USE OF THE SNOWBALL THROWING TECHNIQUE FOR TEACHING BETTER ESL SPEAKING

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ABSTRACT

This research was to investigate the effect of Snowball Throwing Technique (STT) application in teaching speaking to the eleventh grade students of a senior high school in Banda Aceh. The topic given to the students was the expression of asking and giving opinion and suggestion. A number of 29 students were randomly selected for the experimental class (EC) and another 29 students for the control class (CC). The data of this research was collected by giving the pre-test and post-test, and analyzed using statistical formula including mean, standard deviation, and t-test. The results showed that the mean of the post-test of EC was 48.51, while the mean of CC was 42.43. The mean score of the pre-test of EC was 38.58, and the mean score of CC was 38.89. In order to prove the hypothesis, the t-test score of EC was compared with the t-table score, and the result of t-test of the post-test of EC and CC was 1.38 while the result of t-table at a level of significance with $\alpha=0.05$ is 2.048. It indicates that the t-test score<t-table, 2.048. It means that the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was accepted and the null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected. It can be concluded that the students who were taught by using the STT have a better performance than those who were not. As a follow up for this research, it is suggested that English teachers should use various techniques in teaching. In teaching speaking, the STT can be an alternative technique to be applied by the teachers.

Key Words: *Speaking, Snowball Throwing Technique.*

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the most important people in determining the success of students in mastering the ability to speak a foreign language. Harmer (2007:343) stated "Getting students to speak or to use the language they are learning is a vital part of a teacher's job. Students are the people who need the practice, not the teacher". From this statement, it can be inferred that if a teacher aims to develop the ability of students to speak English, she has to maximize the time and opportunities for the students to speak much more than she does. By doing so, it is assumed that the students will be able to develop their speaking performance more since they will have more time practicing speaking.

A student is considered successful in passing English if he can achieve the minimum standard criteria score determined by the school. In the senior high school, SMA Negeri 8, Banda Aceh, the students have to reach a KKM of 70 in order to pass the English subject. It seems that it is difficult for many students to achieve this standard even though they have been taught using all the materials provided in the curriculum within the appropriate time limits.

Based on preliminary observations and informal interviews conducted by the researcher on the students and teacher in the school, she found that the low achievement level of the students may have been caused by several factors. Some of these factors were lack of motivation, feeling uncomfortable at speaking in front of others and afraid of making mistakes, lack of vocabulary and lack of ideas of what to talk about. Poor results could also be caused by the way the teacher teaches speaking. It was seen that the most common strategy the teacher used for teaching speaking was to introduce dialogues to the students consisting of expressions that the students must learn by heart. She would then model or show her students how to practice each dialogue. After that, she would put the students into groups or pairs. Then they were assigned to read and to memorize their dialogues and finally they must practice or perform their dialogues in front of the class. This way of teaching, of course, does not encourage them to be creative in expressing their ability to speak English because they had to use the dialogues provided without being given any opportunity to perform or to speak English freely.

Referring to the above problems, the most urgent problem to solve which became the focus of this study was the reluctance of the students to speak English in front of others. In order to overcome this problem,

the researcher suggested an alternative way, which was the use of Snowball Throwing Technique (STT) because previous research has proven the effectiveness of this technique in the Indonesian teaching context (Darusmin, Delfi & Masyhur, 2012; Sudewo, 2014).

STT is a teaching technique for cooperative learning which allows students to work together in groups, pay full attention to each other, and allow each other to speak and to share information in groups. This is done by a student throwing a paper ball to another student in the group without forewarning. So, whilst they are working in groups, they must listen carefully to what their friends are saying because they can suddenly be asked to answer a question, and it will be their turn to speak and to be listened to. According to Suprijono (2013:128), the STT, also called the snow ball drilling technique, is used to train students to be more responsive to receive messages from other students in the form of snowballs made of paper, and to convey messages to friends in their group. Whenever a student gets the paper ball from another student, she must answer the question written on the paper ball.

Based on the background above, the research question for this study is the following: Is there any significant difference in the ability to speak English between students taught using the Snowball Throwing Technique (STT) and those taught through the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM)?

In recognizing and exploring the application of the STT for teaching speaking, the objective of this study was to find out whether there was a significant difference in improvement in the speaking abilities between a group of students after they were taught using the STT and another group taught using the ALM.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Speaking as a Skill

Speaking, as one of the four language skills is highly important in learning to communicate. Speaking is an interaction between a speaker and a listener or listeners where the aims are to deliver information or intentions from the speaker during a conversation or other speech format. When people start to speak, it means they want to deliver or share their ideas with others. Brown, (2004:115) has written that speaking is an oral interaction where participants need to negotiate the meaning of ideas, feelings and information. In this case, the listener must understand the relationship between the ideas presented. Bailey

and Nunan (2005:2) have written that "speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information. It is often spontaneous, open ended, and evolving, but it is not completely unpredictable". From both these definitions of speaking set-out above, it can be concluded that speaking is an oral communication that is used to convey meaning.

An Overview of the Snowball Throwing Technique (STT)

Istarani (2012:92) defines STT as a set of material presentation preceded by conveying the materials. According to Suprijono (2013:128), the learning environment and management system of cooperative learning when using the STT provides opportunities for democratic learning, enhance the appreciation of students for academic learning and changing norms related to achievement, prepare students to learn using collaboration and social skills through active participation of learners in small groups, provide opportunities for active participation in the process of learning and learners in an interactive dialogue, create a positive socio-emotional climate, facilitate learning to live together, foster productivity in a group, changes the role of teachers from being center stage performers to choreographing group activities and raises awareness of the importance of learning as one of the social aspects of the individual (Slavin, 1991; Suprijono, 2013).

Sociologically, cooperative learning can foster self-awareness and altruism amongst learners and also enhance the importance of the individual in social life. From the points above we can conclude that cooperative learning using the STT is a learning system that prioritizes the opportunities for the active participation of learners in learning especially for interactive dialogue. Because in the STT all the students get the opportunity to give and answer questions from other students in their group and they are required to participate actively in class. The technique facilitates the development of interactive dialogue between the student learners since one of the features of cooperative learning is group interaction. Furthermore, Suprijono (2013:128) has added that the STT has advantages to train the readiness of the students since the ball is thrown at random and the technique is a kind of knowledge sharing activity since the student who gets the ball must answer the written question and share their opinions with the other members of the group. The STT is also able to increase the speaking ability of students because in these activities they will have different roles including having to speak. This means that they do not have to take the same

responsibilities all the time since in this technique the students should formulate and answer questions properly and correctly.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Snowball Throwing Technique

Istarani (2012:93) lists the advantages of the STT as follows:

1. It improves leadership skills amongst students because there is a group leader whose responsibility is to convey messages to her friends as members of her group.
2. It trains students to be independent because each student is given the assignment to create a question to be delivered to another student. Besides that, each student also has a responsibility to answer a question from one of her friends.
3. It develops creativity of the students who have to create questions and form their paper into a ball.
4. It creates a lively classroom atmosphere because all the students must work in order to complete their tasks.

In contrast to the above advantages, Istarani (2012) also explains some of the disadvantages of STT as follows:

1. The explanations from the group leader sometimes are not as clear as that given by the teacher, as a result the members of a group may not understand the explanations given by their group leader because the group leader has forgotten some information or even because she is unable to explain the STT clearly.
3. Some students may not yet be able to create good and correct questions.
4. After getting the ball from his friend, a student may not be able to answer the question correctly especially if the question is not clear or, in other words, the question is incomprehensible.
5. It can be difficult to determine whether the learning objectives were achieved or not.

Teaching Speaking through the Snowball Throwing Technique

According to Suprijono (2013) and Istarani (2012), the steps for implementing the STT are as follows. First, the teacher delivers the topic. Then the teacher puts the students into groups. After that the teacher calls up the group leaders and explains the materials to them that they have to relay to the members of the own groups. After the group leaders re-explanation their members with what the teacher has told them, each student in the group then writes a question related to

the materials on a piece of paper which s/he then rolls into a ball. She then throws her ball to another student in her group who must read out aloud the question in the ball and then verbally answer it.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was done using an experimental quantitative research format which is referred to as true experimental design. Arikunto (2006:125) defines an experimental study as research in which there are two classes observed at two points in time; one is the experimental group (EG) and the other is the control group (CG). The sample for this study was two classes from SMAN 8 Banda Aceh, one as the CG and the other as the EG. Each class had 29 students.

One set of observations is done before the treatment and one is done after the treatment which has been prepared to obtain further information from the study. In this study the researcher used the STT treatment in teaching speaking to the EG.

Procedure

Based on Suprijono (2013) and Istarani (2012), the procedure used in this study for the STT was as follows:

1. The teacher explained the materials which were going to be presented. In this case, she taught about expressions that were used for expressing opinions and for making suggestions, for example:
   (i) *A : What do you think about going to the beach on Sunday?*
       B : I think it's a good idea.
   (ii) *A : I have a problem. I cannot study well, what should I do?*
        B : You'd better invite some friends and share it in a group discussion.
2. She formed the students into groups of 5-6 and appointed the group leaders.
3. She called up the group leaders and explained the lesson materials to them.
4. The teacher asked all students to sit in their groups.
5. The group leaders returned to the groups and explained the materials and tasks to the members of their group.
6. After that, each student was given a sheet of paper and she had to write a problem or issue on it and asked for an opinion or suggestion.

7. Then, each student rolled their sheet of paper into a ball and these paper snowballs were thrown from one student to the other students in their group for 5 to 10 seconds. The purpose of making each sheet of paper into a paper snowball was to give the feeling to the students that they were playing so that they would enjoy learning English.
8. When a student got a ball with a question, she must answer the question written on the paper orally. She should give her opinion and/or her suggestion in response to the question. Then she threw the ball to another student. The student who got the ball also did the same.
9. To facilitate learning by the students, the teacher helped them who have problems. To enrich the interaction among them, the teacher also posed some questions and asked for help to answer them from the students.
10. The teacher then evaluated the learning process and provided feedback to the students about the activities that they have just done.

The EG was treated using the STT in teaching speaking for five meetings, while the CG was taught by another English teacher using the ALM.

Tests

A pre-test and a post-test were given to both the EG and the CG whilst a try-out was given to another class from the same level. The researcher used an oral test. The post-test questions were similar to those in the pre-test. The teacher included some questions about current issues related to the environment of the students for instance questions about the National Final Exams, the use of mobile phones at school, the application of full day school programs and the introduction of enhanced classes in the afternoons. The post-tests were given at the end of the last meeting. In the post-tests, the students were asked questions following on ball catching rather than based on pointing to them one by one.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Validity, as defined by Brown (2004:22), is the extent to which the instrument measures what it purposes to measure. There are three methods of estimating test validity, they are; content validity, criterion-related validity and construct-related validity. Here, the researcher used

content validity which means that the test should representatively contain the items that were supposed to be measured.

The validity of the tests can be seen where the relationship is found between the consistency of the test and its objectives. The objectives of the study here was that the students be able to express meaning in forms of transactional and interpersonal expressions especially the expression of opinions and suggestions. It could be said that this test was valid since it was taken from the curriculum. During the research, the students were taught to use expressions of opinion and to make suggestions and their use of these same expressions was also tested in the post-tests. This should mean that the test would be considered valid based on its contents.

Reliability Test

Beside validity, reliability is one of the criteria that are needed to make a test qualified. Brown (2004: 23) has explained that "a reliable test is consistent and dependable. If you give the same test to the same student or matched students on two different occasions, the test should yield a similar result". Brown (2004) also added that reliability is the extent to which a research instrument such as a questionnaire, test, observation, or any measurement procedure produces the same results on repeated trials. This means, that there is stability or consistency of scores over time and/or across raters. Brown (2004:24) further stated that there are several factors that may contribute to the unreliability of a test, they are student-related reliability, rater reliability, test administration reliability, and test reliability. Accordingly, the researcher tried out the pre-test on another try-out class of students before it was given to the CG and the EG and the results were consistent. In other words, the test used in this study was reliable.

Data Analysis

The students' tests were scored using a scoring system which was adapted from a rubric prepared for Practical Examinations by the Indonesian National Department of Education. The students were assessed on several aspects; they were grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, pronunciation/intonation, and fluency. To assess the speaking performance of each student, the researcher gave scores from 1 to 5 for each aspect for their performance. Then, the score for each student was divided by the maximum score and then multiplied by 100.

The post-test was a test given to both groups after the end of the treatment. The goal of the post-test was to assess the speaking performance of the students after the application of the STT. The purpose was to find out whether the intervention in the EG significantly improved the speaking skills of those students by comparison with the skills of the CG. In order to see which aspects of their speaking skills increased, the same scoring rubric was used as in the pre-test.

The scores from the tests were further calculated using statistical analysis to calculate the means, the standard deviations and the t–test results. Two formulas were used, namely: mean and standard deviation. The mean formula was used to find the average scores from each of the classes.

The formula given by Hasan (2002:15) was as follows:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum fx}{\sum f}$$

Where:
X is the mean score
x is the middle mean score
f is the frequency in the class

Standard deviation measures the variability in the scores to investigate any significant differences between the scores of the variables. The formula used was as follows (Hasan, 2002):

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{\sum fx^2}{n} - \left(\frac{\sum fx}{n}\right)^2}$$

Where:
S symbolizes the standard deviation,
f is the frequency in the class and n is the number of students.

Furthermore, to investigate any significant differences between the means of the two groups, the t-test was used. The formula that follows was used for analyzing the data (Hasan, 2002):

$$t = \frac{\overline{x_1} - \overline{x_2}}{\sqrt{\frac{S_1^2}{n_1} - \frac{S_2^2}{n_2}}}$$

Where:

t is the significant difference between the two means

X1 and X2 are the mean scores from each of the two groups

S1 and S2 are the standard deviations from each of the two groups

N1 and N2 are the number of students in each group

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The result showed that there were some differences in the results for the mean, standard deviation and t-test from the EG and the CG as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of the Results from the Pre-Tests done by the EG & the CG.

Factor	EG	t - test	df	CG
N (Number of Students)	29			29
R (Range)	50			50
$\overline{X}$ (Mean Score)	39	-0.080	56	39
S (Standard Deviation)	15.10			14.48

The statistical summary above shows that the degree of freedom (df) is 56, and for 56 in the t-table with level of significance 0.05 the result is 2.003. The mean score of the pre-tests from the EG was 39, and the mean from the CG was also 39. Both of these mean scores were compared through an independent sample t-test with the level of significance of 0.05. The criteria for testing the two means is that if the t-test<t-table, Ho should be accepted. From the above calculation, we can see that the t-test is -0,080 and the t-table for the degree of freedom 56 is 2.003. In this case, -0.080< 2.003, so, the null hypothesis (Ho) was accepted and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was rejected. This means that from the results of the pre-test indicated that there was no significant difference in the speaking abilities of the EG with the CG.

The results from the scores from the post-tests of the EG and of the CG are summarized in Table 2 which follows below.

Table 2. Summary of the Results from the Post-Tests of the EG and the CG.

Factors	EG	t – test	df	CG
N (Number of Students)	29			29
R (Range)	65	1.38	56	55
$\bar{X}$ (Mean Score)	49			42
S (Standard Deviation)	18.98			14.24

The results in Table 2 show that the degree of freedom [df=(N1+N2)–2, so df=(29+29)-2=56] is 56, and 56 in the t-table with level of significance of 0.05 is 2.003. The mean scores from the post-test results were calculated for both groups. As shown in the table above, the mean score from the results of the post-tests from the EG is 49, and the mean from the scores of the CG is 42. Both of the mean scores were compared through an independent sample t-test with the level of significance of 0.05. The criteria for testing the two means is that if t-test<t-table, Ho should be accepted. On the other hand, if t-test>t-table, Ha should be accepted. From Table 2, we can see that the t-test is 1.38 and the t-table for the degree of freedom of 56 is 2.003. In this case, 1.38<2.003, so, Ho was rejected and Ha was accepted. This means that there was a significant difference between the post-test results for the speaking ability of the EG with the results from the CG.

DISCUSSIONS

The results from the EG were better than those from the CG as they had a significantly higher result as compared to the CG. In this case, to support the reliability of this finding, Slavin (1991) has shown that the STT is a cooperative learning method that has had positive results in all major subjects, at all grade levels, in urban, rural, and suburban schools and for high, average, and low achievers. We can then say that the improvement in the test results from the EG was due to the effects of the treatment. This result was in accordance with the result from similar previous research conducted by Sudewo (2014) at SMAN Maitreyawira Tanjung Pinang. Based on her research findings, it was found that there was a significant difference in the results from the post-tests from the EG when compared with the results from the CG after the STT was used with the EG. These research findings showed that the application

of the STT could improve the motivation and the achievement of the students in speaking.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings and the discussion presented above some conclusions can be drawn in relation to teaching speaking by using the STT. They are: (1) there was a significant difference in the improvement in speaking performance between the students who were taught using the STT and those who were taught using the standard ALM, (2) the STT resulted in significant improvement in the speaking performance of the EG students when asking for and giving opinions and suggestions. Amongst the various aspects of speaking (vocabulary/grammar, comprehension, pronunciation, and fluency), the aspect of fluency had the highest improvement. This is based on the comparison of the differences in results between the pre-tests and the post-tests.

Based on the conclusions above, the researcher has some suggestions for teachers who plan to teach speaking using the STT and those who plan to conduct further studies. Firstly, the STT should be considered as an alternative technique to be used in teaching speaking English since it was found to be effective in improving the speaking performance of students. Although this research was focused on teaching expressions for asking for and giving opinions and suggestions this does not mean that the STT can only be used in teaching those materials, it can also be used for teaching other materials. Secondly, English teachers using this technique should follow the steps suggested for the STT for teaching speaking skills to increase the participation and maximum scores of their students. Next, they should know that speaking English as EFL is not easy for most students so that teachers should try to use different techniques to encourage their students to speak. Finally, for further studies, the STT can be taken as the main focus for more research into speaking. Thus, it is recommended that more research be done to follow on from the findings of this research.

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