

USING INFORMATION-GAP ACTIVITY to Increase Students' Speaking Skill at the Twelve Grade of MAN 1 Pamekasan

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Abstract:

Based on the researchers' observation on the preliminary study on the teaching of speaking, the problem was found that the students' speaking skill in the teaching and learning was very low. It was because the class was heterogeneous and the teacher used monotonous teaching activity. To cope of this problem, the researcher employed the Information gap activity. This study tries to prove how the Information-gap activity can increase students' speaking skill at the third grade of MAN 1 Pamekasan. The study was design to increase the students' speaking skill by using Information gap activity at MAN 1 Pamekasan. The study was collaborative classroom action research in which the researcher and the collaborator worked together, the researcher acted as the teacher while the collaborator observed the students during the implementation of the strategy.

This study was conducted in one cycle consisting of six meetings using the following procedures; planning, implementing, observing and reflecting. The data of the study were collected through the observation checklists, field notes, and questionnaires. The subject of the study were 41 students of third grade on science 3 program MAN 1 Pamekasan.

Keywords:

Information-Gap, Teaching Strategy, Students' Speaking Skill

Introduction

In English learning, the students has master the four skill, they are; speaking, writing, reading, and listening. In every school many teachers applied kinds of teaching techniques for foreign language especially in teaching English speaking. Teacher needs practice to increase their students speaking skill. One of the way to increase the students speaking skill by practicing to communicate.

Besides, based on the result of interview with the teacher and classroom observation, it was found that teaching and learning process still need more variation in term the use of the technique.¹ Therefore, it is important to find a strategy or technique to make the students motivated in expressing their verbal language.

¹Isti'anah, S.S, English Teacher at MAN 1 Jungcangcang, Informal Interview (on Monday, 1 September 2014)

Deciding a method or technique that could be applied in a classroom was not the easy one. Because there were many unpredictable factors were came to avoid the teaching learning process; the strategy cannot make the students interest, the students did not give the positive response to the learning activity, etc. "Usually, students talk less in classroom, they only paid attention to the teachers' explanation, read the book, do the exercise and the others. They seldom to practice their language because of limited opportunity they had".²

Considering the importance of speaking is the most crucial language skill among other skills. Of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important; people who know a language are referred to as 'speakers' of that language, as if speaking include all other kinds of knowing; and many if not most foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak.³ For Indonesian, English became the several language for them, because most of their second language is a national language. Such as Heidi Dulay et.al stated that second language acquisition as the process of learning another language after the

basics of the first have been acquired, starting at about five years of age and thereafter.⁴

The difficulties in mastering English as foreign language might be caused by various factors. Those could be from the English itself, their motivation, background or from the technique that used by teacher in a classroom. Sometimes the learner fell confused when they want to speak because they seldom to practice it. So they need more time to practice their language.

Information-gap technique is one of the communicative learning teaching activity that teachers could use in teaching learning process because this activity is so simple and it could make students be enjoy in teaching learning process. Information-gap activity is an activity that could be played in teaching learning process especially for speaking. Teacher just provided a different word or sentence then students would ask information to the other friend.

The pre-study was conducted on Monday 1 September 2014 by having interview with Mrs. Isti'annah, S.S as the English teacher at MAN 1 Jungcangcang. The students learnt four aspects, such as reading, speaking, listening and writing so they could apply what they get. The

²Isti'annah, S.S, English Teacher at MAN 1 Jungcangcang, Informal Interview (on Monday, 1 September 2014)

³Penny Ur, *A Course in Language Teaching Practice and Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) page., 120.

⁴Heidi Dulai, Marina Burt, Stephen Krashen, *Language Two* (New York, Oxford university Press, 1982) page., 10.

phenomenon happened to students at MAN 1 Jungcangcang. There were many students lack in speaking. They seldom express their thoughts, feeling, and ideas because they had no ability to do it. In the classroom, they got many vocabularies and also grammar. It helps the students to speak English well by having many vocabularies and understanding the structure of sentences, but students had limited time to practice their language.⁵

Using the information-gap activity to increase the students' speaking skill is the solution for those who wanted to increase their speaking. This activity gave the students opportunity to speak each other. They had to get the information that they did not found on their paper by asking each other. Automatically it tried the students' how to speak intelligibly.

Some of researcher had investigated about the technique and method that could increase students' speaking skill. Robiatul Adawiah (2013) conducted a study on implementing inside-outside circle model to students speaking skill at eight grade MTsN Sumber Bungur Pakong Pamekasan. Based on her finding, she concluded that it is very effective to increase students speaking skill. In addition, Moh. Syafi'ie (2013) also conducted a study on improving speaking skill by

using conversation method at MTs Fatihul Ulum Camplong Sampang. Based on his finding, by using that method, it could improve students speaking skill. The other study conducted by Abdul Wafi (2011) wrote a study of the using think pair share strategy to increase students' active involvement and to improve students' speaking ability at Islamic University of Malang. The result of his study, the think pair share strategy had proved very effective to increase students' active involvement and to improve students' speaking ability of the second semester students of Islamic University of Malang.

Since the researcher did not find any previous studies on improving speaking skill by using information-gap activity, then he would like to implement the information-gap activity at the twelve grade of MAN 1 Jungcangcang, Pamekasan. The implementation of the study conducted teaching practice II program. It is hoped by implementing this activity, their speaking skill could improve as well. Based on the explanation above, by conducting this study, the researcher expect that the problems faced by students in speaking can be solved.

Research Focus

Actually research focus is close with problem of the study in quantitative research. Research focus

⁵Isti'annah, S.S, English Teacher at MAN 1 Jungcangcang, Informal Interview (on Monday, 1 September 2014)

are the educational issues, controversies, or concerns that guide need for conducting a study.⁶ Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin stated that research problem in qualitative research is some statements that identify phenomena that is observed.⁷ Research focus is defined as some situation based on the relation between two factors or more that cause confuse situation or question, have tentative character, and situational appropriate to the real phenomena and need problem solving.⁸ Based on the description of the study above, the problems proposed is "How can the Information-gap Activity increase students' speaking skill at the twelve grade of MAN 1 Pamekasan?"

The study is intended to give beneficial contribution for the English students and teacher, the institution and future researchers. The result of the study is expected to be able to be disseminated to all students and teachers or lecturer who need to increase their students in speaking skill.

⁶John W.Creswell, *Educational Research*, (USA: Pearson education Inc., fourth edition) Page.,59.

⁷Ansel Strauss, *Dasar-Dasar Penelitian Kualitatif: Tata Langkah Dan Teknik-Teknik Teoritisasi Data* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar. 2009) Page., 27.

⁸*Pedoman Penulisan Karya Ilmiah Edisi Penyempurnaan* (Pamekasan: Stain Press, 2011) page., 18.

Theoretical framework

1. Information-Gap Activity

a. The Understanding of Information-Gap Activity

English as foreign language for Indonesian, it need more opportunity to practice English and use it communicatively inside and outside the language classroom. There are many activity to increase students speaking skill. Generally, an important aspect of communication in CLT is the notion of Information-gap.⁹ Most of the purpose of the communication to get the information. Information-gap activity gives students more opportunity to practice English in a classroom with their classmate. Information-gap activity according to Harmer in *How to Teach English*, "Information-gap activity are those where the students have different pieces of information about the same subject and have to share this information (usually without looking at what their partner has got) in order for them both to get all the information they need to perform a task."¹⁰ In the same respect, Jack C Richards and Schmidt give definition that an Information-gap task is an activity in language teaching where students are missing information necessary to complete a task or solve

⁹Jack C. Richard. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*, (USA: Cambridge University Press, 2006), page., 18.

¹⁰Jeremy Harmer, *How to Teach English*, (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2007) page., 275.

a problem, and must communicate with their classmates to fill in the gaps.¹¹

In brief, Information-gap is the activity in which the students may be in pairs or in groups of two or more students. They can be given different pieces of information about a topic to enable them to complete a task by sharing this separated information.

2. Speaking

a. The Nature of Speaking

Language is especially need practice. Traditionally, teaching foreign language only concentrated on making the students aware of vocabulary, phonological and morphological, and syntactical rules without providing practice in speaking communication. After a years of the study, students have known a great deal about foreign language without being able to use it to express communication.¹² Of course the learners need practice to speak, because speaking seems intuitively the most important and one of the difficult aspects to express our ideas, using grammar and vocabulary especially about pronunciation to increase a good listening, in order to make a good communication. So actually speaking is used many purpose, and each purpose involve different skill.

Speaking is the most important skill for our students, because it can make the students practice their skill in speaking English and make the students increase their confidence in their performance when they speak real world situation and of course the teacher need to get our practice for interaction in the classroom. Beside that in daily activity, people generally use speaking as a means of communication. Although people cannot ignore the significance of writing, as another form of communication, speaking is still more popular to the people.

Many people think the first stage in building up the confidence to speak are they do not nervous and they don't be afraid, because everyone possess basic skill in communicating with other. So they must have interest idea in communicating to someone else. This condition is much supported existent of technology such as telephone. Speaking is complex skill, because the speaker must able to use the sound system, structure, and vocabulary of the language correctly of the same time. While in other word speaking is uttering or articulating sound with the ordinary voice expressing thoughts.

Research Method

Bruce L. Berg states on his book that "Research design is literally the plan for how the study will be

¹¹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_gap_task. (Accessed on Thursday , August 28th, 2014. 21:00)

¹² Wilga M. Rivers, *Teaching-Language Skill*, (The University of Chicago, 1968) page., 159.

conducting".¹³ The design of this research was the classroom action research. This design dealt with coping with the problem found in the classroom. The research step was started from the problem found by the teacher in his/her classroom. Creswell stated that Action Research designs are systematic procedures done by teachers (or other individuals in an educational setting) to gather information about, and subsequently improve, the ways their particular educational setting operates, their teaching, and their student learning.¹⁴ This research is designed to apply the information-gap activity to solve the problem in students' speaking.

In conducting this action research, the researcher collaborates with one collaborator. The collaborator is the teacher who teaches in English language class. Based on the agreement, the researcher acted as the teacher implementing the Information-gap activity and the collaborator acted as the observer. Before conducting the research, the collaborator was trained on how to use the research instrument such as observation checklists and field note. The collaborator who was

equipped with those research instruments, observed the researcher and students in the teaching and learning activity during the implementation of the technique.

The design of action research used in this study as a cyclical process adapted from the model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart. It consist of four main steps: planning the action, implementing the action, observing the action, and reflecting the action. (See Figure 1)

This study had conducted at MAN 1 Jungcangcang, Pamekasan. The research subject were 41 students of XII-A3 class in English Lesson. The choice of the subject is based on several considerations. First, the condition of the students was heterogeneous that they came from different background of education, family, and level of speaking skill. Second, out of 41 students, there were only 11 students who were categorized as their speaking skill was good, the score of their speaking skill achieved 75.

Based on research design that planned before, the procedure of Action Research consists of four steps that were conducted in any cycles. They are planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting.

¹³Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, (United State of America: California State University Press, 1998) page., 27.

¹⁴John W. Creswell, *Educational Research*. (Buston, Pearson Education, 2012.) page., 577.

Findings and Discussion

1. The Teaching and Learning Process Using the Information-gap Activity.

Based on the findings of the research, it was found that the Information-gap activity was very effective to be implemented for improving students' speaking skill. It also very powerful to make various patterns of conducting teaching and learning activities.

There were various versions of conducting the Information-gap activity. Jeremy Harmer give a definition of Information gap is where the two speakers have different bits of information, and they can only complete the whole picture by sharing information because they have different information, there is a 'gap' between them.¹⁵ Another definition cited from Jack C Richards and Schmidt that is an Information-gap task is an activity in language teaching where students are missing information necessary to complete a task or solve a problem, and must communicate with their classmates to fill in the gaps.¹⁶ However, the cores were similar that was giving students reason to communicate.

In the first meeting of the implementation of information-gap activity, after the teacher give the materials based on the lesson plan, the teacher gave the students a piece of Find Someone Who papers'. The students asked to write down of their friend's name who has the same characters with the paper by asking them randomly and orally. There were 25 box on each paper, they were; wears glasses, has blonde hair, has two siblings, plays soccer, likes football, has birthday the same month as you, is wearing blue and the others.

It was conducted so as to increase their confidences to speak with their friends, and it hoped for the next meeting they would not be passive students. After they got their friends name and write down it on the Find Someone Who paper, the teacher asked students to present it one by one based on what they got on their paper. The teacher give the instruction to describe their friends based on the paper they had.

In the second meeting, after the teacher explained the material, the students were given the paper of The Aim in Live. It has same instruction with the first meeting, the students asked to find their friend and asked them about their Aim in Live. All students asked each other, they were asked each students about the aims. There were 3 characteristics on the paper, the first character for Next Year, the second

¹⁵Jeremy Harmer, *How to Teach English*, (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2007) page., 129

¹⁶http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_gap_task. (Accessed on Thursday , August 28th, 2014. 21:00)

was Next 5 Years, and the last was Next 30 Years. After they got their friends answer, the teacher asked students to presents as like the first meeting.

In the third meeting after the teacher explained the material, to practice the students' speaking skill, the students used 20 question. The teacher focused on the weak students. In this meeting the students did not allowed to write as the previous meeting. The teacher had some list of the answer. They are Helicopter, Bus, Raffi Ahmad, Upin Ipin, Dragon, Tranformers Movie, Mr President, Sule, and Ship.

In this meeting, the teacher give some characteristics of the object, then the students tried to ask and guess the object. Each student had asked 3 questions and once for guessing the object. If the students cannot guess the object so the turn for their friends. After the object had guess, then the teacher ask the students to describe the object that had guess by their friends before.

In the fourth meeting, after the teacher explained the material, then to practice their speaking skill, he used card. It was like the previous meeting. The students guess what was in the card. After that, the teacher asked the students to describe the object change by change.

In the fifth meeting, the teacher used fill in the chart paper. Students work in partners. The students are both

given tables with different information. That is missing in one partners' table is there on the other partners' table. The students must ask questions each other to discover what is the missing in each of their tables.

2. The Increase of Students' Speaking Skill

Utilizing certain activity which is appropriate with the students' need, interest and level in improving their speaking is high required. The Information-gap activity was recommended as the strategy to use in teaching speaking for this strategy is appropriate with the students' need, interest and level. It was very effective in improving their speaking skill.

The way of conducting the activity was very effective in encouraging the students to speak. Considering their mental preparation, the number of students and their level of speaking skill was really effective in making the students to be active in teaching and learning process. By giving the students more reason to communicate, it could provide more opportunity to the students to speak and practice with their friends joyfully that help their speaking skill improved.

The effectiveness of this activity in improving the students' speaking skill was proved by the students' speaking skill. In preliminary study, out of the 41 students joined the test, and only 11 students (27%) achieved the criteria

minimum (75) and the rest 30 students (73%) achieved under the average criteria of minimum. However, after five meetings in implementation of the activity, 26 students (63%) achieved the score 75. It was 3% more than the criteria of success used in the research which was 60%. Since the criteria of this research has been achieved. The activity can be stated as successful.

Conclusions

With the research finding, it can be concluded that the Information gap activity has proved very effective to improve their speaking skill of the third grade of MAN 1 Jungcangcang.

Within one cycle consisting of six meetings, the use of this activity has succeeded in improving students' speaking ability that proved by the increase of the number students who achieved score 75 of their speaking score. In the preliminary study, of the 41 students, there were only 11 students or 27% achieved score 75 which is the criteria of minimum, while their speaking score, 26 students (63%) of them achieved score 75.

However, during the implementation of the activity, the researcher encountered several problems. Those problem was in term of controlling the students during their discussion with their pair, allocating and managing the time, motivating and paying more attention to the lower level students.

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