SELECTING THE RIGHT TOPICS TO ENHANCE THE CRITICAL THINKING IN SPEAKING CLASS, A LESSON STUDY BETWEEN TEACHER-LECTURERS

By Rika Riwayatiningsih

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Abstract

One of the skills needed by the graduates of junior high school students to face the industrial era 4.0 is having critical thinking skill. It is a skill in which ones are able to identify problems, find the source of problems, and get the best solution to the problems. Many English teachers at senior high school face problem to teach speaking. Their students only express certain language functions without elaborating the topic. It means that they do not have critical thinking. The cause of the problem is that the students have limited ideas about the topic they discuss. One of the ways to solve the problem is by selecting the topics that are appropriate with the students' experience and knowledge. This research uses Lesson Study approach and aims at describing and explaining how selecting the right topics for speaking can enhance critical thinking skill of senior high school students.

Keywords: collaborative working, critical thinking, lesson study

Introduction

Industrial revolution 4.0 make the world change very vast. The era is characterized with the use of advance information technology in any aspect of human life. People cannot separate their life with gadget. They get information quickly from various sources. This condition influences the paradigm of the process of teaching and learning at schools. Ideally, teachers make innovation in the ways of teaching so that their students can adapt with the rapid change of the world. The innovation of teaching will facilitate students' skills needed in the era.

To face the era, the Indonesian students must have a set of skills. Zubaidah (2018) states that there are four skills needed to face the Revolution Era 4.0. They are Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication. Furthermore, she explains that *Critical thinking* is all about how to solve problems. *Creativity* is about thinking skill *outside the box*. It means that they are able to create innovation or to get new ways to solve problems. *Collaboration* is a skill in which they can work together with others. It means that they collaborate, adapt with the team, and share the roles to reach the goal. Finally, *Communication* is skill to express ideas, question, and solution in a good way.

One of the skills mentioned above is critical thinking skill. It is process and ability used to understand a concept, apply, synthesize, and evaluate information

one gets or produces. One can filter the useful information because not all information can be accepted and used as knowledge and guidance for his/her life. Knowing the fact that Critical Thinking is very important, all teachers, including senior high school English teachers, must train and develop the students' skill. Ideally, English teachers of senior high school should also develop their students' critical thinking. They can train the students to identify problems; state the reasons why the problems happen, give some solutions, and choose the best solution. Therefore, they should develop the skill through various strategies. One of the strategies to encourage students' critical thinking skill is by selecting and adapting the materials that are appropriate with the students' needs. Selecting materials means choosing the materials that are suitable with the students' interest, the level of difficulty, and the application of the language in real life. English teacher should be able to select topics that familiar with their students. If they think that the topic available in their book is not interesting for them, they may change into the other one that is more up to date. For example, 'the use of technology' is up to date topic, but it is too broad for the students. The teacher can change into 'the advantages of social media' that is more specific and the students are familiar with it. The next is about level of difficulty. It is about the language features, such as choice of words (vocabulary) and the sentence structures. The focus of the study is on teaching speaking in one of senior high schools at Kediri. This is a part of the project carried out by a group of lecturers and an English teacher who collaborated in Lesson Study (LS) program. According to Sudrajat (2010), LS is an activity by a group of teachers which aims at enhancing the learning outcomes and teaching process continuously through teacher group collaboration. Besides, Zahroh and Wardani (2011) add that LS also explores ideas for improved teaching that brings out students' thinking and thinking processes, helps students to develop mental images for solving problems and understanding topic, and expands those skills and abilities. In other words, LS is collaborative activities among teachers and lecturers to find solution and to improve the quality of teaching.

Before the LS program was carried out, the team did preliminary study. They observed in the classroom to see what really happened during the teaching learning process. They also analyzed the existing materials, asked the English teacher about the problems she faced, and asked some students about the English lesson and their problems.

Based on the preliminary study the team had found some problems dealing with the process of teaching English in the classroom, especially in speaking skill. They found some problems that came from the teacher as well as the students. Firstly, the activity in the classroom was always oriented in teacher center in which the teacher mostly dominated the most teaching-learning process. The students had a very few changes to practice the language for communication in real context. Furthermore, the materials and activities in the classroom focused on written cycle. The teacher assigned the students to do the tasks in the student book. They rarely got experience to practice oral language. This condition caused the classroom boring and many students were unmotivated. It can be seen that some students

talked about their own business rather than discussed the materials. The other students were busy doing the homework of other subjects.

Considering those conditions, the team tried to find the solution that was selecting the right topics to teach speaking. The study aims at creating learning community between teacher and lecturers and improving the students' critical thinking in speaking skill. Therefore, the formulation of the problem is as follows: "*How do the team enhance critical thinking of the students in speaking skills at SMAN I Kediri?*"

Material Development

English teachers of high school should consider the basic competence before they do material development. Based on the content standard of the 2013 English Curriculum, one of the basic competence of teaching English for grade eleven of senior high school based on is the students are able to arrange both oral and written texts to express asking and responding the expressions of giving opinion, suggestion, and offering by considering the social function, the generic structure, and the language features that are appropriate within the context. It means that they should select the best teaching strategy to facilitate the students practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

One of the teaching strategies is by selecting the materials. Most English teachers usually use the available materials found in the textbooks to teach in the class. However, not all the available materials are suitable for the needs of the students. Ideally, they should develop the materials that are suitable with the teaching objectives and their students' need.

There are some principles to develop materials. According to Tomlison (2013), teachers should follow the principles to develop materials for language teaching. First, good materials give positive influence for the students, such as they are easily to understand and encourage their confidence. Next, the developed materials should be relevant and useful for real communication. Furthermore, materials should facilitate them to practice how to use the target language for real communication. Moreover, good materials can be applied for different ability students. Finally, good materials should be graded and provide opportunities for outcome feedback.

In addition, Crawford (in Richards-Renandya, 2002) states that the writer's views of language and learning in materials is obviously reflected, so both teachers and students will respond according to how well these matches their own beliefs and expectations. The followings are some points to be considered in providing effective materials: 1) Language is functional and must be contextualized. The use of language should be real for communication. It reflects who involve, what the topic is, what the appropriate expressions are, and how the expressions are delivered. 2) Classroom materials are completed with audiovisual media. 3) The materials cover both oral and written language that the students need. 4) Flexible materials are needed to cater to individual and contextual differences.

In short, English teachers should take some consideration before they develop the materials. The most important point to consider is the competence based on the

standard stated in the curriculum. Besides, the materials should be student friendly ones in terms of the topic and the language use.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is fundamental skill to solve problems. It is very important for millennial students that they face the tight global competition. It a skill that students must have to identify sources of problems, find the right solution of the problems, and select the right choice for the solution. The skill can be trained in all subjects, including English subject in senior high school. Therefore, teachers play important roles to design the learning activities.

To understand this term, Janicek (2006) provides definition that critical thinking is intellectually disciplined process, which involves conceptualizing, applying, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information that someone gets after s/he generates, observes, experiences, reflects, reasons, or communicates. The process is used as a guide to belief and action. In other words, it can be concluded that it is one's ability to find a solution of problems after s/he analyzes, evaluates, and finally makes a decision.

Method

The research employs descriptive approach. It describes the learning process of Speaking class and the researchers used Lesson Study (LS) to solve the problems. The aim is to improve the students' critical thinking ability in Speaking. The Lesson Study was conducted in 8 cycles. It involved a team of four persons, an English teacher of SMAN 1 Kediri and 3 English lecturers of University of Nusantara PGRI Kediri. One lecturer was assigned as the teacher model who taught in the classroom. The program was carried out in the odd semester of academic year 2019/2020. The classes involved were four parallel classes, they were XI IPA-A, XI IPA-B, XI-IPA d, and XI IPA-E. The techniques of collecting data were observation and observation checklist. During the teaching and learning process, the observers made field notes on the phenomena happened in the classroom. At the end of the lesson, the students were assigned to perform a dialogue in groups of four. This kind of test was given to measure their speaking ability and their critical thinking had been appeared, and scoring rubric was used to evaluate their performance. The data based on the observation were used to make some improvement on the following meeting, whereas the results of the observation check list was analyzed by classifying the critical thinking.

Findings and Discussion

In this part it will report the results of the study. They are the stages of Lesson Study, the findings of each stage and the improvement, and the students' critical thinking.

The Stages of Lesson Study

*There were some stages to carry out the research. There were 4 class meetings in which the first meeting was the preliminary study. This activity was to find out the problems faced by the English teacher in the classroom, and it was carried out in class XI IPA-A. Based on the results of the observation, the team began to make a **plan**. They developed the materials and chose the classroom activities. After they made some improvement, they applied the plan in class XI IPA B. It was **Do** activity or the first open class. During the first open class, one of the lecturers became the teacher model and the others played a role as observers. After the open class, the team discussed the result of the observation that what we call **See**. In this stage, they also make some improvement like the one in the Plan activity. To make it clear the procedure of the Lesson Study is presented in the figure 1*

in XI IPA-A

Do

Preliminary study And observation   Plan See XI IPA-B
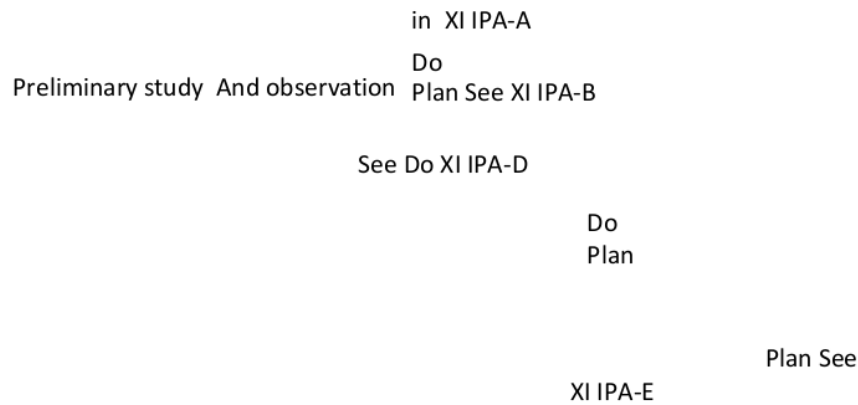
See Do XI IPA-D

Do
Plan

Plan See

XI IPA-E

Figure 1

From Figure 1, it can be seen clearly the procedure of the lesson study. There were four classes involved. The procedure in figure one was conducted to teach speaking with the topic asking and giving suggestion.

The Findings and the Improvement of Each Stage

In this part, it will be reported the findings based on the observation and the improvement done by the team, which was applied in every open class. The findings here can be classified based on the weaknesses and the improvement. The objective of teaching speaking was that the students were able to ask, give, accept, and decline suggestions critically.

In the first meeting of the program, the team found weaknesses dealing with the materials and classroom activities. The materials included topics, the language features and expressions that were appropriate with the context communication. Besides, the teacher did not provide teaching media, such as video, written materials in the form of Power Points, or hand-out. The teacher relied the materials on the student book. The examples of the topics found in the student book were as follows: 'I believe that smoking should be banned', 'I think we should buy a new car', and 'What kinds of music do you like?' Actually, nothing wrong with those topics. However, the teacher did not provide interesting activity. She only asked the students to make dialogue in pairs without giving example before, the students did

the exercises by writing in their book. Therefore, the team decided to make some improvements.

The improvements here were some notes based on the observation in the previous meeting. The team designed in each plan. First, the teacher provided group work activity. Moreover, she provided media to display the example of dialogues and the language features. Before the students were ready to speak, she asked them to observe the dialogues. Based on the observation they made conclusion, and discussed with their friends in groups to perform their own dialogue in which they had to ask and give some suggestion. The teacher also provided the examples of language expressions for giving suggestion, accepting suggestion, and declining suggestion. The team also decided to offer some topics in which the students could ask, give, accept, and decline suggestions critically. They were 'Eating in Abnormal or Padang Restaurant', 'Online game maniac', 'the wise use of social media', and 'Ojek online', '' You fall in love to someone, but s/he loves somebody else", The students might also choose their own topic if they were not interested in the existing topics.

The Students' Critical Thinking

The students who have critical thinking skill can be observed and seen. There are some indicators: they can analyze, evaluate, and create. First, students have critical thinking skill in speaking if they can analyze a problem given. It means that they can express their opinion dealing the problem given from various points of view. Then they are able to evaluate if they can compare more than one problem. Finally, if they can create, they will be able to choose the right solution based on their evaluation. So, critical thinking in speaking skill here means that the students are analyze the problem from different perspectives. The results of analysis are expressed in the form of considerations when they have to talk about a certain topic. They can also make comparisons on two or more topics. Based on the comparison, finally they choose the most reasonable solution taken after they evaluate.

To measure the students' critical thinking the team designed a simple observation checklist. The students who did not perform a dialogue in front of the class, they have to give the score based on the following criteria.

Score Criteria
4 Give opinion, provide three considerations/reasons
3 Give opinion, provide two considerations/reasons
2 Give opinion, provide only one consideration/reasons
1 Give opinion without consideration/reason

To encourage the students' critical thinking, the team gave suggestions to the teacher model. She should inform the criteria of the assessment and give corrective feedback at the end of the performance. After she applied the suggestion, the students' critical thinking skills was improved. The results of the first open class showed that the average critical thinking skills was 1,8. It means that most of the students had already given suggestion, but they only gave one consideration. Three students did not give any reason. The improvement in the second and the third open classes can be seen from the average score. The average score in the second open

class was 2,1 and the average score in the third open class was 2,2. There were some

students who were able to give more than two reasons/considerations on the problems they discussed.

English teachers should apply teaching strategies, including developing materials and learning activities. Developing materials, in this case, is by selecting the up-date topics that the students are familiar and interested in. Learning activities are activities that engage them to develop and practice to use English for communication in context. The activities promote them actively anticipated, beginning from deciding topics which are suitable with their interest, planning an investigation activity, conducting an investigation to see environmental problems, presenting report, discussing the problems in the class, and providing solution to the problem. Those things will stimulate their critical thinking. The idea is line with Romanowski and Nasser (2012) who state that critical thinking is ability that students can learn. When teachers often train them, they become good critical thinkers.

Conclusion

Critical thinking is a very important skill to face the Industrial Era 4.0. The essential skill that the students must develop is critical thinking. To develop the skill, English teachers can select the student friendly materials. The topics must be suitable with the students' world or knowledge, the language features are in the students' level, and they can apply the language in real situation. Developing materials (selecting student friendly topics) is the way to enhance the students' critical thinking. Besides, through Lesson Study a group of teachers or lecturers can work together to build learning community. Through this program, they can discuss to find solution faced by the teachers.

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