

**IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH
COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES OF GRADE VIII STUDENTS OF
SMP NEGERI 2 SEWON IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2015/2016**

E-JOURNAL



LUTFI EFENDI

12202244001

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND ARTS

YOGYAKARTA STATE UNIVERSITY

2016

APPROVAL SHEET

**IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH
COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES OF GRADE VIII STUDENTS OF
SMP NEGERI 2 SEWON IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2015/2016**

E-JOURNAL

**Lutfi Efendi
12202244001**

Approved by the supervisor on _____, 2016

Supervisor

**Prof. Drs. Sugirin, M.A., Ph.D
NIP. 19491127 198403 1 001**

**Improving Students' Speaking Skills through Communicative Activities
of Grade VIII Students of SMP Negeri 2 Sewon
in the Academic Year of 2015/2016**

Lutfi Efendi, Prof. Drs. Sugirin, M.A., Ph.D

Abstract: The objective of this research was to improve students' speaking skills through communicative activities of grade VIII students of SMP Negeri 2 Sewon in the academic year 2015/2016. This research was action research conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of four meetings. The actions were carried out from 12th April to 18th May 2016. The research subjects were 26 students of grade VIII of SMP Negeri 2 Sewon. The steps in this research were reconnaissance, planning, action and observation, and reflection. The data were qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data were obtained from interviews with the students and the English teacher, and observations. The data were in the forms of interview transcripts and field notes. The quantitative data were collected from pre- and post-test. The qualitative data were analyzed through four steps: 1) data collection, 2) data reduction, 3) data display, and 4) conclusion drawing and verification. The quantitative data were analyzed through comparing the means of scores from the tests to see the improvement. The research validity was achieved by implementing democratic, outcome, process, catalytic, and dialogic validity. To gain trustworthiness, the researcher used some triangulation techniques. They were time, investigator, and theoretical triangulation. The actions implemented in this research were using communicative activities, giving feedback to and appreciation for students' performance, conducting reading aloud, conducting acting from a script, and conducting drilling pronunciation through fun activities. The results of this research showed that there were some improvements of students' speaking skills. Speaking skills could be taught equally in the classrooms. The speaking activities in the classroom became varied. The students gained more confidence to speak as their fluency improved as well as their vocabulary. They were motivated and willing to participate in the activities and also to work in pairs and groups.

Keywords: speaking skills, communicative activities

Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk meningkatkan kecakapan berbicara melalui kegiatan-kegiatan komunikatif pada siswa kelas VIII SMP Negeri 2 Sewon tahun ajaran 2015/2016. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian tindakan yang dilakukan dalam dua siklus. Setiap siklus terdiri dari empat pertemuan. Tindakan dilaksanakan dari tanggal 12 April sampai 18 Mei 2016. Langkah-langkah penelitian adalah peninjauan, perencanaan, tindakan dan observasi, dan refleksi. Data terdiri dari kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Data kualitatif diperoleh dari wawancara dengan para siswa dan guru bahasa Inggris serta observasi. Data kuantitatif diperoleh dari hasil tes sebelum dan sesudah tindakan. Data kualitatif dianalisis melalui empat langkah: 1) pengumpulan data, 2) pengurangan data, 3) penjabaran data, dan 4) pengambilan kesimpulan dan verifikasi. Data kuantitatif dianalisis melalui perbandingan nilai tengah dari hasil tes sebelum dan sesudah untuk melihat peningkatan. Validitas penelitian dicapai dengan melaksanakan validitas demokratis, hasil, proses, katalis, dan dialogis. Untuk memperoleh kepercayaan, peneliti menggunakan beberapa teknik triangulasi. Triangulasi tersebut adalah triangulasi waktu, peneliti dan teori. Tindakan-tindakan yang dilakukan dalam penelitian ini adalah dengan menggunakan kegiatan-kegiatan komunikatif, memberikan umpan balik dan penghargaan terhadap hasil belajar siswa, membaca nyaring, berakting dari naskah, dan latihan pengucapan melalui kegiatan-kegiatan menyenangkan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat beberapa peningkatan dari kecakapan berbicara para siswa. Kecakapan berbicara dapat diajarkan seimbang dengan kecakapan lain di dalam kelas. Kegiatan berbicara di dalam kelas menjadi bervariasi. Para siswa menjadi lebih percaya diri untuk berbicara sejalan dengan kelancaran berbicara dan penguasaan kosakata mereka yang juga meningkat. Siswa termotivasi dan bersedia untuk berpartisipasi dalam kegiatan berbicara dan juga untuk bekerja secara berpasangan dan berkelompok.

Kata kunci: kecakapan berbicara, kegiatan-kegiatan komunikatif

=====

Introduction

In learning English, students should be able to produce and figure out the verbal and written texts in four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Those skills should be taught for students with the aim of mastering English. Every skill has its own roles to build up students' ability to learn English. In learning English, those skills strengthen and support each other. Therefore, they should be taught equally.

Speaking is seen as the measurement of mastering English. People who have good speaking skills are associated to those mastering English better than people possessing good writing skills. Speaking could be used as the reflection of how good students' English achievement is. It can also be applied as the instrument to check students' understanding of English.

In fact, speaking skills are more difficult than other skills. Nunan (2005: 48) agrees that speaking is more difficult than other skills because it occurs in real time and the speaker cannot revise or change what the speaker says at that time. Students need to know what to prepare and consider before they want to say at that particular time. They have to practise in order to use them. To facilitate students to practise, students need to have opportunities to speak since speaking is productive oral skill meaning that speaking focuses more on producing language than receiving it. The teacher holds a prominent role in the classroom to teach speaking. Thus, the English teacher needs to provide preparations, opportunities and activities related to speaking skills for students to speak. It might be said that speaking is important skill that should be mastered by the students.

Students are expected to learn four English skills equally and also the English teacher is expected to teach every skill in the same way. In fact, there were some problems found by the researcher for grade VIII students of SMP Negeri 2 Sewon. Speaking was hardly carried out equally and neglected by the English teacher and had the consequence that students' speaking skills were below average. That influenced the reduction of allocated time to learn speaking. Grade VIII students tended to be passive in the classroom because the English teacher used monotonous learning activities and students had different background knowledge of English. That influenced their motivations and self-confidence to learn speaking. They became less motivated and unwilling to participate to the lesson.

Research Method

This research was action research and aimed to improve students' speaking skills through communicative activities of grade VIII students of SMP Negeri 2 Sewon. The research subjects were 26 students of VIII D of SMPN 2 Sewon in the academic year 2015/2016. The research was conducted from 12th April to 18th May 2016.

For data collection techniques, qualitative data were collected through some observations in the forms of field notes, and interviews to be presented in interview transcripts. Quantitative data were gained from assessing students' speaking performance using speaking assessment rubric in the forms of speaking scores.

The steps in this research were reconnaissance, planning, action and observation, and reflection by Kemmis and Taggart (1988) in Burns (2010: 7-8). In reconnaissance, the researcher conducted classroom observations and interviews to find the field problems. In planning, the researcher planned the plans and the selected field problems to be solved. To support the planning, the researcher prepared lesson plan based on the curriculum, course grid and selected materials. Then during the actions, the researcher also did observations through writing field notes to write difficulties that might occur. In reflection, the researcher did the reflection after accomplishing each cycle which was done in four meetings. The researcher conducted interviews with the English teacher and some representative students as the reflection in the end of each cycle. The

results of interviews and field notes done during the implementations were used to decide the next actions.

The qualitative data were analyzed through the steps of Miles and Huberman (1994: 10-12): 1) data collection, 2) data reduction, 3) data display, and 4) conclusion drawing and verification. The first step was data collection. Data were collected from the results of the research through the use of field notes, observation checklists, and interview transcripts. The next step was data reduction. The researcher selected, limited, and simplified data through summarizing and or paraphrasing with the field notes and interview transcripts. The third step was data display. The data were then displayed and organized. The data were in the forms of texts and tables from the field notes and interview transcripts. The last step was conclusion drawing and verification. The conclusions were obtained from the field notes, interview transcripts of students' performances. To do verification, the researcher looked back at the data such as field notes, interview transcripts as necessary.

The quantitative data were analyzed through comparing the means of scores from the pre and post-test results to see the improvement. To gain validity in this research was obtained through steps proposed by Anderson, et al. in Burns (1999: 161-162). They were democratic validity, outcome validity, process validity, catalytic validity, and dialogic validity. Democratic validity was conducted by involving the English teacher as the collaborator by having discussion. Outcome validity was obtained by the improvements of speaking skills. The process validity was done through having observations in classroom activities, interviewing some of students, making field notes, and having discussion with the English teacher as the collaborator. Catalytic validity was done by interviewing both the English teacher and the students and also by asking feedback from the students. The last validity was dialogic validity conducted through having dialogues with the English teacher as also the collaborator about having review of the result that happened after doing actions.

Research Finding and Discussions

The research findings were presented from Reconnaissance. In this step, the researcher started to find field problems. To do this, the researcher conducted classroom observations and interviews. The researcher did the identification of the field problems by having classroom observations which were done twice on 29th and 30th March 2016 and conducted pre-test in the second observation. The researcher had interviews with the English teacher and some students related to the teaching and learning processes of speaking afterwards.

Regarding to the results observations, interviews and the pre-test, it was found some field problems in the teaching and learning processes. The researcher found 18 field problems, namely 1) students were passive and gave less attention to study, 2) students lacked of confidence and were shy to speak in English, 3) students spoke less English in the classroom, 4) teaching learning processes lacked of fun activities, 5) English teacher usually gave written practices for speaking, and 6) English teacher yelled students when students mispronounced words.

After finding the field problems, the English teacher and researcher discussed and decided to select some field problems based on urgency and feasibility. The feasible field problems were decided based on time availability and the ability of the researcher and the English teacher as the collaborator. There were six selected field problems. They were 1) students lacked of confidence and were shy to speak in English, 2) teaching learning processes lacked of fun activities, 3) most students had difficulties with pronunciation, 4) speaking practices were rarely conducted, 5) students were reluctant to perform in front of the class, and 6) students were reluctant to work in groups. Based on these problems, the field problems could be based on the causes of the students, and teaching and learning process.

The first cause was the students. Students lacked of confidence and they were shy to speak English. They also had difficulty with pronunciation. Some of them did not know even how to pronounce some familiar and unfamiliar words. This made students reluctant to speak and to perform speaking in front of the class. They were also reluctant to work in groups with other friends. The second cause was the teaching and learning process. These activities infrequently included speaking activities. Therefore, speaking practices were rarely conducted in the classroom. Most of activities were related to writing and reading skills. Therefore, students got less chance to practice their speaking. The English class also lacked offun activities.

To solve the selected problems, the English teacher and the researcher decided to solve the field problems with some actions. Those actions were the results of the discussion. The first action was using communicative activities. Communicative activities were in the form of pre-communicative activities, discussions and acting from a script. Teaching learning processes in the classroom lacked fun activities. Fun activities could be gained by using communicative activities. Before doing communicative activities, students did pre-communicative activities. In addition, students also lacked of confidence and were shy to speak in English. they got opportunities to practice speaking and to gain more confidence so that they were not shy to speak English.

The second action was giving feedback and appreciation for students' performance. During the communicative activities, students needed to get feedback on their performances. Appreciation was as well given to students to make them feel more appreciated and to motivate them to learn. Appreciation could be in the forms of compliment and gifts.

The third action was conducting reading aloud. Most students had difficulty with pronunciation. They needed to have opportunities to pronounce words. By doing so, they could learn how to pronounce words. The last action was conducting acting from a script. Students were reluctant to perform in front of the class and to work in groups because the class lacked of speaking performance. By conducting acting from a script, it facilitated students to perform in front of the class and to work in groups with other friends.

In Cycle 1, the main activity was acting from a script. Before doing that, pre-communicative activities were implemented. Pre-communicative activities aimed

to help students ready to communicative activities. Based on the implementations, the researcher succeeded to implement communicative activities. Students had positive impressions towards the activities. They were interested to the activities. Some of the students gained more confidence after doing pre-communicative activities, discussion and acting from a script.

Acting from a script asked them to work in groups. Richards (2006: 16) explains that pair and group activities give learners more chances to use the language and to develop fluency. That was why students became more confident because they also spoke fluently by having more chances to use the language and to develop fluency. Students did acting from a script in small groups. Larsen-Freeman (2000: 104-105) explains that students can learn from each other and can obtain more opportunities to practice the language through small groups. Richards (2006: 16) also explains that pair and group activities gave learners greater chances to use the language and to develop fluency.

There were also weaknesses needed to be improved for the next Cycle. Some of the students still mispronounced words and did not feel confident to speak. Those problems needed to be improved in Cycle 2. The researcher gave feedback to the students as a part to improve speaking skills. Based on Littlewood (1981: 90-91), the purpose of feedback is to give knowledge of how successful students' performances have been. The researcher gave feedback to evaluate students' speaking performance. After the performance, the researcher asked them what difficulties they still found and gave compliment as well as the suggestions on the parts they needed to improve.

In Cycle 2, the actions were still what the researcher implemented in Cycle 1. The first action planned to be implemented in Cycle 2 was using communicative activities. Pre-communicative activities were still used in Cycle 2. They were question and answer, arranging activity and finding activity. Discussion in pairs was still used in Cycle 2 to facilitate students to speak with their classmates. Acting from a script was not used because it was already used in the Cycle 1 and it succeeded to improve fluency and to gain more confidence. The objective of acting from a script was already obtained in Cycle 1. Fun activities were implemented in Cycle 2 to provide opportunities which students played and learned at the same time.

Giving feedback and appreciation for the students' performance was still implemented because some students had gained more confidence but others were still less confident to speak. Some students were still hesitated to speak. Pronunciation was still the main problem found after Cycle 1. Reading aloud was not implemented maximally in Cycle 1. Some of the students still mispronounced some words in Cycle 1 as well. The researcher and the English teacher discussed and decided to give the action that was conducting drilling pronunciation through fun activities. Fun activities were chosen because in Cycle 1, the students had acting from a script which was dominantly dealing with remembering the conversations to act.

The communicative activities in Cycle 2 were pre-communicative activities, fun activities and discussion. Students enjoyed doing the activities. Communicative

activities provided fun learning activities. These activities successfully encouraged students to participate and also attract their attention and interest to interact. Students were more interested to join fun learning activities since they could play and learn at the same time. Communicative activities through working in pairs and groups gave improvements for students to be more fluent and more confident.

Researcher kept giving feedback on the students' performance in Cycle 2. He gave compliment by saying "good job", "well done" and giving gifts as the appreciation for the students at the end of Cycle 2.

Reading aloud was used to provide students chances to practice pronunciation. This activity was meant to be another way of drilling pronunciation. As supported by Richards (2006: 14), the accuracy tasks are among others completing grammatical sentences where some students in groups choose the sentence using present or past tense and then read aloud those sentences to check how to pronounce them. It could be implied that reading aloud was also used to check how to pronounce words.

Besides doing fluency activities, students needed to get pronunciation drills to support their pronunciation. Pronunciation drill in this research was presented using fun activities. Although there were only a few students who did not really focus on the activity, most of them did the fun activities excitingly.

In the quantitative data, the researcher got the data through speaking assessment in the form of speaking scores. There were pre- and post- tests. The English teacher and the researcher assessed the students' performance through speaking assessment rubric in pre and post tests. The scores from both the researcher and the English teacher were processed to get the mean scores in both pre and post tests. The mean scores were processed to get the improvements before and after the implementations of communicative activities.

Students' fluency improved 0,46 from 2,38 in pre test to 2,84 in post test after the implementation of communicative language teaching activities. Pronunciation also obtained 0,31 for the improved score. Students' pronunciation mean score was 2,32 in pre test. It improved to 2,63 in post test. Grammar also improved 0,14 from 2,22 in pre test to 2,36 in post test. Students' vocabulary mastery gained 0,23 as well. It was 2,17 in pre test and improved to 2,40 in the post test. Based on these results, it could be concluded that student's speaking skills improved through the implementations of communicative language teaching activities. Those improved skills were fluency, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.

Conclusions

Regarding to the research findings and discussions, it can be concluded that students' speaking skills of grade VIIID of SMPN 2 Sewon improved through the implementation of communicative activities.

First of all, by conducting communicative language teaching activities, speaking skills could be taught equally in the classrooms since they provided speaking activities needed. That made speaking activities frequently conducted. Through communicative activities, the focus of learning in the classroom was not only for writing and reading skills, but also for speaking skills. Secondly, the speaking activities in the classroom became varied. Communicative activities offer various speaking activities. The English teacher had choices to conduct speaking. Thus teaching and learning processes turned into learners-centred instead of teacher-centred. Communicative activities also gave opportunities for students to practise speaking since speaking is a productive skill. Thirdly, students were motivated and willing to participate in the activities. They gained more confidence to speak as their fluency improved as well as their pronunciation. Through communicative activities, students' speaking skills improved.

References

- Brown, H.D. (2003). *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices*. New York: Pearson Longman.
- Brown, H.D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. New York: Pearson Longman.
- Burns, A. (1999). *Collaborative Action Research for English Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burns, A. (2010). *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching*. New York: Routledge.
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Pearson Longman.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Pearson Longman.
- Huberman, M. B and Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. California: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative Language Teaching: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J.C. and Rodger, T.S. (1986). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J.C. (2006). *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Spratt, Mary., et al. (2005). *The TKT Teaching Knowledge Test Course*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.