

Teaching Speaking with Gossiping in the Period of Pandemic

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Abstract

The mastery of speaking is important in English language learning, even in the period of pandemic, due to the outbreak of COVID 19. Teacher should use interesting method to keep students engage in the teaching and learning process. One of methods in teaching speaking is by using gossiping. The aims of this research is to describe the application of gossiping as one of the techniques in the teaching speaking which focuses on intermediate level students. This research will explain: 1) gossiping and its advantages, 2) topics to be gossiped in speaking English activity, 3) the application of gossiping in teaching speaking. Gossiping as a talk with inspiration and emotion has three major function: a) As a mechanism of information exchange, b) As an entertainment, c) As a portal to brings groups together and d) As a way to be influential. Topics to be gossiped in speaking can be someone famous or popular. The conclusion shows that there is an example of teaching procedure in speaking English using gossiping and it can be a way to keep students engage in the process of teaching speaking, thus it an improve the students mastery in speaking skill.

Keywords: *gossiping, pandemic, teaching speaking, speaking activity*

Introduction

The Covid-19 or Coronavirus Disease was declared as pandemic by the WHO (World Health Organization). It became a global public health threat (Dwinantoaji & DW, 2020). All of the education systems had moved into online learning. It was impossible to get proper education process in the period of pandemic (Ariawan & Malang, 2020). However, the demand of a good teaching and learning process is still high, especially in English learning. With the

reshaped of many aspects of teaching and learning, students faced difficulties to cope with process. In online learning, teachers could not fully control the students. Virtual meeting using application like Zoom or Google Classroom was indeed a good way to promote teaching and learning process in the period of pandemic. But, sometimes students just stay there in front of the camera without fully paying attention to what their teachers said.

Speaking as one important skill for EFL learners should be mastered well even

in the period of pandemic, where the teacher and students could not meet face to face. Most students are good in theory, yet bad in practice (Wijaya, 2018) . Whereas Richards (2008) explained that speaking skill mastery in English is a priority for many second-language or foreign-language learners. In this case, teachers had to find more interesting method to keep students engage with the online process of teaching and learning, so that the transfer of knowledge between teacher and students could run well. Here, the writer offers one fun way to teach speaking by using gossiping.

The view of Mino Alemi and Parisa Daftarifard' article entitled *Pedagogical Innovations in Language Teaching Methodologies* [Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 1(6), 2010] was used as the main base that gossiping can be implemented in teaching and learning. They concerned to the revolutionary of pedagogical innovation that had expanded rapidly over years. Alemi and Daftarifard took a more interest in edu-sociocultural-technological perspective to address the potentially important issues in language teaching in the future. Both writers could be categorized as the expertise in English language teaching. The former was a PH.D. candidate of TEFL at AllamehTabata'I University and had

published many articles in international journals and more than ten English textbooks for GE and ESP courses. The later had primary research interest concerns EFL reading, testing, and second language acquisition.

Responding to the inadequacy of conventional methods of language teaching in education system, Alemi and Daftarifard (2010) reviewed that many language teachers have moved their foundation to post method era. This era had greater emphasis on the important role of techniques and technologies. Kumaravadivelu (2003) proposed the concept of post method pedagogy. It referred to a reaction to “method as a means of marginality” in the sense that pedagogy should take a bottom-up process to give teachers power to build their own practices in the classroom. It is believed that in post method era, teachers should be empowered to help learners critically reflected on the social and historical conditions that have shaped their cultural lives (Alemi & Daftarifard, 2010).

In their article, Alemi and Daftarifard (2010) have reviewed many different predictions about the future of language learning and instruction. They started their discussion smoothly by defining post method era, providing macro strategies needed, and proposing four

pedagogical innovation procedures that could be applied in the teaching and learning process, those included: gossiping as teaching activity, game play either through CALL or Face to Face Teaching Practice, using E-pet as Scoring E-portfolio and more ESP and Workplace Integration. This is helpful for language teachers to adopt it in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, this research aims to adopt gossiping as an activity in teaching speaking.

Methods

This research will review gossiping as an activity in teaching speaking. In order to do that, the writer tried to answer the following questions:

- (1) What is gossiping and what are the advantages of gossiping in speaking?
- (2) What to be gossiped about in speaking English activity?
- (3) How to apply gossiping in speaking English activity?

Results and Discussion

Gossiping and its Advantages in Speaking

Gossiping is one of the human ability that tends to be done simultaneously and continuously. It is one of the most common types of discourse

people do for ages. Toffelmire (2013) states that Biologists analyzed sample human conversations and found out that about 60% of time was spent gossiping about relationships and personal experiences. For further, she argued that the word gossip first meant *godparents* or *familiar acquaintance*, it refers to someone who told of a family's news and development. Now, it is defined (Toffelmire, 2013) as rumor or talk of personal sensation or intimate nature or as idle talk or rumor, especially about the personal or private affairs of others.

Talking about gossiping may bring controversy in our life. "Gossip can be bad, but we tend to overlook that it can be good as well," says social psychologist Robb Willer (Song, 2012). Everything has its own advantage and disadvantages, and so does gossiping. Whether it is good or not is actually depending on our purpose in doing gossiping. When there is nothing to speak, gossiping can stimulate us to speak. As being studied by Professor of Psychology, Frank T. McAndrew (Toffelmire, 2013), humans love hearing and talking about other humans. Thus, gossiping can function as a stimulator for others to speak.

Foster (2004) implied four major functions of gossiping: a) As a mechanism

of information exchange, b) As an entertainment, c) As a portal to brings groups together and d) As a way to be influential. First function states that gossiping can be used as mechanism of information exchange, in teaching speaking, teacher can insert information related to grammar or pronunciation through gossiping. This way, students will feel relax to achieve the information. Secondly, as something fun, gossiping can make students fully involved in the speaking activity. Third function, mentions that gossiping can brings group together, this means that by applying gossiping in teaching speaking, all kinds of students, be it active or usually passive, will work together. It can be a bridge between active speaker and passive speaker. Last function shows that gossiping can be influential, it provides norms that might be agreed by the students. In this part, teacher should carefully select the topic to be gossiped about.

In accordance with the advantages of gossiping, Baw (2002) inserted three types of involvement in conversation: (1) self-involvement of the speaker, (2) interpersonal involvement, and (3) being involved in what is being talked about. The purpose of gossiping activity is the involvement of all the students to speak fluently by making use their feeling and

emotion. It contributes to a fully involvement all of the students.

Moreover, Ismail (2017) states that gossiping can bring enthusiasm. For further, he explained that enthusiasm is not just a figure of speech, it is a vital force that people can exploit and use with profit. In speaking, it is an important aspect to bring students altogether to engage in speaking activity. If students feel enthusiastic on a certain topic, it can be made sure that they will follow the process and actively involved along the process from the beginning until the end. Hopefully, teaching speaking using gossiping as an entertaining method is able to make students engage in the teaching and learning process, this way the mastery of speaking skill can be improved.

In conclusion, the idea of gossiping is actually to talk with inspiration and emotion. To talk critically and disparagingly about people who are not present. Instead of seeing gossiping as a wasting time activity, it can be actually seen as a valuable source to understand and get along better with those around us. This discussion does not promote that the students have to gossip all the time. It merely about utilizing gossiping as the most frequent used activity done by people in the teaching and learning process to

make students be actively involved in speaking in a fun way.

Topics to be gossiped in Speaking Activity

Generally, it may be humiliating if the students are asked to gossip face to face about their own classmates or those whom they personally know. One possible case, in order not to hurt someone whom they personally know they might exchange any angry words into the positive one. Consequently, the gossiping activity will not run well. The students will not be able to express themselves freely. In a contrary, using an imaginary person may not produce inspired gossip, as “meaning and mental images come only when connection is made with the learners’ own world of experience” (Lindstromberg, 1990). Meaning that it will be easier for the students to create meaning and mental images in their brains through something real and familiar to them.

Responding to the globalized era, it is now feasible for us to access anything on earth. It will be easier to gather data to be gossiped about. The person chosen to be gossiped about may be depended on the students’ taste, they may be a singer or idol, athlete, movie star, leader of a country, and so forth. Baw (2002) states

that if the learners are mature and understanding, the person to be gossiped about may even be chosen from the class. This may be a bit risky to be done in Indonesian context, since it possible to arouse conflict among members of the class.

Thus, to make the students more enthusiastic in doing this activity, it is recommended to gossip both local and world famous celebrities, can be singer or movie star. The students may talk about their hobby, relationship and so forth. Talking about celebrities’ lifestyle and scandals would be definitely more enjoyable and it would lead to involvement of all students. It will enable them to express themselves more easily due to the knowledge they already have about these personalities.

Moreover, talking about someone famous and scandalous will engross students’ interest to get involved in it. When students get along together into a conversation that they interest, it will strengthen their relationship. The act of gossiping involving talking, listening, sharing secrets and stories bonds them together and helps them to form friendships and distinctive group identities. Subsequently students’ shyness will get lower if they feel save to gather with their

comfort discourse. Another benefit of gossiping someone famous is that it teaches us lesson. Most of us relate better to stories than to raw data (Toffelmire, 2013). Gossip is a form of storytelling, and an interpersonal folklore which can be drawn as our ancestors' heritage. Instead of saying "Once upon a time" we say, in gossiping this opening might be more engrossing "Did you hear about her?" By hearing and sharing these stories, the social norms and conventions happening around us will be learned. Bad act of famous celebrities will be humiliated, while good act that reflect a certain norm will be appreciated. Thus, it can inspire students to act well.

In addition, the students can also gossip about fictional character (Baw, 2002). In this part, watching movie together is fun to be done. Teacher can first find out what movie that the students like, it may be romantic, comedy or even thriller. A controversial movie is also interesting to be gossiped about. It can arouse students' interest. The students can gossip about the character in the movie or even the real life of the movie star in that movie. For promoting reading habit, teacher can also make use of literary works. The students are asked to read a short story, then they can gossip about the main characters. It will be better if the

story concerns human emotions such as love or betrayal. The subject matter of something emotional is engrossing (Baw, 2002).

The most important think in gossiping activity is the involvement of all the students. It is an activity that most people do in their daily life. With engrossing topic to be gossiped about that also including emotional or feeling, students will altogether share their feeling about certain people. Instead of teaching how to speak, gossiping activity is helpful to make students speak naturally by involving their feeling.

A Sample of Gossiping Activity in Speaking

This part offering a sample of how to apply gossiping in speaking activity. Level used in this sample below is for intermediate students. The activities are done in group for two rounds, the first round the groups are created on the basis of friendship among the students, and then the second round groups will be made randomly. The object to be gossiped about in this activity is one of world famous celebrity that is very familiar to the students. It was hoped that all the students can gather along and engross their interest to speak. The gossiping activities are presented in the following:

- Pre-teaching Activities
 1. Explain to the students the purpose of the activity and get them to make a group of three or four depending on the amount of the students
 2. Give the students a small piece of picture containing 3 different topics to be gossiped for each group member, it contains pictures of famous celebrity and the gossip items. (example: see figure 1)
 3. Ask each of students to speak and listen to the gossip items in their groups
- Whilst-teaching Activities
 4. Form a new group of three randomly
 5. Ask students to start gossiping by using the information that they have perceived from the first group without looking at the information
- Post-teaching Activity
 6. Ask students to go back to their first round group

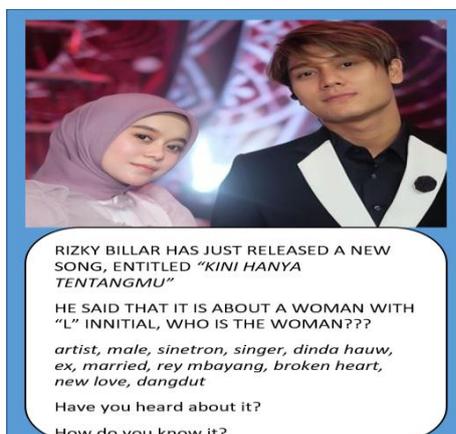


Figure 1 : Example of Gossip Item

7. Lastly, ask each group formed in the first round group to start preparing a short oral presentation about their gossip item, for example they can start by saying “How I understand ... (the person they are gossiped about)”

Conclusion

There are three aspects discussed in this research. The first is what is gossiping. It shows the definition of gossiping and its advantages in the teaching and learning process. There are four major function of gossiping, they are: a) As a mechanism of information exchange, b) As an entertainment, c) As a portal to bring groups together and d) As a way to be influential. The second is topics to be gossiped about in speaking. The most entertaining thing to be gossiped is someone famous or celebrities. The last is teaching procedure. It offers a sample of teaching speaking by using gossiping as an activity in the process of teaching and learning. In conclusion, gossiping as something fun can be implemented as an activity in speaking. Especially in the period of pandemic, teaching speaking in a fun way is crucially needed to make students engage to the teaching and learning process.

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