Improving Students' Speaking Skill through Communicative Activities at Grade VIII of SMPN 4 Yogyakarta in The Academic Year of 2016/2017

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Abstract: The aim of this research is to improve the students' speaking skill through communicative activities at grade VIII of SMP N 4 Yogyakarta in the academic year of 2016/2017. This research was categorized into Action Research (AR). The subject of this research were 34 students of VIII D SMP 4 Yogyakarta. The steps of the research were reconnaissance, planning, action and reflection. The data were in the form of qualitative and quantitative data. The instruments for collecting data were interview guidelines, observation sheet, observation checklists, questionnaire sheets, tests (post cycle I and post cycle II) and camera. The validity of the research was obtained through applying four kinds of validity criteria, namely, democratic validity, outcome validity, process validity and dialogic validity. In addition, to make the data reliable, three kinds of triangulation (time triangulation, investigator triangulation and theoretical triangulation) were used in this research. The actions implemented in this research were implementing communicative activities to improve the student's speaking skill, implementing P-P-P method, giving listening and vocabulary task, giving pronunciation practice, distributing materials handout, using teaching media, and giving reward. The research findings showed that the speaking skill of most of the students improved after communicative activities were used in the teaching and learning process. It was indicated by the increase in the mean of students' speaking performance score in four aspects, namely fluency, pronunciation, accuracy, and vocabulary in the post-cycle I and post-cycle II tests. Communicative activities also improved the students' enthusiasm towards English and the students' involvement in the speaking teaching and learning process because they gave students more chance to practice their speaking skill and did not cause boredom.

Keywords: *action research, speaking skill, communicative activities*

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Introduction

English is one of compulsory objects taught from Junior High School to Senior High School in Indonesia. Especially for Junior High School students, it was mentioned in the Government Regulation no. 19/2005 articles 6 verse 1 about the scope of subjects in every level of education in the curriculum. According to the School-based Curriculum, or officially called as *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP)* which is used in SMP N 4 Yogyakarta, the purpose of teaching and learning processes of English in Junior High School is to develop students' communicative competence both in oral and written forms. It means that the students are expected to be able to understand and to express their ideas, opinion and feeling through spoken or written texts.

In relation to the need of the students in developing their communicative competence in oral form, it is generally accepted that knowing a language and being able to speak it are not synonymous. Yet, in many ways, the teaching of English in Indonesia has carried on as if knowing and speaking English were the same thing. The students just learn grammar and some vocabularies, and make sentences which they can pronounce properly. They do not practice it as if they use the language for real communication.

Speaking is one of productive skills which is used for direct verbal communication. Further, according to Cameron (2001: 40-41), speaking is the active use of language to express meanings so that other people could make sense of them. Thus, ideally, a speaking classroom should provide a situation in which the students can really practice their speaking and produce sounds as a signal that there is communication and interaction. When speaking, the speaker produces speech autonomously and directly. In reality, many students still find it difficult to speak in English. It is because speaking involves many other communicative competences. They

are mainly still confused about the grammatical patterns and pronunciation and are still not quite fluent in delivering their speech. No wonder, speaking represents a real challenge to most language learners.

Based on the preliminary observation, most of the students of grade eight in SMP Negeri 4 Yogyakarta had low speaking ability due to some factors such as crowded class, low motivation and unvaried teaching activities. Related to this condition, the researcher was interested in conducting action research on improving the quality of teaching and learning process, especially in the speaking class. The researcher attempted to use communicative activities to improve the students' speaking skill. The formulation of this study is "how can the use of communicative activities improve the speaking skill of the eight grade students of SMP N 4 Yogyakarta at the academic year of 2016/2017?"

Research Method

This research is categorized as Action Research. Burns (2010: 2) states that the central idea of AR is to take part deliberately in a problematic situation in order to change or to improve the students' achievement. It was conducted on August until September 2016 at SMP N 4 Yogyakarta which is located at Hayam Wuruk St. No.18 Yogyakarta. The subject of this research were 34 students of VIII D of SMP N 4 Yogyakarta. The research procedures were reconnaissance, planning, action and observation, and reflection. The data were in the forms of qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data were the description about the situation of the teaching and learning proces. It was gained from the result of observation and interview before and after the actions. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were from the students' speaking scores in post cycle 1 and post cycle 2. The instruments for collecting data were interview guidelines, observation sheet, observation checklists, questionnaire sheets, tests (post cycle I and post cycle II) and camera. The validity of the research was obtained through applying four out of five kinds of validities criteria namely, democratic validity, outcome validity, process validity and dialogic validity. In addition, to make the data reliable, three kinds of triangulation (time triangulation, investigator triangulation and theoretical triangulation) were used in this research.

Research Findings

There were some actions which were implemented in the teaching and learning process. They were implementing communicative activities to improve the student's speaking skill, implementing P-P-P method, giving listening and vocabulary tasks, giving pronunciation practice, distributing materials handout, using teaching media, and giving reward. This action research study was conducted in two cycles. Harmer (2001:85) states that activities in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) typically involve students in real or realistic communication, where the accuracy of the language they use is less important than successful achievement of the communicative task they are performing. Thus, communicative activities really give some contributions toward language learning, especially in the speaking learning process. The research findings and the discussion showed that the students' speaking skill of most of the students improved after communicative activities were used in the teaching and learning process. This finding could be inferred from the observations of the teaching-learning process and the interviews with the students. Since the action research did not merely depend on the process, the researcher assessed the students' speaking performance as the result of the teaching and learning process.

The assessments of the students' speaking performance were conducted as post cycle I and post cycle II performances. The assessment of post cycle I performance was conducted on September 8th 2016, while the assessment of post cycle II performance was conducted on September 20th 2016. These were assessed by two raters (the researcher and the collaborator). Based on the result of the comparison of the scores between those assessments, there was an improvement in four aspects of speaking skills namely fluency, pronunciation, accuracy, and vocabulary achieved by the students as presented in the following chart.
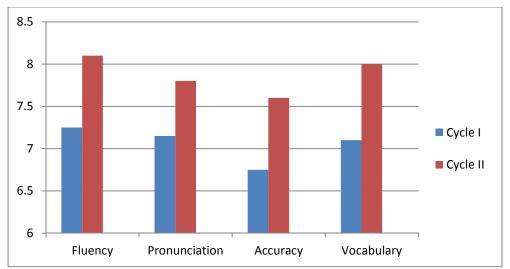
Figure 1. **Students' Improvement of Speaking Scores in Post Cycle I and Post Cyle II**

Conclusions

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the students' speaking skill of students at grade VIII of SMP N 4 Yogyakarta improved through the use of communicative activities. The actions were carried out in two cycles. The actions implemented in this study were implementing communicative activities to improve the student's speaking skill, implementing P-P-P method, giving listening and vocabulary task, giving pronunciation practice, distributing materials handout, using teaching media, and giving reward. Those implemented actions gave contributions to the improvement of the students' speaking skill. Moreover, they not only effectively improved the students' speaking skill but also the students' positive attitude towards the teaching and learning of speaking English. Here are the conclusions of this study:

1.   Communicative activities improved the student's enthusiasm towards English because they provided the students with interesting activities and did not make them bored.

2.   Communicative activities improved the students' involvement in the speaking teaching and learning process because they gave the students more chance to practice their speaking skill. They provided such a condition that make the students had to follow the rules or to act based on the situation given.

3.   Communicative activities gradually improved their speaking skill as could be seen from their scores at the end of cycle I and cycle II.

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