IMPROVING ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY THROUGH CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

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ABSTRACT

Speaking is one of important parts in teaching language because it includes one of four basic language skills. Nevertheless, in MA NU BANAT Kudus, the writer found that most of students there still get the difficulties in studying speaking. It may be caused by the method used in teaching English, especially speaking. Classroom Discussion is a method that can be applied in teaching English, especially to improve the ability of speaking. In this method, hopefully, the students get a big opportunity to express their own ideas and it can arouse their motivation to speak in the classroom. The purposes of this research is to find out if there is a significant difference between the speaking ability of the English department students of the first semester in the academic year 2009/2010 at Amuslim University taught by and without using Classroom Discussion. To answer the research questions, the writer holds an experimental research to apply Classroom Discussion in teaching English speaking. The population is the first semester students of Amuslim University in the academic year 2009/2010 and the sample are two groups of students placed in experiment and control groups. Using oral test as the instrument, the writer collected the data of the students' speaking ability. The report of the research concludes that Classroom Discussion is effective in improving the English speaking ability of the first semester students in the academic year 2009/2010.

Keyword: Classroom Discussion in Speaking Class

INTRODUCTION

Language is a system for expression of meaning. The primary function of language is for interaction and communication. English as one of the international languages in the world should be mastered by people from many countries in the world to communicate each other. They may know and understand what they speak communicatively because of English. Because of the reason, English becomes the first foreign language that is taught in Indonesia from elementary school up to college. Speaking is one of the four basic language skills: listening, writing, reading and speaking. Teaching English speaking is the process of giving the English lesson, from the teacher to the students based on the material from the syllabus of the certain school, in order that the students are able to absorb it and they will be able to communicate by using English orally.

According to the writer's experience, most of the students still get the difficulties in using English for communication. It is caused many factors including the limited students' vocabularies and knowledge of grammar, even the method may be used by the teacher in teaching English. The other factor that may influence the students speaking ability is the lack of practicing English in their daily life. Even though English has been taught for several years, but the writer cannot be proud of the result yet.

One of models in Student-Centered Learning is Classroom Discussion. It is hoped that it can help the students when they are talking to their friends. Indeed, the goal is to get as many students involved in talking to one another as possible and for the teacher to fade into the background. Students will practice in how to talk to and listen to teachers, in how to address and look to authority figures for answers. However, they are not well versed in how to talk to and listen to each other, in how to navigate and negotiate and discuss issues of serious consequence and work toward answers among equals.

Based on the short explanation above, the researcher is inspired to apply this strategy in teaching English, with the hope that it is going to be one of efforts done to help the teacher in decreasing the students' difficulties in learning and practicing their English in communication. By using this strategy, hopefully, the students will be able to work with others in the team, develop their interpersonal skills and independence. Besides, they are also going to be encouraged, innovated, have creativity through deep learning, and require. Students think about their learning, the issues and the problems. It also can make them to develop their tolerance, understanding and respect of other's opinions, responsibility for ones own learning, actions, and responsibility to the group. In line with the statement above, that students' responsibility and independence help them to develop their characteristics of life long learners-motivation, self-evaluation, time management and the skills to access in teaching speaking.

This research is an experimental research done in the class taught by using Classroom Discussion and without using Classroom Discussion. The two variables of this research are: 1) the use of Classroom Discussion as a model of Student Centered Learning in teaching English as the independent variable, and 2) the achievement of English Speaking skill of the first semester students of Amuslim University in the academic year 2009/2010 as the dependent variable. This research used an experimental design without pre-test by using control group. In this research the population used by the writer is the first semester students of Almuslim University in the academic year 2009/2010 that consists of 5 classes. The sample is taken by using purposive random sampling'. The instrument of the research is a test to measure the achievement of speaking. The test is arranged based on the materials in the curriculum or syllabus of the first semester students of Almuslim University. The research hypothesis is formulated in short that There is a significant deference of the achievement of the English speaking of the first semester students at class A in academic year 2009/2010 between using and class BS without classroom discussion as a model of student centered learning.

Speaking as a of Language Skill

Teaching English in any level, always involves four basic skills. They are listening, reading writing and speaking. However, in using English to communicate one another, we often use it orally or speaking, than the other skills. Brown (2004: 140) defines speaking as a productive skill that can be directly and empirically observed, those observations are invariably colored by the accuracy and effectiveness of a test-taker's listening skill, which necessarily compromises the reliability and validity of an oral production test. From those statements above, the writer can conclude that speaking is an activity involving 2 or more people in which the participants are both the listeners and the speakers having to act what they listen and make their contribution at high speed.

In addition, related to speaking ability, Tarigan (1981:15) states that speaking ability is a skill to communicate a speech articulation or to speak a talk for expressing an idea and a message. Lado (1961: 240) points out that speaking ability is described as the ability to report acts or situation, in precise words, or the ability to converse or to express a sequence of ideas fluently. It can be concluded that speaking ability is a skill, which is communicating the speech sound for expressing and conveying a messages or ideas.

Lado (1989: 66) says that: language teaching successfully may be examined by analyzing a series of lesson plans over a period of time which can tell us the procedures of presentation, the predominance of skills and the frequency of reviews, how much by the method, what the teacher has omitted or added to text aim, include a lesson plan. Lado (1977: 200) says also that either four or

five components are generally recognized in analysis of speech process. They are: a) Pronunciation (Including the segmental features-vowels and consonant and the stress and intonation/ pattern), b) Grammar, c) Vocabulary, d) Fluency (the case and the speech of the flow of speech), and e) Comprehension.

Teaching English in MA NU BANAT Kudus

English is one of international languages in the world, so it is taught in any levels of school, including in senior high school. In senior high school, English becomes one of the subjects of national examination. That is why English must be taught more intensively; in order the students are able to master English and finally they can get the sufficient value as the requirement in passing the national examination.

Nathaniel Gage in Arends (2007:4) states that teaching is like an instrumental art. That is something departs from recipes, formulas, or algorithms. It requires improvisation, spontaneity, the handling of hosts of considerations of form, style, pace, rhythms, and appropriateness in ways so complex that even computers must, in principle, fall behind, just as they cannot achieve what a mother does with her five-year old or what a lover says at any given moment to his or her beloved. While Brown (1987:3) states that teaching is guiding and facilitating learning enables the learner to learn setting condition for learning, and Karo-karo (1975:10) states that teaching is the process of transferring the material of someone to another, in order that they absorb, master, then develop the material including skills, knowledge or sciences. In line with the definitions above, Brumfit (1984:5) defines teaching as an activity that is performed directly or indirectly, by human beings on human beings. Considering those definitions, the writer can make a conclusion that teaching is a process of transferring knowledge, skills or science from one to another in order to make someone able to do or know what he/she does not know or cannot do before. Teaching is one of

very common terms that we often find at school and if we talk about it, surely we will discuss about its curriculum.

The curriculum that is used in 2004 is KBK (Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi) and it has been developed with the new curriculum that is KTSP (Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan) in 2006 until now and used in teaching learning process in any levels of school, in this term, senior high school.

In teaching and learning process, teacher delivers the material of the subjects, of course following the rule from education department, which is written in curriculum and developed in the syllabus and then the teacher makes the lesson plan in order the students are going to achieve the aims of teaching learning process.

MA NU BANAT is one of the Islamic senior high schools in Kudus, which is under Ma'arif foundation and all of the students are female. Many subjects are taught in this Islamic senior high school, because the subjects are combination subjects from LP Ma'arif, the religious subjects and from education department, including English.

The tenth, eleventh, and twelfth year of MA NU BANAT Kudus, have seven classes and each class is about 32 – 40 students. Four teachers teach English in this Islamic senior high school and each of them has their own classes in charge. In MA NU BANAT Kudus, English is taught four times a week and each session is 45 minutes. Besides the meetings in the class, the students have to join the extra time called "Conversation" every Saturday until Tuesday at 14.00–15.00. From this activity, hopefully, the students are able to learn English maximally, and they can meet their partners to practice English communicatively they are their English teachers and their friends more often.

Teaching is the activity to transfer the material from someone to another, in order that they can absorb, master and develop the material (Karo-karo: 1975). Teaching is relationship or interaction between teacher and the students in the process of transferring knowledge in order that the students are able to apply

their knowledge in their daily life. From the definitions above, we have understood that teaching is an effort or an activity, which is aimed in how the students learn the materials to achieve the purpose of learning.

According to Brown (2004: 140), in his book "Principles and Classroom Practices", speaking is a productive skill that can be directly and empirically observed, those observations are invariably colored by the accuracy and effectiveness of a test-takers listening skill, which necessarily compromises the reliability and validity of an oral production test. In the other page of his book, Brown says that there are five basic types of speaking. They are:

1. Imitative. This type of speaking performance is the ability to imitate a word or phrase or possibly a sentence.
2. Intensive. This second type of speaking frequently employed in assessments context is in the production of short stretches of oral language designed to demonstrate competence in a narrow band of grammatical, phrasal, lexical or phonological relationships.
3. Responsive. This type includes interaction and test comprehension but at the somewhat limited level of very short conversations, standard greeting and small talk, simple request and comments and the like. The stimulus is usually a spoken prompt in order to preserve authenticity.
4. Interactive. Interaction can take the two forms of transactional language, which has the purpose of exchanging specific information, or interpersonal exchanges, which have the purpose of maintaining social relationships
5. Extensive. Extensive oral production tasks include speeches, oral presentations, and story telling, during which the opportunity for oral interaction from listeners is either highly limited or ruled out altogether.

In MA NU BANAT Kudus, the process of teaching speaking is by considering the level of difficulties, the students' ability and in which type the students are, before giving the high material, certainly based on the syllabus that has been arranged by the teacher. Teacher always tries to keep the communication by using English, so that the students are stimulated to try to respond by using the target language. In addition, if the students get the difficulties or make mistake in their speaking, so the teacher will help them and correct their mistake.

Classroom Discussion as a Model of Student-Centered Learning

The discussion method is an alternative method for teaching English speaking to help the teacher to reach the goal of teaching, especially to improve the students' speaking ability. Student-centered learning is a way of thinking about student learning. It requires that the planning, teaching, and assessment focused on the needs and abilities of the students (how they learn, what they experience, and how they engage with their learning). It is a shared knowledge and shared authority between the students and teacher where the teacher shares control of the classroom and students are allowed to experiment their own learning. Teacher becomes facilitator, helping students access the information, interpret, organize and use knowledge to solve problems and also as the motivator, helping the students to arouse their willing to study actively.

Student-centered learning includes a variety of active strategies, that involve students in doing and thinking about what they are doing. Students are given the responsibility for learning. It is based on the idea that learning is meaningful when topics are relevant to the students' lives, needs, and interests and when the students are actively engaged in constructing their own knowledge. Student centered models

rest on the theoretical perspectives of John Dewey and other twentieth century progressive educators as well as on the theoretical perspective proposed by contemporary developmental and cognitive psychologists. These views hold that knowledge, instead of being objective and fixed, is somewhat personal, social, and cultural. The learners through the experience are able to construct meaning, the concept of Student-Centered Learning has been credited in 1905 to Hayward and in 1956 to Dewey's work. Carl Rogers is associated with expanding this approach into a general theory of education. The term of Student-Centered Learning was also associated by the work of Piaget and more recently with Malcolm Knowles in his book 'Freedom to Learn for the80s', describes the shft in power from the expert teacher to the Student Centered. It is driven by a need for a change in the traditional environment where in this so-called educational atmosphere, students become passive, apathetic and bored.

The paradigm shift away from teaching to an emphasis on learning has encouraged power to be moved from the Teacher Centered to the Student Centered learning. The teacher- focuses on transmission of information formats, such as teaching, has begun to be increasingly criticized and this has covered the way for a general growth of 'student-centered learning' as an alternative approach. The description of Teacher-Centered learning strategy is focusing on the teacher transmitting knowledge from the expert to the beginner. In the contrary, Student-Centered learning strategy is focusing on the students learning and what students do to achieve the goal of learning, rather than what the teacher does. Drawing on similar concepts when describing Student-Centered courses as those that emphasize: learner activity rather than passivity; students' experience on the course outside the institution and previous to the course; process and competence, rather than content; where the key decisions about learning are made by the student through negotiation with the teacher. The following figure describes Classroom Discussion as a model of Student Centered Learning. The effectiveness of using Classroom Discussion requires an understanding of several important topics pertaining to Classroom Discussion. It describes the procedures the teacher uses to encourage verbal interchange among students.

In summary, it appears that some views of Student-Centered Learning as the concept of the student's choice in their education. While others see it as the student doing more than the teacher (active versus passive learning), and the others have a much broader definition which includes both of these concepts but, in addition, describes the shift in the power relationship between the student and the teacher.

According to Arends, (2004: 25) teacher needs many approaches to meet their goals with a diverse population of students. A single approach or method is no longer adequate. With sufficient choices, teacher can select the approach that best achieves a particular class of students, or the models that can be used to promote the students motivation, involvement and achievement.

Labeled each of these approaches a teaching model. A model, as defined here, as more than a specific method or strategy. It is an overall plan, or pattern, for helping students to learn specific kinds of knowledge, attitudes or skills. A teaching model has a theoretical basis or philosophy behind it and encompasses specific teaching steps designed to accomplish desired education outcomes.

The word of discussions can be described in more detail, as the situations in which teacher and students or students and other students talk with one another and share ideas and opinions. Questions employed to stimulate discussion are usually at a higher cognitive level. Seeing that reason, the researcher is interested in doing this experimental research in senior high school where most of the students have the requirement in doing the discussion.

Many people are afraid to discuss in class, but open dialog provides an excellent learning situation. If the students have a

different opinion from the teacher, so they can go ahead and say their opinion because that is one of the goals in the discussion, sharing the idea. Both of teacher and students should make certain that their opinion is based on facts and evidence, and that is not just something they made up.

Application of Classroom Discussion in Improving Speaking Skill

In applying the classroom discussion, the teacher should make a good plan for his/her successful classroom discussion process although spontaneity and flexibility are important in it. Based on Arends' book (2004: 420), there are five steps in planning the discussion in the process of teaching and learning. They are:

1. Consider purpose

Teacher should be sure about the purpose of discussion before applying the approach in the class. This is done in order the teacher can check for students' understanding of assignments or presentations through recitations, teach teaching skill and share the experience to the students.

2. Consider students

A good teacher will consider the students' activities when he/she has to apply the classroom discussion in the class. It includes the considerations in how particular students in the class will respond differently to various kinds of questions. The teacher also predicts how some students will want to talk all the time whereas others will be unenthusiastic to say anything.

3. Choose an approach

In Classroom discussion choosing one of approach can really influence the two things of planning for discussion above. Three approaches that can be used in the classroom discussion are:

a. Recitations

The approach is applied by giving the information on a particular topic and brief question and answer sessions about the information can provide teacher with a mean of checking the students' understanding. It can also arouse the students' motivation to complete their assignments or to listen carefully when the teacher is talking.

b. Inquiry or problem-based discussion

This other approach in classroom discussion is part of some types. This is done by giving the puzzle situations to the students that are not immediately explainable. Teacher encourages the students to ask questions because they are curious about the puzzle given by the teacher. In this type of discussions, the teacher helps the students to be conscious of their own reasoning processes and teach them to monitor and evaluate their own learning strategies.

c. Sharing-based discussion

It will help the students to form and express thoughts and opinions independently. Through dialogue about shared experiences, and what these experiences mean, ideas are developed or expanded and questions are raised for future study.

4. Make a plan

A lesson plan for a discussion consists of objectives and a content outline. The plan should include not only the targeted content but also a well-conceived focus statement, the description of a puzzling event, and/or a list of questions.

5. Use physical space appropriately

In a classroom discussion, the appropriate of using the physical space is one of important things because it can influence the students' behaviors and their communication both of with the teacher and their friends. There are two recommended seating patterns; U-shape seating pattern and circle seating pattern.

In applying Classroom Discussion, Arends (2007) explains about the five phases in the process of teaching learning. Therefore, the application of Classroom Discussion in teaching English speaking is as follows:

1. Clarify aims and establish set
   a. Explaining the purposes of the discussion b.Giving the appropriate issue to the students c.Inviting the students to the puzzling situation
   b. Getting the students set to

participate and respond to the discussion
2. Focus the discussion
    a. Relating the beginning discussion questions
    b. Focusing to the students' prior knowledge or experience c. Describing the puzzling situation given in the previous phase. d.Explaining the discussion issue
    c. Encouraging the students' participations
3. Hold the discussion
    a. Monitoring the students' interactions b.Asking some question related to the issue
    b. Giving the chance to the students to presents their ideas d.Responding the ideas given by the students
    c. Enforcing the ground rules
    d. Keeping records of the discussion g.Expressing his/her own ideas
4. End the discussion
    a. Helping the students to end the discussion
    b. Making the summarize of discussion by tying various ideas together from the students
    c. Explaining the important role about the discussed issue for the students
5. Debrief the discussion

In this phase, teacher gives the explanation to the students about the advantages and the disadvantages in doing the discussion in order they can minimize and decrease the disadvantages and maximize the use of Classroom Discussion as a model in Student-Centered Learning.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

After completing this research, the writer can describe the data as the following.

The Speaking Ability of the First Semester Students of Almuslim University in the Academic Year 2009/2010 Taught by Using Classroom Discussion

From the data of the speaking ability of the first semester students in taught by using Classroom Discussion, the writer found that the highest score is 92 and the lowest score is 45. The average score (Mean) is 80.2 and the Standard of Deviation (SD) is 5.82 Based on those findings, the writer concludes that the speaking ability of the first semester students taught by using Classroom Discussion can be categorized as excellent. The writer then put them into the table of frequency distribution as follows:

Table 1. The Frequency Distribution of the Speaking Ability of the Students Taught by Using Classroom Discussion

Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)
95 – 87	12	30
86 – 78	16	40
77 – 69	7	17.5
68 – 60	3	7.5
59 – 51	1	2.5
50 – 42	1	5.2
Total	40	100

Based on the table above, the researcher then draws a histogram as follows:

The Speaking Ability of the First Semester Students of Almuslim University in the Academic Year 2009/2010 Taught without Using Classroom Discussion

From the speaking ability of the first semester students taught without using Classroom Discussion the writer found that the highest score is 81 and the lowest score is 44. The data can be drawn in the table of frequency distribution as follows:

Table 2. The Frequency Distribution of the Speaking Ability of the First Semester Students Taught without Using Classroom Discussion

Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)
82 – 76	5	12,5
75 – 69	10	25
68 – 62	9	22,5
61 – 55	11	27,5
54 – 48	3	7,5
47 – 41	2	0,5
Total	40	100

From the data listed on the table 2 above, the histogram is as follows:

And from the calculation, the writer also found that the mean is 64.3 and the Standard of Deviation (SD) is 7.74. It means that the speaking ability of the first semester students taught without using Classroom Discussion can be categorized as sufficient.

After analyzing the data it can be described that based on the calculation of t-test, with the level of significance 5 %, the research hypothesis is confirmed. And the achievement of English speaking of the first semester students of Almuslim University taught by using Classroom Discussion is higher than the achievement of English speaking of the first semester students taught without using Classroom Discussion. It means that the Classroom Discussion is effective in improving English speaking skill as a model of Student-Centered Learning.

In Classroom Discussion, the students were more active in learning process, they can freely express and share their ideas and opinion about the problems that has been faced. Beside that they can work together with their friends to solve the problems. The teacher serves only as the motivator and facilitator and also monitors in doing the discussion. Based on the result above, it is concluded that Classroom Discussion as a model of Student-Centered Learning works well in improving the ability of English skills of the first semester students of Almuslim University in academic year 2009/2010.

The discussion can motivate to develop the student's braveries to use their knowledge and their experience to solve a problem without other's opinion. There may be different of view so the students can give different opinion. Beside that the students are also able to give real opinion orally. In this case they need to practice their democratic life. Thus, the students can practice to give opinion about a problem. And at last the discussion gives possibility for students to learn to participate by asking to solve a problem together.

In the classroom discussion, the students have more motivation to use English in communication with their friends they can practice how to express their ideas or opinions, they can also appreciate the other opinions of other students, and they can practice how to solve the problems together. Discussion involves all students in learning process, and it can increase the student's participation individually.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The result of the research shows that Classroom Discussion is effective in improving the English speaking for the first semester students of Almuslim University in the academic year 2009/2010. And the writer suggests that the teacher can use the Classroom Discussion as one of the models of Student-Centered Learning to apply in teaching English, especially to improve students' ability in speaking.

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