

## USING GROUP DISCUSSION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING FLUENCY

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### ARTICLE

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### ABSTRACT

Being able to speak in target language is considered as the indicator that every language learner is mastering the target language. Likewise in English, the learners are regarded mastering English when they can produce the sound of English itself in the form of good communication toward the others. Nevertheless, teaching English is a complex process, since it involves some activities started from preparation until evaluation. In addition, there are some barriers regarding teaching speaking, i.e the number of students, teacher's competence, and even students' problems. Although teaching speaking is a kind of difficult job, still there is a way to overcome some stated problems; group discussion. So, this research is aiming at the implementation of group discussion to improve students' speaking fluency. To achieve the research objectives, the design of the research is classroom action research which involves four steps, they are planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The subject research is the students of *Bahasa Indonesia* Department semester II of University of Muhammadiyah Malang who have different English proficiency background. Data collection method used is preliminary observation, indepth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The data gathered will be analyzed by using the qualitative analysis involving reducing data, displaying data, verifying data and taking conclusion. Based on the results, it can be stated that the implementation of group discussion in speaking course can improve the students' speaking fluency.

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### INTRODUCTION

Being able to speak in target language is considered as the indicator that every language learner is mastering the target language. Likewise in English, the learners are regarded mastering the English when they can produce the sound of English itself in the form of good communication toward the others. Most of them consider that speaking is the most important skill in which they can know about their progress through speaking activity. When their speaking is poor, they think that their ability is also poor. On the other hand, when their speaking is better, automatically they will have good English. According to Burkart (1998), the language learners need to recognize that speaking involves three area of knowledge, namely mechanics

(pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary), functions (transaction and interaction), social and cultural rules and norms (turn-taking, rate of speech, length of pauses between speakers, relative roles of participants).

Speaking is not only learning about the term of knowledge about speaking, but larger than that. Speaking prefers to the way how the learners produce the sound and practice it. Therefore, we know the term of speaking as a production skill. It means that learning speaking must be practiced as often as possible in order to achieve the target of skill that is being able to produce the speaking itself. As a means of communication, language is used for communication (Brown 2000: 5). In this case, the language is purposed to make an interaction among people by speaking. Therefore, speaking takes an important role in order to build a community by having a good speaking. In line with this, a good speaker is he/she who is able to actualize speaking as both production and interaction skills.

As a teacher, it is important to know the characteristics of successful speaking activity. In addition, Ur said that there are some characteristics of successful speaking activity they are: 1) learners talk a lot, 2) participation is even, 3) motivation is high, 4) language is an of acceptable level (2003:120). Therefore, in teaching speaking, a teacher should create a model of teaching which can encourage the learners to speak, give chance to them to participate more, and the most important one is they are interested in the teacher's teaching model. In Indonesia specifically, where English is as foreign language and the students are not accustomed with this language, the teacher is expected to give examples of good speaking, to give the meaningful activities to the students, and also to facilitate them in order to master the speaking skill. This opinion is supported by Brown who said that teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, and setting the condition for learning (2000: 7). So, it is very important for the teacher to guide the students to achieve the goal of speaking, to facilitate their learning by giving many activities in speaking, to enable the students to learn more, and to set the good condition for learning by applying a good strategy or technique in teaching speaking.

Nevertheless, teaching speaking is not an easy job. There are some barriers regarding the teaching of speaking skill. The first is about the number of student in

speaking class. Ideally, a foreign language class should consist of no more than 20 students (Sadtono, 1995: 26). Second, many teachers still do not know how to teach speaking effectively, if they know, they find difficulties to implement it in speaking class (Sadtono, 1995: 26). Besides, Ur said that the problems of speaking activity come from the students themselves, such as inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation, and mother-tongue use (2003: 121).

To overcome the above problems, Ur (2003: 121-122) suggests the following strategies. First, use group work or group discussion, because it can increase the sheer amount of learners talk going on in a limited period of time and also lowers the inhibitions of learners who are unwilling to speak in front of the full class. Second, use easy language during class activity, it means that the language used should be easily recalled and produced by the learners, so they can speak fluently with the minimum of hesitation. The third is making a careful choice of topic and task to stimulate interest. It means that the topic should be interesting for the learners and can motivate them to participate more in speaking class. The fourth is giving some instructions or trainings in discussion skills; the task is based on group discussion in which it includes the clear instruction to the learners. The last is keeping the students speaking the target language. Teacher should guide and monitor the progress of his/her learners in speaking.

Therefore, this research focuses on the implementation of the group discussion as an effort to improve the students' speaking fluency at ESP speaking class at University of Muhammadiyah Malang, especially at *Bahasa Indonesia* department.

## **METHOD**

This research was proposed to describe the process of implementation of group discussion in order to improve the students' speaking fluency in detail. The data that wanted to be gathered in this research was descriptive data which explained all the condition of teaching learning process through the usage of words. The data would be presented based on the fact and the phenomenon during the research. This research emphasized on the process of the implementation group discussion in

improving the students' speaking fluency rather than the result of the speaking fluency.

Therefore, to achieve the research objectives, this research applied classroom action research CAR which involves four steps, they are planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The subject research is the students of *Bahasa Indonesia* Department semester II of University of Muhammadiyah Malang who have different English proficiency background. Data collection method used is preliminary observation, indepth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The data gathered will be analyzed by using the qualitative analysis involving reducing data, displaying data, verifying data and taking conclusion.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The grand design of this research is the implementation of group discussion to improve students' speaking fluency through classroom action research. According to Winoto et al (2002:6), Classroom Action Research is the action research that is conducted in the classroom at school. More specific CAR can be defined as the systematic study toward the process of teaching and learning in the classroom in order to make it better or improve the quality of teaching and learning process, and students' achievement by giving the action. The procedure of classroom action research involves four steps, they are planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting.

Providing the lesson plan as a part of planning is a must for the teacher before giving lesson in the classroom. The researcher made the lesson plan that covered 1) standard competence, 2) material, 3) indicators, 4) teaching and learning activities, 5) media, and 6) assessment.

Further, good planning was needed in order to make the activities would be organized and run well. The action was given in three meetings including the evaluation; each meeting consisted of 3 x 100 minutes. The research planning was made by the researcher. It was consisted of lesson plan, teaching media, and the observation sheet. At this planning, the action was arranged as follows: 1) the lecturer gave brainstorming to the students related to the topic, 2) the lecturer explained the

expression related to the topic, 3) the lecturer divided the students into groups as the implementation of group discussion, 4) the lecturer asked the students to speak in a group or individually, 5) the lecturer asked the students' difficulties and ended the teaching learning process.

The implementation of group discussion is adopted from Barbara's (2003) view about role of group discussion. The role was described as follow: 1) the group is an integral part of, not an adjunct to, the achievement of the learning goals of the class, 2) the teacher chooses the groups to reflect a diversity of viewpoints, abilities, gender, race, and other characteristics, 3) the groups contain fewer than six students-most likely four, 4) students discover information and teach that material to their group and, perhaps, to the class as a whole, 5) the teacher's role is to guide and encourage on the side, to facilitate, to monitor, and to clarify the information, 6) the students are evaluated individually on the learning they have achieved.

In addition, the implementation of group discussion carried out for about one or two cycles and continued on the next cycle if the criteria of success were not achieved. This was based on the concept of CAR that is conducted in cycles until the objective can be achieved. The cycle would be stopped if the research objective was achieved although it was done only one cycle. If not, it would be continued to the second cycle. It was done based on the time schedule that had been arranged before.

It was found that during the observation, generally the lecturer conducted several steps, they were as follows: 1) Brainstorming the student related to the topic given. In giving brainstorming, the lecturer gave simulation to his students related to the topic, giving opinion expressions. He showed his book to his students. Then he gave his own opinion about his book that it was very interesting to be read because there were some interesting topics inside it. In addition, he asked to one of his students, "What do you thing about *mbak VADA*?" the student answered, "*Cantik Pak*," Directly the class was crowded for a while. 2) Explaining the expressions of giving opinion to his students. 3) Giving some cases related to the daily phenomenon to his students. 4) Asking his students to discuss the task given in group. 5) Implementing the group discussion. In implementing the group discussion, there were some activities done by both lecturer and students, they were: a) the lecturer

divided his students into some groups; they were consisted of 4 to 6 students that heterogeneous, b) the lecturer distributed the task to the groups, c) the lecturer asked the groups to discuss the task given, d) The lecturer asked to the groups' member to be active during the discussion, e) the lecturer asked to the group to explore and discover the ideas as many as possible, f) the students told the new vocabulary to their friends in group who did not know the English word, g) the students wrote down the important things on their books, h) the lecturer guided the group discussion, i) the lecturer clarified the wrong sentences from his students, j) the lecturer monitored the students' activity during discussion, k) the lecturer asked the students to use English during discussion, l) asking the students to present the group work after the time for discussion was over, m) asking the difficulties to his students, n) closing the lesson.

Based on the result of observation, the researcher reflected what he had done during the research. When the researcher was reflecting his research, all the data that gathered from observation, field notes, interview, and test were described. From that description, the researcher concluded whether his research objective had been reached or not. From this analysis, he decided whether the next cycle was necessary to conduct or not. This research needed the next cycle, because at the first cycle the research objective did not achieve yet. Therefore, the researcher moved to the next cycle of action by improving and revising the next planning until the objective of research were achieved.

From above illustration, it could be concluded that in the reflection the researcher analyzes, interprets, and evaluates the information which were gathered from the observation (Winoto et al, 2002: 44). The data that had been collected had to be analyzed and interpreted in order to know whether the action given had been met with the research objective or not. The interpretation of this result observation became reference to evaluate the action that had given, so the researcher could design the next steps of action which better than before.

Based on the above finding, it could be known that the students were more active in learning the ESP speaking. They were not hesitant to speak because they had media and time to show up themselves in group discussion. They discovered the

information and idea and then shared it to the others. Moreover, they could practice their speaking directly during the group discussion was running.

In addition, based on the concept of group discussion that belongs to the cooperative learning method, in the group discussion the students could increase their solidarity to the others. Through this way, the students got more information, especially the new vocabulary, related to the topic of speaking that could help them to finish the task and achieve the objective. This was supported by Trianto who states that group discussion is designed in order to increase the students' participation during the class activity, so by applying this strategy the common goal of learning can be achieve easier (Trianto, 2007:42).

Besides, group discussion is designed to encourage the participation in a non threatening environment (Bennett, B., Rolheiser, C., Stevahn, L. (1991). This could be seen from the implementation of group discussion in this class in which all the students were participated actively to find the information, idea, etc without thinking that they were advance student or on the other hand. The students were happy during the lesson in group discussion, because they did not learn something in the strict condition or under pressure. In group discussion, the students not only could learn about speaking, but directly they could practice it with their friends in the same group. Furthermore, they could ask their friends to correct their speaking.

Moreover, the role of lecturer in group discussion just was as the facilitator who guided, monitored, encouraged, and clarified the incorrect statements from the students. So, when there was a student who made a wrong sentence, directly the lecturer corrected it and tried to explain it once more. Therefore, almost the time in group discussion was used by the students.

Based on the above explanation and the analysis result of feasibility teaching learning from the first and second cycle, it can be concluded that the implementation of group discussion could improve the students' speaking fluency in following procedures: 1) The lecturer divided the students into groups; 2) The group was consisted of 4 to 6 students; 3)The group was heterogeneous; 4) The students discovered the information and taught the material to their group; 5) The lecturer guided and facilitated the group presentation, 6) The lecturer monitored the group

work; 7) The lecturer clarified the wrong statement; 8) The lecturer encouraged the group to be active.

## CONCLUSIONS

Refers to research results and the discussions above, it can be concluded that the implementation of group discussion in speaking course can improve the students' speaking fluency. In addition, before giving the lesson, the lecturer prepared the lesson plan and teaching media that could help the teaching and learning process during the implementation of group discussion in speaking course. Besides, the interesting brainstorming and explanation of the topic given were also needed in order to attract the students' attention during the course.

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