

A PROPOSED SYLLABUS FOR TEACHING LITERACY TO DEAF STUDENTS

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Abstract

Curriculum is the guidance for the teachers to carry out their tasks in the teaching and learning process. The content of the curriculum should accommodate the students' needs and should be based on their abilities as well. So far, mostly of the English skills in any type of school are taught to the students separately, and they cause the students cannot integrate the skills. Many previous works have only focused on the curriculum for general school students, hence, the works focus on the curriculum for special needs students in form of D/HH students are a bit neglected. The fruitful of teaching literacy to deaf students cannot be ignored; therefore, deafness should never be excused of hampering on literacy. Literacy is defined as the ability to read, write and furthermore it processes the knowledge to be applied into the written one. Learning to read and write is a part of any language development or process. The paper presents an approach of integrating the syllabus of two basic competencies in one standard competency for teaching literacy to deaf students through total physical response. By applying mix-method, the study reveals that an integrating syllabus for reading and writing skills could help deaf students understand the two skills taught easily.

Keywords: Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH), literacy, total physical response

Introduction

Literacy is said to be the ability of people to be able to read, and write. Beside reading, and writing, they should also be able to process the knowledge onto both the written and spoken forms of communication to let people know what are inside their mind.

In most discussions of adult literacy, a distinction is made between literacy as the acquisition of a distinct set of reading and writing skills and literacy as social knowledge. Combining the two perspectives, the definition of literacy is the ability to use knowledge about language, to comprehend and produce or reproduce texts, so that students can become functionally adept members of the society in which they live (Roach, 2011). It could be emphasized that students not only learn the thing, but they also have to use the language in their daily life/situation to make them be able to communicate with others. The Indonesian government has emphasized the important of literacy to be taught to every level of education, started from the early free-school

level, up to the university level in order to make the citizen of Indonesia aware of being literate people.

Teaching English to general school would not be easy and moreover teaching it to special need students. Both the teachers for the general school and special needs school should find the appropriate way of teaching to their students, and it can be neglected that they may have different technique to convey the message from the text.

The curriculum for junior and senior students for both general and special needs highlights the important of teaching kinds of genre to the students, which is part of the English subject. The types of genre taught to the students are: procedure, spoof, hortatory exposition, recount, narrative, descriptive, news item, report, analytical exposition and discussion, review texts, etc. The aim of teaching the genres to the students is to make them be able to understand the meaning of each genre and use the meaning in order to communicate with the

surroundings both in written and oral of communication forms.

The curriculum used by the teacher is school based curriculum; therefore we constructed the lesson plan by integrating reading and writing skills. The actual standard competence is reading skill, but the basic competence has writing skill.

Reading and writing are the two skills in English that have close relation to each other, hence, they cannot be separated, as Paul underlined that they share similar underlying processes and should be taught together, especially in the beginning of literacy stages (2009, p. 267).

Furthermore, he emphasized that "Reading is a constructive, multiple-contextualized entity involving an array of processes such as linguistic, cognitive, social (2009, 273)." It means that reading is a brain activity relates to linguistic, cognitive, and social entity the human should do. Meanwhile, writing can refer to 'either a process or a result: while we are actively engaged in the process, we are said to be 'writing'; and when we have finished, the product (our composition, or text) is also called (a piece of) 'writing' (Crystal 1995, p. 257) in Paul (2009, p. 321).

Teacher of deaf students should really find the appropriate technique of teaching reading at the same time the students would also learn writing. Therefore, the study was carried out to implement the integrated ways of teaching reading and writing to deaf students with different hearing level through total physical response for reading.

Meanwhile for writing task, the teacher applied guided free writing from Lang and Albertini (2002). Guide free writing is a technique of writing in which students are guided to write with specific writing instruction provided in steps.

The study is a case study of seven graders of deaf with different levels of hearing, and it has the aim of applying the two skills taught namely reading and writing to enhance them understand the material well. It took place at one of the deaf schools

in Bandung, with the consideration that the school has got ISO 9001-2008. It also has A for its accreditation, and becomes the school where some students from Nederland came for their teaching practices.

Methodology

The study applies mix method to answer two research questions relate to the students' performance in literacy (reading & writing) and the construction of the syllabus for English subject.

Creswell and Clark (2007, p. 11) underlined that 'A researcher mixes quantitative and qualitative approaches to research throughout a study. Both qualitative and quantitative question are posed, both forms of data collected and analyzed, and a quantitative and qualitative interpretation is made.

The students were given task with the same topic for reading and writing. The topics discussed were: Shopping list and Favorite fruit and vegetables. Both students' tasks were assessed using the reading rubric for short answer from Rose, et al. (2008) which consist of and writing rubric from Hammill & Larsen (1996). The components assessed in writing were: content and organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. Meanwhile, the qualitative data were collected from observation field notes, and the interview result.

Findings and Discussion

Finding refers to the data results from the study to answer the two research questions aforementioned. In the teaching and learning process, the teacher was suggested to integrate the syllabus with the standard competency of understanding the meaning of functional written text and simple monolog/essay in descriptive and procedure texts to interact with the surrounding environment.

The basic competency is integrated competencies for reading in which the students should be able to use the meaning



of short functional text. Meanwhile for reading, they have to be able to use meaning from short functional text; such as birthday card, shopping list, etc. For writing, the students should be able to express meaning in written functional text accurately, and clearly in order to be able to communicate with their surroundings.

Based on the type of the score the students got, the writer decided to put the score range into: 90-up (excellent), 81-89 (very good), 70-80 (good), and 60-69 (fair), lower score than 60 is considered poor. The ranges are for both reading and writing skills.

To carry out the task, the teacher explained the material: 'My Shopping List', and gave more attention to the students. After applying the integrated syllabus and the lesson plan, the students' scores of reading task were analyzed statistically and the first reading task scores are: one student got 80, three of them got 78, one student got 72, and two students score below 50. However, the students' writing scores are bad compare to reading score. Two students got 90, one student got 77, and the rest got lower than 60.

In the second task the students were given topic entitled *Part of the Body* but the teacher applied the same technique but adding TPR in her activity. Surprisingly, their reading scores were better than before in which four of them got above 90, two of them got above 80, and one of them got 75.

The teacher was still eager to know about the students' improvement and she had the students discuss another material that was close to their life. The material discussed was 'My family'. The third score the students got from the third task is as follows.

Reading score: one student gets 100, two students get 90, another three students get 80, and one student get 40. The writing score would be: one student gets 100, two students get above 90, one student gets 80, and the rest three students get score below the school standard. All of the statistics

analysis could be seen from table 1 until table 6 below.

Table 1. Students' Reading Scores

No	Name	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Average
1	#R1	78	96	86	87
2	#R2	78	96	93	89
3	#R3	80	86	100	89
4	#R4	72	93	90	85
5	#R5	18	82	80	60
6	#R6	78	96	80	85
7	#R7	48	75	40	54

Table 2. SPSS Output Reading Score

Descriptive Statistics										
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std.	Variance	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Nilai01	7	62.00	18.00	80.00	452.00	64.5714	23.37276	546.286	-1.722	.794
Nilai02	7	21.00	75.00	96.00	624.00	89.1429	8.33524	69.476	-.886	.794
Nilai03	7	60.00	40.00	100.00	568.00	81.2857	19.55091	382.238	-1.919	.794
Valid N (listwise)	7									

Table 3. Inferential Output (Uji z)

Name	Task1	Task2	Task3
#R1	0.57454	0.82267	0.24113
#R2	0.57454	0.82267	0.59917
#R3	0.66011	-0.37706	0.95721
#R4	0.31783	0.46275	0.44572
#R5	-1.99255	-0.85695	-0.06576
#R6	0.57454	0.82267	-0.06576
#R7	-0.70901	-1.69676	-2.11170

Table 4. Students' Writing Scores

No	Name	Task1	Task2	Task3	Average
1	#R1	90	93	97	93
2	#R2	53	70	17	47
3	#R3	93	97	100	97
4	#R4	33	77	93	68
5	#R5	33	83	20	45
6	#R6	77	70	53	67
7	#R6	40	67	80	62

Table 5. SPSS Output Writing Score

Descriptive Statistics										
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std.	Variance	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Nilai01	7	62.00	18.00	80.00	452.00	64.5714	23.37276	546.286	-1.722	.794
Nilai02	7	21.00	75.00	96.00	624.00	89.1429	8.33524	69.476	-.886	.794
Nilai03	7	60.00	40.00	100.00	568.00	81.2857	19.55091	382.238	-1.919	.794
Valid N (listwise)	7									

Table 6. Inferential Output (Uji z)/Writing



Name	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3
#R1	1.14135	1.13242	0.87177
#R2	-0.25964	-0.80715	-1.35742
#R3	1.25495	1.46974	0.95537
#R4	-1.01694	-0.21685	0.76031
#R5	-1.01694	0.28913	-1.27383
#R6	0.64911	-0.80715	-0.35428
#R7	-0.75189	-1.06014	0.39807

The study was conducted to answer the two research questions mentioned above that relate to the syllabus and the students' performance in literacy. Based on the score for reading, it could be confirmed that the syllabus applied has given significant result, although not all of the seven students get good score. The means of the three reading activities respectively are: 64, 89, and 81. It means that the syllabus is considered good to increase the students understanding on reading. However, for writing skill that has average of 59, 79, and 65 could be said it is fair.

The observation notes figure out that the teaching activity by integrating the skills gives benefit to the teacher when s/he can patiently assist the students with their problems. It can be neglected that teaching the skills to deaf students is difficult. Therefore, the teacher did the TPR to help them understand the material. Piaget (1950) wrote down that "The conceptual connection between the students' subject will form the scheme, so that they will acquire the integrity and unity of the knowledge they had learned." Indeed, the integrated syllabus gives good result.

The interview and observation field notes are used to support the finding. From the observation notes, the teacher has to be very patient since it is not easy to teach the deaf students literacy; even it is very short essay. They need many interactions with both their friends and the teacher, especially they need to be exposed to sign or spoken language as it is emphasized by Swanwick & Marschack who said that "... language development of deaf students depends on frequent, consistent, and accessible communication, regardless whether it's

through signed or spoken language ..." (2010, p. 119). In line with Swanwick & Marschack, Paul (2009 & 2011, p. 2) depicts that "...It is important for students to have "language comprehension" skills for through-the-air discussion....This through-the-air level of comprehension is critical for developing "print" (or any captured form) comprehension ...". The quotations underline that by involving students with both physical and mind would help them understand the material easily.

From the result of the interview, six students said that learning English, especially reading and writing are difficult to follow. In reading they like only doing multiple choice, since they need only to choose the answer. They also confess that they do not like to write long sentences neither study structure. The writer also asked the weak students why they got lower score than others. The answers are: they do not like English since it is hard to study nor to write.

One of the seven students that is #R3 was able to do his work better than his friends. His score in both reading and writing are excellent. Especially in writing he is able to write essay using some idioms. From the interview, he said that he studies at home with the help of his brother & father who also deaf. This is in accordance with what Moores (2006, p. 45) says: "Deafness, per se, has no effect on the acquisition of literacy skills. A deaf child has the same intellectual capacity as a hearing child.

Conclusion

Teaching English literacy to deaf is not a simple work to do, since there are many things to consider. The teacher has to be able to construct an appropriate syllabus that could cope with the students' difficulties, and help them solve the problem in understanding the materials taught. The implementation of the integrated syllabus of two skills by using total physical response gives valuable things to the teacher, although the teacher needs to give very extra attention to the students, both in explaining

reading and writing materials. The patience of the teacher is needed, since s/he is the one who understands the students' ability.

The students are helped since they have to read and act out the texts they study, and it becomes the better way for them to remember what the texts are about. One problem that could be staying unsolved is the way the students learn at home, since the teacher cannot monitor their progress. However, this study is a case study that cannot be generalized, and the syllabus is needed to be applied to any different level to see whether it will work or not.

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