

**IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN ASKING AND GIVING
INFORMATION BY USING INFORMATION GAP**

AN ARTICLE

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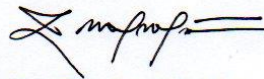
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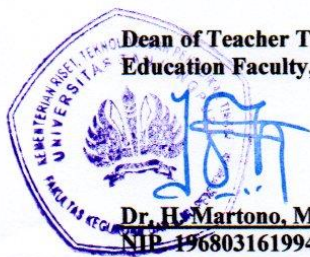
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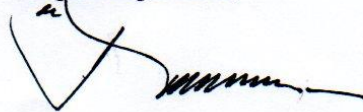
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IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN ASKING AND GIVING INFORMATION BY USING INFORMATION GAP

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Abstract

This research was aimed to know how Information Gap Activities improved students' speaking in asking and giving information on the Seventh Grade Students of SMP Adisucipto in Academic Year 2016/2017. The research was conducted using Classroom Action Research in three cycles. The research participants were the English teacher and 14 students of the Seventh Grade. The data were collected through field notes, students' speaking performance, and teacher's interview. The results showed that students' speaking skills in asking for and giving information improved from cycle 1 to cycle 3. Students' vocabulary improved through preparation of information gap, dividing students into two groups, and forming pairs to find required information supported by other strategies such as using pictures, using a shopping catalogue, sorting information from text, and using grid. Students' ability in asking questions of specific information improved through preparation of Information Gap Activities and forming pairs to find required information supported by other strategies such as introducing questions-answers together and using grid. Meanwhile, students' activeness improved through all of the steps in Information Gap Activities. Forming pairs to find required information gave the students chances to practice their speaking skill in asking and giving Information which improved students' willingness to speak and reduces students' shyness.

Keywords: Information gap activities, asking for and giving information, speaking.

INTRODUCTION

In KTSP curriculum 2006, speaking for learners in the age of early young adolescence such as seventh grade students are targeted to accomplish certain literacy. According to BSNP (2006), it was stated that the speaking target of junior high school level is on functional level to communicate in daily life. The basic competence of students speaking on functional text of shopping list required the students to mention things on the shopping list and to ask about the information of it. In fact, the English teacher of SMP Adisucipto stated that the students of the seventh grade students found common problems on students regarding speaking.

Based on observation on seventh grade students of SMP Adisucipto, it was found that students' problems in speaking skill was affected most by knowledge factors such as insufficient vocabulary and words construction. Hence, the students had difficulties to express their meaning in verbal conversation which

made them not able to reproduce well utterances. This condition also affected students in comprehending spoken interaction. It was indicated in the classroom when the teacher asked about the content of information from students' speaking performance, most of students said, "*Ndak tau, Miss. Tak paham.*"(FN, August 27th, 2016). It means that the students still could not relate information during speaking. Moreover, the students were not eager to speak English. It was indicated by their face about the disagreement when they were asked to speak in the classroom. In addition students' achievements were still low.

On their previous speaking lesson, the teacher applied teaching technique to overcome students' speaking problems by directly translating vocabularies and asked them to memorize them. It was quite good for students to enrich their vocabulary for their speaking, however, students' speaking ability in recognizing the meaning of vocabulary was not

improved well. Hughes (2003) argued that providing context makes the task more authentic and may help activate a memory of the word.

Referring to the problems, the writer and the English teacher then discussed about an alternative solution to the students' problems. The writer then propose information gap activities to helps students in improving their speaking skills in asking and giving information. Information gap activities is a teaching techniques from communicative language teaching were the students need to use verbal English to complete their task. Nation (2009) illustrated the model of information gap activities: (1) Preparation; the preparation of information gap activities can be done individually, with the help of guide sheets, or in group, (2) Information gap; (a) The learner are divided into groups (group A and group B were given a slight different sheets. (b) The students form pairs with someone from group A and someone from group B in each pair. Meanwhile, Thornbury (2005) stated that the knowledge gap in Information Gap Activity can only be bridged using the language. Therefore, by using the gap of information, it provides learners a chance to practice vocabulary in speaking and to move actively in finding the information required.

Other studies support that information gap activities improve students speaking and encouraged them to speak English. Sartika (2016) stated that Information Gap Activities improved more than 20% for speaking aspects; pronunciation, grammar, lexical, speakers' intention, and general meaning. Meanwhile, Ismaili & Bajrami (2016) claimed that after the implementation, the students felt more confident in using English during speaking.

Based on the research background, this research was conducted to answer this question: How does Information Gap Activities improve

the language items of speaking skills on the seventh grade students of SMP Adisucipto in Academic Year 2016/2017 in asking and giving information?, and the specific research questions: (1) How do Information Gap Activities improve students' vocabulary in speaking of asking and giving information?, (2) How do Information Gap Activities improve students' grammatical construction in speaking of asking and giving information?, (3) How do Information Gap Activities improve students' learning skills in teaching and learning process?

METHODS

The methodology of the research included form of research, procedure of research, subject of research, setting of research, data collection, and analysis. The writer used classroom action research and took both qualitative data and quantitative data. Burns and Richard (2009) stated that Classroom Action Research is a research method taking place in teachers' classroom, involving a cycle of activities centering on identifying a problem issue, formulating a strategy to address the issue, trying out the strategy, and observing its effects. Therefore, each cycle of Classroom Action Research is clearly planned, since action is an integral process of action research (McNiff et al., 2003).

In the implementation of classroom action research, the writer followed the four phase procedure. Kemmis and McTaggart (cited in Burns, 2010) divided the procedures of classroom action research into planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Those process can be continued until the outcomes achieved satisfactory. The frame of cycles can be seen on the following diagram.

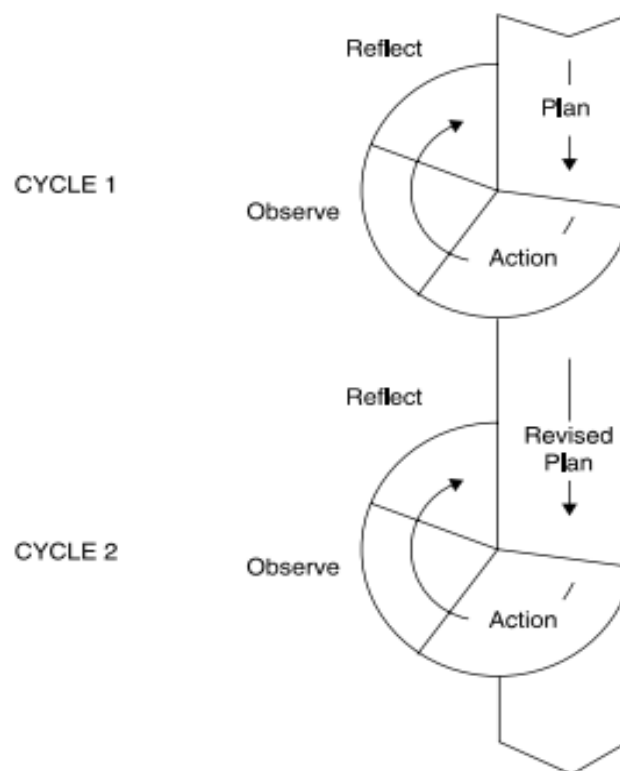


Figure 1. Classroom Action Research Cycles

Planning

In the planning stage, the writer prepared all of the preparation to conduct the research. Those preparation included; (1) conducting a preliminary study in SMP Adisucipto, (2) Identifying problems in the classroom, (3) Formulating problems, (4) discussing research planning with the English teacher, (5) preparing all of the instruments for conducting the research such as lesson plan, field notes, and recordings to obtain the data.

Acting

In the acting stage, the activities included; (1) Implementing information gap activities in the classroom by the English teacher, (2) observing teaching and learning process using field notes by the writer, (3) recording students' speaking performance, (4) interviewing the English teacher.

Observing

In the observing stage, the writer gathered the all of the data from the acting stage. After that the writer analyzed those data.

Reflecting

In the reflecting stage, the writer made reflection based on the result of observing stage. The reflecting stage represented the strengths and the weaknesses of the overall cycle. It was the time whether the writer and the teacher made innovation for the next cycle or considered to stop the cycle.

In this research, the writer took 14 seventh grade students of SMP Adisucipto and one English teacher as the subjects of research. Students' result were evaluated through all process information gap activities during teaching and learning in the classroom.

The techniques and tools of data collection are described as follows. The writer used observation technique using field notes to record the development of students in their learning process during implementation of information gap activities. Other data was obtained using documentation techniques such as recording students' speaking performance, the recordings then be analyzed using speaking rubric to obtained students' scores. The writer also collected photographs during the research.

Meanwhile, Interview was also use to obtain the data from teachers' perspective.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The research finding showed that the students had great improvement from cycle 1 to cycle 3. It can be seen from the process of students as well as the result of students speaking from cycle 1 to cycle 3. Based on the result of data analysis, it was found that Information Gap Activities gave students improvement on students' speaking skills focused on language items; vocabulary and words construction. The improvement on students' speaking skills can be seen from the development on students' learning process as well as the results. There were several steps of information gap activities, supported by some additional strategies on cycle 2 and cycle 3, implemented to solve the students' problems.

Students Speaking Skills of Vocabulary's Improvement in Asking and Giving Information Orally

After implementing information gap activities in three cycles, it was found that students' vocabulary had some improvement. It was showed by the students' performance in labelling and negotiating the meaning of vocabulary of shopping list materials on oral interaction were better from cycle 1 to cycle 3. The improvement on students' vocabulary can be seen from the activities done. There were also some additional strategies combined in the steps of information gap activities; (1) the students' vocabulary enriched during preparation of information gap activities using pictures. There were many students who were able to correlate the vocabulary during this stage. (2) the students were more enthusiastic in exploring vocabulary using shopping catalogue. (3) the students were able to sort information from text in groups. (4) the students were able to practice vocabulary orally using pictures and grid by forming pairs.

Information Gap Activities Improved Students' Speaking Skills of Grammatical Construction

Students' Ability on using the certain pattern to ask questions in asking for specific information was improved by applying preparation of Information Gap Activities and forming pairs supported by some additional strategies such as Introducing Questions-Answers together by the teacher and using Grid. This activity was done in the preparation of information gap stage. Meanwhile, the students were able to practice asking for information by forming pairs and using grid. In this activity, the students reconstructed utterance for asking for information related to shopping list.

Information Gap Activities Technique Improve the Seventh Grade Students' Activeness during Teaching and Learning Process

The students' activeness in asking and giving information orally improved during teaching and learning process by applying the Information Gap Activities. In cycle 1, there were only four students (0.33% of the total students in the classroom) who responded to the teacher during activity of brainstorming while showing pictures by the teacher. Meanwhile, in cycle 2 and cycle 3, More than 50% of the students were actively responded to the teacher. Students' attention to the teacher's explanation was always high from cycle 1 to cycle 3.

Dividing students into two equal groups Roles A and Roles B are one part of Information Gap Activities. This activity gave the students reason for the need to speak using English. Setting the students into roles also let the students know that they had a responsibility to actively involved in the speaking activities prepared. In addition, it also gave the students some responsibility to listen to their partner during speaking.

Since it was done in pairs, this activity improved students' confidence and reduces shyness. The activity of asking and giving information in Information Gap Activities also improved students' willingness to communicate finding the lack of information. It was indicated by their speaking production. In cycle 1, the teacher and the students were still getting used to the Information Gap Activity procedure. However, in cycle 3, the students

looked more confident during speaking asking and giving information.

Discussion

Based on the findings, the writer tends to deliberate some major points of the research. From Cycle 1 to cycle 3, students' vocabulary (nouns and its s) and grammar (patterns) in

asking for and giving information orally showed some improvement. Based on the result of analysis of students speaking assessment, the students' improvement can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Students Score in Cycle 1 - Cycle 3

Students Code	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
A1	40	60	73,3
A2	40	60	60
A3	33,3	46,67	40
A4	40	46,67	53,3
A5	73,3	86,67	86,67
A6	80	86,67	80
A7	66,67	-	60
A8	66,67	-	66,67
A9	60	73,3	80
A10	60	53,3	66,67
A11	46,67	66,67	66,67
A12	53,3	60	60
A13	33,3	46,67	-
A14	40	53,3	-

Based on the table above, the research findings showed that there were improvement on students speaking performance from cycle 1 to cycle 3. There were 50% of students met the standard score 65 on cycle 3. In cycle 1, there were 28.57% of students met the standard score. The percentage of students who met the standard score increase in cycle 2 42.86%. Meanwhile, the students who met the standard score in cycle 3 were the highest 64.3%. Therefore, the teacher and the writer decided to stop the cycle on cycle 3.

Moreover, there were some students who made better improvement from cycle 1 to cycle 3. One of them is Student A1. The following is some part of the transcript from the students' recordings.

Cycle 1

A2: Do you have jar of honey?

A1: No.

A2: Do you have umm.. can of coke, cake?

A1: No.... (A1 laugh) Yes. I do.

A2: How much it cost (kots)?

A1: Five .. thousand rupiah.

Cycle2

A1: Name. Rina. What to buy?

A2: Apple. How much how many?

A1: one kilogram.

A2: Where to buy?

A1: Adinda fruit. Why to buy?

A2: making fruit salad. What to buy?

Cycle 3

A1: What does Andy buy for himself?

A2: training. One pair... pair.

A1: (kau lagi nanya)

A2: How many training does?

A1: Ria department store. What does Andy buy for eh Rina? Oh bukan... how many bottles of shopping does Andy buy?

A2: two.

(recordings, October, 15th, 22nd, 24th, 2016)

The recordings showed that Student A1 did respond to his partner's questions. However, Student A1 did not give correct information. He also did not take turns asking

the partner. Meanwhile, student A1 made effort to take turns asking for and giving information in cycle 2. However, Student A1 made error in his questions. He was able to convey the message but could not made well-constructed sentences. Meanwhile in cycle 3, student A1 finally was able to take turns asking for and giving information using the pattern and vocabulary learned.

There were also some students who get scores higher than the others on each cycle. One of them is students A5 and A6. The students' speaking transcript could be seen on Appendix 3. On the other hand, there were also students who still had difficulties and need more attention from the teacher.

Furthermore, based on the observation and analysis of students' speaking scores in cycle 1, the students still had difficulties with vocabulary aspect. When the teacher showed pictures of a shop, the students could not spontaneously respond to the teacher. Consequently, only a few students who responded. On the other hand, students paid much attention when the teacher explaining materials to build their context. Unfortunately, even though the students were given certain patterns for asking questions, the students still made some grammatical error in asking information orally.

Therefore, the teacher and the writer made innovation to the lesson plan from cycle 1 to cycle 3 to improve students' vocabulary and forming questions. There were changes in using additional strategies on Preparation Times of Information Gap and Split Information of Information Gap from cycle 1 to cycle 3. The writer and the teacher agreed to use text in cycle 2 in order to make the students easier to prepare them in giving information. However, the students were not able to comprehend the information from the text by themselves. This condition occurred because the students did not familiar yet with English vocabulary. They looked more enthusiastic when the teacher introduced the vocabulary using pictures. Therefore, the writer and the teacher decided to change back the strategy from text into pictures again for cycle 3. Meanwhile, the improvement of students' ability in asking for information

was improved from doing the question-answer activity.

The students more enthusiastic to learn vocabulary using picture rather than text. It was happening comparing to text on cycle 3, pictures in cycle 1 and a shopping catalog worked better in enriching students' vocabulary. The students looked excited in exploring the pictures.

Based on interview with the teacher on each cycle, the teacher stated that the students were more comfortable to speak English. In the first cycle, the students seemed really shy to speak, however, in the last cycle, the students looked enjoyed in asking and giving information orally.

Furthermore, Information Gap Activities increase students' chances of using English which made the students more active in speaking activity. It was due to the allocating role which gave the students the responsibility to speak. The students also had to prepare their selves to use English in order to find the required information.

By dividing into student A and student B, the students had some responsibility which made them actively involved in the teaching and learning activity, especially in asking for and giving information. It was revealed that Information Gap Activities improved students' speaking aspects. However, due to the rigidity of the Information Gap Activities in this research, the students could not correct each other if there were incorrectness of pronunciation, the incorrectness of information, and incorrectness in grammar during asking and giving information orally. Meanwhile, those problems occurred during teaching and learning activities could be minimized by applying those additional strategies which were explained on the description of cycles in research findings.

This research was proved that implementing information gap activities supported by other additional strategies successfully helped the students and teacher in improving speaking problems of the seventh grade students of SMP Adisucipto.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the previous discussion, there were some points could be highlighted: (1) students' speaking skills in asking and giving information improved through implementing Information Gap Activities on the classroom action research. The improvement can be seen from the qualitative results which supported by the quantitative results on students speaking performance. It could be inferred that students' vocabulary improved through following the steps of information gap activities such as preparation of information gap, dividing students into equals groups, and forming pairs in asking and giving information. However, information gap activities were supported by some additional strategies such as using pictures, sorting information from text, and using a shopping catalogue. (2) the words construction was also improved supported by some additional strategies such as introducing questions and answers together and using grid. Students' activeness could be seen from the beginning of the lesson. (3) the activities of information gap mostly make the students work with partners. Pair work activity can increase students' confidence and reduce shyness. Therefore, this activity also developed social capability in gathering information. (4) the students could not correct each other's since the activity was rigid and focused more on conveying messages. (5) the students were actively engaged in the activity asking and giving information because the activities in information gap required them to speak to bridge the gap.

Suggestion

Related to the conclusion, the writer suggests some recommendation to whom this research will be used regarding the topic discussed. Due to the rigidness of Information Gap Activities in this research, the students

could not correct each other's incorrectness of pronunciation and the information required. Therefore, it would be better if the students were given drill activity before doing split information activity. From the implementation of the research in cycle 2, the writer used text and asked the students to sort the information from the text into a blank chart. However, it was difficult for the Seventh Grade Students to comprehend information from text. Therefore, it is better to use pictures and small words rather than text.

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