

RUNNING DICTATION TO ACTIVATE STUDENTS IN SPEAKING CLASS

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Abstract

The aim of the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly at the Junior High School, is to provide the students with the ability to use the target language for communication. It means that students should be able to perform oral communication in conveying and receiving messages in the language in real and natural world. Consequently, EFL teachers should create a classroom atmosphere where students engage in real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language production. This paper offers an interesting and interactive activity as so called Running Dictation to activate students in speaking class. Theoretically, the activity is based on the one of the four strands in speaking class that is Language Focused Learning. The activity may lead students to greater independence and interdependence as it requires each student to perform cooperatively and to interact actively with other students in order to finish a task. Above all, this activity will emerge joyful, interesting and challenging atmosphere in Junior High School class as students feel like playing a game while they are learning and as a result Running Dictation can result in promoting better performance in speaking class.

Keywords: running dictation, activate, speaking.

Introduction

The aim of the teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly at the Junior High School, is to provide the students with the ability to use the target language for communication. It means that students should be able to perform oral communication in conveying and receiving messages in the language in real and natural world. Consequently, the teaching and learning activities in EFL classes should be heavily weighted towards the oral productive skill in which students are facilitated and actively engaged in attempting to communicate. Shortly, EFL teachers should create a classroom environment where students engage in real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language production.

In general practice, however, the fact shows that the students' performance in oral communication is sometimes beyond expectation. Students don't feel confident

enough to join a conversation due to some difficulties and as a result they are quite passive and unwilling to participate actively in speaking session . Mostly, they have neither idea to express nor confidence for the given topic. Some students also say that they do not know what to say and they feel afraid of making mistakes in both grammar and pronunciation because usually their friends will laugh at them. Moreover, Eviyuliwati (1997) reported that students had difficulties in using grammar and in applying new vocabulary items in speaking class. This disappointing phenomena has really contributed to poor achievement in oral production.

There are causes driving the students to the failure. Students' anxiety or so called "lathophobic aphasia which is defined as the failure to speak for a new language for fear of making a mistake is caused by not having the right mental preparation and support(Jason, 2013). The anxiety may block the oral production and lead to complete drop off in performance and the memory will struggle. Further, Kweldju2015) has pointed out that the anxiety also promotes negative attitude toward the language. Partly, the anxiety arouses because students have less input of the English language in term of vocabulary and pattern through listening and reading , while in speaking class they often felt anxious due to pressure from the speaking tasks which require them to present individually and spontaneously within limited time(Widiati and Cahyono 2006). To minimize the students' anxiety, Tutyandari (2005) advised that speaking teachers should activate the students' prior knowledge by asking questions related to topics under discussion. She also mentioned that students self-confidence can be enhanced and their anxiety reduced by giving them tasks in small groups.

The presence of the teacher also contributes the students' failure in achieving the speaking skill. It seems that the teachers tend to apply the conventional and monotonous strategy in presenting speaking materials because they lack of variety ways in activating their students in oral production . Some English teachers continue to teach speaking in traditional ways rather than introducing communicative and interactive activities into the classroom. Such teachers may believe that teaching speaking is a matter of repeating drills and memorizing dialogue. This type of teaching may foster negative attitudes toward English and drive students to feel unmotivated, bored, and frustrated. Thus, in teaching, the

English teachers should move from the conventional techniques to the more enjoyable , motivating, entertaining, and even challenging ones. Students should be lead in an atmosphere in which they can be involved actively like what is suggested by Nunan (1991) that learning to speak in a second or foreign language will be facilitated when learners are actively engaged in attempting to communicate. Richard (2009: 20) recommends teachers and textbooks make use of a variety of approaches, ranging from direct approaches focusing on specific features of oral interaction (e.g., turn-taking, topic management, and questioning strategies) to indirect approaches that create conditions for oral interaction through group work, task work, and other strategies.

Language Focused Learning

Language focused Learning(Nation and Newton, 2009:1), refers to learning through deliberate attention to language items and language features, i.e., direct vocabulary study, grammar exercises and explanation, attention to the sounds and spelling of the language, attention to discourse features, etc. Although studying the grammatical system will not lead directly and instantly to acquisition, it may nevertheless trigger a train of mental processes that in time will result in accurate and appropriate production. If the teacher uses techniques that direct the learner's attention to form, and if the teacher provides activities that promote awareness of grammar, learning seems to result. Typical activities in this strand are pronunciation practices such as dictation-based techniques likerunning dictation, peer dictation, completion dictation, pyramid dictation, dictogloss, and disappearing text etc.

Running Dictation

Running dictation is an activity where students read a text , memorize the text for a short time and then write the text. It is a lively activity that practises reading, speaking,remembering,listening, andwriting. The activity is purely done by the students either with partner or in group.In addition, it requires independence and interdependence as each student must perform cooperatively and interact actively with other students in order to finish a task. There are three kinds of

running dictation model that drive students to participate actively in speaking class. They all can be done both in pairs or team/group. If in pair, one learner is the writer and the other is the runner. The runner goes to the dictation text, memorizes a sentence, returns to the writer, and retells it

Procedure 1

First, the teacher sticks some same short text in different places on wall inside or outside the classroom and make sure that each team has one text to read. Second, if the students are working in groups, (in 4 for example), the activity may take the form of a relay in which the first runner (student A) reads the first sentence of the text, memorizes and then runs student B to retell what he has read. The student B then runs to student C to retell what he has heard. Student C then retells student D (the writer) and student D writes it down. After that, back again student A reads the second sentence, memorizes and then retells it to student B, continued to student C and end in student D. The team continues doing the task in relay until the whole text are read and written down by the writer of the team. Let the students swap their work with another team. Last, the teacher confirms the students' work by showing the right and complete text on a slide in front of the class or by distributing the text to each team so that they can correct another team's work. The winning team is pair or team that finishes first although we need to check for mistakes.

Procedure 2

First, the teacher sticks some same short text on a wall, inside or outside the classroom and make sure that each team has one text to read. Second, the team chooses student #1 to be the writer. Next, student #2 runs to the team's text to read the first sentence, memorize, and then comes back to team's table to retell the writer. As soon as Student #2 gets back to the table, Student #3 can go to the text to read and memorize the next sentence, and brings it back to the writer. As soon as Student #3 gets back to the table, Student #4 can go to the text, memorize the next sentence, and bring it back to the writer. The team continued doing the task in relay until all sentences are read and written down by the writer of the team. Let them swap their work with another team. Last, the teacher confirms the students' work by showing the right and complete text on a slide in front of the class or by distributing the text to each team so that they can correct another

team's work. The winning team is pair or team that finishes first although we need to check for mistakes.

Procedure 3

Another more interesting and challenging activity is the teacher posts a picture for instance an old woman having long white hair is walking with a stick while carrying firewood near the jungle, a boy climbing a mango tree, or a dog chasing a cat. The runners must look at the pictures, run back to the team table, and describe the picture. The writer then must draw the pictures exactly as they have been reported. The winning team for both kinds of running dictation is pair or team that finishes first although we need to check for mistakes.

Teachers should take some points into consideration to make the Running Dictation run well. They should present a text in which students are familiar in pronouncing the words in it. The text must also be suitable in term of difficulty level and paragraph length and known vocabulary is presented in familiar collocations and constructions. In addition, teachers should explain clearly and even repeatedly the procedure of the Running Dictation activity and keep controlling it so that students cannot cheat in doing the dictation for example peeping an other group's text which is stucked near their seat.

Assessment

Considering that the students are early beginners, the assessment focuses more on meaning rather than accuracy that is when communication emerges among the students, regardless the correctness of the sentence structure. Focusing on "meaning" refers to a concept that the listener can catch the intended messages delivered by the speaker. This kind of assessment minimizes the students' anxiety besides arousing motivation and courage toward English lesson. In the practice, each student is authorized to assess his partner by using a rubric of peer assessment.

Conclusion

Through well preparation, Running Dictation activity is very suitable to present any instructional materials and student level. It is really effective in activating students especially when dealing with Genre- based Text exactly in presenting a

Model of the Text (MOT). With this kind of activity, no student in the class feels sleepy or lazy because they are not only learning but also doing body movement in semi competition. Last, the such activity may lead students to greater independence and interdependence as it requires each student to perform cooperatively and to interact actively with other students in order to finish a task. Above all, this activity will emerge joyful , interesting and challenging atmosphere in class as students feel like playing a game while they are learning and as a result can result in promoting better performance as well as achievement in speaking class. Why not try?

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