

TEACHING SPEAKING BY APPLYING PAIR WORK TECHNIQUE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study to investigate the significant difference of speaking performances between students who were taught using pair work technique and students who were not. The method of this study was quantitative experimental. The second grade students of a high school in Banda Aceh were chosen as the sample of this research, which consisted of two classes as the experimental class (EC) and the control class (CG) with 30 students in each class. Tests were used as the instrument in this study. The data was analyzed by using t-score. The result showed that there was a significant difference between the EC and the CC in speaking performances. This was proven by the t-score (2.56) that was higher than the t-table (2.00). Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there is a significant difference of speaking performance between students who are taught using pair work technique and students who are taught using the conventional technique was accepted. The use of pair work technique in teaching speaking was found to be an effective technique for the EC students in improving their speaking performances. It is suggested that English teachers make use of this technique in teaching speaking to their students, as a variety among the other techniques that can be used in class to teach the same skill.

Key Words: *Pair Work Technique, Speaking.*

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a great part of daily life that is taken for granted; an average person produces tens of thousands of words a day. Anggiana (2011:1) explains that speaking skill is important since “speaking skill is basic for human being, and it is used as a means of communication in their daily life whether at school or outside”. As human beings, people all learn to speak at least one language (the language that they hear) as they grow up. Speaking is to share information or to say something about feelings, perception and intentions to other people. Hence, in speaking they change ideas into words to inform to other people (Thornbury, 2005).

To speak English is not easy because a speaker should be able to master the elements of speaking English such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, fluency, body language, and gesture (Richards & Renandya, 2002). After people master these, they will become good speakers and can use this language for many opportunities. As it is known, that if they look for a job, speaking English fluently will be one of the requirements to get a good paid job nowadays.

However, unfortunately, the speaking ability of people—especially in speaking English—is not the same. Based on the writer’s experience as a teacher for more than 7 years, she found that around 60% or 13 out of 25 students in one class of the high school that she is teaching in had difficulties in speaking English. As a consequence, the result of their speaking test is commonly low; that is around 50 of the average score and this is still below the standard minimum criteria determined by the school, which are 70 for the English subject.

If such condition keeps happening, the writer worries about the students’ readiness to face examinations, especially the national examinations that are to be taken once they are in the third year of 12th grade. What is worse, the writer worries that her students might not be able to take up future challenges in this globalization era where English is used as communication tools. Thus, the role of teaching speaking is crucial in second and foreign language learning and teaching. Kayi (2006:23) indicates that the ability to communicate in the target language clearly and efficiently makes an important contribution to learners’ success at school and later in every stage of their life. Therefore, it is essential that language teachers pay more attention to teaching speaking.

The aims of teaching English speaking to senior high school students as stated in Curriculum 2006 is that the students are able to understand the meaning of daily transactional and interpersonal conversations (expressions), and ultimately they are expected to be able to communicate and participate actively in daily conversations (Depdiknas, 2006). Thus, techniques of teaching speaking are very important to involve all of the students' participation in the English learning process.

The writer finds many factors that make students confused and have difficulties in speaking English, and vocabulary and pronunciation are among them. To get the real information about the students' problem, before the research was carried out, she conducted informal interviews with the students in her class. Based on their input, she concluded that the problems faced by her students in speaking skill were that many of them did not know how to pronounce the vocabulary correctly; they did not know how to master the words, they had difficulties in grasping teachers' explanation related to the subject, and they found the teachers' strategies were monotonous since different strategies were seldom used.

Pair work assists teachers in helping students' to improve their speaking and communication abilities with their peers thus creating better cooperation among them (especially between the stronger and weaker learners) and allows the teachers to monitor their progress (Achmad & Yusuf, 2014). Some researchers have conducted research on the use of pair work technique in teaching speaking, respectively. Anggiana (2011) on the second grade students at a junior high school in Surakarta also showed that teaching speaking using pair work technique was effective in improving her students' speaking ability. Another experimental research by Syamsuddin (2011) aimed at showing the contribution of pair and group work activities to improve students' speaking ability. The result of this study showed that there was an improvement from the pre-test to the post-test for the students who use pair work activities in the teaching and learning process. In addition, his study showed that the students were well-motivated in learning English by using pair and group work activities.

Hamzah and Ting (2010), and Achmad and Yusuf (2014) had conducted qualitative research on pair work and group work activities and their impact on students' speaking performances. These studies employed observations, surveys, questionnaires, and interviews on students and teachers on the use of pair work technique. The findings

by Hamzah and Ting showed students' positive attitude towards pair and group work activities in class. This contributes to a significant increase in students' participation in pairs/groups. The general results obtained also indicate some improvements in students' speaking when they are assessed individually. Hence, pair and group work activities could have significant pedagogical implications and could be a practical technique if they are carefully planned to teach speaking skills among the students. Furthermore, Achmad and Yusuf (2014) found that pair work can be effective if the teachers pair the students selectively for suitability (i.e. a stronger student with a weaker one), by recognizing the speaking ability of each student and further understand their culture or habits to avoid mishaps in pairings that can lead to gaps where students do not help each other in developing their speaking skills.

Based on the problems and the research findings above, the writer assumes that pair work technique may be an appropriate teaching technique to overcome students' problems in speaking English in her classroom. She is therefore interested to conduct a study on teaching speaking by applying this technique for her students. Hence, the research question for this study is as follow: "Is there any significant difference of speaking performance between students who were taught using pair work technique and students who were not taught using pair work technique?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking

Speaking is one of the four skills in a language; the others are listening, writing, and reading. Speaking is a productive skill, since the speaker is required to produce words and sounds when they speak. Chaney and Burkey (1998:13) define speaking as "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbol in a variety of contexts". Indeed, speaking is a process of exchanging words or information between an individual and more on certain context. According to Tarigan (1985), as cited in Anggiana (2011:15), "speaking is a skill of conveying words or sounds of articulation to express or to deliver ideas, opinion, and feeling." It is clear that speaking is a process of exchange among people on certain opinion or ideas.

Mead and Rubin (1985) add the definition of speaking as an interactive process in which an individual alternately takes the roles of speaker and listener, and which includes both verbal and non-verbal component. To exchange information through speaking activity, there must be two or more parties involved, the speaker and the listener. Thus, it can be concluded that speaking is an interaction between a speaker and listener as interlocutors who exchange their ideas, opinions, feelings, and information which includes both verbal and non-verbal actions.

Components of Speaking

There are several components of speaking that should be noted on when someone speaks or when teachers assess students' speaking performance. Brown (2004) states that to assess speaking, a teacher should assign not one but several scores, each score representing one of several traits, such as pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary use, grammar, comprehensibility, etc. Therefore, the writer can conclude that there are at least five components that should be considered in speaking. They are as follows.

Pronunciation

Hornby (2005:928) states that pronunciation is the way in which a language is spoken, the way in which a word is pronounced, and the way a person speaks the words of language. It is the way for students to produce clear language when they speak. Hornby 2005: 239) further adds that "it deals with the phonological process that refers to the component of a grammar made up of the elements and principles that determine how sounds vary and pattern in a language". Pronunciation is very important in speaking since it influences the meaning of a word. If students do not use appropriate pronunciation in speaking, they can produce different meaning.

Grammar

According to Ur (1996:75), grammar is the way words are put together to make a correct sentence. Mastering grammar will help a learner in speaking English, because he or she will know how to arrange words in a sentence, what tense to be used, and how to use appropriate utterance. In other words, grammar plays an important role in mastering the spoken language.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is an important aspect in learning a language. A language learner cannot communicate or express his or her ideas either in spoken or written form if he or she does not have sufficient vocabulary. Vocabulary is divided into two kinds, active and passive (Finocchiaro, 1974:73). Active vocabulary is the word that the students can understand, pronounce correctly, and use constructively in speaking. Passive vocabulary is the word that the students can recognize and understand when they are in the context.

Fluency

Fluency can be defined as the ability to speak smoothly and readily. Brown (2003) states that fluency is about automatizing the language knowledge. Fluency in speaking is the aim of many language learners. Signs of fluency include a reasonably fast speed of speaking and only a small number of pauses. These signs indicate that the speaker does not spend a lot of time searching for the language items needed to express the message.

Comprehension

Hornby (2005) coined comprehension as the ability to understand something. In speaking, comprehension is certainly required so that the speaker can initiate the communication and the listener can respond it. It is important to avoid misunderstanding between a speaker and a listener. Indeed, communication can go smoothly.

Pair Work Technique

Harmer (2001: 207) defines pair work as “a way of increasing student participation and language use. It can be used for enormous number of activities whether speaking, writing or reading”. Pair work is one of the CLT activities. In pair work, the student is paired with another student and they will cooperate together to work and solve tasks given a by teacher in the classroom.

Pair work is an important component of the communicative approach, and is also a form of collaborative learning. Moon (2000:53) defines pair work as a technique “to organize students in ways that will maximize opportunities for learning”. Pair work means that students collaborate with their pairs to accomplish tasks and reach its aim. Furthermore, Lightbown and Spada (1999) state that in an interactive

environment, children are able to advance to a higher level of knowledge and performance than what they would be capable of independently. Working in pairs could help to promote meaningful interaction between the learners and increase their interest. Lightbown and Spada (1999:56) added that “positive attitudes and motivation are related to success in second language learning”. Hence, introducing pair work as an effective technique could lead to success in language learning because it helps to increase students’ interest in term of the oral tasks. Pair work is therefore a valuable technique to implement in the EFL classrooms.

Harmer (2001:122) explains the procedures used in teaching speaking. He divides the procedures into three sub-units: before, during, and after activity. Table 1 presents the procedures in more details.

Table 1. Procedures of Pair Work (source: Harmer, 2001: 122-124).

Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are divided into pairs following “engage-instruct-initiate” sequence. • Teacher gives instruction/demonstration about what students are going to do.
During	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers pay attention and keep an eye on what is happening during activity. • Teachers go around watching, listening, and helping students in trouble.
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers give constructive feedback and sometimes correction after students’ performance. • Students discuss their performance where necessary.

The procedures of pair work technique assist the teachers in implementing the technique effectively to achieve desirable results from the students after the lesson.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Pair Work Technique

In addition, Harmer (2001:116-117) also provides advantages and disadvantages of pair work technique. The advantages are:

1. It dramatically increases the amount of speaking time for every student gets in the class.
2. It allows students to work and to interact independently without the necessary guidance of the teacher, thus promoting learner independence.
3. It allows teachers time to work with one or two pairs while the other students continue working.

4. It recognizes the old maxim that “two heads are better one”, and in promoting cooperation helps the classroom to become a more relaxed and friendly place. It allows them to share responsibility rather than having to bear the whole weight themselves.
5. It is relatively quick and easy to organize.

The advantages above are rounded up by Slavin (1994) finds that pair work technique is a study model that emphasizes on the activities and interaction between students to motivate and help each other in mastering the learning materials in order to achieve a satisfactory learning achievement.

Additionally, Harmer (2001:116-117) also presents a number of disadvantages of pair work, and they are:

1. Pair work is frequently very noisy and some teachers and students dislike this. Teachers in particular, worry that they will lose control of their class.
2. Students in pair can often steer away from the point of an exercise, talking about something else completely, often in their first language. The chance of ‘misbehavior’ are greater with pair work than in a whole-class setting.
3. It is not always popular with students, many of whom feel they would rather relate to the teacher as individuals than to interact with another learner who maybe just be as linguistically weak as they are.
4. The actual choice of paired partner can be problematic especially if students frequently find themselves working with someone they are not keen on.

Therefore, it is important for teachers to pay attention to these advantages and disadvantages of pair work technique to overcome problems that can occur in its implementation in the classroom.

RESEARCH METHOD

The design for quasi experimental selected by the writer is called non-randomized control group, pretest-posttest design. This design is explained by Ary, et al. (2006) as similar to true experimental design where there are both control and experimental classes which later will be given pre-test and post-test to measure the difference of scores between both. In this study, the pre-test and the post-test were designed to study the improvement of the students in the components of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension in their speaking performances.

Technique of Data Collection

Teaching experiment was conducted as a mean to apply the targeted technique into classroom by the writer. It is meant to apply and later to measure whether the applied technique is effective or not. The teaching experiment was conducted on the second grade students of SMA 8 Banda Aceh of two Science classes, one was as the experimental class (EC) and the other was as the control class (CC).

In EC, the writer implemented the procedures of pair work technique as shown in Table 1 in every meeting of treatment. The experiment was also carried out in the CC, where she also taught similar topics but by using a different technique, which is the conventional, teacher-centered one. She conducted 5 times of teaching in each class.

In order to learn and know the ability, progress, and impact of the teaching experiment of both classes, the writer did pre and post-tests in both classes. The purposes of both tests were to measure the impact of pair work technique implementation in the EC. It is expected that the results of pre-test would portray the ability of students before the interventions (teaching experiments) was carried out. Meanwhile, the results of post-test provided data on the ability of the students after using pair work technique was implemented to improve their speaking performances. These results were compared to study their improvement.

Technique of Data Analysis

Independent t-test evaluates the difference between the means of two independent or unrelated groups. Green and Salkind (2003) provides the formula as:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{S^2_{x_1}}{n_1 - 1} + \frac{S^2_{x_2}}{n_2 - 1}}}$$

Where:

t = to independent t-test

\bar{X}_1 = to mean group 1

\bar{X}_2 = mean group 2

$S^2_{x_1}$ = standard deviation group 1

$S^2_{x_2}$ = standard deviation group 2

n_1 = the number of samples' score group 1

n_2 = the number of samples' score group 2

The results from both groups were evaluated whether the means for the two independent groups (the EC and the CC) are significantly different from each other.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the writer had accumulated and processed the data, it showed that the two mean scores from the post-tests of the EC was 79.33 and of the CC was 63.5. The results further showed that the t-score of two means between the post-test of the EC and the CC was 2.56, and the t-table was 2.00. Because t-score > t-table, therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. This means that the implementation of pair work technique had improved the students' speaking performances in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. This finding is in line with Anggiana (2011) and Syamsuddin (2011) who also found positive results with this technique in helping their students improve their speaking skills.

The writer further found that pair work did not only help her students to increase academic achievement but also it also gave positive outcomes on the social relationship in the classroom, especially with their pairs. This is so because this technique is seen to give chances for students to be involved in discussion, to increase critical thinking and willingness to take responsibility of his/her own learning.

Furthermore, working in pair was realized to increase the students' self-confidence as everybody has an important role to be a speaker and listener. They feel that they have important contribution during the learning process. It was shown from their activities during learning in their groups where they bravely expressed their ideas, learned to appreciate the other members' idea and enjoyed the learning process which gave positive impact to their achievement in learning speaking. The writer as the teacher herself, acted as the controller, guidance and motivator during the pair work activities. She was not active in discussing the material and only guided the students when they needed her. They had to explore and collect more information on the material with their pair.

Moreover, the writer found that the students had positive interdependence during activities with their pair. They discussed the topic together and shared the information. In this case, she had encouraged them to work together, not individually, in order to get good conclusions and similar opinions with their pair. The situation in the classroom showed that they were able to interact with each other cooperatively. They were active in giving and asking opinions or ideas related to the material. They sat face to face and communicated in discussing the topic given by the teacher. Although they were in pair work, they also knew that they had individual responsibility to reach the pair's goal.

It is different from the teaching learning process by using the conventional technique in CC (i.e. teacher-centered), where the students only depended on the teacher's explanation. She acted as the center or main sources in getting the knowledge. This led to the students to become passive learners. Only the students who had high proficiency were more active than the others. This situation brought negative outcomes for their individual achievements and improvement because they could not learn from each other to solve the problem. As the result, it affected their scores to be lower than the EC.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the data analysis, the t-score (2.56) was higher than t-table (2.00). It means that the hypothesis that stated that there is a significant difference of speaking performances between students who were taught using pair work technique and those who were taught using the conventional technique was accepted. The use of pair work technique in teaching speaking was effective for the students in the EC to improve their scores from the beginning to the end of the treatments. Meanwhile, the CC students which were treated with the conventional technique did not make any significant improvements throughout the treatments.

In order to improve the students' performances in speaking and the process of teaching-learning activities, there are some suggestions that should be considered by the teachers. English teachers can consider pair work technique as one of the ways to improve students' ability in speaking. This technique trains the students to learn actively and share knowledge together. They may even consider combining this technique with others. This is as implied by Raja (2012) that pair work technique

is best used when it is not the only classroom interaction pattern, but when it is combined with other strategies. The large multilevel class works better when we provide a great deal of variety in teaching.

Since this study was conducted with limitations, the writer suggests that other researchers who are interested in conducting similar studies to cover wider population with different grade levels to further substantiate the conclusion drawn from this study.

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