

MY JOURNEY IN IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS: NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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Abstract: This article focuses on my journey in improving speaking skill using different strategies from junior high school to undergraduate level. This study uses a qualitative research design that focuses on the narrative side. The participant for this article was the researcher himself. Using autobiography as a data instrument, I collect the data from my memories and dairy. For data analysis I use Webster and Martova's in-depth analysis styles. The conclusion of this study executed into three phases with sub points conclusions in each phase. First phases: junior high school with sub-point of interest. Second phase: senior high school with sub-point of motivation and hobbies. Last phase: undergraduate level with sub-point of self-reflection. In conclusion, my experiences from junior to university have many essential moments and factors in developing my speaking skill, from using different strategies or getting help from my online community and friends.

Key words: learning process, experiences, speaking.

INTRODUCTION

The idea and thought of this article will execute into three parts. First Realization, I notice many aspects of our society have changed from economics, technology, culture, and even education. According to Wilk (2002), the significant shift that is already happening in our society is caused by considerable demand and a massive increase in population every year. Moreover, for a fact, the changes could occur on either the positive or negative side.

The second concern is knowing a lot of aspects have changed lately. I feel slightly concerned about the effects of those shifts on the education side. Remembering back in the past, people used books, magazines, and newspapers as media to gain knowledge and information. Based on Toledo (2020), people started to abandon them because it is too old-fashioned. The researchers mention that people should respect and appreciate books in general because there are some important that only books have. From this perspective, it is called the traditional way.

Now back to the recent situation in terms of media. The changes that affect education side, for instance simple and handy devices for gaining knowledge and information like internet. The portability of the internet provides many learners and teachers quick and convenient access to information. The shifting also affects the curriculum to adapt to the changes. Also, online classes that are held recently because of the pandemic situation. The result of changes in education shows a more positive side because it is not only given benefits but also creates a solution that society faces depending on the problems. This perspective is called the modern way.

For the last part decision, after noticing the problem and finding a concern about the issue. I decided to take a topic study related to traditional and modern ways. Me as person born in 1999 who experiences both ways, I think this topic will become perfect for my interest. I intend to use a narrative research design because there are many interesting points and values from my story that people could learn from it. From junior high school to university learning journey, it will create many possibilities for data analysis. Also, one statement by Gredley (2013) agrees about implementing experiences for research purposes because every individual has a different background and personality and believes in producing different outcomes. For the objective of this article, I focus on three points. First, the events or moments affect my interest in learning English, especially speaking. Second, my progression on develop speaking skill uses different strategy. Last, the pedagogical value that readers can obtain from my story.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section will focus on the point that is relevant to this study. The topic includes narrative research, qualitative analysis, internet roles in learning, and previous study.

A. Narrative Research

According to Bruner (1986, cited in Kim, 2015), differentiating between narrative and quantitative research depends on two thoughts. The researcher chooses narrative analysis in the first place because the researcher focuses on his stories. Positivism's paradigmatic way of thinking is pervasive in quantitative research because it relies on theory, scientific analysis, logic, empirical evidence, and discovery guided by a reasoned hypothesis. The primary goal is to promote certainty by seeking a definite answer or objective truth.

On the other side, the narrative mode of thinking represents qualitative research that uses stories to understand the meaning of human actions and experiences, the changes and challenges of life events, and the differences and complexity of people's actions. The nuances and ambiguities from a story cannot be expressed or tolerated in the paradigmatic mode of knowledge with its insistence on definitions, statements of fact, and generalized rules.

B. Qualitative Study

This section discusses on a reviewing study about my strategies or learning methods from junior highs school to university. First repeated reading, I used when I was in junior high school. The reason on using repeated reading was to expand my vocabulary by reading a dictionary repeatedly. Therrien and Kubina (2006) state that maximizing the effectiveness of repeated reading depends on students reading material. If reading a topic captures their interest, it will be easier to reread a similar issue. Their findings also show teachers' viewpoints regarding this method. It says consistently be helping students to reach certain reading levels because teachers can respond by guiding and giving advice to students.

The second recurring activity this strategy I used unintentionally because of my hobby playing games unexpectedly build my vocabulary at a high level. Braund & Leigh (2012) state that frequency and self-efficacy are related. Depending on a person's self-efficacy, indeed, an increased chance for the success of repetitive action.

Third, the e-learning this strategy I use a lot from junior high school to university. For example, in junior high school, I used social media to learn to interact with people who used the English language. Then university-level I used YouTube to watch different Stand-Up Comedian videos to learn about accents and how to speak naturally. A case study from Husnussaadah (2021) investigates how important e-learning is for the digitalization era. Researchers state that education should adapt to the current condition to make teachers and learners ably optimize technology's potential, like the simplicity of accessing information and updating with news local or outside benefits from using technology in this era. If they cannot adapt to this situation, at this point, it will be hard to keep up with the world's recent progress.

Last blended learning, this strategy I used at the university level. Using discord as a communication platform in a modern way. Then I used the discussion method as the traditional way. According to Sari (2013), blended learning can improve students' self-paced learning and critical thinking.

C. Internet roles in learning

Because my learning process involved the internet, so I decided to look at the internet side from a positive and negative perspective to understand its effect. Starting from positive roles, technology like the internet gives educators many opportunities to expand tutoring-teaching and educational-management abilities more efficiently (Geladze, 2015). Then Dogruer et al. (2011) state internet is a source of ton information with easy accessibility. With this, many researchers agree that the internet has become something society needs for education purposes, and it has become the central role of education.

Now internet at a negative side; according to Mutaat et al. (2020), there is a three-point weakness of the internet. First, sometimes participants hardly find relevant sources to their study theme. Second, participant frequently copy-pastes or cheat on their test and homework because there is no inspector or educators to watch their back, so the percentage of cheating were high. Third, less interaction between educators and learners makes them not confident and do not have an excellent relationship to ask a question or give questions which means there is no mental support from educators.

D. Previous Study

Review some studies with the same research design or topic as this article. The first study was conducted by Putri (2014) entitled "The Learning Speaking Skills Strategies in My Personal Experiences: A Narrative inquiry." Her study was about the strategies to learn speaking skills through past experiences and using herself as a subject participant. Autobiography as data instrument. Then for data analysis she used Webster and Manorva in-depth analysis. This study showed a lot of important moments in her learning process from junior to university. Somehow, she used different strategies depending on the situation. With the support environment school like pesantren, she achieved her goal of improving her speaking skills. So related to the researcher's article, the idea of my paper was based on her study. Using the same narrative research design, our objective of the study had the same goal, which is about the journey of improving speaking skills. But what makes the difference between our studies is the learning environment. The pesantren and regular high school. With her pesantren school environment known as a place to learning both

language Arabic and English that support her speaking skill. Beside my learning environment only from regular high school that have lack of language activity and only sport activity. Making our learning process became much different by learning background also not forget to mention the variety strategies that we used. However, the conclusion from my study and her study is showing the difference on background study, but it is expected to show same goal that is improving English speaking skill.

The next research was conducted by Gredley (2013) entitled "Learning Through Experience: Making Sense of Students' Learning Through Service Learning." Based on narrative research design this study focuses on students' experiences. There are four university students from 2010 and 2011 as participants. For data instrument researcher used blogs assignment and in-depth one-to-one interviews Cohen et al. (2007). Then, each student get interview talking about their feel on specific treatment. The results of this study show different perspectives of each student. Some students are satisfied with the treatment, and the rest are not. The reason behind it because of personal knowledge or background knowledge. If a person cannot use some complicated learning method, the result will not be good. So, the researcher concludes that personal knowledge could affect someone's growth.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative research design. Because the central point of this research is based on personal or unique experiences, narrative inquiry might be a suitable research design for this case. The subject participant itself for this study is the researcher itself. I found some things that could became a research value from my story. Based on Kim (2015), The term auto (self) is commonly used in the academy when the researcher engages in critical reflections and interpretations of their personal experience. However, this study could not avoid subjectivity because this study based on personal stories. For my study background, in junior high school I studied at SMP YPK Toboali from 2010 to 2013. Then, in senior high school I studied at SMA Negeri 1 Toboali from 2013 to 2016. Last, at a university level, I studied at the University of Islam Malang in 2016; for the data, the source researcher used an autobiography that he wrote by himself. For data collection researcher uses three steps. First, the researcher needs to read or observe their experiences from daily or memories. Second, selecting data is relevant to their problem studies. Last, organizing data and combining them into an autobiography. For data analysis, the researcher used Webster & Martova's In-Depth Analysis Styles (Putri, 2014, p.11).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

For the findings of this study, I will separate into three parts so it is more convenient for the researcher to analyze and organize the data. In addition, each section will have a sub-point to give more detailed explanations and discussion on the stories. The first sections will be called the first phases: during middle school, the second phase during senior high school, and the last phase in college.

A. First Phases: Junior High School

My first journey started when I was in junior high school. One of my close friends will teach me about creating a Facebook account if I was treated him at the school canteen. That is how I got introduced to social media for the first time. After spending hundred hours on Facebook, I got my first message from a person, but the message was entire in English. Somehow it frustrated me because I have little knowledge of English. However, that did not cut my intention to keep trying, so I used my sister's dictionary to translate the message. Also, I convinced myself to replied the message even though the grammar and the structure were not on point. Then his response was actually lovely and friendly. From that moment, I invested in English and want to have more conversations like this in the future.

- *Interest: (Repeated Reading)*

My first journey started when I was in junior high school. I got invested in English after spending much time on Facebook. The first message that I got from my Facebook friends made him feel challenged on himself to respond to it with complete English sentences. Unexpected, it gets a reply nicely. Since then, I have found that English is so interesting, and it would be much fun to learn more about it. According to Hindi & Renninger (Harackiewicz & Hulleman, 2009), three factors contribute to developing interest: knowledge, positive effects, and personal value. In the researcher's case, the interest created motivation to learn English; then positive effects made curiosity about social media; last personal value is having friends from a different country and mentioning the researcher's learning strategy. I used repeated reading by reading the dictionary to gain more vocabulary. The more conversation I had on Facebook, and more often I read the dictionary. Also, (Therrien & Kubina, 2006) mentions that maximizing the effectiveness of repeated reading depends on students reading material. I used repeated reading consistently, so hopefully I could obtain more words and have a good conversation with my online friends.

B. Second Phases: Senior High School

In senior high school, my classmates called me "A Walking Dictionary" because I had a lot of vocabulary at that time. The time that I spent playing games somehow pulled off. 90's gamers surely knew the language's default setting of the video games was only English. I kept playing without any other option, even though I didn't understand a single word. Unpredictably my vocabulary was expanding to an average level. However, I felt less interested in English because I was bored and did not find something new in English. But there was a moment that changed everything and happened on the final test in the 3rd year of senior high school. The test was about storytelling. Then I thought I should put 100% effort into this final test. After preparing and practicing for the last, I give my best in the performance. Unexpectedly my teacher was surprised by my performance and gave me a lot of compliments. That moment was the turning point for me to dedicate myself to learning English in the future.

- *Hobbies and Motivation: (Recurring Activity)*

From hobby, I can expand my vocabulary to an average level. Spending much time playing games with the English language becomes something beneficial for my learning process. The happy feelings from playing games turn out to be a productive hobby because it strengthens my skills. Approved by Braud & Leigh (2012), feelings can affect someone's motivation to achieve

better results. In my case is for someone who feels happy and excited by only playing games without noticing expands my vocabulary. Also, one factor that keep me to learn English is the motivation from my teacher. According to Wettergren (2012), teacher feedback becomes the key to success in student improvement. If teachers cannot give the best response to students or are not interested and careless with students' progression, it will waste students' potential to grow. The compliment from my teachers motivates me and I want to dedicate myself to learn English more in the future.

C. Last Phases: University Level

After the first semester ended, I felt a bit left out from my classmates regarding speaking skills. Then I started to observe and analyze the weakness and lack of my abilities. After that, I browse on internet about learning methods or strategies that match me. I found two learning strategies that fit my learning styles: watching YouTube and singing. For watching YouTube, I specifically watched Stand Up Comedian to learn about accents, idioms, and western jokes. My favorite comedian among them is Jimmy O Yang because he made a lot of jokes about Asian stereotypes. I sang many 90s songs for singing because I wanted to practice my pronunciation using a song with simple lyrics. Then I tried to sing a modern song with complicated lyrics. With the expectation that my speaking would improve, my other skills, like listening by watching YouTube and pronunciation by singing, were enhanced. My speaking still has not improved because I still feel unnatural and stuttering.

However, one of my online friends suggests using Discord to practice my speaking skills. Discord was known as a communication platform for gamers. Not only about playing games, sometimes they used to discuss recent issues on the internet. If you asked to describe Discord as an online platform to talk or just have a fun conversation while playing games. Suddenly on the first day of using Discord, I found three friends from different countries and different personalities. There is Jhonny and Dexter from Singapore, and then Diana from the Philippines. We often hang out on Discord to waste time talking and playing games. After spending time on Discord for about 14 months, I noticed my speaking skills were improved because I got help from my Discord friends by imitating their accents, intonation, and phrases. In only one year, my speaking got better by using Discord repeatedly.

- Self-reflection: (E-learning and Blended Learning)

At the university level, I noticed my speaking skill so much behind my classmates. For that reason, I motivate myself and reflects on my abilities. I am tried to find a perfect strategy for my learning cases. I found two learning methods. Nevertheless, those method does not seem enough to improve the researcher speaking skill. Then I tried another method. Finally, I am able to improve my speaking abilities after trying so many strategies. Bubnys (2019) stated that improving reflection abilities in their professional fields makes learners find a way to improve their knowledge or skills. When learners are experts in their fields or subjects, it will be easier to find weaknesses and lacks in their abilities—looking from the researcher's perspective after reflecting on his abilities helping him to find a solution for his cases.

For the strategy, I used e-learning methods like watching YouTube. Maziriri et al. (2020) study stated that watching YouTube makes the learner's behaviour and attitude toward technology

very much intentionally optimistic. Meaning learners used that platform for educational purposes, the same as my case. For the implication of blended learning in my learning process is when I use the Discord platform. Combining discussion and online platforms is a perfect representative of blended learning. This method works perfectly for my case because someone is involved in my speaking progress. Hammar (2014) said there are three critical parts of group study: learning, studying social function, and organization. It tells that working in a group can improve someone's ability much faster.

CONCLUSION

So, the conclusion of this study was focused on three points that I mentioned in the introduction. First, the events or moments that affect my interest in learning English, especially speaking. For example, in Junior high school, I found interest in English after my friends were introduced to social media. Second, my progression on develop speaking skill uses different strategy. I used repeated reading to increase vocabulary depending on the situation in junior high school. In senior high school, my hobby helps me develop my vocabulary to an average level. At the university level I use many strategies like watching YouTube, singing, and using Discord app to improve my speaking skills. Last, the pedagogical value that readers can obtain from my story based on their profession. This paper will give students an idea of their learning styles. For the teacher, it will give them another perspective on students' growth possibilities. Hopefully, researchers will be motivated to investigate this narrative topic with different research designs.

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