

A Case Study in EFL Teaching and Learning Process for Students with Visual Impairment: Understanding Needs and Necessities

Silfia Asning Tias
English Department
Universitas Negeri Surabaya
Surabaya, Indonesia
silfiasningtias@unesa.ac.id

Abstract—Visual impairment comes in many different classifications. Nevertheless, less evidence found in research conducted in teaching and learning of foreign languages with these group of students. In addition, the challenges on how to customize the needs of the individual to meet the requirements of the course are real. This case study research focuses on understanding needs and overcoming challenges during the teaching and learning activities of one student with visual impairment in public speaking course. As the initial stage to understand the needs, the need analysis were conducted to the student which later was utilized to design teaching strategies to meet the necessities. The research methodology employed for this case study research is qualitative method, ranging from observation and interviews. Data analysis is narrative analysis in a qualitative approach. The findings affirm that the accessibility of assistive technologies improve the quality of teaching and learning for students with visual impairment, such as an application of JAWS to provide voice over the text and other assistive technologies as well as low tech technology that help her needs. Limitation is applied as it is a single case study research.

Keywords— *visual impairment; teaching strategies; EFL teaching and learning process.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Visual impairment has several categories. According to World Health Organization (WHO) [1], which quoted the data from 2006 The International Classification of Diseases (1-10), that vision function is categorized into four, i.e, normal vision, moderate vision impairment, severe vision impairment and blindness. As mentioned in the statement, moderate and severe vision impairment are commonly called as low vision. The subject of the study belongs to the category of severe low vision which develops into blindness towards the current state. It is stated

in interview that her sight condition at the moment comes to blindness category and this gradually happen over the course few years.

Public Speaking course requires a complex process of teaching and learning activities. First, during the introduction of the course, students needs to be able to find online and offline resources to support their statements, in terms of statistics, supporting evidence and other related data. Secondly, it needs the ability to work with speech matrix, a tool for students to jot down ideas in a structural way. The next stage is composing a speech text that demands a comprehensive statement which is supported by evidences. The last stage is on speech delivery, which basically performing the text in front of the audience. This whole cycle is intended to enable students to do extemporaneous speech which is divided into four types, i.e demonstrative, informative, persuasive and impromptu speech. Students who take the course needs to be able to fulfill the required learning objectives standards as stated in the university study handbook. Furthermore, students need to be able to construct and to deliver public speeches to the audience based on the speech types. At the earlier stage of the class, movie clips and videos of how public speech were presented. This is to enable the students to illustrate on the expectation of the course.

The subject of the study has been explained in annex 1. Despite her nearly blind condition, the fact that computer software helps her a lot with the academic activities is encouraging. The use of assistive technology has greatly assisted her daily to do academic work although she admitted that the struggle to keep up was unavoidable. From the interview, she expressed her anxiety in long speech delivery that might require her to check on notes constantly.

Intelligence does not require sight, however, educational challenges are real. In order to reach their

potential academic, challenges of being visually impaired, such as, moving around the classroom, reading, and operating standard educational tool need to be addressed. As the demand of public speaking course, the student needs to be able to construct and to perform the speech to the audience. In fact, students with sight impairment will find composing and delivering long speech challenging. Therefore, it is important to find out on the needs of visually impaired student to support her in composing and delivering speech text in the public speaking class. This study tries to investigate how the wide array of assistive technology available can help the students to work in the complex process of public speaking course. Moreover, what effective strategies to employ with regards to speech delivery on each type of the speech text is found out. Since this study is a case study of a single subject, the result is limited to be generalised in other context or situation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

For language teaching and learning, it is widely agreed that comprehensible input theory by Krashen [2], is the key to language acquisition. In addition, we are also aware that negotiation of meaning and social interaction is crucial in the language acquisition process [3]. Donley [4] asserted that despite the challenges that blind and other visually impaired students encounter, they are able to acquire the language through input and social interaction although less comprehensible compare to their sighted classmates, such as linguistics input from the assigned reading material or from the nonverbal cues as well as the other teaching aids, like film or video, during the course.

Naidu affirmed [5] in his study to incorporate more corporeality in the classroom, which means that teachers and visually disabled students have to communicate effectively so that students will not feel left behind. This is crucial, as he further explained by quoting one of the participants' statement that their inability to see is not related to their inability to learn.

III. METHOD

A. *Setting and Participants*

The reports of observation and interviews of subject of the study were generated in this paper. As a case study research, it involved one particular subject in a speaking course context. It attempts to work on the challenges met during the course and strategies to overcome the situation.

To fully understand her visual impairment condition, researcher provided the elaborated story on her situation, which is provided unedited in annex.

B. *Data Collection Technique and Analysis*

The researcher conducted open ended interviews with a single student with visual impairment in order to find out the preliminary data on how to facilitate her learning in the public speaking course. The interviews were done in the beginning of the course, during the course and along the

development of the situation she was in. Observation during the course was also employed to generate ideas of strategies that could work effectively during the subject. As part of the primary data, field notes generated from observation activity were used to verify information gathered in the participant interviews. The other form of data were also collected from the participant to validate the interview data. All the data were then analysed.

To conform with research ethics, informed consent was obtained after carefully explaining the study and its objectives. It is clearly mentioned that she was free to withdraw at any point.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the several interview sessions on pre and mid session regarding her sight condition, it is confirmed that she develops from severe visual impaired or called low vision to nearly totally blind. As she described that she used to be able to see screen with magnifier tools or see closely to the screen. It is very unfortunate that at the moment, she could only see glare of lights from the screen, both mobile or notebook screen. Therefore, braille printed material will help.

During the interview, she also mentioned that since her vision was lost when she was a teenager, she did not have a proper training on reading with braille. Moreover, with her emotional turmoil for more than 5 years to accept her condition, she started learning on how to read braille with private tutor. This was due to restriction of age in formal school, which did not allow her to continue her education in formal institution. She can read braille in a limited knowledge. Thus, reading the printed material, even when it is in braille is limited although still possible. With the coursebook, she needed to find another tool to enable her to work with the material.

The modern technology is undoubtedly support the students with disability to work with their study. There are tools or software that can be used by students with vision impaired to be able to listen to the text. Many of these software, unfortunately is not free. Many of them is even with high cost, such as Eye-Pal Reader or Dragon Naturally speaking. The two mentioned tools will enable the text converted into sound or speech. This will help the participant to listen to the text. With the whole process, she came up with the software named JAWS that supports the text to sound conversion. Although this software does not come for free, her community can provide her with one that is installed in her computer. This way, she can cope with the reading assignments to produce a speech draft. She worked on her computer using the PDF file of the coursebook and wrote her presentation matrix and speech draft afterwards.

The challenges continued with the needs to deliver the speech in 3-5 minutes long. Her ability to memorize text was remarkable. However, with a long text, she came up with using a head set to give her clue on her speech text. In the Demonstrative text, she presented on how to

operate the screen reader software in the computer. She provided power point presentation to give ideas to the audience on stages of managing the software installation to working with it. As she utilized the software very well, her presentation was smooth and successfully delivered. The fact that she was unable to point on detail information in the slides, she managed to provide a resourceful information in her speech.

Moving to the next type of speech, she was struggling with the embody tone, gesture and facial expression in delivering the persuasive speech. The nature of persuasive speech is to persuade or to convince the audience to accept or follow the speaker's ideas. This speech might need illustration, in terms of images, statements or any means, to support the claim. In this type of speech, the presenter needs to incorporate tone, gesture, facial expression and body language, in which visually impaired students are having issues with. A study by Sankey[6], dated back in 1938, regarding teaching speech to the blind is very much relevant up to now. She highlighted that the problems of teaching speech to vision impaired students were restrictedly body movement that resulted in stiffness which inhibit the oral and pantomimic expression. To overcome this issues, she consulted her work many times and practiced which was supervised and recorded by her peer. Shorter lines and advetorial types of persuasive were chosen for effective delivery in her context. During her performance, she used her notebook to support her. As suggested by Donley [4], for effective teaching and learning, conferring the students periodically to check how she progress during the course will beneficial. And indeed, that it boost up her confidence towards speech delivery. It was rewarding to see her on stage and had all the confidence to conquer her fear and deliver the speech.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Challenges towards teaching English with students with visual impairment is real. Thus, we need to take into account their needs, perspective and abilities. Developing strategies to meets their needs and building close rapport to build her selfconfidence will enhance her performance.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My deepest appreciation is to Nurul Hikmah who is willing to work with me for understanding needs for visually impaired

students and has made this teaching exceptionally unforgettable experience. This study is also possible because of the support of Belmawa funding for research in inclusive education.

REFERENCES

- [1] WHO. (2018) Blindness and vision impairment. [Online]. Available: <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment>
- [2] S. Krashen, and Principles, Practice in Second Language Acquisition. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982.
- [3] L. S. Vygotsky, Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- [4] P. R. Doonley, "A touch of...class!," The Canadian Modern Language Review, vol. 59, no. 2, pp. 302-305, Dec. 2002.
- [5] M. Naidu, "Seeing with the blind: teaching and learning with differently-abled students." International Journal of Educational Sciences, vol. 7, no.2, pp. 349-355, Sept. 2014.
- [6] A. M. Sankey, "Problem in teaching speech to the blind," Quartely Journal of Speech, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 77-83, Feb. 2014.