

THE APPLICATION OF INFORMATION GAP TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE THE SPEAKING ABILITY OF SECOND YEAR STUDENTS OF SMA NEGERI 11 PEKANBARU

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Abstract: *Based on the writer's small observation in the process of teaching and learning English and an interview with one of the English teachers in SMA Negeri 11 Pekanbaru, most of students faced difficulties in speaking English and their speaking score were lower than KKM so that the teacher needed to find the appropriate teaching technique to improve their speaking ability. Therefore, this research was aimed to find out whether the application of Information Gap technique could improve the speaking skill of the students. The participants were 28 students of XI IPA 3 class. This research was conducted in two cycles, three meetings in each cycle. The instruments of this study were collected quantitatively by asking the students to tell story based on the picture sequences in the pre test, post test 1, post test 2 and qualitatively by asking the collaborator to fill the observation sheet and field note. The writer used the score in Pre-test as a guidance for her to conduct this research. The research finding showed that the application of information gap as the teaching technique could improve students' speaking ability both at the first cycle and second cycle. The finding also proved that the students' average score was only 68.10 in the pre-test, then it improved to 73.48 in the post-test 1, and finally improved to 82.10 in the post-test 2, it could increase students' interest and motivation to speak and share ideas with their partners in pairs or groups since the core of information gap was a collaboration between groups or pairs, and it also improve students' ability to speak English in terms of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension.*

Keywords: *information gap technique, students' speaking ability, picture sequences*

PENERAPAN TEKNIK INFORMATION GAP UNTUK MENINGKATKAN KEMAMPUAN BERBICARA SISWA KELAS DUA DI SMA NEGERI 11 PEKANBARU

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Abstrak: Berdasarkan observasi awal yang dilakukan oleh penulis pada Proses Belajar Mengajar (PBM) mata pelajaran Bahasa Inggris and sebuah wawancara singkat dengan salah seorang guru Bahasa Inggris di SMA Negeri 11 Pekanbaru, sebagian besar siswa mengalami kesulitan dalam berbicara menggunakan Bahasa Inggris and nilai mereka lebih rendah daripada KKM sehingga guru perlu menemukan teknik mengajar yang tepat untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara siswa. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui apakah pengaplikasian teknik Informatin Gap dapat meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam berbicara Bahasa Inggris. Subyek dari penelitian ini berjumlah 28 orang siswa yang merupakan siswa pada kelas XI IPA 3. Penelitian ini dilakukan dalam 2 siklus. Instrument penelitian yang dikumpulkan secara kuantitatif dengan meminta siswa menceritakan sebuah cerita berdasarkan rangkaian gambar pada pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2 and secara kualitatif dengan meminta kolaborator untuk mengisi lembar observasi guru dan siswa serta catatan khusus. Penulis menggunakan nilai pada pre-test sebagai pedoman untuk melakukan penelitian ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan Information Gap sebagai teknik mengajar dapat meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara siswa pada siklus pertama maupun siklus kedua. Hasil penelitian juga membuktikan bahwa siswa hanya mendapatkan nilai 68.10 pada pretest, lalu meningkat menjadi 73.48 pada post-test 1, dan akhirnya meningkat menjadi 82.10 pada post-test 2, teknik ini meningkatkan minat dan motivasi siswa untuk berbicara dan berbagi informasi dengan teman mereka, baik dengan teman disamping ataupun teman dikelompok karena inti teknik Information Gap adalah sebuah kolaborasi didalam kegiatan berpasangan maupun berkelompok, dan teknik ini juga meningkatkan kemampuan siswa untuk berbicara Bahasa Inggris dalam aspek tata bahasa, kosa kata, pengucapan, kefasihan, dan pemahaman.

Kata kunci: information gap technique, students' speaking ability, picture sequences

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English become the primary language of communication and it is spoken by millions of people all over the world. The ever-growing need for good communication skills in English has created a huge demand for English teaching around the world (Richards, 2006). Millions of people today want to improve their mastery of English or to ensure that their children achieve good command of English. The opportunities to learn English are provided in many different ways such as through formal education, travel, studying abroad, as well as through the media and internet.

Furthermore, in relation to the importance of English in all aspects of life today, Indonesia as a developing country has an educational curriculum for public schools which includes the instruction of English as one of the important subjects to be taught from junior high to university level. As English is a compulsory subject in school, the Indonesian government always develops the English lesson in school. The purpose is to make it easy for the students to learn and to use it every day.

In line with the explanation before, there are some characteristics of a successful speaking activity: (1) learners talk a lot; (2) participation is even; (3) motivation is high; and (4) language is of an acceptable level (Darwis, 2004). But in fact, as found in the writer's small observation in the process of teaching and learning English and an interview with one of the English teachers in SMA Negeri 11 Pekanbaru, there were some problems which contrast to the characteristics of a successful speaking activity by Darwis (2004). The problems can be identified from the teacher's experience and reality in the classroom and they came from the teacher and the students themselves..

There were some problems faced by the students. First, only several students that wanted to speak English and the others were shy, afraid of making grammatical mistake and lack of vocabulary. They still faced the difficulty to express their ideas orally in English. Therefore, they tend to keep silent or confuse while the teacher inviting them to interact each other using English in the classroom. The problems above are supported by Darwis (2004): the problems of speaking that students have been around are :(1) inhibition; (2) nothing to say; (3) low or uneven participation; (4) mother-tongue use, otherwise they are native language.

Another problem was the teachers' teaching technique. The teacher tend to apply monotone teaching technique without using various media except book and students' worksheet which made the students feel bored during the teaching and learning process. In addition, although the school organized the event of English Day as the extracurricular in every Saturday morning for each class performance by turns, but it was not effective enough because only some students practiced to speak English seriously whereas the others did not. It might be caused by the less participation of the teacher to control them to speak English while they were practicing English outside of classroom activities (extracurricular).

In order to make the students' speaking ability level become higher and to increase their interest in the teaching and learning process, the teachers should use the most appropriate teaching technique to the students. In this case, one of the alternative techniques is Information Gap technique. Information Gap technique involves the learners in sharing the information that they have in order to solve a problem, gather information or make decisions (Ress, 2002). So, English language learning students should be involved in as many situations as possible where one of them has some

information and another does not, but has to get it. In other words, situations containing an Information Gap technique between the participants are very useful.

According to Liao (2001), the ideas of applying the information gap activities appeared because of four reasons. They are: (1) Traditional classroom speaking practices often takes the form of drills in which one person asks a question and another give answer. (2) In all many classes teacher pupils exchanges have little communicative value because there is no real information being exchanged. (3) Traditional grammar oriented class, teacher often spends a large proportion of class time asking question for which they and the students already know the answer. (4) The teacher asks a 'display question' that is a question the teacher evaluates or directly corrects the answer and then the cycle begins again with another students and another question that everyone knows the answer too. It is an unrealistic use of language.

According to Raptoe (2002), there are some supporting reasons why information gap activities are possible to increase students speaking ability. They are: (1) Since the teacher creates the content and the students are sufficiently prepared for the activity by discussing essential vocabularies before sharing the information, they tend to speak more smoothly. (2) Because the classroom activities are fairly distributed, every student has a chance to speak. The classroom will not be dominated by talkative student. (3) The activities are more joyful for the students because they are not under pressure. (4) The content of information gap can be chosen based on the students' level and curiosity.

Harmer (1991) views there are some the benefits of information gap. First, information gaps serve as a stimulus to elicit speech, The learners interact freely with one another to gather information from their peers, thus creating a casual atmosphere, in which everybody feels comfortable and no threatened to offer their contributions. Second, information gap activities can be adapted for multilevel learners: from the elementary to the advanced. Third, information gap activities can not only prove to be useful at the productive stage in the classroom, but also for the receptive stage as well.

Based on the problem above, the writer was interested in conducting an action research to help students overcome their problems in speaking. In this case the writer applied information gap technique to improve the speaking ability of the second year students of SMANegeri 11 Pekanbaru.

METHODOLOGY

The participants of this research were the second year students of SMA Negeri 11 Pekanbaru. For this purpose, class XI IPA III became the subject of the research. This class consisted of 22 female students and 6 male students so that there were 28 students at all.

Two techniques of collecting data were used in this research. There were quantitative and qualitative data. To get the quantitative data, the writer used the test instruments to the students by telling story based on the picture sequences in the pre test, post test 1, and post test 2. Besides, to get the qualitative data, the writer used observation sheets and field note. The students were asked to pay attention to the teacher explanation, work in group that each student was given a picture and they had to observe it, review and pronounce the vocabularies will be used based on the pictures, discuss to decide on a correct picture sequence without seeing each other's picture by

describing, asking and answering question of their own picture to other members, discuss in group to construct the story, tell the story to the whole class.

The writer gave treatment as a way to improve the students ability to speak English. The writer believed that the application information gap technique was an effective way to solve the students' problems in speaking. In addition, the writer prepared the lesson plans for two cycles, teaching materials and media, observation sheets and field notes to note specifics things, weakness, strengths or suggestions related to teaching and learning process as well. The writer used the score in Pre-test as a guidance for him to conduct this research.

The steps of applying information gap technique according to Littlewood (2006) were drawn as follows; (a) giving explanation about the activity which is going to conduct, (b) asking the students to work in groups, each group consists of four students, (c) giving picture of a picture script story to be observed to each student in group, (d) reviewing and pronouncing the vocabularies will be used based on the pictures, (e) asking the students to discuss in deciding the correct sequence by describing, asking, answering question based on their own picture to the other members in the group without seeing each other's picture, (f) asking the students to discuss in order to reconstruct the whole story in group, (g) telling the story to the whole class.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The collaborator analyzed the students' progress during the treatment and also observed both the teacher and the students' activities during the treatment through observation sheets and field notes. Commenting about the teacher's performance in the classroom was also parts of the collaborator's job.

The writer gave the students a post-test 1 at the end of cycle 1. The purpose of giving the post-test was to know the ability of the students after being taught by information gap technique. If the result of the quantitative and qualitative data in the cycle 1 did not show a significant improvement yet, the writer decided to continue to cycle 2. Consequently, the writer gave the students post-test 2 at the end of cycle 2.

In addition, the quantitative data of this study was collected through the oral tests (Pre-test, Post test 1, Post test 2), and the qualitative data were collected by using the observation sheets and field notes.

The Pre-test was administered before respondents were given a treatment by applying information gap technique. The number of students who took the tests was 28 students. As assumed before, the average of pre-test score was lower than the minimum passing criteria (78). The total score of the pre-test was 1906.67 and the mean score was only 68.10. The level of ability was good, but it was not reached the minimum passing criteria that was 78. So that, the treatments were needed to increase students' speaking ability.

The result of Pre-test showed that most of students in this class had low ability in speaking (oral skill). From 28 students there were no students that reached very poor and poor level. There were 10 students or 35.71% reached the mediocre level. Then, 17 students or 60.71% were in good level. The last, there was only 1 student or 3.57% was in excellent level.

In cycle 1, the students' ability in speaking was still low because most of them were still in below of Minimum Passing Criteria (KKM) 78. The total score of the post test 1 was 2057.33 and the mean score was 73.48 that ranged in good level. There were no students that reached very poor and poor level. There were 7 students or 25% reached the mediocre level. Then, 12 students or 42.86% were in good level. The last, there were 9 students or 32.14% were in excellent level.

Based on the data above, it can be compared the students' speaking ability from base score to their speaking score of Cycle I. In addition, the writer and collaborator found that teaching by using Information Gap technique in learning process at cycle 1 could improve students' speaking ability in each aspect of speaking. But the improvement of the average score in post-test 1 did not achieve the average score of Minimum Criteria of Achievement (KKM) yet. The students' *grammar* on base score was 63.33, while on Cycle I was 65.24. *Vocabulary* on base score was 69.29, while on Cycle I was 76.19. *Pronunciation* score on base score was 65.95, while on Cycle I was 70.71. *Fluency* on base score was 68.81, while on Cycle I was 75.48. Finally, *Comprehension* base score was 73.09, while on Cycle I was 79.76.

From the students' test result on Cycle I, it can be seen that the students still have problem on the five aspect of speaking, because the averages were still in below of KKM, 78 even the students' test result on those skills was categorized *good*. But the more focused is on grammar which is the lowest score among of them. So, the skill was the focus of the writer and collaborator to be improved in Cycle II.

The result of cycle 2 showed the total score of post test 2 was 2245 and the mean score was 82.10. The level of ability was excellent. The level of the students' ability in this cycle was better than in the previous cycle. It was proved that there were no students that reached very poor and poor level. There was only 1 student or 3.57% reached the mediocre level. Then, 10 students or 35.71% were in good level. The last, there were 17 students or 60.71% were in excellent level. Fortunately, there was none of them who reached the poor level. In other words, the improvement occurs in the post test 2.

It was also supported by the students' speaking skill skill in Cycle II is better than in Cycle I. In *Grammar*, it is 65.24 (good) in Cycle I but it is 78.10 (good) in Cycle II. Although the level is the same, but the score is improved. Then, the students' speaking skill in *Vocabulary* is 76.19 (good) in Cycle I but it is 83.10 (excellent) in Cycle II. Next, the students' speaking skill in *Pronunciation* was 70.71 (good) in Cycle I but it is 77.86 (good) in Cycle II. The students' speaking ability in *Fluency* is 75.48 (good) in Cycle I but it is 82.38 (excellent) in Cycle II. Finally, the students' speaking ability in *Comprehension* is 79.76 (good) in Cycle I but it is 89.05 (excellent) in Cycle II.

Referring to the above cycle II data, the writer and the collaborator/teacher concluded that *grammar* had the lowest score among the five aspects of students' speaking skills. But, the score of *grammar* increased as well as the score from cycle I to cycle II, and the improvement of the scores was better because the average score was 82.10 and it had passed KKM. In addition, there were 18 students (64.29%) of students who could reach the KKM and there were 10 students (35.71%) who could not reach KKM (78). It means that this technique could improve students' speaking ability and it did not need to be rearranged the next cycle. This evidence showed that the writer has been success to help students at SMA Negeri 11 Pekanbaru to increase the student's speaking ability by applying information gap technique.

As shown on the table, the writer presents the score of the students' speaking ability by applying information gap technique to see the improvement of student's speaking ability in five aspects of speaking on base score and score in each cycle. The improvement of students' speaking ability from pre test to post test in cycle 1 and cycle 2 can be seen in the table below:

Improvement of Students' Speaking Ability in Each Cycle

Score	Ability level	Pre-test (%)	Cycle 1(%)	Cycle 2(%)
81-100	Excellent	3.57	32.14	60.71
61-80	Good	60.71	42.86	35.71
41-60	Mediocre	35.71	25	3.57
21-40	Poor	-	-	-
0-20	Very Poor	-	-	-

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the research was to find out whether the teaching speaking by applying information gap technique technique could improve speaking ability. From the research findings, it can be concluded that: First, the implementation of teaching English in this action research using Information Gap as the teaching technique could improve students' speaking ability of the second year students of SMA Negeri 11 Pekanbaru to speak English both at the first cycle and second cycle. It can be seen from the average score of the students' speaking ability. In the pre-test, the average score was 68.10 while the average score in the post-test 1 was 73.48, and finally improved to be 82.10 in the post-test 2. Second, based on the results of the observations in the previous chapter, it was concluded that applying the procedures of information gap technique in teaching speaking could increase students' interest and motivation to speak and share ideas with their partner in pairs or groups since the core of information gap is a corporation between groups or pairs. Last, using information gap as a teaching technique in English language teaching and learning could also improve students' ability to speak English in term of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In relation to the conclusion above, the writer would like to propose some suggestions that hopefully will be useful for the next writers, the students, the English teachers, and the educational institution. First, the writer is aware that this research is still imperfect, so the next writers are expected to explore this Information Gap technique more deeply in order to obtain the further discussions and more satisfaction about the result of the research. Second, students should be aware that speaking is important in English communication, the students should try or practice to speak individually or in group, both inside and outside of the classroom. Third, the English teachers should learn and be creative to find the way of how to improve speaking using

effective technique, one of them is by using Information Gap technique. The teacher should also give some motivations and explanations about the importance of speaking in English communication or universal communication. Last, the educational institution is expected to give a contribution in improving the students' speaking ability by providing a wide range of facilities and infrastructure needed to support the teaching and learning activities.

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