

INCREASING STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE CLASSROOM THROUGH THINK-PAIR-SQUARE STRATEGY

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Abstract

This study is categorized as classroom action research (CAR). This study proposed Think-Pair-Square as strategy in English language teaching and learning of speaking at the second grade of MTs Mambaul Ulum Bata-Bata Palengaan Pamekasan. This strategy is aimed at solving the students' problems on speaking ability and active participation in the classroom. Based on the preliminary study, the students' problems in speaking skill grouped into several problems: (1) lack of vocabularies (2) lack of ideas to speak (3) afraid to speak (4) lack of self-confidence. Therefore, the criteria of success were directed to the mentioned problems. The result of the research showed that by implementing Think-Pair-Square strategy in English language teaching and learning of speaking skill in the classroom, the students speaking ability is increased and students' active participation during the speaking activities in the classroom is very highly positive and increased.

Key Words: *Think-Pair-Square, Speaking Ability and Active Participation*

Introduction

English is international language. It is used by many people in the world as means of communication. It is also widely used in various fields, from mass-media to scientific field. As one of the major languages

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in the world, English is significant in international relation and used as media of communication among countries in international relationship. Today rapid technological development inevitably makes English more important.

Knowing the fact, and considering the position of our country in the world, it is fair to say that English learning is very important for Indonesian students in particular and Indonesian in general. Because English is used in many aspects of life, such as economic, politic and education. In the field of economic, we find that English is used in trade; in politic English is used to communicate the idea or the opinion of the people, and in education, we know that many literatures are written in English. So it is very important for the people in Indonesia with the position of developing country to know about English both of passively and actively.

In Indonesia, English is taught in all formal educational institutions, from elementary school to university. The major purpose of English teaching in Indonesia is to acquire ability in reading, listening, writing, and speaking English. It is proved by the curriculums that applied in school in Indonesia that consist of listening, reading, listening and speaking. Considering the importance of English for job opportunity, many students take an extra English class such as private course; English course to master English well.

In Indonesia, English is a foreign language.² For Indonesian people, English is learned after they mastered their first language. English as foreign language means that English is studied by people who live in places where English is not their first language; English is only taught as a school subject. For this position, many Indonesian people, including students, find several problems in mastering it. They consider that English is as quite difficult to learn and even they think that it is the most difficult one to master.

² Utami Widiawati & B. Y Cahyono. *The Teaching of EFL Speaking In the Indonesian Context: The State of the Art. Bahasa dan Seni*, Tahun 34, Nomor 2, Agustus 2006. Page 276

The difficulties in mastering English as foreign language may be triggered by various factors. Those could be from the English language itself, or from the learners themselves, or possibly from the learning process itself. Obviously the role of the teacher also plays a crucial effect.³ For Indonesian people, English is a complex language for it contains various patterns, the unique spelling and pronunciation. It is said that English is badly spelled.⁴

According to Ur speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as speakers of that language, and many if not most, foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak.⁵ Speaking is an active process of negotiating meaning and of using social knowledge of the situation, the topic and the other speakers.⁶ Speaking can be medium in social interaction. Spratt stated that speaking is a productive skill and it involves using speech to express meaning to other people.⁷ Speaker has a great range of expressive possibilities at his command. A part of actual words he used and he can vary his intonation and stress.⁸ Therefore, the language learners, especially English learners, tend to want to know speaking than other skills.

As we know that many language learners regard speaking skill as the measurement of knowing a language. These learners define fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than the ability to read, write, or comprehend oral language. They regard speaking as the most

³ David Nunan. *Second Language Teaching & Learning*. (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999). Page 93

⁴ Literary-research, 2001

⁵ Penny Ur. *A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Page 20

⁶ Anna Burns & Helen Joyce, *Focus on Speaking* (Sydney: Macquarie, 1997), Page 14.

⁷ Mary Spratt, *The Teaching Knowledge Test Course* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Page 34.

⁸ Jeremy Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (New York: Longman Group UK. Limited, 1990), Page 49.

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important skill they can acquire, and they assess their progress in terms of their accomplishments in spoken communication.

Language learners need to recognize that speaking involves three areas of knowledge: Mechanics (pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary): Using the appropriate words in the right order with the correct pronunciation. The Functions (transaction and interaction): Knowing when clarity of message is essential (transaction/information exchange) and when precise understanding is not required (interaction/relationship building). Social and cultural rules and norms (turn-taking, rate of speech, length of pauses between speakers, relative roles of participants): Understanding how to take into account who is speaking to whom, in what circumstances, about what, and for what reason.⁹

In the active learning model of language teaching, instructors help their students to develop understanding of the material by making the students active participatory in classroom activities. Learning techniques that may be appropriate are active knowledge sharing, true or false, TV commercials etc. By the explanation above we can conclude that the process of speaking language comes from interactive communication among the students and the teacher.

MTs Mambaul Ulum Bata-Bata is one of private school in Pamekasan Madura. It is located at an Islamic boarding school in Pamekasan Madura, it is Mambaul Ulum Bata-Bata Islamic boarding school. Based on preliminary study, the students' problems in speaking skill grouped into several problems: (1) lack of vocabularies (2) lack of ideas to speak (3) afraid to speak (4) lack of self-confidence. Therefore, based on the preliminary study presented above, the researcher very interested in implementing think-pair-square strategy to solve the students' problems in speaking.

Cooperative learning is a method of instruction that has students working together in groups, usually with the goal of completing a

⁹ David Nunan, *Second Language Teaching And Learning* (Sidney: Prentice Hall, 1991), Page 87

specific task. This method can help students develop leadership skills and the ability to work with others as a team.¹⁰ However, gifted students are often placed in groups with non-gifted children, sometimes with the goal of having the gifted student help the others, either directly or by example. In these instances, the gifted student is not likely to learn anything new, while the non-gifted students are not likely to develop any leadership skills.

According to Robinson stated that cooperative is a set of instructional strategies "which employ small teams of students to promote peer interaction and cooperation for studying academic subjects".¹¹ While according to Kadarisman cooperative learning is an approach that organize instruction using small learning group in which the students work together the achieve learning goals.¹² Every team has heterogenic members in case of cognitive skill, ethnic, status and etc. and each group has responsibility the task given by the teacher but also help their friends in their groups to study so that it can create conducive study in teaching and learning process.

Lesson planning that encourages cooperative work demands careful planning by the teacher, as well as a different type of involvement and a reflective analysis after the experience. For the students to work in a truly cooperative way, the educational context must comply with a series conditions. The distribution of space in the classroom must enable face-to-face interaction. When it is not possible to modify the arrangement of tables and chairs, students can be asked to work with their closest classmate. An ideal situation places all members of the group where they can see each other and allows the teacher to approach any student. All students must be able to see the blackboard from their seats and move around the classroom easily.

¹⁰ Robert E Slavin, *Cooperative Learning* (Bandung: Nusa Media, 2009), Page 27.

¹¹ Robinson, Ann, *Cooperative Learning and the Academically Talented Students*, (America: The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, 1991), Page ix.

¹² Edy Kadarisman, *Teaching English Speking Through Contextual Teaching and Learning* (CTL), Post Graduate Program of UNISMA,(2003) Page 45.

A group task must be assigned, that is, a specific aim the different students must achieve together as a group. The purpose is not only doing things together, but facing and solving a common task or question and, as a result, learning something together. A cooperative setting will not work properly if students just speak or exchange ideas, or even if they happen to help each other at a given moment, when in the end they can carry out their task without the contribution of the rest of the group. This inter-relation is called Positive Interdependence.

Think-Pair-Square strategy is one of cooperative learning methods that encourages individual participation. The strategy is designed to influence the students' interaction style. The Think-Pair-Square is as an effective way to make various atmospheres in the classroom discussion. Its assumption is that all classroom discussions need management to control the whole class and the procedure used is enabling to give the students more opportunities to think, to respond and to help each other.

This strategy consists of three phases. The first phase is **Thinking** phase. In this phase, the teacher poses one open-ended question or challenging problem related to the lesson. Then, the students are asked to use several minutes to think of the possible answer or solution individually. The 'Think Time' incorporates the important concept of 'wait time'. It allows all students to develop answers. This is important because this 'thinking time' gives students a chance to start to formulate answers by retrieving information from long-term memory. It becomes a powerful factor in improving their responses to questions or problems.

The second phase is **Pairing** phase. This phase is as the following activity after the thinking activity. In this phase, the students are asked to be in pair with a cooperative group member or neighbor sitting nearby to discuss what they have thought.

The third phase is **Squaring** phase. In this phase, students are then asked to share their answers with another pair (4 total). This answer has to be communicated to the whole class, along with the reasons for the choice. This is where the higher level thinking comes in, as students have to justify the decisions they have made.

The focus of the research is on the use of Think-Pair-Square Strategy to develop students' speaking ability and active participation in the classroom at The 2nd grade students of MTs Mambaul Ulum Bata-Bata Palengan Pamekasan Madura. The problem is "How can the think-pair-square strategy increase students' speaking ability and active participation at the 2nd grade students MTs Mambaul Ulum Bata-Bata Palengan Pamekasan Madura?".

By conducting this study, the researcher expects that the problems faced by both the teacher and students in their English speaking can be solved. By implementing the strategy, the students' participation in the teaching and learning of speaking activities could increase and their speaking ability could improve as well.

Research Methodology

Based on the research focus, this study intends to increase the students' speaking ability and active participation in the classroom by using Think-Pair-Square strategy. Therefore, the design of this study is classroom action research (CAR). The researcher designed planning, actuating, observing (gathering and analyzing the data), and reflecting (making conclusion and research report).

Planning

In this step, the researcher and the collaborator prepared the Think-Pair-Square strategy to be implemented in English teaching and learning of speaking skill activities. It covers strategy, lesson plan, and criteria of success.

1. Preparing a suitable strategy: The strategy of think-pair-square applied in the classroom as following procedures.

Thinking phase: In this phase, students are given a question/task and asked to think in silence for 2-5 minutes about their answer.

Pairing phase: In this phase, this answer is then shared with the person next to them in the classroom. The pair of students are asked to come up with the "best" answer and why it is the best.

Squaring phase: In this phase, students are then asked to share their answers with another pair (4 total). This answer has to be communicated to the whole class, along with the reasons for the choice. This is where the higher level thinking comes in, as students have to justify the decisions they have made.

2. Designing the lesson plan: The lesson plan focused on the use of think-pair-square strategy in English language teaching and learning of speaking skill in the classroom that was intended to solve the students' problems in speaking ability and active participation in the classroom. The topics discussed in this cycle are expressions of asking for, giving and refusing opinion, recreation and expressions of agree and disagree.
3. Criteria of success: There are two criteria of success implemented in this study; (1) the students' active participation in the teaching and learning process of speaking are highly positive, and (2) the achievement of students' speaking ability are 70% of the students get the score of greater than or equal to 7 of the range that lies from 0-10.

Implementation

When all the preparations are ready to use, the researcher implemented the activities have been designed using think-pair-square strategy. The subject is the second grade students' of MTs Mambaul Ulum Bata-Bata Palengaan Pamekasan Madura.

In implementing the action plan, the researcher was assisted by collaborator who at the same time acted as the observer in the teaching and learning process of speaking skill in the classroom. During the process of teaching and learning of speaking in the classroom, a collaborator held field note and observation checklist.

Observation

1. Data and source of data: The data were in the form of qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data were about the students' active participation in speaking activities, comment, opinion, and

suggestion. The quantitative data were the students' speaking test. The data were obtained from the students and the collaborating teacher.

2. Instrument and techniques for data collection: To collect the required data, the researcher used an observation checklist, a field note, list of questions, and a test. *The observation checklist* was used to observed students' activities in English language teaching and learning process of speaking skill in the classroom, and to observe the use of the lesson plan, instructional material, speaking practice, and instructional process with dealt with the implementation of the strategy of think-pair-square. *The field note* were used to regularly to take notes and record the information about the event, dates, and persons involved in the teaching and learning process of speaking skill in the classroom. *The list of questions* was used to know the students' responses to the implementing think-pair-square strategy, *while a test* was used to get the students' speaking score on speaking.

Reflection

This part deals with the activity to analyze the implementation of the action during the cycle, which was obtained through the result of observations. It includes the discussion how far the developed strategy solves the problems and factors that might be the causes of the unsuccessful strategy applied. In this research, the researcher reflected the strategy has been done in the activities of learning and the impact of the activities as well as toward the improvement of the students' speaking ability in speaking. The data obtained then checked with the criteria of success to see whether the data have met the criteria or not. The result of this reflection is, then, used as the basic consideration to revise the model to be applied in the next cycle to get a better result of learning or researcher should stop because the result have met the criteria of success.

Result

The Students' Active Participation

The criteria of success states that the 2nd grade students of MTs Mambaul Ulum Bata-Bata Pamekasan participated actively in the process of teaching and learning of speaking skill in the classroom. To obtain the data, the researcher used a list of questions, observation checklist, and field note. The data were taken during the activity of teaching and learning of speaking skill in the classroom.

In a list of questions, most students are get difficulty in speaking ability. However, after implementing think-pair square strategy in the classroom, they state that their ability in speaking skill is increased and they feel enjoy learning speaking through think-pair-strategy.

In observational checklist and field note indicated that the students were actively participated in the teaching and learning of speaking skill in the classroom. The collaborator teacher commented and ticket YES to observation checklist. The field note gave information that the students feel happy in joining the teaching and learning of speaking skill although they look a little bit tired.

Test

The test was given after implementing think-pair-square strategy. The test was in form of students' presentation in front of the classroom. The students should report related topic that they have practiced before in activity of think-pair-square strategy cycle. The average score of the students' test was 78.55.

Discussion

Based on the preliminary study conducted by researcher, the students of the second grade of MTs Mambaul Ulum Bata-Bata Pamekasan have some problems in speaking skill, the problems grouped into several problems: (1) lack of vocabularies (2) lack of ideas to speak (3) afraid to speak (4) lack of self-confidence. Therefore, the criteria of success were directed to the mentioned problems. The strategy selected is

based on consideration to solve the students' problems in speaking skill and participation in the classroom.

After implementing think-pair-square strategy, the students' speaking ability is increased, it is showed by the students' speaking score in the test, and in average their score is 78.55. Besides that, students' active participation in the English language teaching and learning process of speaking skill is highly positive. The students gave their opinion in the classroom, they speak each other without nervous. They also have high self confidence and brave to deduce their opinion in front of the classroom. Therefore, based on the result above the cycle was stopped since the result has met the criteria of success.

In implementing think-pair-square strategy, the researcher used the following procedures. The teacher explain the students about the material about asking for, giving and refusing opinion / expression of agree and disagree, then the teacher decide a certain topic to discuss in the classroom. After that, the teacher conducted the following procedures of think-pair-square strategy.

The first procedure is thinking phase: In this phase, students are given a question/task and asked to think in silence for 2-5 minutes about their answer concerning a certain topic decided before.

The second procedure is pairing phase: In this phase, this answer is then shared with the person next to them in the classroom. The pair of students are asked to come up with the "best" answer and why it is the best.

The third procedure is squaring phase: In this phase, students are then asked to share their answers with another pair (4 total). This answer has to be communicated to the whole class, along with the reasons for the choice. This is where the higher level thinking comes in, as students have to justify the decisions they have made.

Conclusion

The result presented above indicated that the students have increased their speaking ability and active participation in the classroom.

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Therefore, the researcher can conclude that the use of think-pair-strategy at the second grade students of MTs Mambaul Ulum Bata-Bata works well, the result suits and available with the criteria of success mentioned in the previous discussion. The students are actively participated in the process of teaching and learning of speaking skill in the classroom and the average of students' speaking score is 78.55. This study was stopped in one cycle because the cycle have met the criteria of success, so the researcher is no need to continue to next cycle.

Suggestion

Based on the result presented above, it indicates that the think-pair-square strategy can increase students' active participation in the classroom and speaking ability. English teachers in any levels of school should consider implementing this strategy to increase their students' speaking ability and participation in the classroom. This strategy can be introduced in any form of English teacher training and workshop that the use of cooperative learning (think-pair-square) can effectively applied in English speaking class to increase students' speaking ability and active participation in the classroom. For future researcher, hopefully they can do use the same technique applying to another skill of English.

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