

STORYTELLING: ENHANCING VOCABULARIES FOR CEREBRAL PALSY STUDENTS

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Abstract: This paper reported on a study concerned with teaching vocabulary using storytelling technique in one of SLBs in Bandung. This study aimed to find out the cerebral palsy students' ability in English vocabulary before and after the treatment, and to find out whether storytelling significantly improved English vocabulary of students with cerebral palsy. This study used an experimental method with single subject research with A-B-A design which involved two participants. This study revealed that the storytelling technique increased the students' score in general, but six sessions of treatments still could not yet give significant improvement to the cerebral palsy students' ability in English vocabulary.

Keywords: *Storytelling, Vocabulary, Cerebral palsy*

Introduction

“Every citizen has the right to receive education” (The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in Article 31 Paragraph 1). As mentioned in the constitution, every citizen should get the same education. It means not only for the non-disability students, but also for the students with disability. The way teachers teach the students with disabilities, specifically students with cerebral palsy, should be different from the student with a non-disability condition. Their disorder can mask abilities in other areas. For instance, a child with severe cerebral palsy, who has severe motor impairments, may not have had a chance to develop language,

thinking, or problem-solving skills because he has been unable to practice in activities that promote those skills (Greenspan & Wieder, 1998). Some children with cerebral palsy also may experience cognitive difficulties because the damage has affected multiple areas of the brain. (Gillette, 2009)

Therefore, the teacher has to have a lot of patience when dealing with the students with cerebral palsy. More creativity in practicing and designing the classroom activities is also needed to teach them. Their uniqueness should be one of the teacher's considerations in designing the activities.

Some of the teachers may get trouble in handling the students with

cerebral palsy. It should not be a reason for them to decline and ignore the students with cerebral palsy. It should be the motivation for us to help them. They also need education and need more attention from us, especially the people who are dealing with education.

In teaching English to young learner, there are some techniques that can be used by the teacher to deliver the material on the language subject to the students. One of them is by using storytelling. For learning new vocabularies, the students will understand the correct usage words through learning by context. It is much different to learn new words in the context of a sentence, especially in a story than learning them only from a word list. Then, the students will put them in a long-term memory and become a meaningful learning. (Mehring, 2007, p. 4).

Story itself has already been one of the children's parts since early childhood. They get the opportunities to listen to the stories being read to them, to hold and find as much as possible information about the world through the colourful pictures, until it makes sense

for them as words and sentences. (Loukia, 2006, p.27)

In dealing with children, it will be better if the activity is coherent with the children's world. They have their daily activities that can be taught to their friends as a story. Furthermore, we can create an interesting story without requiring the students to have a lot of physical movement. Those are why the storytelling is chosen in mastering English vocabulary of the students with cerebral palsy.

Literature Review

- **Cerebral Palsy**

“Cerebral palsy is primarily a disorder of movement and posture.” (Sankar & Mundkur, 2005, p.865). The students with cerebral palsy are the students who have a condition of muscle control disorder that causes difficulty with moving and positioning the body (World Health Organization, 2004, p.1). Cerebral refers to the cerebrum, which is the affected area of the brain.

The types of cerebral palsy are classified based on the location and the extent of brain damage, the body parts affected, and the kinds of tone and

movement difficulties present. There are spasticity, dyskinesia, ataxia and mixed (Allen et al., 1983, p.42).

In this study, the participants are classified as spasticity. It is the most common type of cerebral palsy. It affects about 60% of the cerebral palsy population (Haskell & Barrett, 1993). Spastic means stiff muscle. The muscle stiffness causes a slow movement and taut. It is described according to which parts of the body are affected.

Based on Vujinović & Mazurkiević (2013, p.155), possible causes of foreign language learning difficulties of students with disability are memory difficulties, high anxiety, poor productive skills, understanding the usefulness of the language or topic for future goals, feelings connected to learning success, self-confidence, independence, and support from others (teachers, parents, society).

In some cases, cerebral palsy students may experience an arduous communication with each other in the area of speech, facial expression, and gesture (*Communication and Language Development*, 2014). They may also have learning difficulties that

are related to the specific area of learning.

Richardson and Kertoy (2006) stated that “Children with cerebral palsy are at increased risk for language disorders.” It is strengthened by Pennington, Goldbart, and Marshall’s study (as cited in Richardson & Kertoy, 2006) that cerebral palsy children in total 20% have severe communication impairments. They are also hard to catch the information that the teacher gives than non-disability students.

Moreover, Rosenbaum, et al. (2006, p.573) also state that cerebral palsy students’ cognitive also may be affected. It includes attention. Their capacity in interpreting cognitive information may be impaired as well. It is strengthened by Richmond (n.d.), some of the most common cognitive skills that are affected are attention, learning, solving problem, and decision making. It can make the cerebral palsy students difficult to retain information and learn new information, especially in a learning environment. Therefore, as stated by Richardson & Kertoy (2006), children with cerebral palsy should be provided

by the language stimulation program as early as possible.

- **Vocabulary**

Many experts stated that the vocabulary is very important to be mastered since it is the key of communication. “Vocabulary appears to be the heart of language, especially by children.” (Soleimani & Akbari, 2013, p.104) Without knowing the vocabulary, one cannot get the important point of what other people are talking about.

There are many experts who define vocabulary. Lessard-Clouston (2013) stated that “The words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning, the way individual words do.”

Pinter (2006) also explains that vocabulary is the basic part of the language that should be taught in early age. In addition, Lessard-Clouston (2013) mentions that it is the central of teaching learning language because without vocabulary mastery, it is hard for students to understand others or explain their ideas.

Mastering and learning vocabulary is an important role for

students in the learning process of any foreign language learning. Students can achieve a successful communication by having vocabulary mastery which is the main goal of any foreign language learning (Al-Dersi, 2013, p.74). Moreover, Antonacci & O’Callaghan (2012, p.83) also stated that

...vocabulary size in young children is a strong predictor for success in later grades: The larger the children’s vocabularies in the primary grades, the greater their academic achievement in the upper grades.

In learning vocabulary, it is not only dealing with the meaning of vocabulary itself, but also the use of the vocabulary. If the students are having a bunch of vocabulary knowledge, but cannot put it into the suitable place, they cannot use it appropriately. In this case, the teacher should help them and teach vocabulary with the strategies that require the students to learn the language by using the context. (Ferreira, 2007, p.12)

One of the strategies in teaching vocabulary is by using a storytelling method. Therefore, this research used the storytelling method in enhancing students’ vocabulary mastery.

- **Storytelling**

In this research, the treatment used listening comprehension during teacher's delivery of the stories. Miller (2011, p.2) defines storytelling as relating a series of event that give meaning to life, express values, teach the young, and convey culture. It also connects elements in one's own self, experience, and life. Cameron (2001) also stated that storytelling is an oral activity in delivering a sequence of event, to be listened to, and can be participated in. Furthermore, Keshta (2013, p.16) explains that storytelling as a different way of expressing ideas, emotions, and experiences in encouraging young learners to be actively involved in learning a language. The expressions of ideas, emotions, and experiences in the storytelling can be shown livelier with gesture from the storyteller in supporting the story.

The reason of using story is that it is apart from being most of young child's bedtime friends and it can become most of young learner's school time treasure (Loukia, 2006, p.25). Moreover, one important literacy skill is the development of

listening comprehension (Mims, Browder, Baker, Lee, & Spooner, 2009, p.409).

The use of story also can help the students connect their background knowledge to the story itself (Shin, 2007, p.1). Language is picked up easily because the stories contain repetition which makes linguistic input more noticeable (Pinter, 2006). Active participation in the storytelling process increases the fluency of verbal expression in young children, especially when a child is actively involved in a story (Speaker, Taylor, & Kamen, 2004, p.4). The use of storytelling also gives advantages for the students that the teacher brings the 'real' world in the classroom and it is an excellent opportunity for providing the students with examples of authentic language use (Loukia, 2006, p.27).

Methodology

The method used in this research was an experimental method with single subject research. Fraenkel (2012, p.265) states that "The experimental research is the only type of research that attempts to directly

influence a particular variable, and when properly applied, it is the best type of testing hypotheses about cause-and-effect relationship.” This research used A-B-A design. It has three steps, those are: A-1 (baseline-1), B (treatment), A-2 (baseline-2).

This research took place in one of SLBs in Bandung. Two students with cerebral palsy were the participants of this research. The two participants in this research are 13 years old. They are in the eighth grade of junior high school. These cerebral palsy students are classified as cerebral palsy spastic quadriplegia. It means that a whole body is affected. Both of them use wheelchairs, one of them can use his hands little bit to use the wheelchair; another participant should get help from others to operate it.

In the beginning of baseline-1 (A-1), the pre-tests were given to see the prior knowledge of the students with cerebral palsy in considering the choice of the stories that delivered to them. The pre-tests consist of one part. They were oral tests by asking the participants separately the English language of ten vocabularies of nouns and verbs.

The participants were given three pre-tests to see their prior knowledge accurately.

In the treatment sessions (B), the storytelling was given to the participants of this study in six sections. The stories were ‘Where’s Spot?’, ‘The Hungry Dragon’, ‘Where’s the Drug Store?’, ‘Dear Zoo’, ‘The Moon and The Cap’, and ‘Gingerbread Man’. After each of the stories given, the cerebral palsy students were given a test of ten vocabularies that were belonging to the story.

After the treatment of storytelling given, the post-test was held. It was at baseline-2 sessions (A-2). It was also an oral test of asking the English language of ten vocabularies to see whether or not there is an improvement of their ability in mastering the vocabularies even they were no longer in the treatment. The measurement principle of this step was the same as in the baseline-1 sessions.

In every test, there were ten vocabularies that should be tested. There were two points that were highlighted for the students’

assessment; the content and the pronunciation. The choice of vocabularies was based on the story given. There were several vocabularies that were different between pre- and post-test. But they are in the same classification based on 'Word by Word Picture Dictionary' by Molinsky & Bliss (1994).

According to Sunanto (2005, p.121), there are three main points in analyzing the data with single subject research: the creation of graphs; the use of statistical descriptive analysis; and the use of visual analysis. Two steps were used in analyzing the data. There are analyses within particular condition, and between the conditions (Sunanto, 2005, p.121).

Data Presentation and Discussion

This section contains the analysis result and discussion of the

baseline-1, treatment, and baseline-2 from each participant.

The ratio of the average score of both participants as assessed in the content and pronunciation among the three sessions of baseline-1 (A-1), six sessions of treatment (B), and three sessions of baseline-2 (A-2) shown a marked increase. From the first participant, the pre-treatment average score of the content was 2.67. Meanwhile, the post-treatment was 6.38. Moreover, the pre-treatment average score of the pronunciation was 0.67. Nevertheless, the post-treatment was 5.00. From the second participant, the pre-treatment average score of the content was 5.33. Meanwhile, the post-treatment was 8. Moreover, the pre-treatment average score of the pronunciation was 4.67. Nevertheless, the post-treatment was 7.33.

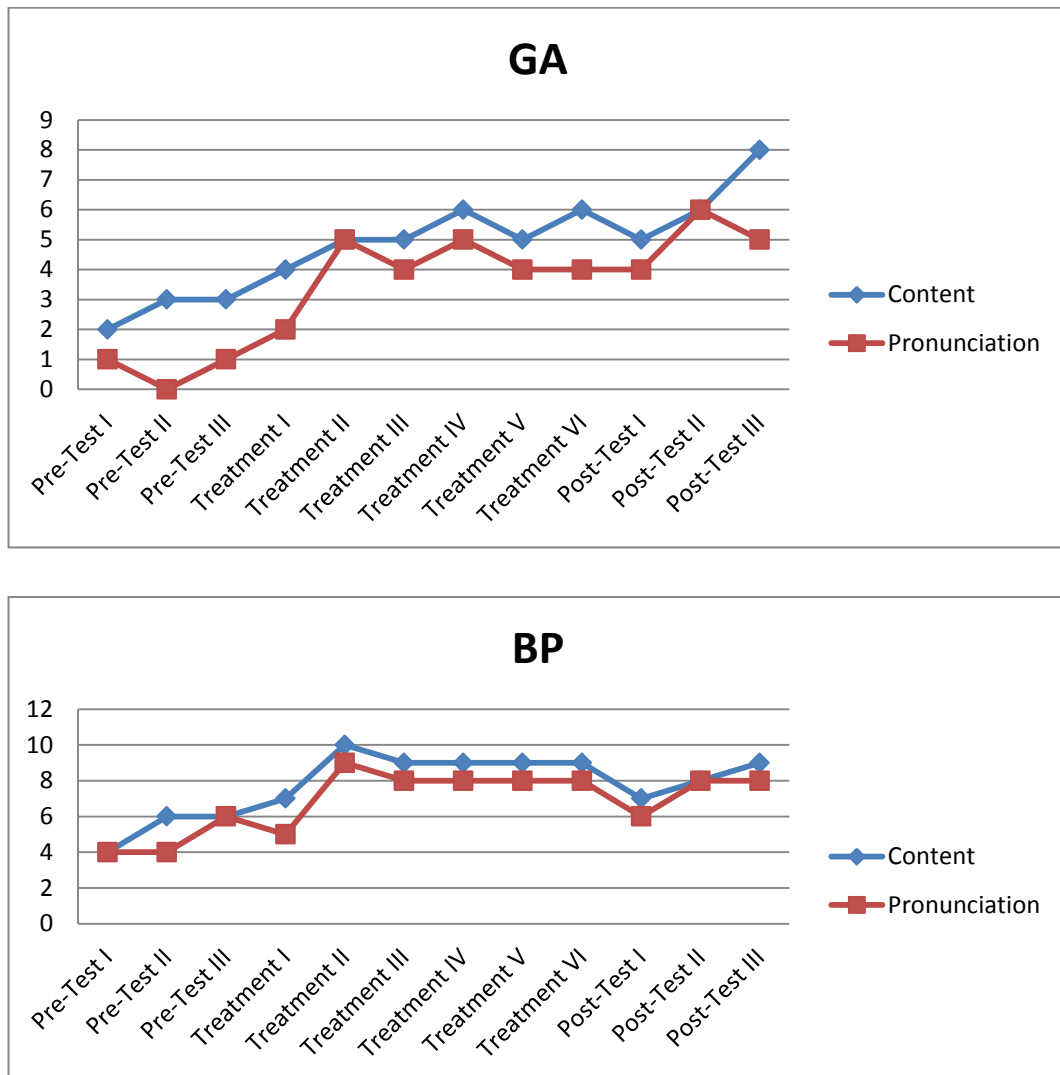


Figure 1. The number of correct answers from the participants.

As displayed in Figure 1, even though there are improvements in general, there are still some decreased scores. Based on the analysis of stability trend, the findings show that it is unstable that means the enhancement of vocabulary mastery for cerebral palsy students by using a

storytelling technique still needs longer time to reach stable developmental change. In other words, the storytelling technique increased the students' score in general, but six sessions of treatment still cannot make the storytelling technique significantly improve

cerebral palsy students' ability in English vocabulary.

Based on the analysis, the unstable results are different for every participant, this is caused by some factors. Firstly, the potential ability of both participants is assumed the same which can influence to the enhancement of vocabulary mastery. But in fact, their prior knowledge of vocabulary mastery is different, where the second participant got better results in baseline-1 than the first participant. Secondly, as mentioned earlier in the review of literature, Rosenbaum, et al., (2007, p.572) stated that cerebral palsy depicts a group of permanent disorders in developmental movement and posture, which happened in the developing fetal or infant brain. The damaged brain of cerebral palsy students is the factor which can possibly affect their learning. Thus, it has also a big possibility for them to have another problem, for instance, lack of concentration.

Based on the observation during the research, their difference is not only from their potential and their brain damage, but also from their

willingness in learning and their autonomy. The second participant inclines to have a bigger problem than the first participant in motoric and movement coordination. This affects the autonomy, where the first participant can operate his wheelchair by himself, but the second participant needs more help from others. However, the second participant has bigger willingness and concentration in learning than the first participant. The first participant can easily get distracted and easily forget what he has just known ten seconds earlier.

Richardson and Kertoy (2006) stated that "Children with cerebral palsy are at increased risk for language disorders." It is strengthened by Pennington, Goldbart, and Marshall's study (as cited in Richardson & Kertoy, 2006) that cerebral palsy children in total 20% have severe communication impairments. They are also hard to catch the information that the teacher gives than non-disability students.

There are some techniques to teach language for cerebral palsy students. During the research, the second participant often helped the

first participant in mastering the vocabularies by using another word that is similar to the target word. It helped the first participant quite significantly. Even in the beginning they did not know the uncommon word of 'wind', they easily remembered that word as they referred to the word 'win' that they had already known. The repetition, movement, sound, and expression helped them to easily memorize the target words as well.

The story makes learning English an enjoyable and attractive process for EFL learners. Stories also help to stimulate students' curiosity about the target culture and language. (Al-Dersi, 2013, p.80) The use of media in supporting teaching and learning process helped the students during listening to the stories as well. The researcher used a variety of media; those are pictures, puppets, flip-flap books, and slide show presentation.

They were more excited as they found that the researcher brought some interesting media that could make them paid attention and got an enjoyable process. When the researcher provided a flip-flap book,

the students were curious and wanted to open the flip-flap book by themselves.

Conclusions

The result of the research shows that storytelling can increase the cerebral palsy students' score of vocabularies. It can be seen from the average score between before and after the treatment from both students as described before. The media, the use of repetition, movement, sound, and expression helped them to easily memorize the target words. The interesting media and stories are the major key to make them fully attracted to the lesson. If the materials are not interesting enough to make them pay attention, they will get easily distracted with other things.

However, the improvement of English vocabulary of the students with cerebral palsy is not significant. Based on the analysis of stability trend, the findings show that it is unstable. The factor is that the enhancement of vocabulary mastery for cerebral palsy students by using a storytelling technique still needs longer time to reach stable

developmental change. Learning vocabulary cannot ever be mastered once fully and done, but something which is continuous and extends across a lifetime (Cameron, 2001; Hiebert & Kamil, 2005). In other words, the storytelling technique increased the students' score in general, but six sessions of treatment still could not make the storytelling technique significantly improve cerebral palsy students' ability in English vocabulary.

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