

## TEACHING SPEAKING SKILL USING PICTURE SERIES: WAYS, OBSTACLES AND ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE

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**Abstract:** Teachers should always attempt to create an interesting and challenging English communication during the classroom of the language teaching which actively involves the students in the teaching and learning process. This article is aimed at describing the teaching technique of speaking using picture series, the use of picture series to support the teaching of speaking skill, the obstacles or unexpected possibilities generally found in the use of picture series, and attempts done to solve/minimize the problems or to anticipate the unexpected possibilities in the teaching of speaking skill. The design belongs to descriptive. Classroom observation and interview were executed to collect the data. The result showed that in teaching speaking skill using picture series, students were divided into group work or in pair, the use of picture series to support the teaching of speaking skill in classroom depended highly on supporting factors and specific criteria, the obstacles or unexpected possibilities generally found in the use of picture series in the teaching of speaking skill cover the number of picture series distributed was sometimes imbalanced, so small, unclear and uninteresting, tended to be only black and white and was not suitable with the real condition or context

**Key words:** teaching technique, picture series, speaking skill, obstacles, attempts

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### Introduction

It is commonly accepted that English has now been officially considered and used as an international language which facilitates communication among people from all over the world. It is pointed out by The British Council (as cited in Dieu & Pauster, 2005), that English is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air-traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science and technology, diplomacy, sport, international

competitions, music and advertising. That is the logical reason why English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) has been taught almost everywhere including in Indonesian, from schools to colleges/universities and mostly become a compulsory subject. Four English practicing skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) seem very significant and set the basis for the ability of communication. However, nowadays, how to speak English well is still considered problematic for many ESL/EFL learners, especially students of the junior high schools including in rural areas.

Since speaking English is one of the important skills to have among other skills, meeting the requirement of global world is considered necessary for each individual to master and use English fluently. It cannot be neglected because English as a foreign or second language (ESL/EFL) plays an important role in communication.

It is believed that it is not easy to teach English speaking skill to particularly young learners. But it does not mean teachers become frustrated to teach speaking skill especially at junior high schools. Teachers should always attempt to create an interesting and challenging English communication during the classroom of the language teaching which actively involves the students in the teaching and learning process. In this case, the teacher must be able to set up a conducive situation to prevent students' boredom using various techniques or methods. That is why, Byrne (1997:1) suggests that teachers should have clear understanding and enrich their own possible techniques or methods in teaching oral performance.

Besides, to facilitate the teaching and learning process of English speaking skill, teachers are also suggested to use any supporting media which is believed to be able to give significant impacts towards the students' progress. Various instructional media will also help the teacher stimulate the students' interest to express their ideas in the spoken form. Media is considered to be able to integrate the experience from the concrete things to the abstract ones. In addition, the media can facilitate the interaction between teachers and students so that learning activities can be carried out more effectively, efficiently, and easily. Concerning with this idea, Usman (1995) in Rustiani (2009:3) notes that learning could be more effective if some various kinds of teaching aids are utilized rather than without using any aids. Of all types of media, as stated by Corder in Ratnasari, (2010) are more preferable because most people learn more easily by their sight than other sensory perception. With a better understanding of media and some ideas to maximize them, teachers are expected to be able to evaluate how to

teach, how students learn and how best to use various instructional media so that they can select the most appropriate means to present different content and tasks (Rose & Mever, 2002). The literature reviewed by the researchers dealing with picture in language teaching (Raimes, 1983; Wright, 1990; Hill, 1990; Bowen, 1991) maintain that incorporating picture to language teaching and learning has positive effects on the improvement of learners' communicative skills.

Various kinds of picture, for example, could be utilized as instructional media in the teaching and learning process of speaking skill. A picture is viewed as a visual representation or image painted, drawn, photographed, or otherwise rendered on a flat surface (Cobuild, 1997). It is also pointed out by Harmer (2004:177) that media such as a range of objects, pictures, cards and other things can be utilized for presenting and manipulating language. Thus, it allows students to be active in all class activities. Furthermore, according to Wright (2004:17), the use of pictures as media can help to attract students' interest and encourage their motivation in learning, make them willing to pay attention and want to take part. Thus, using visual aids in general and pictures in particular to teach speaking skill for the students is one pedagogical issue which attracts the attention of not only educator but also many learners and people concerned.

One of the instructional media that should be considered by English teachers in the teaching of speaking skill is picture (Perdana, 2014: 12). It is fact that pictures could be very useful because it will make students understand the topic of lesson more easily. Thus, it is obvious that the most outstanding feature of a picture is its visibility to learners; it can be utilized for a lot of pedagogical purposes. Visible pictures printed in textbook; cut from magazines or newspapers; drawn on cards or boards, shown in slides in PowerPoint programs are some vivid examples of common types of pictures. Pictures can commonly be categorized according to the size and design. Each type of picture has its own characteristics which should be considered carefully by teachers when adopting them as a teaching tool/media in ESL or EFL classes, such as wall pictures, sequence pictures, flash cards (Bowen, 1991).

Among various kinds of picture commonly available are picture series. The use of picture series, as one of the visual aids, can help not only to improve all language skills but also to promote a friendly environment in the classroom and to ensure greater students' participation. In practice, the explanation using picture series will lead the students to view

more curiously and meaningfully on the subject given. Besides that, teaching speaking using picture series is more meaningful than teaching without using media because with the use of such media students can learn and remember the instructional materials more easily. Therefore, it is believed that the use of pictures is effective in promoting students' interest and motivation in speaking activities in English class (Wright, 1989). A great deal of researches dealing with picture series as instructional media have been done (Rustiani, 2009; Ratnasari, 2010; Aschawir, 2014; Gutiérrez, Puella & Galvis, 2015).

Using picture series as instructional media, however, does not always guarantee that the teaching and learning process of speaking skill runs well. Other serious problems or unexpected possibilities may occur when it is not prepared well. Therefore, a teacher is demanded not only to be able to utilize the media, but also be able to solve or to anticipate the obstacles, problems or unexpected worst possibility to occur. In other words, even though, a teacher has clear understanding and enriches one's own possible techniques or methods and appropriate instructional media in teaching oral ability, a teacher is also required to be able to solve the problems, or at least, to be able to minimize the problems or to anticipate worst possibility in term of using particular instructional media, particularly picture series.

Dealing with the description above, it was found that the fact that an English teacher in a state junior high school teaches speaking using picture series as media to support the teaching of speaking skill. Appropriate techniques are also used to promote students' learning activity of speaking. It is assumed that the use of picture series and appropriate techniques give many advantages for both teachers and his students. However, the teacher sometimes find his students complain some obstacles or unexpected possibilities generally found in the use of picture series in the teaching of speaking skill. It is often caused by immature preparation. Consequently, some obstacles or unexpected possibilities emerge unexpectedly. Therefore, it requires the teacher to keep trying to solve the problems or to anticipate the unexpected possibilities encountered.

Based on the background of the research articles described above, the research problems proposed are as follow: (1) How is the teaching technique of speaking skill using picture series carried out? (2) How can the picture series be used support the teaching of speaking skill? (3) What obstacles or unexpected possibilities are generally found in the use of

picture series in the teaching of speaking skill? (4) And what attempts are done to solve the problems or to anticipate the unexpected possibilities in the teaching of speaking skill?

Thus, based on the research problems proposed above, this research article is aimed at describing (1) the teaching technique of speaking skill using picture series (2) the use of picture series to support the teaching of speaking skill, (3) obstacles or unexpected possibilities generally found in the use of picture series in the teaching of speaking skill, and (4) attempts done to solve the problems or to anticipate the unexpected possibilities in the teaching of speaking skill.

## **Methodology**

The design used in this research is qualitative descriptive. It is designed to obtain information concerning the current status of phenomena (Ary, et al, 2002). An English teacher of state junior high school in an administrative city, with the initial IS, was selected as a subject of the research. The research is intended to describe some information dealing with the use picture series in the teaching of speaking for students of junior high school, which involves (1) the teaching technique of speaking skill using picture series (2) the use of picture series to support the teaching of speaking skill, (3) obstacles or unexpected possibilities generally found in the use of picture series in the teaching of speaking skill, and (4) attempts done to solve the problems or to anticipate the unexpected possibilities in the teaching of speaking skill. Classroom observation and interview were carried out to collect the data. Thus, in this research, observation sheet and interview guide were used as the instrument to collect the data. The classroom observation is used to collect the data concerning (1) the teaching technique of speaking skill using picture series. Meanwhile interview is carried out to describe (2) the use of picture series to support the teaching of speaking skill, (3) the obstacles or unexpected possibilities generally found in the use of picture series in the teaching of speaking skill, and (4) attempts done to solve the problems or to anticipate the unexpected possibilities in term of using picture series in the teaching of speaking skill. Data analysis in qualitative research is a process of categorizing, description and synthesizing the collected data (Ary et al, 2002). Thus, after the data have been collected particularly through interview, the data will then be selected, simplified, organized, and then reduced. It is done to make the researcher easier to understand, interpret and make sense out of the collected data.

## Findings

### **The Teaching Technique of Speaking Skill Using Picture Series**

Based on the classroom observation which was held twice, it was found out that in teaching and learning process of speaking skill using picture series, the English teacher divided the students into several groups each of it comprised 5-6 persons in the first meeting. However, the teacher admitted that there were still obstacles when the students work in group, such as some of students joining in the group do nothing and tend to be out of task. But according to him, teaching speaking using picture series in group (and pair work) was still far better than teaching speaking using picture series individually. Meanwhile, at the second one, the English teacher asked the students to work in pair, which automatically there are simply two students to work. According to him, in the teaching and learning process of speaking skill using picture series, the use of group work and pair was considered having much more advantages than disadvantages, in which each of students got far more chances to speak English in the classroom. Students participated in the lesson much more actively because they are involved in talking to their friends, exchanging opinions, practicing new structures more than listening to their teacher talking.

### **The Use of Picture Series to Support the Teaching of Speaking Skill**

Based on the research findings obtained through interview, it was find out that the use of picture series to support the teaching of speaking skill in classroom depended highly on supporting factors (that should be available on many sources, sequential, informative, attractive clear, and representative) and specific criteria (namely, easy and simple to prepare, easy to organize, and interesting to see).

Dealing with supporting factors, according to the teacher, the use of picture series to support the teaching of speaking skill should be (1) available on many sources. The use of picture series to improve the students' speaking ability depends on the availability from many sources, such as English books, English magazines, internet, etc., (2) sequential. Pictures could help the students to generate ideas about what they are going to convey orally, as students are sometimes confused about what they will speak firstly, (3) informative. The use of picture series provided several information of which one came first and which came next, (4) attractive. Picture series used is expected to be able to draw students' attention to be involved in learning process of speaking.

Meanwhile dealing with criteria of the use of picture series to support the teaching of speaking skill, the teacher described that there were some criteria that should be considered before using picture series in class, they were namely (1) easy and simple to prepare; the pictures should be used easily and simply in teaching learning and process, (2) easy to organize; there should be right decision making whether the efforts of organizing the pictures were complicated or not, (3) interesting to see; the use of picture series as an instructional media in the teaching speaking skill should be interested to see.

### **The Obstacles or Unexpected Possibilities Generally Found in the Use of Picture Series in the Teaching of Speaking Skill**

In term of the obstacles or unexpected possibilities generally found in the use of picture series in the teaching of speaking skill include (1) the number of picture series distributed was sometimes imbalanced each other. Consequently, some of those who received many more picture series sometimes were not motivated to get involved in their group work or were out of their task. The imbalance of picture series distributed and presented is commonly caused by or depend the portion of story sequence based on the picture series presented. (2) The size of picture series distributed was so small, that it would be difficult to see the entire picture series presented in the distance. The size of picture series distributed and presented so small often become students' serious problems. They sometimes complained on it because they had difficulties seeing and observing the picture series shown/presented in the distance. Consequently, they sometimes did not pay attention what their friends conveyed using picture series in front of class. (3) The picture series distributed and presented were sometimes so unclear and uninteresting to see. The picture series distributed and presented so unclearly and uninterestingly to see becomes any other problems encountered by the students. Consequently, they tend to ignore and not to be interested in paying attention to the story presented by their friends in front of class. (4) The picture series distributed tended to be only black and white and was not suitable with the real condition or context. The picture series distributed and presented only in black and white colors and not suitable with the real condition or context were the other obstacles or problems encountered particularly by the students. In fact, it was not serious problem when the picture series distributed and presented was only black and white. Some of them considered it was still tolerable. According to some of the students, as long as the picture series distributed and presented were clear, interesting, and even still

understandable, it would not significantly influence toward their speaking ability/performance. But according to the teacher, it would be better if the picture series distributed and presented were colorful.

## **Attempts Done to Solve the Obstacles or Anticipate the Unexpected Possibilities in the Use of Picture Series in the Teaching of Speaking Skill**

Based on the interview dealing with attempts done to solve the obstacles or to anticipate the unexpected possibilities in term of using picture series in the teaching of speaking skill, it was found out that there were attempts done to solve the problems or to anticipate the unexpected possibilities in term of using picture series in the teaching of speaking skill, they are namely (1) distributing the number of picture series in balance/proportionally one another. According to him, the best thing to do was distributing the picture series among the group of students in random. He also added that they were not permitted to see what and how many pictures were distributed among them. It was done to reduce the students' complain on the picture series distributed. And then he also told students that different distribution of picture series encountered among the students was common to happen. Some of the group of students accepted a bit more picture series and some of the others accepted less ones. (2) Distributing relatively big sized picture series. Dealing with the distribution of relatively big sized picture series, according to him, if the picture series distributed/presented were large enough, it would be easier for those –particularly who sit in the distance– to see or to observe the pictures shown in front of class. The pictures themselves should all be the same size and similarly mounted in order to make a set (Bowen, 1991). (3) Distributing the picture series as clearly and interestingly as possible to see. According to him, it was important to do because some clear and interesting picture series distributed/presented would make the students pay much more attention to what was presented in front of class, and (4) Distributing several colored picture series which were suitable with the real condition or context. According to him, even though it was not serious problem, but it would be better if the picture series distributed and presented were colorful and suitable with the real condition or context.

All in all, he said that he had to consider in advance whether picture series as an instructional media could be used appropriately, effectively and efficiently or not in the teaching and learning process. It is intended, firstly: to anticipate the unexpected worst



possibility that probably will occur in the teaching and learning process of speaking and secondly: to follow up what had occurred.

## **Discussion**

### **The Teaching Technique of Speaking Skill Using Picture Series**

It is believed that working in a group makes children more engaged not only intellectually but emotionally as well. They have to think, contribute to the own group, evaluate what other members of the group say, share information, ask friends for clarification, and prepare a presentation together. Krall (Arsyad, 2014: 9) argued that group work gives learners exposure to a range of language items and language functions. Students use and experiment with the language items they already know in order to develop fluency; they also use some items pre-taught by the teacher or contributed by the members of the group to express themselves more fully and improve the quality of their performance. Preparing the presentation they learn the new items, process them and make them more personal. They also have to use different strategies to compensate for the items they do not know.

The teacher's decision to make a group work of five persons and a pair work needs to be appreciated. It is done in order that the students can share information each other. Some of the students, who have not yet had adequate ability and self-confidence, could be also involved and share information each other in the group. The learning activity in group is considered much better than individual learning activity. It is not only more efficient in term of time but also more effective in term of sharing information. Indirectly, the learning activity in group work and pair work makes the students who are relatively passive, less competent and confident can learn much more active, competent and confident. By dividing the class into groups students get more opportunities to talk than in full class organization and each student can say something. Ur (1996:232) recommends that teachers working with large classes should divide them into five groups which is the most effective organization for practicing speaking. Thus, dividing students into small group, according to Ornstein and Lasley (2000), gives positive impact which seems to provide students a chance to be more actively engaged in learning and teacher to monitor students' progress better. It can also enhance students' cooperation and social skills. It is also pointed out by Watkins (2004), who states that group work and pair work aids in fostering social membership in a mass education environment which can be alienating and confusing for students. Besides, group work and pair work can promote not only "deep and

active” learning (Entwistle and Waterston 1988; Kremer and McGuiness 1998; Ruel et al. 2003), but also promotes experiential learning (McGraw and Tidwell 2001) and collaborative and cooperative learning (Ackermann and Plummer 1994; Lee et al. 1997; Mahenthiran and Rouse 2000; Nance and Mackey-Kallis 1997).

## **The Use of Picture Series to Support the Teaching of Speaking Skill**

Dealing with supporting factors, the use of picture series to support the teaching of speaking skill should be available on many sources. The use of picture series to improve the students’ speaking ability depends on the availability from many sources, such as English books, English magazines, internet, etc. The use of picture series to support the teaching of speaking skill should be sequential. Thus, pictures could help the students to generate ideas about what they should convey orally, as students are sometimes confused about what they will speak firstly. The use of picture series to support the teaching of speaking skill should be informative. The use of picture series provided several information of which one came first and which came next. The use of picture series to support the teaching of speaking skill should be attractive. Picture series used is expected to be able to draw students’ attention to be involved in learning process of speaking. Visual aids, including especially any kinds of pictures and colorful posters are assumed to be able to add much to the attractiveness and atmosphere of a classroom (Moore, 1992), (5) the description of the picture series was clear. Picture series also provided clearer description about what happen. The use of picture series to support the teaching of speaking skill should be representative. Picture series represent the details of events.

There are some criteria that should be considered before using picture series in class, they are namely (1) easy and simple to prepare; the pictures should be used easily and simply in teaching learning and process, (2) easy to organize; there should be right decision making whether the efforts of organizing the pictures were complicated or not, (3) interesting to see; the use of picture series as an instructional media in the teaching speaking skill should be interested for both teacher and students to see.

In line with the criteria described above, Wright (2004) stated the use of picture as media should be easy and simple to prepare, easy to organize, interesting to see, meaningful and authentic to use and sufficient for amount of language in the Language lesson. Thus, instructional media can be utilized by teachers for supporting their teaching activity (Amalia,

2015). In this case, picture series play a vital role. It can contribute to interest and motivation, sense of the context of the language and a specific reference point or stimulus (Ali, 2014). However, how to use pictures and when to use them depends a lot on the teachers' ability, flexibility and purposes as well.

## **The Obstacles or Unexpected Possibilities Generally Found in the Use of Picture Series in the Teaching of Speaking Skill**

A great deal of obstacles or unexpected possibilities generally found in the teaching and learning process particularly in the use of picture series in the teaching of speaking skill are common things to occur. Nobody can avoid encountering several obstacles, problems or other unexpected possibilities. It can occur whenever and wherever, including in term of using picture series in the teaching and learning process of speaking skill.

It is believed that the number of picture series distributed imbalanced each other becomes serious trouble for ESL/EFL learners. Some of students viewed it is something unfair and considered "burden" that requires them to work extra harder, The imbalance of picture series distributed and presented is commonly caused by portion of story sequence based on the picture series presented. Another obstacle generally found is the size of picture series distributed is so small, that it will be difficult for some other students to see the entire picture series presented in the distance. The size of picture series distributed and presented so small is often considered serious problems. It is difficult to see and observe the picture series presented in the distance. Consequently, students sometimes do not pay attention to what is conveyed in front of class. The other obstacle in term of picture series distributed and presented so unclearly and uninterestingly to see becomes any other obstacle. It is not surprising, students tend to ignore and not to be interested in paying attention to story shown and presented in front of class. The other obstacle generally found is when the picture series distributed tended to be simply black and white and not suitable with the real condition or context. In fact, however, it is not considered serious problem when the picture series distributed and presented is only black and white. Some of them considered it is still tolerable. It is true, according to some of the students, as long as the picture series distributed and presented were clear, interesting, and even still understandable, it will significantly influence toward their speaking ability/performance. However, it would be better if the picture series distributed and presented are colorful.

Some other obstacles that should be avoided by the teacher are such as unavailability of picture series on many sources. Besides, teacher should avoid some picture series that tend to be less sequential, informative, attractive, clear, and representative. The last obstacles will possibly occur are when teacher does not use picture series without paying attention to specific criteria, such as, the picture series are difficult to prepare, difficult to organize, and uninteresting to see. Therefore, it will enable the teaching and learning process of speaking skill not to run well. To tell the truth, there are still other factors that potentially disturb the teaching and learning process of speaking skill. Thus, other serious obstacles, problems or unexpected possibilities may occur anytime and anywhere and when it is not prepared well.

### **Attempts Done to Solve the Problems or Anticipate the Unexpected Possibilities in the use of Picture Series in the Teaching of Speaking Skill**

All of the attempts done by the teacher to solve, to reduce the problems or to anticipate unexpected possibility regarding with the use of picture series in the teaching of speaking skill are important things to do and need to be appreciated. Therefore, Yulianti and Latief (2014) suggested that teachers should be more creative and innovative in using instructional media (such as pictures series) for teaching and learning process. Thus, teachers should be prepared with all possible solutions to solve the students' obstacles/problems or to anticipate the unexpected possibilities of using picture series in the teaching of speaking skill (as integrated with the teaching of other English skills).

Bowen (1991:1) viewed the use of visual aids is considered an effective tool to motivate language learners and that learning is a complex process and visual aids are a great help in stimulating the learning of a foreign language. In this case, picture series also belong to visual aids. Indirectly, the use of picture (including picture series) as instructional media in the teaching and learning process will also give impact on students' motivation to learn. It is in line with was argued by Wright (1989), that the use of pictures (including picture series) can motivate students to take part in speaking activities.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, various kinds of techniques can be used in the teaching of speaking skill using picture series. Among of those kinds of techniques that could be used are group work and pair work. Group work and pair work can promote not only "deep and active" learning but also experiential, collaborative and cooperative learning.

Picture series as instructional media can be used to support the teaching of speaking skill when it is facilitated by supporting factors (such as availability on many sources, sequential, informative, attractive, clear, and representative) and specific criteria (namely, easy and simple to prepare, easy to organize, and interesting to see).

Any obstacles or unexpected possibilities may occur and be found in the use of picture series in the teaching of speaking skill, even though it is assumed to be able to promote the students' learning.

It is a must for English teachers to do any attempts to solve/to minimize the problems or to anticipate the unexpected possibilities in term of using picture series in the teaching of speaking skill.

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