

USING THE PARTICIPATION POINT SYSTEM IN TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS

By
Muhammad Ihsan*
Asnawi Muslem
Zulfadli A. Aziz

Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh

ABSTRACT

This research was aimed to investigate if there would be a significant difference in achievement between students who were taught EFL speaking skills by using the Participation Point System (PPS) technique and those who were taught by using the discussion technique at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. It was also aimed at finding out the response of the students' towards the use of the PPS in learning speaking skills in a conversation class at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. The participants for this research were 30 non-English first year students in an EFL conversation class at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. Tests and a questionnaire were used to collect the data. The findings from the research showed that the PPS can help the students improve their speaking skills more than the discussion technique in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and expression. The PPS technique encourages the students to participate more in the classroom situation by asking and answering questions, expressing opinions and volunteering for classroom activities. It also creates a better teaching-learning atmosphere in the classroom.

Keywords: *participation point system, speaking skills, experimental study, conversation class*

INTRODUCTION

One of the main problems when teaching speaking skills is that many students do not want to fully participate in the speaking practice.

* Corresponding author: ihsan@santertainment.com

Anxiety, shyness, lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence, afraid of making mistakes, and lack of motivation are believed to be the main problems in speaking (Juhana, 2012).

Language is a method of communication used by humans to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings. It is a way to communicate in social interactions which have essential social roles (Phakiti, 2014). Human organs of speech produce language from the persons thoughts according to Bashir et al. (2011).

English language teaching is often divided into the four domains of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Each aspect of English is equally essential and the development of one area has a tendency to enhance learning in the others (Rabbitt, 2015). There are two ways to deliver the message in communications. It can be produced by writing and/or by speaking. Speaking is the most important skill to master by EFL English learners in order to enhance students learning and other aspects of English.

When students are trying to communicate, they need to assemble their thoughts and encode their ideas into the words and syntactic structures in the target language. Schunk et al. (2008) have stated that speaking skills are in some ways linked to the motivation of the students themselves. Additionally, students who are interested in learning and speaking English will find that their motivation increases gradually. Some of them feel that learning a foreign language completely needs hard work and that there are not many chances to use all those skills in their real life situation.

Green-Demers et al. (2006) have said that lack of motivating conditions in learning activities is also one of the most obvious academic problems for students. They further indicated that this situation could lead to frustration, learning dissatisfaction and could affect their motivation in learning to improve their speaking skills.

Based on the researcher's experience in teaching an EFL conversation class for one year. many students showed lack of motivation when they were asked to speak in the classroom, and they tended to just sit at the back of the class and pretend that they were not there in the class to avoid the situation where they would be asked to speak. This is a big issue in the conversation class because the main point of a conversation class is to help the students to get the chance to speak and to practice their speaking skills. Therefore, the researcher believes that there is a need to find a suitable technique to help students gain self-confidence and to feel more motivated in their conversation

class to achieve the main goal in teaching-learning speaking. This is also in line with Astuti (2013) who stated that most Indonesian students want to speak English communicatively in real life but are afraid to make mistakes in speaking even though they understand English Grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, the lack of motivation to create a welcoming English speaking environment is another factor for the learners in learning speaking. It becomes a severe issue in the conversation class because the main point of the conversation class is to help the students to get chances to speak EFL and to practice their EFL speaking skills. Therefore, the researcher felt that that there was a need to find a suitable technique to help students gain their confidence and to be more motivated in their conversation class to achieve the main goal for the teaching-learning of EFL speaking. By doing so, the conversation class would achieve its main purposes which is to help the students to speak English.

The Participation Point System (PPS), introduced by Hadley (2002), has been used to measure and to assist the progress of students in developing their speaking skills, to make students used to speaking in English and to measure the participation levels of the students. Teachers usually only write the scores for the active learners in their score sheets privately. Consequently, it's only the active students who get the advantage of these scores and the students do not know what their participation level is. Therefore, Hadley (2002) designed the PPS technique, which makes the points for the students who participate become something tangible.

Jeffrey (2004) has stated that the PPS can help passive students participate and communicate in the classroom activities. After noticing the passivity of his students, he decided to use PPS in his classroom. The results from his research showed that his students became much more enthusiastic to participate in all the speaking activities in the class after introducing the Participation Point System technique.

Hadley (2002) and Jeffrey (2003) have found that the PPS has a positive effect, which does not control the students but rather encourages them to reduce their anxiety level in order to communicate effectively in the class. A study conducted by Bess and Bess (2002) showed that PPS can be very effective in assisting students to overcome their anxieties and become more proactive learners in the speaking classroom. Raine (2014) also proved that the students' attitudes towards PPS was positive which was shown from the answers they gave on the questionnaire where the majority of the students agreed

that the PPS was effective in encouraging them to ask questions, answer questions, express opinions, and to volunteer to speak in the classroom activities.

PPS has been proven by Hadley (2002) and by Jeffrey (2003) to be one of the most suitable and effective teaching techniques to improve the students' motivation to speak EFL and to decrease the students' anxiety when practicing speaking. Therefore, the researcher decided to try the use of the PPS technique in her conversation or speaking class in order to try to solve problems she had in her speaking class.

In order to try to solve problems she had in her conversation class, the researcher tried using the PPS technique in order to try to improve the students' speaking skills. PPS is a technique to motivate students' participation in the classroom, especially participation in communication by giving the students something real to talk about. Coins, beads, cards etc. can be used to represent the participation scores of each student in the class (Jeffrey, 2003).

This research was important in order to provide useful information for the teacher, her school and education authorities about any benefits of using PPS in teaching speaking skills and to find out the responses of the students to the application of this technique in the classroom.

Research Questions

1. Will there be any significant difference in the achievements of students from UIN Ar-Raniry who are taught speaking using the PPS technique and those who are taught using the usual technique?
2. What will be the response of the students to the use of PPS for learning speaking in conversation classes at UIN Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking

Language skills that should be mastered by students are reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Speaking is one of the most important skills to master in order to acquire the language fully. Brown (2004) has stated that speaking is a part of the creative construction of linguistic products. Furthermore, Harmer (2007) has claimed that speaking is frequently face-to-face and interactive. Speakers may use non-written language, vocal variety features, for example altering their

tone, emphasizing, whispering, shouting or speaking faster or slower and they also can use body language to add further meaning to the verbal messages. In addition, Cameron (2001) has said that speaking is the active use of language to convey meaning so that another individual can make sense of it. Therefore speaking can be labeled as a productive use of language.

Speaking is the verbal communicative skill in using a language to express thoughts, ideas and feelings. Speaking is a crucial part of everyday verbal communications and is most often used as a first impression of someone's ability in a language. Most people will assess someone's English ability by their speaking skills. Someone who can easily and automatically express his ideas fluently in English will become well-known as a good speaker of English.

Speaking Skills

Heaton (1990) has said that speaking is a complex skill that needs the simultaneous use of different abilities, which commonly develop at different rates. According to Bashir et al. (2011), speaking skills are productive skills in the oral mode. It is like other language skills, but it is more complicated than it seems at first and involves more than just pronouncing written texts.

To conclude, speaking skills are the most challenging part of learning a foreign language and deserve more attention. They are a vital part of language learning and need to be developed gradually, step-by-step.

Teaching Speaking

Teaching speaking is a very crucial part of EFL teaching-learning to make students able to interact with other speakers of English. As stated by Nunan (2015, p. 58), the actual test of a student's ability as a speaker is whether they are able to communicate with other people that use the target language outside of the classroom.

This is in line with what has been stated by Thaine (2005) that practicing the target language regularly is definitely needed in order to get students used to speaking in the new language. The more they practice, the more they can concentrate on what the other speaker expresses and give a proper response to it. Teaching-learning speaking not only consists of giving students practice in the classroom but also focusing on methods and techniques which can assist students to

negotiate meaning and to communicate effectively with other speakers of English.

Teaching-learning speaking EFL must aim for the students to be able to use the English language in communication processes. Hence, the process of teaching-learning EFL speaking should not only focus on controlled and guided activities but also on some free activities to give students opportunities to practice and to develop their own, individual speaking skills.

The main objective of teaching-learning EFL speaking is to make students understand and use their target language. Students need to minimize confusion while delivering their thoughts and ideas to other speakers of English because of problems with their grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. They must also carefully consider the social and cultural background of the listener.

Importance of Teaching-Learning Speaking

Speaking is the process of arranging and producing messages by using the voice, vocabulary, articulation, non-verbal cues and syntax (Cooper, 1985). Teaching-learning speaking is a key aspect in improving the sociolinguistic competence of students in using English as a foreign language. There are some challenges in teaching-learning EFL speaking or conversation. One of them is that the students have little idea what real spoken English language sounds like except from the movies and TV (Pawlak & Waniek-Klimczak, 2015). In teaching-learning speaking, the teacher must not only teach his students the theory about speaking or just give them examples of how to speak or how to use English, but the teacher must guide the students how to learn, use and practice English till they become fluent in it. In this case, the students must practice speaking by themselves. The teacher should make the students interact with other people who can speak English. Speaking is not only the ability to say anything in a language but also the ability to communicate by using that language.

Spoken the English language is an essential skill for students to learn, in order to understand and to communicate, to read and to write, to ask and to answer questions, to express their thoughts and their feelings in English. It is the main form of human communication and the fundamental method of teaching-learning from the early school years up until the highest levels of higher education (Cook, 2000).

Speaking is recognized as the fundamental ability in language communication. Nevertheless, its significance to language learners is

unsurpassed for daily verbal communications. Speaking can assist in language acquisition and lead towards the educational development of many second language learners. All language educators understand that speaking is a vital communications skill for their learners, although not all are aware of how speaking can directly contribute to other significant aspects of their students' achievements (Christine & Debbie, 2007).

Speaking activities require interaction between a person and one or more others. Such interactions happens in a natural situation. In these interactions, speakers not only give short sentences to answer questions from other people but they also provide interactions that use emotions, creativity, agreement or disagreement, sighing, nodding, gesticulating and so on. So the other person will understand what that person has said.

Learning to speak communicatively in a foreign language needs to follow a process. First, the learner needs to understand enough vocabulary and grammar and to have a little knowledge of the language that they are learning. Then they must become accustomed to the sentence patterns and have a basic knowledge for them to use them in expressing their intentions automatically so that the main goal of speaking in the language is achieved.

The students need much practice in order to make them accustomed to the language so that at the more advanced stage the learners can concentrate on what they want to say. If the teacher wants his students to be able to interact better, the teacher must get his students to practice many examples, many times and must give them good models of communication to practice. The teacher must also help his students develop their ability to speak with acceptable grammar and good pronunciation, like an international speaker not like a native speaker as there are so many different varieties of native English speakers e.g.: Cockney, Texan, Queenslander, Irish, Scottish, New Yorker, Canadian, Northern Indian and Philippino. In fact Malaysian contestants regularly won the Toastmasters International recorded World Speaking Championships a few decades ago.

It is important to note that a language teacher should understand the purpose of teaching-learning EFL speaking. It's aim is to make his students able to use English for day-to-day communications. The processes of teaching-learning, therefore, should give more emphasis to free activities: whereas the controlled and guided activities should just be a vehicle for achieving that purpose. Speaking is very important in

our life. According to Melendez et al. (2014, p. 549), speaking EFL is one of the main challenges for a beginner student, and it can lead to frustration for a student at the start of her degree. Hence, it was proposed to conduct a study based on strategies for developing speaking skills at a basic level in order to support and enhance the oral participation of students in their studies.

Functions of Teaching-Learning Speaking

Speaking especially in a language other than our own is quite complex. For that reason, teachers need to focus on the learners and provide them with opportunities to speak by using several strategies for teaching speaking (Nunan, 2015, p. 64). In order to develop strategies for teaching speaking, teachers need to understand the core functions of it in order to find ways for teaching-learning it effectively and efficiently. As stated by Richards (2008, p. 20), a good understanding about the functions of speaking and the different purposes of speaking in daily communication will help teachers in designing speaking activities through instructional materials for second or foreign language learners. Many experts have classified the functions of speaking in human interactions. Brown and Yule (1983) in Richards (2008, p. 21) categorize them into three functions: talk as interaction, talk as transaction, and talk as performance.

Talk as interaction refers to the conversations that people make every day and describes interactions which mainly serve social functions. Talk as transaction refers to situations where the main focus of communication is on what is being said or done. Talk as performance refers to public speaking in front of an audience like a public speech, making an announcement in public, or giving a classroom presentation Richards (2008, p. 22).

The Participation Point System

The Participation Point System (PPS) is a technique of motivating classroom participation, particularly communicative participation by providing students with something tangible while activities are underway to represent their participation scores (Jeffrey, 2003). It is a way of encouraging students to get the confidence they need to be able to communicate in the classroom. It can assist some passive students to become more active and to communicate actively in class activities. Jumiati and Asrina (2013) believe that PPS can improve the students' speaking skills in grammar and vocabulary as well as in fluency.

According to Hadley (2002), the PPS is a technique for motivating students to participate in classroom activities mainly in communicative participation by giving students something tangible (such as discs, marbles, poker chips, etc.) while activities are underway to represent their participation scores. Besides active participation is a must for every student, communicating daily expectations is also a must for every teacher. Thus PPS combines these two in a measurable and tangible way. Each class activity is given various points that students can get as they complete their tasks.

Teaching Speaking Using the Participation Point System

The PPS is a technique to motivate students to participate in the classroom activities. This technique is used to improve students' communicative participation in the classroom by giving students something tangible (such as discs, marbles, poker chips, etc.) while activities are underway. These tangible things then represent the participation scores of the students (Jeffrey, 2003).

Jeffrey (2003) implemented the PPS technique in his class by using glass discs that were each worth one point while a marble was worth three points. He also used gold discs that were worth six points for remarkable and outstanding participation. One point was given to each student who was on time to emphasize the importance of punctuality. He found that punctuality definitely improved when students were rewarded with one point in this way for being on time. Before using this technique, there were always a number of late students, coming into the class after the lesson had started, which was disruptive.

In the first section, the teacher walks around the classroom to check each students' homework and gives one point to each student who has done his/her homework. Additionally, students who volunteer to answer a question while their homework is being checked get one additional point or more if they elaborate the answer. Homework checking only takes around five minutes. Before the class ends, each student's participation score is counted by collecting all discs and marbles.

Bess and Bess (2002) have said that PPS works like this: during the lesson planning, the teacher thinks about planned student behaviors such as speaking in pairs, working in groups, etc. Next, the teacher assigns each task with a number of participation points based on the task. What students are expected to do is clearly spelled out, either

written on the white board or written out in a handout. Students complete each activity in the classroom.

In fact, teaching speaking using Participation Point System can be used in many kinds of ways. Below are the fundamental steps to implement PPS in a classroom as outlined by Raine (2014):

1. Desirable behaviors (asking for opinions, asking questions, volunteering for classroom activities, etc.) are assigned a participation point score;
2. Students who participate in desirable actions are rewarded with a physical representation of the points value (coins, beads, or tokens);
3. At the end of each class, the total participation points received by each learner is counted;
4. Special prizes are awarded at the end of each semester for the students who collect the most points.

The total number of points may also count towards each student's final grade.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research used a quantitative method with a pre-test and a post-test design. This research was a type of experimental study using a Quasi-Experimental Design which had both a pre-test and a post-test with an experimental (EG) and a control group (CG) and with direct assignment of subjects (see below) (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 33). The experimental design which was used in this study was Non-equivalent Control Group Quasi-Experimental Design which was almost the same as pre-test-post-test control group design. The EG and the CG in this design were not chosen at random (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017, p. 36).

Research Location and Participants

This research was conducted at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh which is situated in Darussalam, Banda Aceh. This University was established in 1960. It has been a requirement since 2014 that all new students admitted to UIN have to take a compulsory EFL conversation course. There were 792 students enrolled in 2016, and they were divided into 36 classes, average 22 students/class, for the conversation course.

These first-year students were from many different majors in UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.

The population for this research were the non-English department students of UIN who were taking the conversation class at UIN Ar-Raniry dormitory that is obligatory for them to complete as a requirement to finish their degree. The researcher also excluded those students who had graduated from boarding schools (e.g. Madrasah Alia) because those students had already attended a better fundamental conversation class at their previous school. The total population for this research was 151 students.

To conduct the research on PPS, the researcher chose those students who were taking the conversation class in the UIN Ar-Raniry dormitory as a sample for this study, because those students came from many different majors and were gathered into one class.

There were 151 students who were taking the Conversation class who did not come from a boarding school. The researcher and one of the researcher's acquaintances were each teaching a Conversation class that semester. Those two separate classes consisted of students who were not from boarding schools so that's why those two classes were suitable to become the samples for this research.

Thus the sample for this study were 30 non-English department students from two existing conversation classes at UIN in the 2016/2017 Academic Year. The researcher checked for equivalence of homogeneity in the English achievements of those two classes, and the results showed there were no significant differences between them.

Blom and Unsworth (2010) aver that every experimental research must have a minimum of two subject groups, an experimental group (EG), and a control group (CG). The EG consists of subjects who are given the treatment, while, the CG consists of subjects who are not given the treatment in the study. Therefore, the students were divided into two classes, the CG and the EG. 15 students were assigned to the EG which waswas to get the PPS technique, and 15 students were assigned to the CG with the usual Discussion technique. During the teaching experiment, the treatment was only given to the EG, while the CG was taught using the Discussion Technique. The post-testscores from both groups were compared to see if there was any significant difference between the scores from the two groups or not.

Research Instruments

Before giving the treatment to the EG, the researcher gave a pre-test to both the EG and the CG. The pre-test was conducted in order to get the background information on the students' prior level of knowledge.

The tests were given in spoken form in order to find out each student's speaking ability in understanding and responding to a conversation. The test was created based on the syllabus specification for the conversation class which consisted of five questions about introducing yourself, introducing people, asking and giving information, simple questions, and asking and giving directions.

After conducting the pre-test, the next step was to analyze the results from the pre-test in order to allow the researcher to compare the results from the two tests after the treatment. The treatment was conducted with the EG and the CG for seven meetings.

A questionnaire is a list of questions used to collect written data. Arikunto (2010) has stated that, regarding the way of answering the questions, the questions can be divided into two types, viz: open and closed. Closed questions were chosen for this research in order to limit the responses from the students. This study had 10 questions about the students' responses toward the use of PPS in the classroom and was adopted from Raine (2014). The questionnaire was distributed to the EG students in order to find out their response to learning speaking using the PPS in their conversation class at UIN.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data from this study, the researcher used the data from the students' answers about introducing themselves, introducing other people, asking and giving information, simple questions, and asking and giving directions from both the pre-tests and the post-tests that were done.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The quantitative data, in this study, was acquired through the pretests, the post-tests, and the questionnaire. By applying the PPS when teaching-learning speaking in the classroom, the students became more interested in participating in their conversation class since for every participation that they made in the class they got a reward in the form of a silver bead (1 point) for a regular participation or a golden bead (3 points) for a special participation. The total participation points

for each student were added up to get their final scores at the end of the semester. Therefore, the EG students were more excited about practicing speaking in class and this therefore affected their overall speaking skills performance during the classes.

The students' overall speaking skill scores from the EG were better than those from the CG after the PPS technique was applied for teaching-learning speaking with the EG. This can be seen as the scores from the EG for the post-test were certainly much higher than those from the pre-test.

Furthermore, from the questionnaire the EG students responded positively to the use of the PPS technique for teaching-learning ESL conversation skills. The students believed that the PPS technique assisted and motivated them in improving their speaking skills.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This experimental research was conducted with a conversation class at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. This experimental research was focused on the use of the PPS technique for improving the speaking skills of the EG students. The implementation of the PPS technique by Hadley (2002) and Jeffrey (2003) had previously shown that this technique is one of the most suitable and effective teaching techniques to improve the motivation of students and to decrease their anxiety. This research has several conclusions, they are; the PPS technique can improve the achievements in speaking skills of students, this was proven by $t_{test} > t_{table}$ ($7.41 > 2.07$). Therefore, it was concluded that the alternative hypotheses (H_a) be accepted. Additionally, the PPS also improved the motivation of the EG students towards the application of the PPS technique and encouraged greater awareness in the classroom to ask and answer questions, to express opinions and to volunteer for classroom activities. On top of that, it also created a better teaching-learning atmosphere in the classroom.

According to the research findings, it can be concluded that the PPS technique can improve the students' speaking skills in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and expression. This happened because the PPS technique motivated the students to be more active in the classroom and encouraged them to participate more in the classroom activities by asking and answering questions, expressing opinions, and volunteering for classroom activities. Consequently, the

students got more practice in speaking in the classroom and this resulted in positive improvements in their speaking skills. Thus the students responded positively to the use of the PPS technique for teaching-learning EFL conversation skills. The students said that the Participation Point System technique assisted and motivated them to improve their EFL conversation speaking skills.

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