner who had same schedule. Before the activity began, the teacher wrote down the examples of the expressions that might be used during the game on the whiteboard. For instance, “would you like to go with me on Sunday?”, “I’m so sorry I can’t, I have an appointment on Sunday”.

(c) **Role Play**

Role play was conducted at the following day. At first, the teacher asked the students to make a group with their partner. Then the teacher gave them a couple of minutes to memorize or prepare anything that they need for presenting or practicing the dialogue which they had made at the last meeting.

(d) **News Reading**

The next activity conducted at the following week was news reading. Before the class began, the teacher explained to the students about the rule of the news reading activity. At the end of the class the teacher conducted a short discussion about the news with the students to make them understand the news they had presented deeply.
(e) Watching Movie

The last activity which the researcher observed was watching movie. The title of the movie was “Percy Jackson, the Lighting Thief”. There was no activity that the students did during watching movie. The teacher only asked them to write down a summary and their opinion about the movie they had watched.

Materials Used in the Conversation Class of SMPN 2 Malang

The materials used for the conversation class changed every week. The materials used in the class were narrative texts (funny story in the first meeting and news in the fourth meeting).

Media Used in the Conversation Class of SMPN 2 Malang

During the teaching and learning process in the conversation class, the teacher used two media such as whiteboard and movie.

(a) Whiteboard

The whiteboard was used many times during the conversation class. The whiteboard functioned as a medium for the teacher to introduce new even difficult words to the students.

(b) Movie

The movie helps the students to practice listening and understanding someone else’s utterance in English.

The Students’ Problems in the Conversation Class of SMPN 2 Malang

The students have various opinions towards English. Some of them really like English while some others do not. From the questionnaire distributed to the sample students, it was found that they had various opinions towards the English subject at school. Generally, all of them were like English subject. The questionnaires revealed that the students faced various problems in the conversation class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Kinds of Students’ Problems in the Conversation Class</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar/ Structure</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronounciation</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence/ shyness</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding other utterances</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of motivation</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Students’ Strategies to Overcome the Problems

Each problem must have its own solution to overcome or at least to minimize its negative impact. Littlewood (1992: 84-86) mentions some communication strategies which are applied many times by the EFL students. During the observation process, the researcher found out that some of the strategies described by Littlewood were applied by the students. They were Paraphrasing, approximation, using Native Language, using Non-Linguistic Resource and searching for Help from Other people.

DISCUSSION

This research was intended to investigate the implementation of teaching English in a conversation class at SMPN 2 Malang. This study presented five research questions to be answered. They were (1) What are classroom activities
conducted in the conversation class of SMPN 2 Malang? (2) What are the materials used in the conversation class of SMPN 2 Malang? (3) What are the instructional media used in the conversation class of SMPN 2 Malang? (4) What are the students’ problems in the conversation class of SMPN 2 Malang? (5) What are the students’ strategies to overcome the problems in the conversation class of SMPN 2 Malang? The result of the discussion is as follows:

**The Classroom Activities Conducted at the Conversation Class of SMPN 2 Malang**

Kayi (2006: 6) states that teachers should provide a rich environment where meaningful communication takes place is desired. Therefore, various speaking activities should be given to the students since they can contribute a great deal to the students in developing basic interactive skills necessary for life. In the conversation class being observed, there are five kinds of classroom activities conducted. Those activities were storytelling, news reading, watching movie, game and role-play. Hence, the classroom activities suggested by Kayi were really conducted in the conversation class.

**The Material Used in the Conversation Class of SMPN 2 Malang**

The materials used in the conversation class being observed followed the topics suggested by Fachurrazy. The materials were related to the students’ daily activities, as an example, funny experiences. The students used their own experiences to make an essay. Furthermore, the materials used for news reading were related to problems recently faced by our country.

**The Media Used in the Conversation Class of SMPN 2 Malang**

Media are used in the classroom to transmit information from the teachers to the students. There are three kinds of media such as visual media, audio media, and audio visual media. Those media are used in the classroom to help creating livelier learning situations.

In the conversation class observed, there were two kinds of media used during the learning process those were whiteboard and movies. The whiteboard functioned as a medium for the teacher to introduce new even difficult words to the students. The second medium was a movie. Heinich (1993: 203) identified movie as motion media. Motion media, like movies, has a lot of advantages. Movies offer more relaxing atmosphere to the class since the students have been bored by doing all the written tasks in the textbook. It supports Heinich’s theory (Heinich, 1999: 201) which states that movie offer enjoyable and meaningful learning situation at the same time.

**The Students’ Problems in the Conversation Class of SMPN 2 Malang**

EFL students often face many difficulties in learning English especially whenever they should communicate using English. They often have problems to speak English due to minimum exposure to English and contact with native speakers (Shumin, 1997: 1). Due to the minimum exposure to English, the students only have an opportunity to learn English at schools. They do not practice using English very often. As the result, they face some problems whenever they have to use English for communication.

The students of bilingual program also had problems in speaking. Most of the students admitted that they had obstacles in improving their speaking skills in the conversation class. This condition supports Shumin’s statement which says
that most of EFL students face problems whenever they have to speak English. These problems become the threat for them to achieve fluency in English.

**Students’ Strategies to Overcome Their Speaking Problems in the Conversation Class of SMPN 2 Malang**

Littlewood defined some strategies used by students to cope with their difficulties in speaking as communication strategies. He mentioned eight communication strategies often used by language learners. Those strategies are paraphrasing, approximation, creating new word, adjusting the message, using native language, the use of non-linguistic resource, searching for help from other people and avoid communication (Littlewood, 1992: 84-86).

Five of Littlewood’s strategies were implemented by the students in the conversation class. To cope with their speaking problems, the students used paraphrasing, approximation, using gestures, using Indonesians and searching help from their teacher.

**CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

These conclusions are based on the data analysis which has been done in the previous chapter. Firstly, classroom activities conducted in the conversation class were storytelling, news reading, blind date game, role-play and watching movie. Those activities functioned as media for the students to improve their English so they were prepared to use their English in a real life communication. Secondly, the materials used in the conversation class were narrative texts in the form of funny stories, and movie, and texts about the Indonesian’s current issues. Therefore, the students were able to practice some necessary language functions such as personal and interpersonal function. Thirdly, the media used in the conversation class were whiteboard and a movie. The whiteboard helped the teacher to explain the lesson easier to the students. By reading what was being written on the whiteboard, the students understood the teacher’s explanation more clearly. The movie helped the teacher creating a different learning situation. Fourthly, The students faced several obstacles in their attempts to achieve the mastery in speaking ability. Most of the students in the conversation class faced linguistic problems. They were vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Beside the linguistic problems, the students also faced other problems like shyness and lack of motivation. Even though the students had some problems in the conversation class, they still tried hard to speak English fluently. They tried to manipulate the language using some strategies called communication strategies. The strategies used by the students were paraphrasing, using gestures, approximation, searching for help from their teacher and using native language.

Since the teaching English in a conversation class has positive impacts towards the students’ speaking abilities, it is suggested that the school establishes the conversation class not only for the students of bilingual program but also regular students. Also, inviting native speakers so that the students will get motivated to learn English and practice their speaking abilities. It is also suggested for further researchers can conduct other studies to investigate other elements of the conversation class. Another alternative is that to conduct an in-depth investigation of one of the five elements above.
REFERENCES


