

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the first part of this thesis, the writer provides background of the study and statement of the problem as the fundamental elements of the study. Besides, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of key term are the next sub-chapters that the writer will explain.

A. Background of The Study

As a productive skill, speaking is the most important of the four skills. The central importance of speaking is gained from the belief that speaking is basic means of human communication. By speaking, people can express their feelings and ideas; send intended messages and purposes orally to the listeners. Interlacing relationship is definitely required ability in speaking. Moreover, Speaking English, as lingua franca, can be used to interlace international relationship with foreigners or to continue study abroad.

Speaking is regarded as the success of language learning measurement. The success of language learning is often seen from their ability to speak. Learners and their parent usually assess their language progress in terms of their accomplishments in spoken communication. They define fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than the ability to read, write, or comprehend oral language. Richard states that language students assess and evaluate their

language learning success by their speaking improvement in their spoken ability. Ur also says that language speakers are people who know a language, as if speaking covers the whole kinds of knowing. In short, the majority of English learners' reason in learning language is to develop their proficiency in speaking because their speaking English is considered the same as understanding and mastering English.

Many learners considered speaking skill to be the most difficult skills to develop. The difficulties are caused by the involvement of mother-tongue and learners self condition both psychological and social factors. In the involvement of mother-tongue problem, learners tend to formulate what they want to speak from their first language into English. Thornburry states that:

*“The process may be complicated by a tendency to formulate the utterance first in the first language and then translate it into the target language”.*¹

In other word, to speak is not the same as to translate. Speaking by translating students' mother-tongue can create complicated problem. This problem is gained by learners who learn English as foreign and second language.

The second problem is students' self condition in term of their psychological and social factor. In this case, learners face their lack of confidence and fearful to speak. This is as stated by Ur that:

*“The problem in speaking such as nothing to say, worried about mistake, fearful or criticism, low or uneven participation”.*²

¹ Scott Thornburry, *How to Teach Speaking* (England: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 28

² Penny Ur, *A Course In Language Teaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 121

From above statement, it shows that students often feel nervous, lack of confidence and afraid to make mistake to speak English. Those three problems can be categorized as the psychological problem.

In students' social problems in speaking, they are often afraid to be criticized and participated in speaking activity. They have low motivation to take part in a speaking activity or even being a reluctant speaker. Nunan states that this reluctance is because of their preceding learning experience so that their chance to speak is restricted.³ These social problems lead them to be uninterested in speaking English especially and learning English generally.

Those factors are the general phenomenon happened in speaking class. They can make students uninterested in English classroom so that they block students' speaking improvement. To solve the problem, the teachers are demanded to be creative to create a new atmosphere which decrease those speaking problems.

Media is a good solution to overcome the problem. The use of media in language teaching has a lot of advantages. One of the advantages is that media can be used to promote students' ability in any expected proficiency. By using the media, learners can be motivated so that they tend to learn more while gain the objective of the use of the media as long as the media is used creatively and appropriately. Brown states that:

³ David Nunan, *Second Language Teaching and Learning*, (Boston Massachusetts: University of Hongkong, ITP, 1999), 231-232

*“Creative use a media will enhance students’ possibility to learn more, and improve their performance of the expected skill”.*⁴

In other words, the use of the media in teaching and learning process can improve either students’ eagerness in learning or student’s ability in any expected skills they want to extend.

“Cuisenaire rods” is one of language learning media which have meaningful advantages. The first advantage is that Cuisenaire rods can create learners to use their visual sense to play with the rods. The use of visual sense is caused by the shape of the tool is unique and consist of different colours and lengths every rod that will automatically can get their interest in learning, because it required them to learn by doing. As well as their visual sense, the rods can make the students become quieter and more focused because they required more concentrate on and narrowing attention.⁵ This condition will make students to learn seriously and being responsible of what they will do by the rods. The rods also have several strengths comparing to other representational objects. Such as compared to puppet which is a media whose role as a representation of the character, rods has more challenging activity not only because it is used to represent the character, but also they can represent the place, building and any object that probably can be constructed from that small rods. This is another strength belongs to Cuisenaire Rods compared to puppet. In addition, to get

⁴ H Douglas Brown, *Principle of Language Learning and Teaching* (New York: Carson Education Company, 2000), 9

⁵ Jim Scrivener, *Learning Teaching: A Guide Book for English Language Teacher* (United Kingdom: Macmillan, 2005), 312-316

students full attention and not to easily be bored, the activity within the rods has to be modified as good as possible to maximize the use of the rods.

Retelling is one of the activities which can apply rods as a media in teaching learning activities. In this case, students are required to construct any object such as person, animal or building as the representation of any material used in the classroom. Scrivener said that the rods creates magic of the object becomes alive, when they are representing others.⁶ In other word, the rods can engage student's imagination to make the object alive when they are in retelling activities. The rods can create student's illustration of certain story. This is referred to Scrivener's statement that "the rods can illustrate and absorb little story situation."⁷ It means that retelling by rods can also involve certain story to get learner's illustration of the real situation of the story. From the reasons, retelling is an appropriate activity to promote student's speaking skill.

Based on the interview with the English teacher of the school, it can be known that students' with the lowest ability in English lesson especially in speaking is from eleventh graders. He explained that most of the students in eleventh class, especially male students got under score 75 in their performance score of English which is assessed by assessing their speaking English.⁸ The score is not satisfying because it is still under the standard of the minimum

⁶ Ibid., 312-316

⁷ Ibid., 316

⁸ Based on the interview with Mr. Lauvan as a result of preliminary study on March 8, 2013 at SMA Bina Bangsa Surabaya

standard of mastery (KKM) namely 75 score. Besides, the teacher is also stated that students usually tend to memorize word by word of a dialogue rather than to create their own words to express their ideas through speaking English in speaking activity. Moreover, the teacher is also said that he often teaches English without any media which is also affected students' achievement.

Research on Cuisenaire has also been applied by Akarcay. A study entitled "Cuisenaire Rods: Pedagogical and Relational Instruments for Language Learning" investigated about the use of Cuisenaire rods as an instrument in language teaching. The research takes the conclusion that Cuisenaire rods are potential tools in learning that may help learners to develop in any kinds of activities such as: Playing with Time and Thirty-Four Linking Phrases.⁹ From the conclusion, it can be known that Akarcay's research is different from the writer's research. Akarcay's research focuses on the implementation of Cuisenaire rods generally, while the writer's research just focuses on the application of Cuisenaire rods limited in retelling story activity to improve student's speaking ability.

Considering the background above, the writer intends to conduct experimental research by the title "Cuisenaire Rods as a Media to Improve Students' Speaking Skill in Retelling Story: An Experimental Study at SMA Bina Bangsa Surabaya".

⁹ Sevilay Akarcay, *Cuisenaire Rods: Pedagogical and Relational Instruments for Language Learning* (Vermont, USA: Published Thesis of the SIT Graduate Institute, 2012), 70

B. Statement of Research Problem

Based on background above, the research problems of the study is whether there is a significant improvement of students' speaking ability in retelling story after using Cuisenaire Rods.

C. Objective of the Study

Based on statement of research problem above, the study is aimed to know whether there is a significant improvement of the students' speaking ability in retelling story after using Cuisenaire Rods.

D. Significance of the Study

The researcher conducts this study to apply an alternative media to improve speaking ability of the students of SMA Bina Bangsa Surabaya in retelling story by using Cuisenaire Rods. This study is expected to give positive contribution to English teaching and education development of Indonesia.

Furthermore it is also expected to give benefit for both teacher and students. For teacher, it can be used as a reference to the following teaching process for the sake of improving their professionalism as an educator. While for the students themselves, this media is wished to be able to encourage their participation in the English classroom generally and speaking class especially. The last, this study is also hoped for the readers to learn and help him to provide much information about teaching language by Rods.

E. Scope and Limitation

This research is conducted in SMA Bina Bangsa in 2012-2013 academic years with the subject is the students of eleventh grade. There were 78 students in the SMA Bina Bangsa as the population. The population is gained from 3 grades: tenth graders within 32 students, Science class of eleventh grade with 14 students and twelfth grade which is divided into two classes: Science class with 17 students and Social class with 15 students. The researcher takes on Science class students of eleventh grade as the sample of the study. There were 14 students on that class. This small amount of sample is hoped to be easier to organize.

Besides, this study is investigated to know the implementation of Cuisenaire Rods in speaking class and the improvement of students' speaking ability in retelling story after getting Cuisenaire Rods. Thus, this study only focuses on the implementation of Cuisenaire Rods to improve students speaking skill in retelling story.

F. Definitions of Key Terms

There are several terms as the key of the study to refer to certain concept. The terms are defined to avoid any ambiguous and misinterpretation. Thus, the writer tries to break down and give clear definition about the terms. Those terms are presented as follows:

1. Cuisenaire Rods: It contains two words; Cuisenaire and Rods. Cuisenaire is the last name of the inventor of the media “Rods”. While rods are small blocks of wood or plastic of different lengths. Each of lengths is a multiple of the smallest rod with different colour.¹⁰ In this case, the researcher makes the rods herself from any possible toys to be modified as the coloured rods as the criteria of Cuisenaire rods.

2. Improve : Become or make something better, achieve or produce something better than.¹¹ In this study, the use of “improve” word refers to students achievement in speaking become increased after being taught by Cuisenaire Rods.

3. Speaking : Speaking is to produce verbal utterances to express meaning of any information and ideas by communicating with others.¹² In this study, speaking means the ability to produce utterances in order to deliver students’ ideas or to give information in the form of live monologue.

¹⁰ Jim Scrivener, *Learning Teaching*. A....., 312

¹¹ OUP, *Oxford Learner’s Pocket Dictionary : Fourth Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 222

¹² Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. (Cambridge: Longman. 2001), 7

4. Retelling Story: Retelling means recalling the story in the student's own words orally.¹³ In this case, the researcher gets the students to reconstruct the text of certain story by the student's own words orally. By retelling certain story students are trained to speak in the class. The purpose of retelling activity in this study is to help students improving their speaking ability. Furthermore, the term story in this research means narrative text in the form of fairy tales.

¹³ Hazel Brown - Brian Cambourne, *Read and retell: A strategy for the whole-language/natural learning classroom*. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1987), 46