

## Improving Speaking Skills through Pictures for Grade VIII Students of SMPN 2 Tempel

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**Abstract:** The objective of this research was to improve Grade VIII students' speaking skills of SMP Negeri 2 Tempel that were still low through pictures as main media and supported by other media in the academic year of 2016/2017. This research was classified as classroom action research. It was conducted in two cycles, which was held for three meetings in the first cycle and two meetings in the second cycle. The subjects of this research were 33 students of class VIII E of SMP Negeri 2 Tempel. The data were qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data were obtained through observations and interviews with the students and the English teacher as the collaborator. The data were in the forms of field notes and interview transcripts. While the quantitative data were obtained from the pre-test and post-test. The validity of the research was obtained by adopting five criteria of validity namely democratic validity, process validity, outcome validity, catalytic validity and dialogic validity. In addition, this research applied time triangulation and investigator triangulation. The actions implemented in this research were using pictures in the teaching and learning process of speaking, implementing picture-based activities, giving feedback to students' performances, accustoming students to open the dictionary, and some other activities (actions). The results of the research showed that the use of pictures in the teaching and learning process of speaking was believed to be effective to improve the students' speaking skills. The students' motivation also increased. They were more enthusiastic in learning speaking. Moreover, the students were interested in various materials presented by the teacher. They could get involved actively in the speaking learning process. Furthermore, the result of the research also showed that the improvement on the teaching and learning process affected the improvement on the students' speaking skills. The students made improvements in five aspects of speaking namely accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and performance. The students' speaking skills were measured quantitatively by comparing the mean score of pre-test and post-test. The result revealed that the mean score of the students' speaking performance increased from 51.6667 in the pre-test to 64.1515 in the post-test. The gain score of the students' speaking skills was 12.4848.

**Keywords:** *pictures, speaking skill*

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### Introduction

Nowadays, most of the people in the world use English to interact and communicate in order to maintain good communication in society. To fulfill the need of communication with others, people need to master English language. To master it, people can learn it from various places, including in schools.

According to School-Based Curriculum, the English teaching and learning in Junior High School is aimed to develop students' communicative competence. Therefore, students need to be able to comprehend and produce spoken and written texts which consist of four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among those four skills, speaking is seen as the most difficult. As Brown (2007) states, speaking is also considered as the most difficult and challenging skill to be mastered.

Speaking itself is an activity done by someone to communicate with others. When someone speaks, he/she interacts and uses the language to express his/her ideas, utterances, feeling and thought. He/she also shares information to others through communication. Furthermore, Bertram (2002) states that oral language is a very important link in the process of students' learning and thinking development. Oral language provides a foundation for the development of other language skills. As children talk about themselves and their experiences, they are learning to organize their thinking and to focus on their ideas. Bertram (2002) also adds that it is important to provide opportunities for oral language to continue to grow in the classroom from those foundations. Before students achieve proficiency in reading and writing, oral language is one of important means of learning and of acquiring knowledge. In fact throughout life, oral language skills remain essential for communication of ideas and intelligent conversations.

Communicating in English is indicated by being able to speak English fluently. It is reasonable because people know someone's ability in English based on his/her performance (Shuying, 1999). His/her oral performance in English indicates whether he/she has good ability in English or not. Furthermore, Nunan (1999) states that the ability to function in another language is generally characterized in terms of being able to speak that language. In other words, speaking ability is an instrument to measure whether someone has or does not have English proficiency as the foreign language. Due to the need for English, the students should have English proficiency. So, they can correctly express their utterances using the appropriate forms of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.

Based on the needs above, the students must study really hard to master speaking skills and they also need a good atmosphere in class to concentrate in learning speaking. However, it is different to the real situation in class because most of the students had difficulties in speaking English. There were a few problems in the process of learning speaking in the class. The first problem was that most of the teachers taught about language instead of teaching how to use the language as a means of communication. In this case speaking proficiency was neglected. The teacher did not give the students' time to practice speaking. Students should be given highest opportunity to practice. In fact, most students were passive, shy, and afraid if they made mistakes, they were also afraid of being laughed at by his or her friends and of having lack of confidence in their ability. They also had difficulties in organizing ideas and expressing their ideas orally. It was because the adopted teaching and learning media merely focused on language forms-the correctness of rules for every grammar pattern-instead of language functions. What the teacher taught was how to make the students able to answer all the questions in the National Examination and how they can pass it.

Considering those problems in the classroom, teacher should create a low anxiety classroom atmosphere that can encourage real communication. Real communication in class is significant to build teacher-student relationship to comfort the students during the teaching learning process in class. It will help the students to understand the lesson easily and encourage them to express their ideas. There are many media that can be designed related to speaking activities in class, such as pictures, cards, paper sheets, videos, audio recordings etc., one of the media that can be applied in teaching speaking is pictures where the students will be asked to organizing ideas and express their idea based on the pictures.

The use of pictures as media in the class was chosen to give the students motivation to speak in class and to help them organize ideas and express their ideas easily without any burden. Pictures were believed to be able to stimulate and guide the students to speak. Pictures aids for illustration, develop students' imagination, accommodate their interest and motivate them to express ideas and also make the learning process more interesting. Wright (1989) says that

pictures are not just an aspect of method but through their representation of places, objects, and people they are an essential part of the overall experiences the teacher must help their students to cope with.

Teachers could use the pictures in any techniques or activities in order to meet the goal of speaking. Pictures are a very valuable resource as they provide a shared experience in the classroom, a need for common language forms to use in the classroom, a variety of tasks, and a focus of interest for students (Raimes, 1983). Therefore, it is believed that pictures could be used to overcome the problems and to help the students to improve their speaking skills. By describing pictures, it would be easier for the students to deliver their ideas based on the pictures. It is also believed as a perfect combination between language practice and enjoyment of learning. That is why the researcher was interested in using pictures as a media to improve students' speaking skill.

### **Research Method**

This research is categorized as Action Research since it aimed to improve the students' speaking ability of grade VIII students at SMPN 2 Tempel. The subjects of the research were VIII E students at SMPN 2 Tempel, English teachers, and the researcher herself. The research procedures were divided into 4 parts: reconnaissance, planning, actions and observations, and reflection. It was conducted in two cycles. The data of this research were obtained through several techniques including observations, interviews, documentations, and speaking tests. In analyzing the data, the researcher applied two types of data analysis. The first data were quantitative data in the form of the students' speaking scores from Pre-test and Post-test; they were analyzed by comparing the means of each test to find out the improvement of the students' achievement in speaking. The second data were qualitative data. In analyzing qualitative data, the researcher used five steps based on Burns (2010); they were assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building meanings and interpretations, and reporting the outcomes. Validity of this research was democratic validity, outcome validity, process validity, dialogic validity, and catalytic validity. Furthermore, this research applied time triangulation and investigator triangulation to get trustworthiness.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Before the implementation of using pictures in the teaching and learning process of speaking, the students felt that speaking was difficult. They got many difficulties in speaking. Based on the data collected in the reconnaissance stage, it was found that students' speaking ability was still low related to accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and performance. Therefore, the researcher implemented pictures to solve those problems.

Pictures facilitated the students to become better speakers. They were given some tasks to build their knowledge about an invitation text. There were some tasks implemented by the researcher through pictures. Firstly, to solve the accuracy and pronunciation problems, the researcher implemented two actions; they were conducting pronunciation drills and using interesting media such as video and projected slides. Before the actions, most of the students often mispronounced a lot of words in English. It made their utterances could not be understood by other listeners. After the actions, the students had better pronunciation and accuracy so the listener could get what they talked about.

Secondly, to solve the fluency problem, the researcher gave more speaking activities in the form of working in pairs to make a dialogue based on the cue cards that they got. Before the

action, some students got difficulties in delivering their dialogue. It made their dialogue lack in details and difficult to understand. After the action, the students produced a fluent dialogue which could be understood by other listeners.

Thirdly, to solve the vocabulary problem, the researcher gave a task in the form of vocabulary practices. There were two actions; the first was students got a cue card with picture and the name of the picture on it, which they should memorize. At the end of the class they should mention the vocabulary that they got. The second was that the students got a cue card with only a picture on it and they should guess the English name of the picture. Before the action, most of the students had a limited vocabulary. It led the students to speak in limited sentences. After the action, the students used more vocabulary than in the pre-test.

Lastly, to solve the performance problem, the researcher gave feedback on students' performance in Cycle I and their friends also gave feedback on their friends' performance in Cycle II. Before the actions, most of the students found the difficulty in speaking in front of the class. Some of the students were too shy to speak louder, some others kept joking during their performance, and the rest of the students were too fast in delivering their dialogue and monologue in front of the class. After the actions, all students were able to perform their dialogue and monologue in front of the class better than before. They no longer found difficulties in delivering their dialogue and monologue in front of their friends.

## Conclusions

The improvement of the students' speaking ability can be identified from the improvement in speaking achievement; the students' ability in making a dialogue and monologue with correct grammar and organization; the students' ability in expressing their ideas using appropriate vocabulary; and increase in their fluency, pronunciation and accuracy.

Pictures also improved the situation in teaching and learning process of speaking. The class situation become more alive with various tasks given, and the students' participation in the lesson also increased. Besides, pictures motivated the teachers in creating interesting tasks and developing of media in the teaching and learning process of speaking.

In conclusion, the result of the research shows that pictures can improve the students' speaking ability, especially for grade VIII E in SMPN 2 Tempel.

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