

APPLYING WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH AND PUBLIC SPEAKING ACTIVITY IN SMART EKSELENSIA HIGH SCHOOL

Lisa Rosaline

Smart Ekselensia Senior High School, Bogor, Indonesia
E-mail: lisa_rosaline@yahoo.co.uk

Amru Asykari

Smart Ekselensia Senior High School, Bogor, Indonesia
E-mail: amru_asykari@gmail.com

APA Citation: Rosaline, L. & Asykari, A.. (2013). Applying whole language approach and public speaking activity in smart ekselensia high school. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 1(2), 151-158

Received: 06-04-2013

Accepted: 30-04-2013

Published: 01-06-2013

Abstract: Whole Language Approach (WLA) is the approach to learn language that focus on the real communication, reading and writing in the fun learning environment context (Richard and Rodgers 2001). The teachers of WLA believe that the students should learn the materials in unity. This study involved 102 of 3rd to 5th year grade students of Smart Ekselensia High School, Bogor, Indonesia. The public English speaking activity has been held for 6 months. The public speaking can be in form of storytelling, general speech, and religious speech. Before the students performed the public speaking, they had to prepare the material such as a story or a book summary. Instrument used to obtain the data were questionnaires and interviews aimed at gathering statistical data and open responses about what students think and feel about the public speaking activity. Based on the findings, basically students can improve their four language skills although it still cannot be seen directly. According to the result of the interview, some students suggest the whole language approach and public speaking be continued. They also suggest the frequency be added more in order to encourage them to speak English and create a good English environment.
Keywords: *Whole Language Approach, Public Speaking, Competence Standard Curriculum.*

INTRODUCTION

Ken Goodman is one of the educators most often associated with the term "whole language" and one of the earliest and principle advocates of the whole language approach as we know it today. Goodman (1986) described whole language as a "top-to-bottom," rather than a "bottom-up," view of language learning, a view that does not break language into bits and pieces. Language is taught in real and natural contexts, and thus, language learning is easier and more interesting and relevant to the learner.

Whole Language Approach (WLA) is the approach to learn language that focus on the real communication, reading and writing in the fun learning environment context (Richard and Rodgers, 2001). This approach was popular in the beginning of 1980 to 2000 in America. The teachers of WLA believe that the students should learn the materials in unity, without separated them to small parts. For example, rather than teaching the word structure, it is better to ask the students to read a story book, summarizes it and retells it in front

of others. The special thing from this approach is that the learning material is something authentic such as a story book, general books and also articles from newspaper. Another characteristic of this approach is that the students have freedom to choose the material for their learning activity, they are expected to be independent learners who are responsible with their own learning progress. Language learning involves risk, and students should be encouraged to try and try again if they fail; and that form follows function in language development and not vice versa. The teacher is a facilitator and also a supporter to support collaborative process among students (Setiyadi, 2008).

The whole language movement originated with elementary educators. How can these principles apply to the teaching of adults learning English? A teacher in an adult literacy program can incorporate a whole language approach first by recognizing that most adults already know a great deal about how language works. Even though they may not be able to read or write proficiently in English, adult ESL students come to literacy programs with many years of experiences that have developed their world knowledge, oral language, and reading and writing and have shaped their views of what literacy is and how and why it is learned. A senior high school teacher can incorporate a whole language approach first by recognizing that most students have already known a great deal about how language works. Even though they may not be able to read or write proficiently in English, Senior high school students come to literacy programs with many years of experiences that have developed their world knowledge, oral language, and reading and writing and have shaped their views of what literacy is and how

and why it is learned.

One of the first steps a whole language teacher should take is to share with learners his or her views on how language is learned. The notion that literacy is functional and contextual should be emphasized, as many adults come to the classroom with the notion that literacy is an academic hurdle to overcome rather than a tool for larger goals or everyday needs. Finally, learners should be encouraged to take risks and develop their literacy in ways that are relevant to their personal situations. This elaboration of assumptions about whole language opens the way for the teacher to introduce activities such as journal and letter writing, the language experience approach (see Taylor, 1992), and story writing and publishing, rather than focusing on drills and grammar exercises.

Some educators have learners write personal stories reflecting their experiences--sorrows, joys, problems, and memories--and publish them to use as a basis for additional reading, writing, and discussion activities (see Peyton, 1991, for examples). Authentic reading that is meaningful and of interest to learners is also part of the whole language approach. As Smith (1983) points out, "The only way to make learning to read easy is to make reading easy" (p.23). By this he means that students learn to read only by reading and focusing on meaning and not primarily focusing on words, pronunciation, speed, or accuracy.

Public speaking is the act of speaking on a particular subject in front of a group of people with the intention of influencing, entertaining or informing the listeners. In order to be a good orator one must be able to influence people, change their opinion, and transform the emotion of the listeners as pertaining to that particular subject. ¹

Public speaking is the process of speaking to a group of people in a structured, deliberate manner intended to inform, influence, or entertain the listeners. In public speaking, as in any form of communication, there are five basic elements, often expressed as "*who* is saying *what* to *whom* using what *medium* with what *effects*?" The purpose of public speaking can range from simply transmitting information, to motivating people to act, to simply telling a story. Good orators should be able to change the emotions of their listeners, not just inform them. Public speaking can also be considered a discourse community. Interpersonal communication and public speaking have several components that embrace such things as motivational speaking, leadership/personal development, business, customer service, large group communication, and mass communication. Public speaking can be a powerful tool to use for purposes such as motivation, influence, persuasion, informing, translation, or simply entertaining.

More over, Senior High School students are encourage to be able to develop their four language skills based on Competence Standard and School Based Curriculum (KTSP) which are listening, reading, writing and speaking. By applying whole language approach, it is expected that the students can practice their reading and writing skills independently. Language is taught in real and natural contexts, and thus, language learning is easier and more interesting and relevant to the learner. Rather than depend on basal readers, textbooks, and workbooks that often stress contextualized language exercises, whole language teachers build on learners' existing knowledge and work with writing letters, or developing and working on extended writing projects.

Learners, therefore, develop control over the mechanics of language through real reading and real writing.

METHOD

This study involved 102 students of Smart Ekselensia High School, Bogor, Indonesia. They were students of 3rd to 5th year grade. The public English speaking activity has been held for 6 months. It was held 4 times a week, twice a week in the morning and twice a week in the afternoon. The public speaking can be in form of storytelling, general speech, and religious speech. Before the students do the public speaking, they had to prepare the material such as a story or a book summary and in this a part of Whole Language approach application.

Instrument used to obtain the data were questionnaire and interviews. The use of questionnaires in this study aimed at gathering statistical data and open responses about what students think and feel about the public speaking activity.

The questions in the questionnaire consist of closed ended and open ended questions. There are 10 closed ended questions with 5 statements of preferences. The fifth statements are designed to use five point of Likert scale which is range from "strongly disagree", "disagree", "neutral", "agree", and "strongly agree". As for open ended questions, the students respondents were asked to state their reasons of their choices in the close-ended questions.

The interviews involved 30 students who have ever delivered the public speaking more than once in front of the teachers and students. This interview was conducted to pursue more detailed opinions and issues on students' thoughts and feelings on the public speaking activity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The whole language approach could make the students practice their four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). In whole language approach, students are encouraged to read a story or an article, summarize it and retell it in front of others (Setiyadi 2008). Moreover, public speaking activity

as a transmitting information activity is expected to improve the students' four language skill.

This section addresses the findings on students' perspectives of the whole language approach and public speaking activity in relation to their listening skill improvement.

Table 1. *Students' perspective on their listening skill improvement*

Public speaking and whole language approach improve student's listening skill especially <u>listening to the gist</u> of conversation	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (4)
Number of students	11	14	36	34	7
(Percentage)	10.78	13.73	35.29	33.33	6.86
Public speaking and whole language approach improve student's listening skill especially <u>listening to the details</u> of conversation	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (4)
Number of students	17	23	42	17	3
(Percentage)	16.67	22.55	41.78	16.67	2.94

As can be seen from the table, the students tend to improve their listening skills especially listening to the gist of conversation. The total percentage of the students who agree and strongly agree that they have improved their listening to the gist of conversation is 40.19% and it is higher than those who strongly disagree and disagree (24.51%). While majority of students prefer to be neutral when they are asked about their listening

for details improvement. This fact shows that the students are able to get the general information of the speech or conversation even though they still have to improve their ability to grasp the information details. It means basically the students improve their listening skill because listening to the gist is a basic of listening skills. With more practice the students will be able to improve their listening to the details skill.

Table 2. *Students' perspective on their reading skill improvement*

Public speaking and whole language approach improve student's motivation to read more English books	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (4)
Number of students	19	26	34	20	3
(Percentage)	18.63	25.49	33.33	19.61	2.94
Public speaking and whole language approach improve	Strongly disagree	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree

student's reading skill especially on skimming technique	(1)				(4)
Number of students	12	16	34	35	5
(Percentage)	11.76	15.69	33.33	34.31	4.9
Public speaking and whole language approach improve student's reading skill especially on scanning technique	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (4)
Number of students	12	24	40	21	5
(Percentage)	11.76	23.53	39.22	20.59	4.9

As we know that there are 2 kinds of reading techniques, skimming and scanning. Skimming is the technique to improve comprehension speed and is useful at the intermediate level and above. The idea of skimming is to look over the entire text quickly to get the basic idea. By skimming the text, the students will be able to tell the main topic, purpose, or idea. Then they will have a framework to understand the reading when they work through it more carefully. Scanning is another speed strategy to use with intermediate level

and above. Students must look through a text quickly, searching for specific information.

Table 2 has shown that the students' reading skill improve especially their ability to use skimming technique. Though the students' perspective proves that they are not too motivated to read more English books and to improve the scanning technique, they are still in neutral position. It means that public speaking and whole language approach still influence them to improve their zsignificant.

Table 3. *Students' perspective on their writing skill improvement*

Public speaking improve student's vocabulary building	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (4)
Number of students	10	10	19	42	21
(Percentage)	9.8	9.8	18.63	41.18	20.59
Public speaking and whole language approach improve student's grammar especially the use of tenses	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (4)
Number of students	13	14	39	32	4
(Percentage)	12.75	13.73	38.24	31.37	3.92
Public speaking and whole language approach improve student's writing skill especially to arrange some sentences into paragraphs.	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (4)

Number of students	13	16	37	29	7
(Percentage)	12.75	15.69	36.27	28.43	6.86

Table 3 has reflected that the students' writing skill in general improve especially their ability to broaden their vocabulary. The total percentage of the students who agree and strongly agree with this is 61.77%. It is much higher than those who tend to be disagree and neutral. By listening and writing or

summarizing text for public speaking, students find a lot of new vocabulary. Students also improve their ability to arrange some sentences into paragraphs. Reading and delivering speech or story telling could also improve the students' understanding about grammar though 36.27% students choose to be neutral.

Table 4. *Students' perspective on their speaking skill improvement*

Public speaking and whole language approach improve student's motivation and self confidence to use English everyday	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (4)
Number of students	9	15	41	27	10
(Percentage)	8.82	14.71	40.2	26.47	9.8
Public speaking and whole language approach improve student's speaking skill especially students' fluency, pronunciation, and intonation.	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (4)
Number of students	9	14	42	30	7
(Percentage)	8.82	13.73	41.18	29.41	6.86

As can be seen from Table 4, 40.2% of the students think neutrally about the effect of public speaking to their motivation and self confidence in using English. Although the total percentage of students who agree and strongly agree that public speaking improve their motivation to use English is 27.53 which is still lower than the neutral percentage, it is still higher than the percentage of those who strongly disagree and disagree (23.53%). This fact means that basically students improve their motivation to use English though it is not directly and significantly reflected.

Furthermore, the students also improve their fluency, pronunciation, and intonation even though it is still not reflected significantly since 41.18% of the

students chose to be neutral.

The foregoing presentation has been focused on the statistical data of the findings. The following is the discussion of the findings by presenting some data of the interviews.

Several comments from the interview can be seen as follows:

"The frequency of this activity should be added more, maybe everyday. It is good because it will encourage the teachers and students to speak English and it can create English environment."

(Source of data: interview with student 1)

"The improvement that I got is my effort to speak English"

(Source of data: interview with student 5)

" Those who have the turn to do the public speaking should pronounce the words words well so it can be understood more" (Source of

data: interview with students 8)

"The public speaking should be more attractive"(Source of data: interview with students 16)

"The grammar use should be clearer"(Source of data: interview with students 20)

"I can make the summary but finding the new meaning of new words need much time"
(Source of data: interview with students 20)

According to the interview data, the respondents believe that public speaking influence their four language skills although it cannot be seen directly. Those who have delivered speech or story telling more than twice think that this activity should be continued and the frequency should be added to 5 times or six times a week.

CONCLUSION

Whole language approach and public speaking can be applied to Senior High School lesson. Whole language approach makes the students become an independent learners and public speaking encourage the students to speak in front of others. Based on the findings, basically students can improve their four language skills as expected in Competence Standard and School Based Curriculum (KTSP) although it is still cannot be seen directly.

According to the result of the interview, some students suggest that the whole language approach and public speaking should be continued. They also suggest that the frequency should be adding more in order to encourage them to speak English and create a good English environment.

REFERENCES

Bearre, K. *Improve reading skills*. Retrieved July 15th, 2010 from
(<http://esl.about.com/od/englishreadi>

[ngskills/a/readingskills.htm](http://esl.about.com/od/englishreadi)).

Bello, T. (1997). *Writing topics for adult ESL students*. Paper presented at the 31st Annual Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Convention. Orlando, FL.

Bello, T. (1997). Improving ESL learners' writing skills. *ERIC Digest*. Retrieved July 15th 2010 from <http://www.ericdigests.org/1998-1/skills.htm>.

Cheatham, J., M. Clark, D. McKay, M. Schnieder, and M. D. Siedow. (1994). *Whole language for English to speakers of other languages adults: a guide to instruction*. Syracuse, NY: New Readers Convention Press.

Clayton, A. (2010) *Writing and Public Speaking: How To Successfully Deliver A Speech*. Retrieved June 15th, 2010 from (<http://www.eslteachersboard.com/cgi-bin/writing/index.pl?read=3188>).

Crandall, J. A., and J. K. Peyton. (1993). *Approaches to adult ESL literacy instruction*. Washington, DC and McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems.

Goodman, K. S. (1986). *What's whole in whole language?* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Peyton, J. K. (1991). *Listening to students' voices: educational materials written by and for adults learning English*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education.

Peyton, J. K., and J. Staton (Eds.). (1996). *Writing our lives: reflections on dialogue journal writing with adults learning English*. Washington, DC and McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems.

Richards, J. C. , and T. S. Rodgers. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching (second edition)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Setiyadi, B. (2008). *Teaching English as foreign language*. Jakarta: Universitas Terbuka.

Smith, F. (1983). *Essays into literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Taylor, M. L. (1992). *The language experience*

LISA ROSALINE & AMRU ASYKARI

Applying Whole Language Approach And Public Speaking Activity In Smart Ekselensia High School approach and adult learners. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education

.Tran, H. (1997). *Becoming a writer*. Paper presented at the 31st Annual Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Convention, Orlando, FL.

Vandergrift,L. Retrieved July 15th 2010 from <http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/gpg/67>.

Public Speaking. Retrieved June 15th, 2010 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_speaking.