Sing YouTube Subtitled Video of Native Speaker to Enhance Speaking Ability and Cultural Understanding

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Abstract: The objective of the research was to find out whether the use of YouTube Video could enhance students’ speaking ability and cultural understanding. The research method used was Classroom Action Research. The subject of the research was beginner Indonesian students at Northern Illinois University (NIU) in the academic year of 2014/2015. There were sixteen students in this class. They were all American and they had never learned Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian Language) before. They first took Indonesian class in Fall semester 2014. The lack of exposure to Indonesian in the U.S. made the students difficult to speak in Indonesian and to know Indonesian culture. In Spring semester 2015, the researcher regularly used videos of Indonesian Native speakers from YouTube during teaching and learning process. The video also provided the idea about Indonesian culture. To facilitate comprehension of the video, the researcher developed an assortment of supporting materials, such as listening comprehension questions, glossaries, and follow-up discussion questions. Some of the videos were very funny and entertaining, which were enjoyed by almost everyone and particularly favored in culture. Finding from the research revealed that the use of video from YouTube could get students energized and engaged in the hands-on learning process. Students got more time to enhance their listening comprehension and to practice their speaking skill at the same time. They were interested in and involved in the discussion about Indonesian culture from the videos. It was clearly an instructional medium that was compelling and generated a much greater amount of interest and enjoyment than the more traditional printed material.

Keywords: YouTube Video, Speaking Ability, Cultural Understanding

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian has been taught for decades in various countries in the world, including in Australia, the United States and South Korea, to mention a few. This indicates that Indonesian is one of the foreign languages that university authorities have seriously noted and consider important for their students to take in their countries. In the United States of America, Indonesian is listed as one of the Critical Languages. It is a term used in the US to designate languages for which there is large demand for language professionals but little supply. As of 2010, the following 14 languages are listed as critical languages; they are Azerbaijani, Arabic, Bangla, Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Punjabi, Swahili, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Chinese, Japanese and Russian. (http://clscholarship.org/). The list of which languages are considered critical changes over time as economic and political situations change and develop, but often these languages are radically different from English in grammatical structures, sound systems and writing systems.

Many universities in the US offer foreign language course to their students. Some universities even put it as one of the graduation requirements. In Northern Illinois University (NIU), Candidates for the Bachelor of Arts degree must demonstrate competence in a foreign language equivalent to that attained in two years of college instruction. This requirement must be met by successful completion of one of the following sequences: Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Polish, Portuguese, Russian Spanish, Tagalog, Thai. For Bahasa Indonesia, students at least have to take it for two semesters:
Indonesian: FLIN 103, FLIN 104 with no grade lower than C.

Learning a foreign language is never easy. Many of NIU students who took Indonesian class had problems at the beginning of the course. Indonesian looks easy to start with – no special writing system, no tones, verbs don’t show tense, nouns and pronouns don’t show gender, number or case. But, the lack of exposure of Indonesian in the US makes it difficult to the students to learn this language. The aim of learning a language is of course to be able to master language skill which covers listening, writing, reading, and speaking.

All four language skills are equally important, lack of practice in four language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing - will definitely hinder the acquisition of the language skills the students are learning. But this time, the focus is on speaking ability. As stated by Chaney (1998: 13), “Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching”. Brown and Yule (1983) stated that “learning to talk in the foreign language is often considered being one of the most difficult aspects of language learning for the teacher to help the students with”. Helping the students develop the speaking skill not merely so that they can pass examination but also for more general use when they want to use the it in the outside world such as study, work, or leisure.

Learning a language is also learning its culture. Therefore, by having knowledge of some Indonesian cultures, students can also appreciate the people, their customs and beliefs, as well as their way of life and their language that they are studying. Cultures may also attract students' interest in learning the language, for students may appreciate the cultural values of the people having the customs.

There are a number of reasons why Video is an excellent teaching and learning tool. In many cases, it is proved that students love video because video presentation is interesting, challenging, and stimulating to watch. It also brings how people behave in culture whose language they are learning into the classroom.” It enables students to have authentic experience in controlled environment. It is also contextualizing language naturally by showing real life into the classroom.

As mentioned before, the lack of exposure to Indonesian in the US made the students finding difficulties at the beginning of the course. For the reasons above, the used of subtitled YouTube Video was regularly used since fall semester. The used of YouTube videos are also expected to enhance students’ cultural understanding. There are several benefits from using Video in the classroom; (1) Learning from Video is motivating and enjoyable. Motivation is one of the most important factors in determining successful second-language acquisition. Video, as a motivator, also makes the language learning process more entertaining and enjoyable (Harmer, 2001: 282), (2) Video provides authentic and varied language (Harmer, 2001: 282). Another benefit of using Video is that it provides a source of authentic and varied language. Video provides students with examples of a Foreign Language, in this case Indonesian, used in ‘real’ situations outside the classroom, particularly interactive language – the language of real-life conversation. Video exposes students to natural expressions and the natural flow of speech. If they are not living in an Indonesian-speaking environment, perhaps only Video and television can provide learners with this real-life language input, (3) Video gives a visual context. The ‘visuality’ of Video makes it an invaluable language teaching tool,
enabling learners to understand more by interpreting the language in a full visual context. Video assists the learners’ comprehension by enabling them to listen to language exchanges and see such visual supports as facial expressions and gestures simultaneously. These visual clues support the verbal message and provide a focus of attention, (4) Video can bring variety and flexibility to the language classroom by extending the range of teaching techniques and resources, helping students to develop all four communicative skills. For example, a whole Video or sequence can be used to practice listening and reading, and as a model for speaking and writing. Video can also act as a springboard for follow-up tasks such as discussions, debates on social issues, role plays, reconstructing a dialogue or summarizing. It is also possible to bring further variety to the language learning classroom by screening different types of Video: feature-length Video, short sequences of Video, short Video, and adverts.

Given the benefits of using Video in the language learning classroom, it is not surprising that many teachers are keen to use Video with their students, and an increasing number of them are successfully integrating Video into the language-learning syllabus. From the discussion above, the researcher believes that the used of Subtitled YouTube Video can enhance students speaking ability and cultural understanding.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted at NIU. The subject of the research was FLIN 104 Class, spring semester 2015. The research method used in this study is a Classroom Action Research (CAR). The first definition is given by Kemmis (1983) in McNiff (1992:2) who says that Action Research is a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants (teachers, students, or principals, for example) in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of (a) their own social or educational practices, (b) their understanding of these practices, and (c) the situations (and institutions) in which these practices are carried out. According to Gwynn Mettetal (2001), Classroom Action Research (CAR) is research designed to help teacher find out what is happening in his or her classroom, and to use that information to make wise decisions for the future. Anne Burns (1999: 30) suggests a number of general features, which characterize the action research. They are as followings:

a. Action research is contextual, small-scale and localized – it identifies and investigates problems within a specific situation.
b. It is evaluative and reflective as it aims to bring about change and improvement in practice.
c. It is participatory as it provides for collaborative investigation by teams of colleagues, practitioners, and researchers.
d. Changes in practice are based on the collection of information or data which provides the impetus for change.

From the definitions above, it can be summarized that that Action Research is the systematic study of efforts to overcome educational problems or to change things related to educational problems for improvement. It is done by practitioners or teachers, or in collaboration of teachers and researchers by means of their own practical action and their own reflection upon the effects of those actions.

In this study, there are two kinds of data. They are qualitative data and quantitative data. The sources of the qualitative data were taken from observation and field notes. In this research, the observation is used to collect the data. It was a technique of collecting the data by closely watching and noticing classroom
events or happenings, or interaction. The quantitative data were taken from the result of speaking test. Speaking test was used to measure the students’ achievement in speaking. The data which were collected were analyzed by qualitative and quantitative ways. The qualitative data analyses were used to analyze the data that were taken during the teaching learning process. The writer used the indicators that show the improvement of the students’ speaking ability. The qualitative approach was done by describing, investigating, and evaluating the observation result, field notes, and interview note. Meanwhile, the quantitative approach is done by describing the tests results.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Subtitled YouTube Video was used constantly in Indonesian beginner class during Spring semester 2015 (FLIN 104). Fortunately, there are so many Indonesian videos with English subtitled in YouTube. After constantly using videos for a semester, the result was great. It really helped the students to learn Indonesian in a more fun way. They were also more motivated to learn Indonesian after the teacher showed them Obama Speaking Indonesian. They also found out that Indonesian is one of the Critical Language listed by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. It means that it gives them more opportunity career if they can master it. FLIN 103-104 is an intensive course, so things move along quickly, but many students found it easier to learn this language as time went by. The activities in the classroom were more varied. The students had lots of chances to practice their language skill. Before and after playing the video, there was discussion dealing with the topic. During the video playing, they also practiced their listening comprehension. After the discussion, the teacher usually asked them to write too. Some of the students were so surprised that they could speak and write in Indonesian well only for a semester and half. Many of the students took Spanish when they were in High School but the result was disappointing. They couldn’t write well in Spanish even for some sentences. So they were so surprised and happy to able to speak and write a paragraph well in Indonesian.

Indonesian course at NIU is five days a week; Monday to Friday. To avoid boredom, the teacher made culture class every Friday. There were games and entertaining videos. We discussed a lot about Indonesian Culture and compared it with American. There were times when I showed them the video of making Batik and fried rice competition on August 17 (Indonesian Independence Day). After watching and discussing the video, they were so excited about it. So, at the end of spring semester we finally had a chance to make it happened. We held fried rice completion, and the following week making Batik. It was very fun class. The students were so satisfied because they learnt a lot from this FLIN class. They not only learnt the language but also learnt the culture. Three of students visited Indonesia this summer 2015. They told me that it was very useful to learn the language beforehand.

4. CONCLUSIONS

As stated by many language experts that learning to talk in the foreign language is often considered being one of the most difficult aspects of language learning for the teacher to help the students with. Helping the students develop the speaking skill not merely so that they can pass examination but also for more general use when they want to use the it in the outside world such as study, work, or leisure. If we are going to improve the students’ speaking ability, we should provide them with more opportunities to get the practice they need to use the language and expose them more to the language to be more familiar. It is believed that the use of video of native speakers can help students improve their speaking skill because they are exposed to the real-life situation of the language they are learning. The use of video of native speaker also creates a situation where learners are
expected to discuss and argue with each other, to assess their current pronunciation while they are watching and listening to the video. It also helps them to enhance their cultural understanding. Based on the result of the research above, the teacher can use Subtitled YouTube Video of Native speaker as one of the alternatives to teach speaking ability and to enhance cultural understanding.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher wants to thank you for her Supervisor during her assistantship at Northern Illinois University (NIU), Rahmi Hartati, Ed.M, Ed.D. She also wants to thank Director of Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Dr. Judy Ledgerwood. She also wants to thank her parents for always praying for her in every way. Her biggest thanks to the Fulbright Scholarship for giving her opportunity to be one of the Foreign Language Teaching Assistants (FLTAs) at the Universities in the USA. It was such a great experience to be able to teach Bahasa Indonesia to American students.

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