Correlation of Interactive Activities to Improvement of Students' Speaking Skills

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Abstract

The focus of this research was on enhancing students' speaking abilities through interactive activities. Various interactive activities, including picture description, card games, role-playing, and simulations with visual aids, were utilized in the research. The researcher performed a classroom action research consisting of three cycles with students from Universitas Tama Jagakarsa. The results indicated that interactive activities were effective in improving students' English-speaking skills, as they encouraged students to participate actively in the learning process. Based on the findings, it is recommended that facilitators employ interactive activity techniques in speaking classes and modify them to prevent students from becoming bored, anxious, or less motivated to participate. Teachers can also consider using interactive activities as an alternative approach to teaching English, particularly for speaking skills.

Keywords: *TEFL, Interactive Activities Teaching, Teaching Speaking, speaking skills.*

INTRODUCTION

It is crucial to learn English as it has become a universal language used by most communities worldwide. Even though learning English may be challenging, it is worth the effort as it is essential in various aspects of life such as communication, commerce, economy, politics, education, science, and technology (Pennycook, 2017). In Indonesia, English is the primary foreign language to learn as it is necessary for modern science and technology. Consequently, the government has added English to the educational curriculum to ensure that the society can use it both actively and passively (Bailey, 2017).

When attending Speaking class, students are expected to be actively involved to enhance their speaking skills. Unfortunately, the classes tend to be very quiet, with students only speaking when asked by the teacher (Krebt, 2017). Lecturers must point out individuals to answer questions, leading to unsure and inaudible answers. Currently, the interaction pattern is only from the teacher to the students. If students were encouraged to share their thoughts, they may still be hesitant to participate.

Several factors affect the outcome of teaching, including the learners, the teacher, the material, the use of visual aids, the methodology, teaching materials, and the interaction between the teacher and students in the classroom.

Interaction is crucial in language learning because it allows learners to break down the target language structures and derive meaning from classroom events. It also provides opportunities for learners to incorporate the target language structures into their own speech (Van Canh & Renandya, 2017). Meaningful classroom events, whether interactive or not, depend on communication being jointly constructed between the teacher and learners. Verbal and non-verbal interactions are both important and dominate classroom events, influencing students' acquisition of the language.

Teaching and learning English is unique because it involves four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are essential to support the achievement of learning

English according to the communicative approach (Rahman, *et al,* 2018). Thinking skills, including understanding skills, are also crucial as they involve understanding different kinds of meaning simultaneously. Understanding is essential across all language skills, as without it, it is difficult to extract information from a text, deliver messages effectively, catch communication content, or produce correct writing (Moore & Morton, 2017).

Therefore, facilitator must use the right techniques to teach. Although English for senior high school aims to improve students' language skills through simple activities, it provides an excellent starting point for learning English in higher level. In university, students are in the transition period, which can cause self-consciousness (Coertjens, *et al,* 2017). However, they are also curious and energetic, providing an opportunity for teachers to explore their curiosity and energy in learning new things, including English for specific purpose.

The researcher is interested in investigating the effectiveness of cooperative learning in teaching speaking skills. The research aims to answer the question of how interactive activities can be utilized to improve speaking skills in English language learning. However, it can be challenging for teachers to apply cooperative learning in their teaching due to their limited knowledge and experience with this teaching method.

The purpose of this research is to determine whether interactive activities are effective in improving speaking skills in English language learning. The research problem is centered on the use of interactive activities to enhance speaking skills. The researcher hopes to gain insights into how interactive activities can improve students' speaking skills.

The significance of this research is three-fold. Firstly, it aims to provide English language teachers with ideas on how to improve their students' speaking skills, thereby enhancing the overall learning outcomes. Secondly, it will equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to create an enjoyable and engaging learning experience using interactive activities. Thirdly, the research aims to change students' attitudes towards English language learning from being difficult and dull to being enjoyable and interesting. Finally, this research can serve as a model for improving speaking skills in English language learning.

METHOD

In this research, the researchers employed their knowledge of English as a Second Language and Foreign Language, as well as Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language, Students' Speaking Skills, and the Role of an Interactive Teacher to conduct quantitative research. They utilized an action research approach consisting of three cycles, each with four phases: planning, action, observing, and reflecting (Mills & McGregor, 2016). Data collection was also a critical component of the study, which involved several steps such as fulfilling administrative procedures and observing the location.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Implementation of Action Research

Cycle 1

The researcher conducted observations to gather data on the challenges faced in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The vignette provided in the text details the first class, where the students were preoccupied with other tasks when the teacher arrived. During the lesson, the teacher faced difficulties with students not paying attention, making noise, and not understanding the material. The teacher attempted to engage the students with a song, but this was not followed up with interactive or interesting activities, and the materials were limited to the worksheet. Additionally, some students did not bring

their worksheet and had to share with their peers.

Apart from classroom observations, the researcher also used an observation checklist to identify problems in the teaching and learning process. The checklist revealed that some students struggled with speaking English and found the subject difficult. Many students were silent during class, lacked motivation, and had trouble understanding English explanations. Noisy behavior was also observed, and some students were afraid to answer questions in English. In addition, there were difficulties with completing exercises, managing student behavior, and some students did not bring their worksheet. Finally, there were disturbances from other classes.

Cycle 2

Planning

After discussing with the students, several plans of action were formulated to improve their speaking skills and ability to complete exercises in the second cycle. The main focus of these actions was to incorporate interactive activities in the classroom. Three interactive activities were planned, including describing pictures, playing card games, and role-playing. Media such as colorful pictures related to advertisements and announcements were also included to support these activities. Additionally, group work activities were introduced to encourage interactions among students and assist them in completing exercises. The playing card game was done in groups to allow students to discuss their exercises with their peers. Finally, role-playing activities were also introduced, where students were encouraged to take on different social contexts and roles as a way to improve their speaking skills. The teacher provided information to the students about their assigned roles and thoughts to enhance the activity.

Action and observation

In this semester, the research material focused on the SKKD. To collect data during the first cycle of the study, the researcher employed observation checklists and recordings. The data gleaned from these methods revealed that interactive activities were effective in maintaining students' motivation to improve their speaking skills during the teaching-learning process. As such, the researcher designed and implemented a series of interactive activities, including:

Describing Picture

To begin the lesson, the researcher conducted a questioning and answering activity as a warm-up to improve the students' English speaking skills. Following that, the researcher introduced a picture describing activity which was done in groups of four students. Each group was given a picture related to advertisement and announcement, and they were required to describe it. Despite the pictures being colorful and interesting, many students struggled with grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Nonetheless, the students showed progress in speaking English, such as being more active and confident in speaking in front of the class. Although they faced difficulties pronouncing English words, they tried to seek help from the teacher, their friends, and even the dictionary. Overall, the teaching and learning process seemed to be interesting.

Playing card game

The researcher introduced a card game as a means of encouraging the students to improve their speaking skills. To begin the game, the students formed groups of four, and each suit in the deck represented a specific topic. Each student in the group then selected a card and created 4-5 questions related to that topic to ask the other members of the group. However, it was emphasized at the start of the game that yes-no questions were not

allowed, as they provided limited practice in spoken language production. Instead, open-ended questions were encouraged to prompt full sentence responses from the students.

Role play

There are several methods that educators can employ to encourage their students to engage in oral communication, one of which is role-playing. This method allows students to assume various social roles and positions within different social contexts. During these activities, teachers provide students with information about their roles, thoughts, and emotions. To perform the role-play effectively, students engage in dialogues based on given situations, which they subsequently present in front of the class. This approach not only improves students' speaking abilities but also enhances their interpersonal and social skills, which are essential for their personal and academic growth.

Reflection of cycle 2

After the implementation of the planned actions, the students, English teacher and researcher reflected on the teaching and learning process using observation checklists and recordings. All participants were given equal opportunity to express their ideas, opinions and feelings. The findings from the implementation of the actions are as follows:

The picture describing activity attracted the students' attention and improved their speaking skills. However, the unclear color of the pictures made it difficult for the students to fully engage in the activity. Clearer pictures should be used in the next cycle. Additionally, the activity encouraged the students to express their imagination and involvement in the teaching and learning process.

The card game activity was effective in building the students' enthusiasm in the teaching and learning

process. It was an interesting activity for the students and helped to improve their speaking skills. This activity enabled the students to improve their conversational skills and their confidence to speak in front of the class.

The role-play activity allowed the students to develop materials and play as someone else with different character and place. However, the students lacked preparation and need to improve their performance in the next cycle. In this cycle, there were some weaknesses that need to be improved in the next cycle, including: (a) the color of the pictures, (b) difficulty in dividing the students into groups, (c) lack of preparation in the role-play activity, and (d) small card size in the card game activity.

In conclusion, most of the activities were successful in attracting the students to speak during the teaching and learning process, but improvements need to be made to address the weaknesses. Group work was effective in enabling students to do their exercises and most students were happy to discuss their exercises. However, there were still some students who remained silent during the group discussion. The media used in the activities should be well-prepared to ensure a smooth process.

Cycle 3
Planning

The results and reflections of cycle 2 provided valuable insights for planning the activities for cycle 3, which continued to focus on improving the students' speaking skills. The researcher developed action plans to achieve this goal, starting with the use of interactive and engaging activities in the teaching-learning process. Describing pictures remained an integral part of the curriculum, with the researcher making some improvements from cycle 2 to keep the students' enthusiasm and interest high. The rules of describing pictures were similar to cycle 2, but the material used

was different, and it was narrative and descriptive, based on the SKKD in the current semester. The students were excited to describe the pictures, which were clearer than before, and they worked in groups, discussing and presenting their findings in front of the class.

Secondly, the researcher used media to attract and keep the students' attention during the learning process. Card games were played in cycle 3, with cards prepared before the activity began, and the size of the cards was larger than in cycle 2. This use of media aimed to create a more engaging and interactive environment that motivated the students to learn and speak English. The card games were topic-based, aligned with the material covered in the current semester.

Thirdly, the researcher introduced group work to provide more opportunities for the students to participate actively in their group discussions. While role-playing was a familiar activity, simulations were introduced to the students to create a more elaborate and realistic environment. In simulations, students could bring items to the class to create a realistic environment, such as a microphone for a student acting as a singer. This approach aimed to stimulate the students' motivation to learn and speak English.

Action and Observation

The material used in cycle 3 was narrative and descriptive, based on the SKKD in the current semester. The data collected during cycle 3 indicated that there were three key areas of focus: firstly, describing pictures, which the students had done in the previous cycle and enjoyed. In this cycle, the researcher used pictures to warm up the students and engage them in the learning process. The pictures were related to narrative and descriptive texts, and each group was assigned a different picture to describe. After the discussion, one student from each group presented their findings to the

class. Secondly, the card game activity was similar to cycle 2, but the cards were larger and aligned with the material covered in the current semester. The students enjoyed this activity, paid attention to their friends' dialogues and were confident enough to act out their own. Lastly, the researcher continued to use role-plays and simulations to stimulate the students to speak up and act in front of their friends. In this cycle, students brought items to create a more realistic environment and were motivated to participate actively in the activity. Overall, the use of interactive, engaging, and topic-based activities in cycle 3 succeeded in maintaining the students' motivation and interest in improving their speaking skills in the teaching-learning process.

Reflecting cycle 3

Following the implementation of the action, the English teacher and researcher engaged in reflection through observation and recording, resulting in several main findings to be discussed below:

Describing Picture

Picture describing was divided into two sections. In the first section, conducted at the beginning of the lesson, it effectively primed students for the topic at hand and motivated them to answer questions.

Playing card game

The card game successfully improved student attention and increased their willingness to speak during lessons, while also improving pronunciation skills. Despite some mispronunciations, many students were confident enough to act out dialogues in front of their peers.

Roleplay and simulation

Roleplaying was found to be an effective method of boosting student confidence and encouraging public speaking. Students who were previously

silent and shy were now more engaging and willing to speak in front of others. Overall, interactive activities such as picture describing, card games, and roleplaying simulations were effective in improving student speaking skills, though weaknesses were noted, such as the need for monitoring to prevent the use of *Bahasa Indonesia* and potential issues with crowded discussions.

Discussion

The following was the result of students' recording assessment

Table of students' average scores

No	Speaking Skills	Average Score		
		Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
1	Pronunciation	63	72	80
2	Grammar	6	69	78
3	Vocabulary	60	74	82
4	Fluency	66	71	80
5	Comprehension	68	77	85
	Total Score	63,6	72,6	81

The table shows that in cycle 1, the students' total score was 63.6, indicating that many students struggled with speaking skills. They had difficulty with vocabulary, grammar, and lacked confidence to speak in front of others. To improve their speaking skills, the teacher used interactive activities that were more engaging and motivating for the students.

Cycle 2 had a total score of 72.6, and the average score was higher than cycle 1, indicating that the interactive activities were successful in improving the students' speaking skills. In cycle 3, the average score was 81, the highest of all cycles, suggesting that the students' speaking skills had significantly improved through the use of interactive activities.

Observation checklist cycle 1

The teacher utilized an observation checklist to monitor the students' actions and discovered that a significant number of students had difficulties with various speaking skills, such as pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary

selection. Nevertheless, a considerable number of students exhibited a grasp of the subject matter. The observation checklist indicated that out of 37 students, only 13 were able to pronounce words correctly, 15 could speak fluently, 10 had good grammar, 10 could select the appropriate words, and 20 comprehended the material.

Observation checklist cycle 2

The students were observed using a checklist to track their activities. The findings from the observation are as follows: 1) There were 37 students present; 2) 20 students demonstrated good pronunciation skills; 3) 18 students spoke fluently; 4) 15 students showed good grammar; 5) 20 students were able to choose appropriate words; and 6) 27 students displayed a good understanding of the material.

Observation checklist cycle 3

To monitor the students' activities, an observation checklist was employed, and the outcomes are as follows: 1) There were 37 students in attendance; 2) 26 students had good pronunciation skills; 3) 25 students spoke fluently; 4) 20 students exhibited good grammar; 5) 23 students selected suitable words; and 6) 30 students demonstrated an understanding of the subject matter. From the data collected through observation and recording, it can be concluded that these activities are useful in enhancing the students' speaking abilities.

CONCLUSION

After completing three cycles of action research involving interactive activities to improve students' speaking skills, the researcher concludes that these activities are effective. Beginning the lesson with a picture description built an English atmosphere and served as an effective warm-up, while also stimulating students to answer questions in English and fostering creativity and imagination. The Cards Game built students' spontaneity in

speaking and encouraged them to speak English despite some pronunciation mistakes. Role play and simulations also stimulated speaking and acting in front of peers, with the added element of allowing students to bring equipment to create a realistic environment, such as a student acting as a teacher with a uniform and shoes. Based on observations and recordings, these activities were found to be effective in improving students' speaking skills.

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