

Improving Students' Descriptive Speaking Competence by Using Cue Cards at the Grade VIII 2 of Public Junior High School 03 Bengkulu City

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Abstract

This is a classroom action research that was carried out by implementing cue cards as the teaching media in class VIII 2 of Public Junior High School 03 Bengkulu city. This research was focused on whether the cue cards could improve students' descriptive speaking competence and to determine the factors involved. This research was implemented to 36 students (19 female and 17 male) registered in this class. The progress was measured by several tests and some supporting data such as observation checklist, field note, and interview. The result of the research indicates that the improvement of subjects who were able to pass the target score (score ≥ 60) from 0% of students in pre test into 16% of students in post test in cycle 1 and finally becomes 36% of students in cycle 2. However, the factors those influence in improving students' descriptive speaking competence are the students' English proficiency, thinking ability of students, and students' attitude and behavior along the treatment.

Keywords : *improving, descriptive speaking competence, cue cards*

A. Introduction

As stated by Nunan (2003), speaking is the productive oral skill that consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning. This skill cannot be easily acquired by the learners easily. Speaking has various functions. One of them is describing object. This competence refers to the ability of a student to provide a detailed, vivid, word picture of a person, animal, place, or object. It means that the speaker should explain orally a clear vision of the object. Unfortunately, the fact shows that the lack of descriptive speaking competence becomes the most problem at school especially in Junior High School level. One real example can be found in SMPN 03 Kota Bengkulu. Especially in 2nd Grade (class VIII 2), from the English formative test, about 47% of 36 students who can pass the passing grade (7, 00) and the rest were failed.

As stated by Panny Ur (1996: 121), the First problem is inhibition from students' environment. That caused students afraid of speaking English. The second problem is students do not know what to say. Mostly students stand and think too much of what to say in speaking activity. The third problems are low participation of students and mother-tongue use along the speaking class. These all problems somehow caused by the inappropriate media used by teachers at class that cannot cover and develop students' speaking skill especially descriptive speaking competence appropriately. Thus, there must be a proper techniques and medium to teach descriptive speaking at class.

One best medium that can be used is cue card. Cue card is card with words or picture on it, which is used to encourage the students to respond (Harmer, 2001:178-179). This media is interesting, attractive, and it is easy to be made for both students and teacher. In addition, Cue Cards are also clearly visible, which can help the students to describe the object of speaking easily. According to Harmer (2001) pictures really help to reduce preparation time. Sets of pictures can be re-used; especially it can be laminated and applicable at any level. The second advantages are when it comes to using picture stories in class, the key point is not to limit teacher to typical class activities and writing exercises.

Another said that one of the more popular ways to elicit oral language performance in both intensive and extensive levels is a picture-cued (Brown: 2004).

However, some points in selecting appropriate cue cards are important. Harmer (2001) says that there are three qualities of cards that have to be considered by the teachers in choosing Cue Cards. First, cards need to be appropriate not only for the purpose in hand but also for the classes they are being used for. If cards are too childish, the students may not like them. Second, cards should be visible. The students can see the cards clearly. Last, cards have to be durable. Therefore, the use of Cue Cards has to consider the time, visible cards, and cards have to support the students learn easily. Furthermore, O'Malley and Pierce (1996) state some qualifications for precise Cue Cards, pictures should be appropriate for the age and interest level of students. Pictures should be real people rather than cartoon characters in order to ensure appropriate perception. Besides, the picture must be free of cultural bias. And later on in the application, make sure the teachers give a sufficient time for students to examine, analyze and internalize the information given in the picture before speaking performance.

By the assumption related to the lack speaking ability of students and the effectiveness of cue cards, this research is intended to answer these questions:

1. To what extent cue cards can improve students' descriptive speaking competence?
2. What factors influence in improving students' descriptive speaking competence by using cue cards?

As this study conducted in classroom setting, this study follows the form of Classroom Action Research (CAR) which refers to the way of teacher collecting the data about the process of teaching, the way student accepts the material for effective teaching and learning strategy (Mills, 2007). The simplest cycles that researcher can take conducting this classroom action research is divided into four steps. The steps are planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis, cited in O'Brien 1998). In short, the research was started by giving students the pre test to measure Students' pre test point of descriptive speaking competence which later becomes the indicator of successful treatment. The treatment was given along two cycles and there was post test conducted in the end of each cycle.

The respondents of the research are student of 2nd grade (class VIII 2) of SMPN 03 Bengkulu in Academic Year 2011/2012. The participants were 36 students consist of 17 male students and 19 female students. Acting as the collaborator to observe the teaching element from teacher point of view, the researcher got help from the English teacher, Eva Eliza, S.Pdi. The data was obtained from test in form of speaking performance, interview, observation checklist, and field notes. The data is analyzed and displayed in both quantitative and qualitative approach. The quantitative data such as test score is displayed in the table while the qualitative data obtained through interview, observation and field note, is explained in the result and discussion section.

B. Finding

The result showed that there were improvements in students' descriptive speaking performance in grade VIII 2 of SMPN 3 Bengkulu city. First improvement can be proved by the increasing score. Another improvement was even students' participation in speaking activity. The next was the high motivation in speaking. The last was students talked a lot in speaking class.

However, from the scoring aspect, there were weakness and unsatisfied result of this research. One of the unsatisfied result of students' scorer from pre test, post test in cycle 1, and post test in cycle 2 can be displayed as follow:

Table. 1 The scores in Pre test, Post test in cycle 1 and Post test in cycle 2

Score Range	Pre test	Post test in cycle 1	Post test in cycle 2
0-20	6%	6%	3%
21-40	47%	36%	22%
41-60	25%	44%	50%
61-80	-	6%	14%
81-100	-	-	-

While the number of students who could achieve the target score (score ≥ 60 with total number of 60% of subject/ 22 students) can be seen as follow:

Table. 2 The Percentage of Students who Achieve the Target Score

Pre test	Post test in cycle 1	Post test in cycle 2
0%	16% (6 students)	36% (13 students)

Based on the result above, it can be concluded that the research was not successful yet to improve students' descriptive speaking competence into 60% of total subjects in grade VIII 2 of SMPN 3 Bengkulu city.

C. Discussion

Many factors were involved in this case. Firstly is the insufficient capability of students in English especially speaking skill. As stated by Brown, speaking must consider some aspects such pronunciation, fluency and accuracy so that the action can be happened and understandable. While from the treatments and scoring, the students' score showed the lack capability in those aspects. Moreover, speaking is an interactive process of conducting meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. This means that speaking cannot be separated from the other skills. Students in this class were not good in speaking could be affected by the lack of other skills as well. The fact showed that this class got troubles in full English explanation. But, these do not occur to whole class, the result showed 36% students had the good foundation of English so, these students can be improved along the treatment.

The second factor is the inner motivation of students toward English especially speaking interest. From two cycles, observer took notes that some students did not pay attention and did not study seriously in English class. These conditions worsen the understanding of students to the material given. In opposite, the research that was conducted by Suryani, 2010 was successful in improving student understanding in spoken descriptive because the motivation in speaking was high and what the previous researcher measured was the understanding of students to spoken descriptive text. So, the consideration between the previous and the current research is different.

The third factor is the lack of students' discipline along the treatments. Students did not work hard and cheat to each other. These affected negatively to students' progress. Group work without discipline and good control could not possibly create the chance for students to be dependent to smart students and dishonest in finishing the task. In additional as claimed by Harmer, the advantages of cue cards using is not to limit the typical class activities and writing exercises, students can as much spoken English practice as possible. But the fact found is students did not discipline along the class. The topic of speaking often

out of the cue cards focus and the use of English were mostly rare. The use of mother tongue is not clearly banned in English class.

The last problems occurred to certain students who did not join the treatments fully. Some of students missed the meetings while others did not participate in pre test or post test. This condition gave bad effects to the performance and progress. The real competence of those students in descriptive speaking could not be explored well. There was also underestimated attitude in descriptive speaking recording that showed by some students that influences badly to the performance and the scoring as the consequence.

Although the using of cue cards cannot improve students' descriptive speaking competence in grade VIII 2 of SMPN 3 Bengkulu city as the target stated, it does not mean that this media fail. The result showed that 36% of students were improved in descriptive speaking competence. This media can give the even opportunity to practice and develop students' descriptive speaking competence (Brown, 2004). The motivation of speaking is also increased because students know exactly what to say. Besides, the implementation of cue cards in speaking class proves that students became active and interesting in speaking English as stated by Hamalik (1998).

Moreover, almost 80% of students' score increased in two post tests although the increasing was not as high as expected. Because of that, it can be assumed that the problems are only the limitation of the time. The additional meetings are absolutely able to fix the problems. So, to answer the research question of to what extent cue card can improve students' descriptive speaking, the answer is the using of cue cards in improving students' descriptive speaking competence in grade VIII 2 of SMPN 3 Bengkulu city is not failed but the progress is not as high as expected.

As conclusion, the factors involved in improving students' descriptive speaking competence are the capability of English that consist of integrated skills and language element such as pronunciation, grammatical comprehension, vocabulary mastery, and fluency. The second is the thinking ability of students to process the visual information into verbal and convey the meaning. Third is the attitude or behavior towards speaking activities that consist of motivation in speaking English, seriousness or fully attention, discipline, and the practicing time to drill the speaking skill.

D. Conclusion

The first objective of this research is to find out whether cue cards can improve students' descriptive speaking competence in grade VIII 2 of SMPN 3 Bengkulu city. While the other is to determine the factors those influence the improving students' descriptive speaking competence itself. After conducting the research, researcher is able to clarify that the using of cue cards is able to improved students' descriptive speaking competence with certain conditions and progress.

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As conclusion, the research showed that the using cue cards to improve students' descriptive speaking competence at grade VIII 2 of SMPN 3 Bengkulu city is an effective and practicable media.

Suggestions

For the better implementation of this research, future researcher can consider some factors as follow:

1. Cue cards is good and suitable media in teaching descriptive speaking if only the condition of selecting and implementing the media can be fulfilled, such as students' capability in English, students' thinking ability, discipline and time allocation.
2. In implementing cue cards as the media to increase students' descriptive speaking competence teacher should put attention to build students' grammatical understanding that is useful in sentences construction to improve students' descriptive speaking competence by using cue cards.
3. To minimize the wrong pronunciations in speaking activity, teachers should speak English a lot to model the good pronunciation for students.

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