



P-ISSN 2355-2794  
E-ISSN 2461-0275

## Impromptu: Great Impromptu Speaking is Never Just Impromptu

Ramlah A. Nawi<sup>1</sup>  
Burhanuddin Yasin<sup>2\*</sup>  
Ibrahim C. R. Champion<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>West Aceh Education Ministry, Meulaboh, INDONESIA

<sup>2</sup>Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh, INDONESIA

### Abstract

*Great impromptu speaking, reciting and singing are never just an isolated impromptu act. It is the result of endless practice to perfect performance that can then be given impromptu. One of the main objectives of learning English as a Second Language (ESL) is to be able to speak English impromptu, not just on the stage or in front of an audience but also in a casual meeting, on the street or during a formal meeting in a board-room. In fact to be able to speak “impromptu” should be the Holy Grail of teaching and learning ESL, more important than reading, writing and listening. So how come it is not given the priority it deserves – and how come it seems such a difficult goal? We believe it is because teachers and learners neglect to emphasize and practice the key to learning impromptu speaking. That key we believe is practice, practice and more practice. We can remember songs from our kindergarten years and we can still sing them because we practiced, practiced and practiced them. We believe that the teaching of ESL often overlooks the critical importance of lots of practice to create depth of learning and that creative methods of practicing need to be taught and practiced in ESL courses until such methods become deeply habitual, in fact they become a new personal paradigm. If our students aim to become great at ESL, they, too, must take continuous never-ending practice to heart.*

**Keywords:** Impromptu, extemporaneous, creative methods of practice, rehearse, learn by heart.

---

\*Corresponding author, email: [burhanyasin@yahoo.com](mailto:burhanyasin@yahoo.com)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Why is the Ability to Speak Impromptu Important?

Speaking English or any language includes a large variety of speaking modes from casual conversations to giving directions, orders and instructions plus reading of texts out-aloud through to giving speeches and in particular to speaking extemporaneously or impromptu. In fact, being able to speak impromptu should be one of the top priority targets of any ESL course with speaking in it. In fact, the realization of this ability is often not accomplished. The third author of this paper had a sad awakening to this fact when he included a simulated oral English job-interview with each student as the final question on a recent English IV exam. He was dismayed to find that after all his efforts to get his students to speak English in class most of them could not answer very basic questions about themselves in such an interview. Simple questions like “When did you come to live in Banda Aceh?” and “What does your father do?” were followed by embarrassing silences. Even though these same students had spoken well in class and could read English well, when it came to speaking impromptu they failed. As a result, he realized he had failed to prepare his students to speak impromptu. And when he looked around, he found there was a dearth of papers on this basic skill. Accordingly, the authors of this paper resolved to write a practical paper and literature review on “impromptu” speaking to stimulate other lecturers to make speaking English impromptu a top priority skill to be developed amongst ESL students.

The definition of “impromptu” is *‘said or done without any preparation or planning’*, thus there is a misconception that impromptu speaking requires no planning or preparation but as we shall show in this paper impromptu or extemporaneous speaking requires a lot of pre-planning and pre-preparations. In fact the Latin origins of “impromptu” give away the secret of successful impromptu speaking. In Latin ‘impromptu’ actually means ‘in readiness’ and this is the secret of successful impromptu speaking – it requires a great deal of planning, preparation and practice to be ‘in readiness’ at all times to speak impromptu.

Speaking impromptu is closely related to singing impromptu and to reciting or even creating poetry impromptu. Speaking impromptu is a learned skill which requires a lot of the 3 P’s: pre-Planning, pre-Preparation and pre-Practice just as other automatic learned skills also require lots of the 3 P’s: Planning, Preparation and Practice. Simple skills such as riding a bicycle, driving a car, operating a hand-phone, swimming and ballroom dancing all require lots of initial practice leading up to more complicated skills like playing championship golf, playing championship tennis, playing chess or even flying a helicopter which all require massive amounts of pre-practice followed by continuing practice.

Many of our students often appear to think that they can learn without practice – sometimes arriving in class and starting to do their homework of a week ago after they arrive in class or hand copying or photocopying the homework of a classmate and handing it in as their own original work. They may think they are clever – saving more time for texting in Indonesian or Acehnese – but in reality they are short-changing themselves because there is no substitute for practice. Champion athletes know this, that is why they practice and practice, and that is why they are champions. But unfortunately

far too many of our ‘clever’ students think that they can short circuit the process and get good results with very little practice. Also, too many of our lecturers are prepared to use multiple choice questions, similar to TOEFL, to test their students rather than insisting on a pile of individual results and lots of good short speeches indicative of personal practice for giving their students grades. Also few of our teachers, mainly on the grounds of time, seem prepared to personally examine each student to evaluate their speaking ability (refer to Ur, 1996, p. 134).

## 1.2 Background: Practice Makes Better

Although we have studied many books on speaking, in particular on public speaking, most of them are written for native speakers and some say hardly anything about the need for practice, practice and more practice if we are going to become fluent at speaking in public and in particular able to speak impromptu, even more so when English is a Second Language (Payne, 1995). Therefore this paper intends to describe why practice, practice and more practice are necessary for speakers, in particular ESL students, to be able to speak impromptu. There is a saying in English, “*practice makes perfect*”, well, while we do not believe there can ever be a truly perfect speech, we do believe that practice is the most important factor for making better speeches. So, yes, practice makes better in particular for being able to make impromptu speeches. Why is being able to speak impromptu important especially for ESL students? It is very important for the simple reason that most speaking is impromptu. Daily greetings, conversation at the market, talking with friends and with strangers – most of what people say is impromptu. Over time the daily greetings and conversation, the dialogues of daily life become automatic because people say them time and time again, i.e. they practice them. Instinctively most students know this – that they need to practice more to get better – but their problem is how to do it without it getting boring. Teachers, too, face a conundrum – they have to keep moving, keep teaching new things, and new units to finish the syllabus within the semester. So how can they find time in class to make sure that students practice what they have already learnt to the point that they can remember and recall it impromptu?

Ibrahim (the third author) relates how when he first started to live full-time in Indonesia (more than 3 decades ago) and started to learn Indonesian as a second language, he had a great Indonesian private teacher who taught him “*learn what you can use*” and “*use what you learn*”, and he can vouch that simple system works. Sounds are deceptively easy. It is what Covey, Merrill and Merrill (1994) would put in Quadrant II, the preparation, planning and empowerment quadrant where we improve our skills through practice. But the reality is often otherwise. In fact, if we look at some syllabi like the KTSP (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan) or School Based Curriculum Syllabus for Grade 1 at high school, we find they stress “*to understand and to express meaning in short functional monologues and texts in the form of narratives, spoofs and hortatory*” (Murniati, 2014). Now narratives we understand – but spoofs – spoofs in reality are a very rare animal in daily English and as for hortatory they are extinct. You cannot find “hortatory” in modern dictionaries, and even the six decades old 1955 Webster’s 20th Century Dictionary noted that “hortatory” is rare. So who writes these syllabi and where are the students going to use spoofs and hortatory even if the teacher can teach them? No, the reality is that students are not being taught on what they can use and cannot use. There needs to be a revolution where students are taught

on what they can use, i.e. dialogue that can be used impromptu in daily conversation and made to practice it and using it till it is clearly, indelibly etched into their memory banks so we will have no more memory blanks and no more spoofs and hortatory.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 What Others Have to Say about the Need for Practice to Make Better

After searching through a lot of literature on speaking, we only found practical ways for enhancing practice in a couple of books. Baxter (1954, p.50), writing over 50 years ago, listed 10 commandments for effective speaking. He advises that “practice aloud...repeated oral practice is the best precaution (against forgetting a speech)”. He also advises to “speak at every opportunity, for until practice has created confidence a degree of uncertainty (e.g. stage-fright) is natural. Do the thing you fear... the more you speak the sooner speaking will be an easy and pleasant experience, even more so when English is a Second Language” (p.12). There is nothing new in what we are saying about the need for practice in order to be able to speak impromptu. He also says, “...there is no such thing as speaking ‘on the sudden, i.e. impromptu, if that means speaking without preparation...No man can speak without having something to say; it is impossible to draw water out of an empty well” (p.80). Well said, 60 years ago – still only too true today.

McCallion (1998) in his outstanding *The Voice Book*, writes about how to improve one’s voice for speaking, acting, singing or other vocal activities, is the only book we found with a great deal about the need for practice and many practical exercises for practicing to improve one’s voice production (refer to pp. 150-250). Furthermore, Gerald Green in *The Magic of Public Speaking*, the founder of the Toastmasters International Club in Malaysia, the first and only accredited speaker outside of the USA and owner of Speech Dynamics writes (1999, p. 171) “...effective communication (speaking) skills is (sic) painstakingly learned.” He further quotes Anon (p. 174) that “nothing in the world can take (the) place of persistence. Talent will not. Education will not. Persistence and determination alone are all important”.

Even presidents and their wives need practice, Lilyan Wilder (1999), a very experienced, outstanding speech trainer writing about fears of speaking in *7 Steps to Fearless Speaking* (p. 4) quotes from the autobiography of Rosalyn Carter (the wife of former USA President, Jimmy Carter), “the idea of standing up in front of people absolutely terrified me...(but)...as time passed her fortitude, her careful preparation and her willingness to go back again and again, practice and practice some more, eventually paid off”. She further adds (p. 22), “so it was with Ronald Reagan (the ex-actor, USA president)...When he spoke in public as President, and remember he was a famous ex-actor, he made it looked effortless. But Reagan spent hours rehearsing for a press conference. For a major speech, he’d close his doors and spend at least 12 hours practicing out loud”.

Wilder (1999, p. 23) then gives good practical tips for “how to be your own coach” including, for example:

- audiotape and play back your practice sessions, and
- get your spouse, partner or friend to give you feedback as you practice.

She then regales us with stories about how she has coached various people to give greatly improved speech presentations. Her story about Peggy Lynch (p.141-148) which is all very well if your student is paying for one-on-one coaching but not very easy to duplicate with a class of 20 to 40+ active young people. So we still need to find good interesting ways to try to ensure that our active young potential future demagogues will start to do some serious practice. It is a lot easier if you are training the potential footballers – if the students are serious they will practice because they know that only practice and more practice will enable them to develop the skills that will give them a top chance of being selected for the football team.

We can, however, seek to inspire our potential leaders of the future by sharing *Secrets of Super Star Speakers* as Lilly Walters (2000) has done even if most of their names are not familiar to people outside of the USA. She quotes (p. 18) Jack Canfield, of *Chicken Soup* fame as saying, “we have a culture that if you can’t solve a problem in 30 minutes- about how long a TV show lasts, give up. I think most people don’t push through the hard times, they throw in the towel too easily.” Whilst earlier in her introduction (p. 1) listing *Common Characteristics of Super Stars*, she noted, “they persevered, if something didn’t work, they tried something else, then something else, then something else...”. She also quoted Brian Tracey (p. 130), “one of the most important success principles I ever discovered was... ‘Learn from the experts’... If you want to be a successful speaker... you can become continuously better by practicing and continuously studying the craft of speaking”.

Smith’s (2003) very practical book about how to *Fire-Up Your Communication Skills* in emphasizing the need for practice in preparing for a job interview (p. 211) says, “practice, practice, rehearse, rehearse and over-learn the part (i.e. the interview presentation) until it becomes second nature to you,” which are entirely our sentiments.

Writing about the problem of getting students to speak, Ur (1995, p.121) notes four problems, viz: inhibition, nothing to say, low participation, and use of mother tongue. To overcome these problems, she proposes group work, use easy language, carefully choose topics and tasks, train in discussion skills, and use monitors to keep to the target language. She outlines lots of programs, but like the writers of most syllabi, neglects to emphasize making time and devising ways for practicing.

O’Connor (1996, p. 33), however, states that “nothing can take the place of thorough practice. Start preparing your speech well before and allow time for several rehearsal sessions. You need to rehearse in a place where you can speak aloud”. He also notes “the ancient Greek orator Demosthenes is reported to have rehearsed his speeches on the sea shore where he had to speak over the roar of the waves”. Our students could well do to follow his example – prepare their speeches and then head off to the beach at Loknga (a tourist beach facing the Indian Ocean, 15km west from Banda Aceh) and practice aloud. That is sure to stimulate retention, sure to help them overcome their inhibitions, and sure to help them remember better.

### 3. TECHNIQUES

Being able to speak impromptu in English is similar to being able to sing a song impromptu. Most students when challenged by their lecturer to sing a song impromptu in any language, English, Indonesian or Acehnese, will say “I can’t do it – it’s impossible!” One of us authors will then say to the class of students, “If I can prove to

you that you can remember a song in English will you join in and sing with me?” and these adult students will look quizzical and say, “Yes!” at which point the author will start to sing, ‘*Potong bebek angsa*’, followed by ‘Twinkle, twinkle little star’, and the students will all, without exception, join in. So the author will ask the students, “What’s the moral of this demonstration?” The students will then come to realize that they can remember and sing songs even from 15 or so years ago because they practiced and practiced those songs when they were in kindergarten. So what are the differences between then and now – how come the students can so easily say they cannot speak or sing anything impromptu yet 12 or 15 years ago they could and still can?

If we look carefully, we find there are four factors at work. But first, one factor that is not at work is our ability to learn – yes, it is much easier to learn new things in kindergarten, in the age range of 2 till 7, but the RAM and hard disk in our brain still go on functioning after age 7. In fact recent research shows that continuing learning to ages of 80 and over increases longevity and decreases the likelihood of diseases like Alzheimer’s. No, as long as we don’t have Alzheimer’s, we can still learn new routes to a new work location, we can learn how to use new products like ‘iPad tablets’ and so forth, and we can even learn to sing new songs if that is what we really desire to make us happy. And that is factor one: Desire. If we desire it enough – if learning so we can sing impromptu will make us happy, it is much easier to do it, just as we did in kindergarten. Factor two is peer group pressure – if we belong to a group, an English club, a social club or just an informal student’s group, it is much easier to learn something by heart if that is part of the activities of the group as it was when we were in kindergarten.

Factor three is pride of accomplishments – yes, we got pride of accomplishment when we came home from kindergarten and sang a song to our mum. Even now if we can learn a song that we can sing extemporaneously at a wedding party or other celebration we can feel that pride of accomplishment. And finally factor four is practice – this is the hardest factor for us as we get older – making the time and opportunity to practice, practice and practice. When we were in kindergarten, the teacher arranged the practice time; maybe once a week or even more often we would sing those songs together which we can still remember today.

So how can these four memory triggers be recreated?

Firstly is desire – create that desire. Make the memorization one of your priorities in life. Visualize how you will feel when you have mastered your memory challenge. Many Moslems want to memorize the Holy Quran and they do it – one *juz* at a time, taking great pleasure in their accomplishment.

Secondly is peer group pressure – join a group or create a group with your friends or fellow students. If there is a Toastmasters<sup>(TM)</sup> (Public Speaking) Group in your area, join it – even if there is no Toastmasters Group create your own Proto Toastmasters group and mimic the Toastmasters techniques (Slutsky & Aun, 1997; Green, 1999). For example, at a Toastmasters club meeting they have what is called a Table Topics Session. Table Topics speeches are mini-speeches 2 to 3 minutes long. At each meeting one of the members is selected to be the Table Topics Master (TTM) for the next meeting. That person then selects a topic, e.g. Global Warming or Examinations, and then prepares a number of questions or sub-topics (usually 6 to 10) related to that topic. Then during the meeting, when the Table Topics Session is run the TTM will ask one of the other members present, at random, to speak on a question/subtopic related to the

topic, a typical question could be “Why do scientists warn against global warming?” or “Why is there controversy about the NU?” or “What would you like to be after you graduate?” (John, 2006). The member asked to speak has to speak for 2 to 3 minutes on the question asked (actually 1 min. and 30 sec. to 3 min. and 30 sec.) to be qualified to be included in the voting for the “Best Table Topic Speaker”. The members chosen to speak are usually those members who have shown some ability in speaking, not the newest members who may yet be too shy and may still lack experience to speak impromptu. Toastmasters never forces members to do things they are not ready to do. Members programmed to deliver a speech at a meeting are usually not chosen to give Table Topics Talks in order to give more members a chance to speak at each meeting. Members of Toastmasters soon learn to prepare to speak impromptu in the Table Topics session. The moment the TTM announces the topic, they will scribble down key words on a slip of paper to remind them of things they could say if they are called to speak. The key words will relate to the reporters’ questions for that topic: the who, with whom, when, where, what, why and how. For example, what has already happened? What will probably happen in the future? What does this mean? Another way of handling the impromptu question that every Toastmaster soon learns is to deflect the question to talk about something they already know about and have already prepared a mini-speech about. So the member could say “Well, fellow members, ladies and gentlemen, I cannot tell you much about Global Warming but I’m sure you’ll be interested to learn what’s being done to stop Illegal Fishing.” Or “Piracy” or “I remember an amazing thing that happened during the 2004 Tsunami” or something else that that member has previously prepared a short speech about.

Thirdly is pride – yes, you will certainly feel that pride in accomplishment when you can do it and before you actually make that impromptu speech you can motivate yourself by visualizing making the impromptu speech, and visualize how you will feel when you’ve made that successful impromptu speech.

Fourthly is practice – this is the absolutely essential prerequisite for preparing to speak or sing or recite impromptu. We need to learn a variety of ways to practice practicing so that these ways of practicing become habitual, so they become part of our new improved personal paradigm.

### **3.1 Ibnu’s Deck of Speeches Method**

For example, one of our Toastmaster friends, who joined Toastmasters when he already had a degree in English but could not say a clear sentence in English (when he joined), could soon make a good prepared speech but still struggled with the impromptu Table Topics speeches. This friend, Ibnu, who is now a very good ESL teacher, created his own learning system for preparing for the impromptu speeches which we now call Ibnu’s Deck of Speeches Method. First to prepare, select a number of topics that you know about or are interested in and prepare a short speech, one to two minutes, for each topic. Next, get a deck of cards and paint all the card suites and numbers white. Alternatively, you can get blank name cards or make blank 4”x 2.7” (10cm x 7cm) filing cards by cutting A4 carton into 3 strips vertically and then cutting each strip into three (so you get 9 cards from one A4 sheet – these are the right size to fit neatly into the hand, so they are also a good size to use as cue or memory cards for remembering the key words of your speeches). Write the title of one of your speech topics on each one of these cards. When you have finished preparing several speeches, say 5 or more,

you can start practicing. Pick a time when you will be free from interruptions. Ibnu recommends at night before you go to bed. Then shuffle the cards, pick one at random and practice your prepared speech for that topic from memory, if you can, if you still cannot remember it, find your written speech and rewrite it and read it aloud. Gradually prepare more and more speeches so that in the end you will have a whole deck of cards of mini-speeches, 52 in all. Of course each speech must be prepared as a proper mini-speech – they should always be written by hand (double-spaced so they are easy to edit). Each speech must have an attention getting opening, a body with a couple of well-made short points and a memorable summary or closure. It must flow, i.e. have good continuity, use simple and easy to understand language, make good use of rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and idiom. It should include points to get the attention of the audience like rhetorical questions plus stories of real life experiences or events that the audience can relate to. Ideally after each initial written speech has been prepared, it should be edited to straighten out the grammar, but perfect grammar is not as important as ensuring that each speech has a good flow and is easy to understand.

Next, Our Keen Speaker (OKS) should practice each speech before an honest audience – even an audience of one – e.g. mother, spouse or friend, who must tell him honestly what is good and what could be better. Then if there is equipment like a handy-cam or a high level hand phone, OKS should record his speech and replay it to see for himself how he can improve his presentation. Initially when OKS draws out the card with a speech on it he can refer to his written speech, but gradually after a few times he should try to give the speech extemporaneously (i.e. without referring to his written speech). At the most, he could use cue words which can be written on the card with the name of the speech on it – these cue words will be words to remind him of the key points in the speech.

One further way OKS can use to reinforce the memory of each speech is to rewrite it long-hand, reading it aloud as he writes it down again, improving it wherever he can as he goes. The actions of re-writing, re-reading, reciting and re-listening (yes, we listen to ourselves as we speak) will greatly magnify the memorization of each speech. By the time each speech has been re-written five times it should start to be glued to the memory banks of OKS for a lifetime.

Practice one (or more) short speech(es) every night including re-writing them and before long you will have memorized all the topics in your deck of cards and you will be ready at any time to give an impromptu speech or to introduce yourself and even to talk about yourself as if in a demanding job interview. OKS does not have to stop at 52 short speeches, he can keep on producing more and more speeches and even include songs, mini-monologues, poems and ballads in his deck of cards.

These 1 to 2 minute speeches are really mini-speeches, only about 100 to 200 words long, they are really only one paragraph long, taking less than a page when hand-written, double spaced. These mini-speeches can be prepared to be parts of a longer presentation – thus 2 or 3 mini-speeches can be strung together to make a 5 min. speech and 5 or 6 to make a 10 min. speech.

### **3.2 Champion's Lyrics Memory Sheet Method**

One of the authors of this paper used a similar method to memorize songs. Many years ago he realized that the main reason he would decline an invitation to sing at a

gathering, e.g. a wedding, was that he could not remember any lyrics. Accordingly, he created the Champion Lyrics Memory Sheet Method. He wrote the lyrics of a half dozen of his favourite songs on a piece of paper and put it in his wallet, then whenever he had to spend time sitting around, e.g. waiting for a bus or waiting at the bank (in the days before ATMs), he would take out his sheet of lyrics and practice singing them, quietly under-his-breath if there were people around but singing loudly if there was no-one around. Before long he could sing all those songs impromptu and even now decades later he can still recall them.

ESL lecturers can get their students to use both of the above techniques for practicing and can try to develop other techniques. In particular Ibnu's Deck of Speeches Method can become a part of their syllabus for teaching Speaking English and the accompanying written mini-speeches can be included in the portfolios for which each student is evaluated at semester's end.

### **3.3 Remembering by Association**

Other techniques could include, for example, techniques for remembering vocabulary. One such technique is to prepare lists of words according to topics or themes and then prepare a sentence using each word in the list. This memorization from lists uses the properties of association to assist in memorizing the words; the brain apparently uses association in storing memories. This technique is especially good for memorizing words to describe qualities.

Thus for example lists can be prepared for positive words, (Robbins, 1994), qualities of leadership, sizes of objects, colours, textures, tastes, sounds, weather, the economy and even 18 qualities of character: This technique can also be combined with a pack of cards. Thus, for example, first make a list of words or idioms to describe 18+ qualities of character or a list of 52 positive words, phrases or idioms. Then write one word or idiom on each card from a deck of cards like the impromptu speech topics above together with a typical sentence using that word or idiom. Next, practice repeating these words and sentences at random. Finally, use these words or idioms to make new sentences. This method of memorizing helps students build vocabularies that will enable them to make better speeches. One of the shortcomings students often exhibit is a limited ability to incorporate adjectives and qualitative descriptions into their speeches to give their speeches more colour and flavour. Beginners' speeches are often all nouns and verbs; by practicing memorizing descriptive vocabulary the students are able to prepare and give better speeches.

### **3.4 Keep an English Speaking Daily Diary**

Still another technique for ESL students to use is to keep an English diary, i.e. a daily diary written in English, briefly noting any interesting things that happened during the day (Slutsky & Aun, 1997, p.46), plus new vocabulary that OKS wants to learn to use, complete with examples of how to use the new word. It is difficult at first, but easier and easier over time. The daily English diary will soon become an idea bank that will provide OKS with lots of material from which to prepare "impromptu" speeches. Lecturers, moreover, can build the English diary into their syllabus – this can be done by making the English Daily Diary part of the portfolios that they will mark to assess each student's results.

One important rider to note and make a rule at the start of each semester is that speeches and diaries must be hand written – not typed or photo-copied. The actual material may be copied from some source but it must be hand copied – why? Because the act of writing imprints the words in the brain; if the words are also spoken as they are written this gives extra memory reinforcement for these words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs. Also, all your students should be required to write legibly, double-spaced on A4 sheets not on scraps of notepads so that their writings can be more easily edited – this is important discipline for later in life. Student submissions not meeting these standards must be returned to be redone properly before the lecturer reviews, marks or edits them.

### **3.5 Perform and Make Your Own Mini-Dramas**

Yet another way that lecturers can help students build their vocabularies is to use mini-dramas. The authors have found that students respond very favourably to using mini-dramas in their syllabus for Speaking English at all levels. At first, they get the students to practice using existing mini-dramas, hundreds of which can now be easily downloaded from the internet. Then the students are asked to form their own groups (these can vary in size from 2 to 6) and then, step-by-step, each group creates their own mini-drama. First step is to prepare the outline plot, then present the plot in class and revise it based on comments.

Next, prepare the initial dialogue and then after practicing in rehearsal to improve the dialogue, step by step. After practice in their separate groups' in-class and out-of-class, each student group finally presents their own mini-drama extemporaneously in class. One interesting observation of the lecturers from these performances is that the other students find these presentations so interesting that they actually keep quiet and listen to the dialogue of the mini-dramas as they are presented. Mini-dramas were found to be much better than just practicing dialogue, e.g. a dialogue for meeting someone or for going shopping as dialogue practice on its own tends to go flat and run out of steam very quickly. Dialogue practice can however be easily incorporated into preparations for producing mini-dramas in order to build vocabularies for use in the mini-dramas.

One other consideration in all speaking classes must be to give every single student the maximum opportunity for actually practicing speaking (Baxter, 1954) whilst also setting the stage so that each individual student must practice speaking as much as possible out-of-class. Both Ibnu's Deck of Speeches Method and the self-produced mini-dramas do this as the students must practice a lot alone, in pairs or in group's out-of-class in order to be able to perform well in front of the class.

## **4. PRACTICING COMPONENTS OF PUBLIC SPEAKING AND SPEAKING EXTEMPORANEOUSLY**

While preparing this paper, the authors became aware that there is much more that we as lecturers and leaders in public speaking must do to prepare our students and also our fellow lecturers to speak better in public and in particular to make their teaching and lecturing better. In particular we must develop better ways, nay better paradigms,

for helping our students practice the components of Speaking in Public no matter what the language. Many of these components are universal, meaning they apply to all languages, yet, they receive very little if any attention in current academic syllabi. In particular (a) voice projection especially voice volume and posture (see McCallion, *ibid*), (b) vocal variety and (c) body language to convey emotions in speaking plus (d) use of props and particularly (e) use of In-Focus or PPP (Power Point Projections). Skill in each of these individual components must be developed through special practice in parallel with developing skills in combining them all together to be able to produce good impromptu speaking performances.

These additional brief notes were precipitated by two things that happened as this paper was being finalized. By chance one of the authors was invited to a well-organized International Conference at Syiah Kuala University with many speakers from overseas, Germany, UK, Malaysia, Japan, Australia and many local speakers, and was reminded of the need for the training mentioned above by observing the performances of the speakers. Invariably all the speakers used PPP and with only one exception their performances were woeful, in particular the local speakers. Dozens of speakers, one after the other, presented PPP slides that were too full of information, with text that was so small that it was unreadable even by those sitting in the front row. And even worse, many of these highly qualified speakers faced the screen, they turned away from their audience and proceeded to read what was on their PPP slides. Even more exasperating as there was no sound system and almost all the speakers spoke so softly, especially the ladies, that what they said could not be clearly understood even sitting in the front row. Sitting in the front row where we could not read what was on the screen and could not hear the speaker who was facing the screen, it was devastating. It seems that these clever people had never been taught the basics of public speaking, i.e. (i) always face your audience, (ii) always project your voice to the back row, (iii) only use PPP for key words and never for whole pages of information (iv) always practice, practice and practice before giving a public performance and (v) if possible practice and practice before a critical audience so that you can give your audience a great speech extemporaneously.

The other thing that happened was a positive one. This time it was planned but the result was much better than expected. The third author had set a new speaking class to each prepare a eulogy. To make sure that each student gets as much chance to speak as possible, the students were arranged in independent groups of four. In each group, one person in turn would give their eulogy, followed by an evaluation from another person from the group. There was one extra rule the eulogy had to be for someone who had died. The results were phenomenal – those students were great – although they had prepared written speeches because they had practiced and knew their material very well they all spoke extemporaneously and their speeches were great. Yes, they still have room for improvement in particular with voice projection but we will soon program some other special practice lessons in order to improve that.

It is not enough to be able to speak impromptu to a friend or two but we must prepare our speakers to be able to speak impromptu to a whole lecture room or a large gathering so that the speech can be heard, the speech has emotion, the speaker practices eye contact and involves the audience and in particular our student speakers learn how to use PPP to highlight key points and not as a substitute for printed notes.

Accordingly the authors are planning to prepare a series of papers on each of these orphans, these neglected components of speaking English, viz: voice projection, vocal

variety, body language and speaker's etiquette, speaking extemporaneously, use of props and in particular "Rules for using Power Point Projections".

## 5. DISCUSSION

What we hope we have shown above is that there is no way in which ESL students can be expected to give impromptu speeches without planning, preparing and practicing, practicing and practicing to be "in readiness aka *impromptu* in Latin". We also hope we have shown that there is a crying need to create enjoyable ways in which our ESL students can practice, practice and practice their skills in speaking English, practicing as much as possible on their own and amongst class-mates and friends in small groups and also in larger groups where they can harvest the rewards of praise and appreciation from their contemporaries. The authors have described several methods that have given good results in practice whereby students can develop their skills for speaking impromptu both individually and in groups.

Ibnu's Deck of Speeches Method of preparing to give impromptu speeches is one method that could be followed by all serious students of ESL and thus ESL lecturers should build this method into their teaching armoury. The Champion Lyrics Memory Sheet is another method that all students can use and benefit from. Themed vocabulary lists with actual examples of practical usage are a method that all students will find beneficial for building body into their vocabularies. Keeping an English Daily Diary is yet another method which the ESL lecturer can build into the syllabus to help his students develop their ESL. And finally, the use of mini-dramas to capture the attention of ESL students and develop their dialogue skills should become mandatory as part of ESL speaking syllabus packages. Hopefully, other inventive fellow lecturers will be able to come up with yet other interesting and stimulating ways to get our ESL students to practice, practice and practice so that the ESL students make continuing practice part of their new ESL paradigm that they personally own.

Impromptu speaking, reciting and singing must be one of the big aims for ESL, but the reality is that good impromptu speaking requires a great deal of planning, preparing and practice, practice and practice beforehand. We can remember songs from kindergarten, decades ago, because we got pleasure from them, we got praise for singing them and we practiced, practiced and practiced them till we knew them by heart and we still do, decades later. Great sportsmen know this – they practice, practice and practice. What looks so natural from a great golfer, tennis player, driver, rider or football player is the result of endless practice. The same applies to speeches, even speeches by presidents that look as if the words are coming straight from his heart – in reality the president has usually rehearsed and rehearsed, practiced and practiced, time and time again, often using a private voice coach so that what appears to be natural is in fact perfected by critical practice and learned by heart. Great impromptu speaking, reciting and singing is never just an isolated impromptu act, it is the result of endless practice to perfect performance that can then be given extemporaneously.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Good impromptu speaking is never just impromptu – it is the result of planning, preparation and practice, especially lots and lots of practice. ESL programs for Speaking English need to include ways of getting students to do lots and lots of practice in preparation for being able to speak impromptu. This paper has described in detail Ibnu's Pack of Speeches way for Our Keen Students (OKS) to plan, prepare and practice many mini-speeches, re-writing by hand, re-reading and repeatedly reciting each mini-speech until they are learnt by heart and become a memory bank from which impromptu speeches can be withdrawn at any time. Unfortunately, for Our Not Keen Students (O No KS) there are no short cuts in this process, even Presidents of the USA practice and practice using speech coaches in order to give State of The Union Speeches which appear extemporaneous. The ESL lecturer is advised to ensure that each student handwrites and hand re-writes each of their own mini-speeches and includes them in a portfolio for evaluation and marking at the end of the semester. This paper also describes several other methods for practicing lyrics and for expanding and practicing vocabulary. In conclusion there is no substitution for practice, practice and practice.

## REFERENCES

- Baxter, B. B. (1954). *Speaking for the master*. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- Covey, S. R., Merrill, A. R., & Merrill, R. R. (1994). *First things first*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Green, G. (1999). *The magic of public speaking*. Penang: Gerald Green.
- John, N. (2006, October). The power of praise. *Toastmaster*, p. 6.
- McCallion, M. (1998). *The voice book*. London: Faber and Faber Limited.
- Murniati. (2014). *The implementation of Jigsaw technique in teaching reading (a descriptive study at SMAN 1 Peusangan Siblah Krueng, Bireuen)*. (Master), Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh.
- O'Connor, J. R. (1996). *High impact public speaking*. Chicago: NTC Publishing.
- Payne, J., & Carlin, D. P. (1995). *Getting started in public speaking*. Chicago: NTC Publishing.
- Robbins, A. (1994). *Giant steps*. New York: Fireside.
- Slutsky, J., & Aun, M. (1997). *Toastmaster's international guide to successful speaking*. Petaling Jaya: Advantage Quest Publications.
- Smith, "Captain Bob". (2003). *Fire up your communication skills*. Kuala Lumpur: Golden Books Centre
- Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Walters, L. (2000). *Secrets of superstar speakers*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Wilder, L. (1999). *7 steps to fearless speaking*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

[Received 31 July 2015; revised 11 August 2015; accepted 30 August 2015]

## THE AUTHORS

**Ramlah A. Nawî** graduated from the Secretarial Academy, Faculty of Economics, Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh, in 1983. In 1991, she completed her Bachelor's degree in English Education from Serambi Mekkah University, Banda Aceh. She continued her studies to a Master's degree level majoring in Management of Tourism at Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Bandung in 2002 and finished it in 2004. She started her career as an English teacher at SMAN 1 Bungcala, Aceh Besar, in 1991, and in Kuala, Aceh Barat, in 1998. In 2000, she was transferred to SMKN 3 Banda Aceh. She then moved to Meulaboh, Aceh Barat, in 2007 and became the school head master of SMKN 3. In 2009, she was appointed as a senior high school supervisor until now.

**Burhanuddin Yasin** was born in Meulaboh, September 29, 1960. He graduated from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Syiah Kuala, in 1984 for his Bachelor's degree in English Education. He completed the program of Advance Diploma in Business Administration at the University of Salford, England, in 1993. He finished his Master's degree at La Trobe University, Australia, in Education Management Information System in 1997. In 2004, he completed his Ph.D. in Malang State University, Malang.

**Ibrahim C. R. Champion** is a highly active grandfather, born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1940, with a very diverse background. As a surveyor, scientist, explorer, engineer, planner and project director, he has worked in many remote areas from Antarctica, through the deserts of Australia, to the mountains of Papua. Whilst in Australia, on sabbatical in 1995, studying part-time for an MBA, he joined a Toastmaster's International public speaking course and since then has promoted public speaking wherever he goes. He started three clubs in Medan and now teaches Speaking classes in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Syiah Kuala. He is passionate about helping Indonesians, particularly Acehnese, to become great speakers of English.