The Use of Debate Method to Improve Students' Speaking Skill

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Abstract

Speaking is a crucial part of the language learning process. However, many students find speaking as one of the most difficult skills in English. Therefore, the researcher wants to improve the students' speaking ability through the suitable teaching method, in this case the debate. The objective of this research referring to the research problem is to find out how the debate method can improve speaking ability. Based on the research problem and the relevant theory, the hypothesis of this research is described as follows: Debate method improves the speaking ability of the fifth semester students of Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember in the 2017 / 2018 academic year by developing their activeness in expressing oral argument logically in a systematic way. The design of this research is classroom action research. The research subject is the fifth semester class consisting of 34 students. Test and observation are used to obtain the data. The data collection involved a number of instruments namely Test of Speaking English and Speaking Rubric. It was then evaluated by using speaking rubric covering fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Debate method improves the students' speaking ability in two cycles from M = 61.84 in Cycle 1 to M = 70.34 in Cycle 2 and the percentage of students scored ≥ 60 (E = 66.67%) in Cycle 1 to (E = 83.34%) in Cycle 2. The observation result from 56.15% students' activeness in Cycle 1 to 85.29% students' activeness in Cycle 2. Based on the data above, there was significant impact of Cycle 2 implementation on the students' speaking ability. It can be concluded that debate method is able to improve the students' speaking ability.

Keywords: debate method, speaking ability

Introduction

The teaching of speaking skill is important due to the large number of students who want to study English in order to be able to use English for communicative purposes. It is clear that speaking is a crucial part of the language learning process (Kayi, 2006). However, many students find speaking as one of the most difficult skills. It was supported by Shumin (2002) who stated that spoken language production or learning to talk in foreign language is often considered to be one of the most difficult aspects in language learning, because students must be able to use the language appropriately in social interactions. However, public speaking is one of the skills that can be developed and improved.

Many students in Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember (later refers to UMJ) still cannot speak English fluently including the fifth semester students. One of the most widespread problems among learners of foreign languages, including the students of class VA, is their considerably lower speaking performance when compared to their passive knowledge. Those learners are not able to express their thoughts and opinions satisfactorily. Major problems of the students are poor grammatical structure, poor self-confident, and lack of vocabulary, which are caused by the lack of practice. The average speaking score is 60 in which the minimum score set by the school is ≥ 70. Most of the students still have problem in organizing and expressing their ideas. They were also still afraid of making mistakes because of the difficulties in pronouncing English words and organizing the structure. The expected score is 70 and by the pre-test the researcher found that the percentage of students who got score ≥ 70 is only 40% (11 students) and the average speaking score 65.00.

One method which is usually used in teaching speaking is Debate Method. Debate is a broader form of argument than **logical argument**, which only examine the   consistency   from factual   argument,   which   only examine what is or isn't the case or rhetoric which is a technique of persuasion (Fallahi, 2007:84). Teaching debate skills to students presents a unique set of challenges.

Aside   from   the   fact   that debate is a   sophisticated form   of interactive   discourse (which can even challenge   many   native   speakers)   debating could   be   defined   as   "mission impossible" from   a   cultural perspective (Lieb, 2008:73). Because   debate   is   built   upon disagreement,   it   could   be   seen as imposing   an individualistic   communication style   on learners   who value   more harmonious,   non-adversarial types of interaction. Yet, if presented carefully and systematically, debate skills can be effectively taught, leading to enlighten and enrich learning experience. The objective of this research referring to the research problem is to find out how the debate method can improve the English speaking ability of the students. In debating, students express their argument by speaking, so in this case, speaking ability is one of the most important factors in conducting a success Debate. However, this assumption needs to be proved, and will be proved through this research.

The Steps to Apply Debate in Teaching Speaking

Debate or debating is a formal method of interactive and representational argument (Koshy & Halvorson, 2002). Because it is an argument, it enables students to formulate opinions, develop reasons and evidence, offer refutations, and ultimately participate in the debate process

If a debate is a form of argument then it logically follows that there must be something to argue about (Kretsch, 2009:2). Related to the statement above, the first step to do is defining the topic. Topic is often about current issues of public importance ("That Jember should have self-government") or about general philosophies or ideas ("That beauty is better than brains"). All topics begin with the word "That". As in other arguments there are two sides to any topic.

Secondly, define the team. The team that agrees with the topic is called the AFFIRMATIVE and the team that disagrees with the topic is called the NEGATIVE. To facilitate these goals, debaters work together in teams of three, and must research both sides of each issue. Each side is given the opportunity to offer arguments and direct questions to the opposing side.
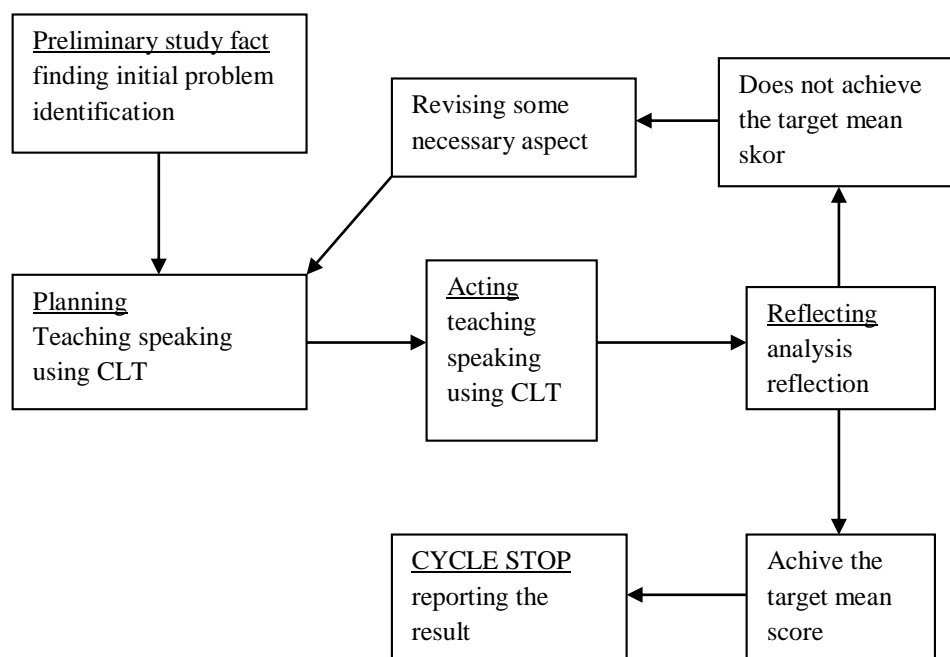
Thirdly, define the job. The first speakers of each side have 6 minutes to present their constructive cases, or in the negatives case a rebuttal. The other 4 speakers each have 5 minutes to deliver a speech supporting their team's main arguments. There is also an allotted 3 minutes after each of the first 4 speeches for cross-examination, during which the opposing team has a chance to clarify what was stated in the preceding speech (Fallahi, 2007:85). Finally, the students perform the debate. Each member of the team needs to reinforce the team line and be consistent with what has already been said and what will be said by the other members of their team.

Research Method

The idea of Classroom Action Research is that educational problems and issues are best identified and investigated where the action is; at the classroom and school level (Sagor, 2009:1). This research was intended to improve the speaking ability by using debate method for the fifth semester students of UMJ. Therefore, the kind of this research is class room action research. Watts (1985:118) in Ferrance (2006:1) states that action research is a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research.

Classroom Action Research is a model of professional development in which educators study student learning related to their own teaching, a process that allows them to learn about their own instructional practices and to continue to improve student learning (Ferrance, 2006:1). Based on the research design, the actions of the research are implemented in four stages, in which explained by Lewin Elliot (1991:68) as follows: the planning of the action, the implementation of the action, observation and reflection of the action. The design of this action research is illustrated in the following diagram.

Diagram 1: The Model of Classroom Action Research
(Adapted from Elliot, 1991:70)

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┌─────────────────────┐                          ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Preliminary study   │      ┌──────────────┐    │ Does not achieve     │
│ fact                │      │ Revising some│◄───│ the target mean      │
│ finding initial     │      │ necessary    │    │ skor                 │
│ problem             │      │ aspect       │    │                      │
│ identification      │      └──────────────┘    └──────────────────────┘
└─────────┬───────────┘             ▲                        ▲
          │                         │                        │
          ▼                         │                        │
┌─────────────────────┐    ┌─────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Planning            │    │ Acting      │    │ Reflecting           │
│ Teaching speaking   │───►│ teaching    │───►│ analysis             │
│ using CLT           │    │ speaking    │    │ reflection           │
│                     │    │ using CLT   │    │                      │
└─────────────────────┘    └─────────────┘    └──────────────────────┘
                                                          │
          ┌─────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────┐
          │ CYCLE STOP          │    │ Achive the           │
          │ reporting the       │◄───│ target mean          │
          │ result              │    │ score                │
          └─────────────────────┘    └──────────────────────┘
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The researcher observed the class and interviewed the students to investigate whether they had problem in speaking ability. Based on the interview, the students were still unable to use the target language to fulfill the need in their daily activity and their speaking score were still low. The pre-test result could not reach the mean of students standard passing score (M = 65) and the requirement of students scoring ≥ 60 (E = 75%). Based on the pre-test, the students' speaking ability needed to be improved.

After implementing the classroom action research, the researcher conducted the test in each cycle. To compare the test result between pretest and the tests of each cycle, the writer calculating the students mean score of the test, calculating the class percentage, and calculating the students' improvement score from pretest to posttest 1 and posttest 2 into percentage.

Result and Discussion

The Description of Action in Cycle I

Cycle 1 was carried out through certain procedures with cyclical model which consists of four activities (1) The planning of the action, (2) The implementation of the action, (3) Observation, and (4) Reflection of the action. (Elliot, 1991:68)

The first step in doing action research was planning the action. The researcher and the English teacher discussed when the action could be started and how was the best way to implement speaking ability using Debate Method in class IV A. The researcher and the English teacher also discussed about the material that would be given to the students, the news item text. Then, the researcher prepared the lesson plan for teaching learning process. The implementation of the action was done in three meetings and each meeting provided 90 minutes.

The lesson plans of Cycle 1 were made based on Competency Based Curriculum (KTSP). The action was debating the current issues referring to the news item text. The topics of the debate were based on the text given.

Observation was done by using checklist paper. It was done in every teaching learning process of speaking ability through the debate method. It focused on the students' active and passive performance and the performance indicators of the active students were:
1. asking question,
2. answering question,
3. paying attention to the lesson and
4. Performing the tasks.

The students were considered active when they fulfilled at least two of the indicators. In this case, the English teacher as the observer did the observation activity by sitting at the back of students' seat in the classroom, and the researcher as the teacher. Based on the calculation of the observation result in Cycle 1, 56.15% of 34 students were actively involved in the teaching learning process.

Table 1: The Average of Observation Checklist in Cycle 1

Meeting	Active
Meeting 1	(16/32) X 100% = 50%
Meeting 2	(16/28) X 100% = 57.14%
Meeting 3	(19/31) X 100% = 61.29%
Total	168.43%
Average	**56.15%**

This means that the requirement of 75% of the students' active involvement in the teaching learning process of speaking ability was not yet fulfilled. It can be concluded that the students did not give optimum response, or most of them were passive. Most of them were paying attention to the lesson but not performing the task yet. In other words, teaching speaking through the debate method in Cycle 1 was not successful.

The reflection was done after calculating the students' score of speaking test of the debating class. The item of evaluation was made based on the Competency Based Curriculum in the form of oral test. The speaking test was conducted to measure the students' fluency and accuracy in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar in speaking. The topic was to give opinion whether Indonesian people should use SNI helmet or not. Thirty students were present from 34 students. From the test result, 20 students got ≥ 60 and 10 students got ≤ 60 in speaking ability.

Table 2: The Result of Speaking Test in Cycle 1

The Data Results	Cycle 1
The mean score of speaking test	61.84
The percentage of the students who scored ≥ 60	66.67%

The mean score was 61.84 and the percentage of students who scored ≥ 60 was 66.67%. Based on the above table, teaching English through debate method in cycle one could not reach the mean of students standard passing score (M = 65) and the requirement of students scoring ≥ 60 (75%). Based on the speaking test result of Cycle 1, it can be concluded that the standard requirement of the mean score and the percentage score of the student in speaking ability was not achieved yet. It was because debate was a new method for the students, and they weren't used to expressing their opinion orally. Indeed, speaking needs a lot of practice. Furthermore, the students didn't have enough vocabulary so it's difficult for them to arrange the sentences properly. The action in Cycle 2 needed improvement by giving more practice and more challenging topics to the students.

The Description of Action in Cycle 2

In Cycle 2, the researcher gave the students more challenging topics and tasks which need their activeness in the classroom. As the first step in Cycle 1 the researcher and the English teacher discussed about the suitable material that would be given to the students. The implementation of the action was done in three meetings and each meeting provided 90 minutes. It was hoped that students would be more actively involved in the teaching learning process. The implementation of the action in Cycle 2 was revised based on the problem found in Cycle 1. It was expected that after implementing the action in Cycle 2, the results of the students' score in speaking ability would be better than the first one. The class was more conductive as the students have practiced more and they became more familiar with the debate method. The researcher asked the students to find some news item text from internet or English paper, then the researcher chose one topic to be used on the debating process.

The evaluation process through observation by using checklist paper was also done in Cycle 2. It was done along with the teaching learning process of speaking ability through the debate method. The English teacher as observer did the observation activity by sitting at the back of students' seat in the classroom, and the researcher

as the teacher. The performance indicators of the active students were the same as in Cycle 1. Based on the calculation of the observation result in Cycle 2, 85.29% of 34 students were active to join the teaching learning process of speaking ability.

Table 3: The Average of Observation Checklist for Cycle 2

Meeting	Active
Meeting 1	(26/34) X 100% = 76.47%
Meeting 2	(27/34) X 100% = 79.41%
Meeting 3	(32/32) X 100% = 100%
Total	255.88%
Average	**85.29%**

From the above table, it can be concluded that the requirement of students' active involvement in the teaching learning process of speaking ability (75%) had already been fulfilled. In Cycle 2, the students were more actively involved in the teaching learning process than in the action in Cycle 1. Teaching English speaking ability by using debate method could improve the students speaking ability because it could reach the requirement of students' active involvement in the teaching learning process of speaking ability (75%).

The reflection was done after calculating the score of Cycle 2 test. The researcher asked the students to explain the advantages and disadvantages of smoking (based on the topics discussed in the first meeting of the second cycle). Thirty students were present from 34 students. Based on the test result, 25 students got ≥ 60 and 9 students got ≤ 60 in speaking ability.

Table 4: The Result of Speaking Test in Cycle 2

The Data Results	**Cycle 2**
The mean score of speaking test	70.34
The percentage of the students who scored ≥ 60	83.34%

The mean score was 70.34 and the percentage of students who scored ≥ 60 was 83.34%. It means that teaching English through debate method in Cycle 2 could reach the mean of students standard passing score (M = 65) and the requirement of students scoring ≥ 60 (75%). There was significant impact of Cycle 2 activities application on the students' speaking ability and there are 22 students got better score than in the Cycle 1. From the data above, it can be concluded that the requirement in this research had already been achieved. The action can be stopped in Cycle 2. In conclusion, the debate method is able to improve the speaking ability by developing their activeness in expressing oral argument logically in a systematic way. It could help the students to speak English fluently, accurately in pronunciation and vocabulary and it is worth being carried out for the speaking class.

Conclusion

The use of debate method is able to improve the fourth semester students' speaking ability at Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember by developing their activeness in expressing oral argument logically in a systematic way because in debating, students are not only shouting arguments. Their arguments must be supported with facts and it must be done systematically in a debate procedure. Because it is an argument, it enables students to formulate opinion logically by developing reasons and evidence. If students often do the debate, it will increase their vocabulary and their confidence as well, and they will be able to speak English fluently.

Debate method improves the students' speaking ability in two cycles from M = 61.84 in Cycle 1 to M = 70.34 in Cycle 2 and the percentage of students scored ≥ 60 (E = 66.67%) in Cycle 1 to (E = 83.34%) in Cycle 2. The observation result from 56.15% students' activeness in Cycle 1 to 85.29% students' activeness in Cycle 2.

Table 5: The Result of Speaking Test and Observation

Type of Data	**Pre Test**	**Cycle One**	**Cycle Two**
The mean score of speaking test	56.13	61.84	70.34

The percentage of the students scored ≥ 60	38.71%	66.67%	83.34%
The observation result	-	56.15%	85.29%

Based on the above table, the test result in Cycle 1 is better than the pre test, but the standard requirement has not been achieved yet. There are several possibilities, they are as follows:
1.   students do not have enough vocabulary
2.   lack of practice and confidence
3.   lack of questioning and reasoning skills

In Cycle 2, the researcher gives more practice and more challenging topics to the students in order to improve their activeness and their speaking ability. There was significant impact of Cycle 2 implementation on the students' speaking ability compare to the result of the pre-test and Cycle 1. It can be concluded that the debate method can improve the students' speaking ability.

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