

IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY USING GUESSING GAMES IN SMP AL FALAH DELTASARI SIDOARJO

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed at applying teaching spoken descriptive text using guessing games in eight grade students of SMP Al Falah Deltasari Sidoarjo. It described how to teach spoken descriptive text using guessing games and reported the improvement of students' speaking ability on learning process and test score. This Classroom Action Research (CAR) had 8-4 class students as subject of the research. The researcher worked together with two collaborators to collect the data using observation sheet, video recording, field-note and questionnaires. The research gained quantitative data; students' score on spoken descriptive text presentation and qualitative one; description on teacher and students' activities in teaching learning process and students' reflection on the use of games in their class. The research finally found that the use of guessing game in the class improved students speaking activities, reduced stress, increased self-confidence; as students were eager to speak up, and gave more chance to every student on practicing speaking. The use of games also motivated students to improve their vocabularies. Students were excited and enjoyed the class. The improvement on students speaking ability was also found in spoken descriptive text scores. It was significant in performance area of content, grammar and vocabulary. The researchers, however, did not concern on the improvement on pronunciation performance area. It was, therefore, suggested to be observed by other researchers.

Key words: *Spoken descriptive text, Guessing games, improvement.*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menerapkan pengajaran deskriptif teks lisan menggunakan permainan tebak-tebakan di kelas VIII SMP Al Falah Deltasari Sidoarjo. Disini akan digambarkan bagaimana proses belajar mengajar di kelas menggunakan permainan tersebut dan peningkatan kemampuan berbicara siswa yang ditunjukkan dengan nilai tes, Obyek penelitian tindakan kelas ini adalah siswa kelas VIII-4. Peneliti bersama dua orang kolaborator mengumpulkan data melalui lembar observasi, rekaman video, catatan harian, dan kuisisioner. Ada dua jenis data yang diperoleh; kuantitatif, berupa hasil tes siswa dan kualitatif, berupa gambaran kegiatan proses belajar mengajar dan refleksi siswa ketika selesai pembelajaran di kelas. Peneliti menemukan hasil yang positif dari

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penggunaan game tebak-tebakan ini; meningkatnya aktifitas berbicara Bahasa Inggris siswa, mengurangi stress ketika pembelajaran, meningkatnya kepercayaan diri siswa ketika berbicara, dan memberi lebih banyak kesempatan bagi siswa untuk memperkaya perbendaharaan kata-kata Bahasa Inggrisnya. Siswa lebih senang dan nyaman ketika belajar. Nilai kemampuan berbicara mereka juga meningkat, khususnya pada isi, tata Bahasa, dan pemilihan kata yang digunakan. Tetapi peneliti tidak melihat sejauh mana pengaruhnya dengan peningkatan kemampuan pengucapan Bahasa Inggrisnya. Hal ini mungkin dapat menjadi acuan bagi pengajar lainnya untuk melanjutkan penelitian.

Kata kunci: Teks deskriptif lisan, permainan tebak-tebakan, peningkatan kemampuan berbicara.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization era really gives big impact on Indonesian education. Government needs to upgrade human resources quality to adapt the world changing. One of competencies needed in modern era is mastering English, both oral and written. Teachers of English have an important role to improve students skills, especially in speaking and writing. The students, however, need to practice speaking before writing, especially in Junior High School. Teachers emphasize on speaking more than writing. Students should be able to express ideas orally in conversation (transactional and interpersonal) and also in short simple monolog (spoken text).

It is challenging to upgrade students' skill in speaking English in SMP Al Falah Deltasari. Teachers have designed some programs like English Day, English Corner, English Competition, and other events to make the students speak up, however, they do not get satisfaction on the result. The students have no self-confidence, lack of vocabulary, and be afraid of making mistakes in speaking English. The teachers actually have given them practices and exercises, however, their knowledge on language rule do not reduce their speaking barriers. According to Martin Bygate (2000:5), in Speaking, knowledge is only a part of the affair; we need a skill. There were some learning problems that exercises like model dialogs, pattern practices, oral drill tables etc. do not solve. These activities are like learning to drive without ever going out on the road. He, then, promotes a transition from supervised learning situation to real-life use of the language.

The teachers, then, decided to emerge the students in every meeting of English class. They tried many kinds of methods and techniques to upgrade speaking skill of the students. One of technique used, especially in teaching spoken descriptive text, was using guessing games. Asking students to speak on describing thing was, however, not easy. The students were already introduced to descriptive text since they were in grade 7 and also to the related grammatical sentences. But most of them looked stressed when they were asked to deliver

short simple spoken descriptive text. A joyful learning in the class to reduce the hesitation and stress was then considerably needed.

The writer chose 8-4 class to do a research based on English score on the previous semester that it had the worst one among other classes. Considering the conditions of the students in class 8-4, a real-life use of language is definitely needed for the students. Even in the very beginning level like introducing themselves or their friends or speaking on even very simple thing around them. The ability to describe a real object in the surrounding is expected to prompt advanced speaking skill. Expressing meaning in a short simple descriptive monolog/spoken descriptive text accurately, fluently and acceptably is one of the basic competences that should be mastered by eight-grader. To present a real-life use of language means to construct a meaningful teaching and learning in speaking. Since speaking is a skill, it is not about the knowledge of the language; it deals much about behavioral learning or skill that includes the development of competence in students' ability to perform or express the language (Silberman, 1996:67)

Considering a joyful and meaningful teaching and learning to improve students' speaking ability in spoken descriptive text, the researcher came to think of games. Games are very attractive for people of all ages. Some educators see games as a useful and perhaps even necessary learning environment suitable for learners of all ages. Games also help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work. Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. Many games provide repeated use of a language form. Wright et al (1994) states;

By making the language convey information and opinion, games provide the key feature of 'drill' with the opportunity to sense the working of language as living communication...a useful interpretation of 'meaningfulness' is that the learners respond to the content in a definite way. If they are amused, angered, challenged, intrigued or surprised the content is clearly meaningful to them. Thus the meaning of language they listen to, speak, read or write will be more vividly experienced and, therefore better remembered. (p.1)

Games provide meaningful 'drill' that students are not aware of being drilled as they as amused, challenged or even angered. Guessing games, as a kind of language game provide describing drill to guess a certain object. Therefore, the researcher assumed that by using some guessing games, students' speaking ability in spoken descriptive text in grade 8-4 of SMP Al Falah Deltasari will be improved. The research then sought to describe the implementation of the guessing games in teaching and learning spoken descriptive text and the improvement of students speaking score and speaking activity in the class.

Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols, in a variety of contexts (Chaney, 1998: 13). Kayi said what is meant by "teaching speaking is to teach ESL learners

to: (1) produce the English speech sounds and sounds patterns; (2) use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language; (3) select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter; (4) organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence; (5) use language as a means of expressing values and judgments; and (6) use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which are called as fluency (Nunan, in Kayi, 2007: 1).

According to Martin Bygate (2000: 6), since speaking is a skill, there are two basic things that should be taken into account. The first is motor perceptive skill. It involves perceiving, recalling and articulating in the correct order sounds and structures of the language. And the second is interaction skill which is the skill to use knowledge and basic motor perceptive skills to achieve communication.

Communicative language teaching and collaborative learning serve best the students to learn to speak in the second language by interacting. Bygate states that teaching speaking should be,

...ensuring a satisfactory transition from supervised learning in the classroom to real-life use of the skill. This transition is often called the transfer of the skill.... if *all* language produced in the classroom is determined by the teacher, 'we are protecting (the learner) from the additional burden of having to make his own choices'... nor presumably will the learner be able to transfer much of any motor perceptive skill to a language-using situation (2000:5-6)

Communicative language teaching is based on real-life situation that requires communication. It will give students more opportunity to communicate each other using the second language. Teacher should be able to create a classroom environment where students have real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful task that promote oral language. This can occur when students collaborate in groups to achieve a goal or to complete a task. Practice in interaction skills requires the participants to negotiate meaning. There is a connection between the degree of freedom to negotiate and the number of people involved.

There are many ways of grouping learners in the classroom. Long and Porter (in Bygate, 2000:96) report that small-group interaction allows more talks for each of the student. Another view to grouping student for speaking class considers the heterogeneous or homogeneous speaking ability among the students. Heterogeneous Grouping is intentionally mixing students of varying talents and needs in the same classroom (the opposite of homogeneous grouping). The success of this method, also called mixed-ability grouping, depends on the teacher's skill in differentiating instruction so that all students feel challenged and successful. Advocates say heterogeneous grouping prevents lower-track classes from becoming dumping grounds and ensures that all

students have access to high-status content. Opponents say it is difficult for teachers to manage, hampers the brightest children from moving at an accelerated pace, and contributes to watering down the curriculum (www.smallschoolsproject.org).

Teachers are sometimes confused to choose what kind of activities that can be done at the classroom and to check the students' speaking competence. Drilling or acting out conversation in pair is an activity that usually done by teachers. Both activities are also used to check the students' speaking competence. The question and the answer are predictable and even there is only one correct predetermined answer. On the other hand, the purpose of a real communication is to accomplish a task, such as conveying a telephone message, obtaining information, or expressing opinion. In real communication, participants must manage uncertainty about what the other person will say. Authentic communication involves an information gap; each participant has information that the other does not have.

Teaching speaking is a very important part of second language learning since oral communication seems to be more widely used than the written communication. The ability to communicate in a second language clearly and efficiently contributes to the success of the learner in school and success later in every phase of life. Therefore, it is essential that language teachers pay great attention to teaching speaking. Rather than leading students to pure memorization, providing a rich environment where meaningful communication takes place is desired. With this aim, various speaking activities such as those listed above can contribute a great deal to students in developing basic interactive skills necessary for life. These activities make students more active in the learning process and at the same time make their learning more meaningful and fun for them.

Bygate (2000: 76) presents four types of materials to promote interaction skills, they are: (1) information gap; (2) communication games; (3) simulations; and (4) project-based activities. These materials can be designed in such a way to fit the classroom speaking performance as drawn by the instruction.

Shelley Vernon who has inspired thousands of ESL teachers with her games (<http://www.buzzle.com>) proposes that it is very important for the teachers to adopt as many ways as possible to let students practice English in class. The success of this teaching strategy is due mainly to the fact that the learners can choose what they want to read, listen to, watch and talk about in class. Therefore he also proposes some ways i.e.: Free Talk, Retelling, Short Play, Speech Contest, Speaking and Acting, Acting and Speaking, Speaking and Drawing, Watching and Speaking, Acting as an Interpreter, Problem Solving, and Games.

Students love games. The teacher can choose games to have students practice. Some of the games (adapted from many resources) are:

- (1) Twenty Questions: One student has a word or some expressions in his mind. Other students guess the word by asking only general questions and alternative questions. The students answer them with only “yes” or “no”. If the students can guess the word or expression in twenty questions, they win otherwise they lose.
- (2) Just a minute: Students are grouped into four. Every group presents a spokesperson. The group plays in turn. A spokesperson of a group chooses one of the cards that consist of six words. The spokesperson has to make his group members guess all of the word by describing them within one minute.
- (3) Describe and Draw: Students are grouped into 5. The group will play in turn to draw a picture based on a description given in the card. Every group has 3 minutes to guess what animal it is. A student takes a card and read it clearly so his friends can draw it right and guess what animal it is.

Teacher can pick one or two of them, modified them to adjust with the need in his or her class. In this research, the researcher was interested to implement those guessing games in her class.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study the researcher applied Classroom Action Research (CAR). It is a research that is done by systematically collecting data in everyday practice and analyzing them in order to come to some decisions about what the future practice should be (Wallace, 1998: 4). By doing action research teacher initiates classroom investigation which seeks to increase the teacher understanding of classroom teaching learning and to bring out change in classroom practices.

The subject of the research was 32 students in class 8-4 of SMP Al Falah Deltasari Sidoarjo. The data gathered were quantitative (in the form of students' speaking score) and qualitative data (teacher's and student's activity in the guessing games implementation, and the student's reflection on guessing games in the class). The researcher worked together with two collaborators to collect the data by observing, giving questionnaires, documenting the activities and evaluating students' performance in spoken descriptive text.

RESULTS

At the first time the researcher was interested to implement “just a minute” to improve students' speaking ability in spoken descriptive text. Students were grouped when playing in every game. After checking the class attendant, the goal of the lesson was explained. Students should be *forced* to speak. “To learn language means to learn how to speak it. No English class without speaking it out. You will never know you can speak English if you never

try to". The main goal of the game that day (Just a minute) is to force the player to explain something so that their friends can guess what objects he/she means.

Students were getting enthusiastic and challenged. They were grouped into seven or eight students. Every group was given a set of shorts descriptive texts. They were to identify any description sentences and details of an object in the text. For about 10 minutes, they discussed the utterances or sentences used to describe an object in the group.

Before starting the game, the teacher explained the rule of the game (how to play, what role to play, forbidden things punishment and reward) in blended language to get students' comprehension. At the first time, students were little bit confused, but when teacher acted out to be the player, they got more understanding. The teacher also drilled them set of utterances to describe a thing to be clues for guessing the word. There were three ways of giving clues for this game done by the students:

1. Describing it with sentences (this is considered the best performance). Like using the utterances, "*it is made of wood, it's around us, we have it in this class, we use it every day to write and so on*"
2. Pointing at the thing while saying, "*What's this?*", for example if in the words in the card [hair, nose, cheek, neck, foot, arm, ears], the player can just point at his/her hair and say "what's this?"
3. Digesting. This is the poorest way of giving clue. Student may just keep silent while pointing at her/his hair, nose, and so on without saying anything and expected the rest to guess what was meant.

When a student from a group was playing (later on he/she was called "the witness"), two students of other group acted to be scorer and time keeper who shouted "START" when it was ready to play and "TIME'S UP" when it was already one minute.

As the game went on, the students were happy. They jumped, yelled, and clapped hands. The witness tried hard to explain something so that the rest in group could guess the word she/he meant. Some students played as what was expected, like when she/he expected the rest to guess "plate" she/he said "we eat with..." while digesting rounded thing with his/her hands. To deal with "father" a girl said "*pak Joko* is my bla..bla bla!", then the rest responded "father". However, there were many students only gesturing to make their friends guess the words they meant. Funny things were happening during the game. There were speechless students, only jumped all the time due to the stress and said few words like "*round...round... fruit!*" to deal with "water melon". The game went on about 8 rounds until every student got a chance to play. The score of the groups then was calculated. The group with most score wins the game and got a sack of candies as a reward. As the bell rang, the class should be ended. But most students yelled "*besuk lagi ya Ustadzah...*"

"Are you having fun today?" asked the researcher. Most students shouted cheerfully, "YEESSS..." then they were asked what have they learnt that day, they

answered; they were challenged to speak. Some of them even enthusiastically opened the dictionary to find a word every time they got difficulty to find one. They felt very nervous and had fun in the same time.

The next activity was then to evaluate what have they been drilled in the game: students were asked to describe their pet in a short and simple spoken descriptive text. This time all students were willing to speak up, they got more confident, no student rejected to do it. However, some of them still did it by reading their writing.

The researcher needed to adapt and adopt the other guessing games to suit the class instruction. Seeing the students' achievement that was not satisfying (in the level of 'poor' to "fair"), the researcher planned for the next cycle.

In the second cycle, the lesson plan was revised. The researcher planned the other games should be more challenging and also forcing the students to speak more. There should be more than one language games implemented in the class, so that the class would not be boring. The games should force the students to speak more in a joyful and challenging way.

Among other language games, the researcher chose "21 questions" and "describe and draw" game with some modified activities to fit the class' situation and need. As the performance task was on describing a pet animal, the material in the games will also be focused on describing animals.

As usual, in the beginning of the class, the researcher had always to check that everyone was in or whether they were fine and ready to join the class activities. And the most important, the researcher had always again and again to motivate the students to speak.

This time, the researcher gave them small talks to motivate them, about "the power of *kepepet*". It is about how people can do what they usually cannot when they are forced in unexpected situation. The researcher gave them example like some Indonesian students who had to study in foreign country (Australia), because their parents moved to that country due to their job. The students got difficulties in communication to the locals only in the first month.

The immigrant students who were in the same age as those in class 8-4 needed only one month to be fluent in their speaking English because they were in "*kepepet*" situation. "So, why don't we make ourselves in such situation to be brave to speak? Why don't we create our class environment force us to speak? Why don't we put ourselves into a fake '*kepepet*' situation" said the researcher to the students of 8-4. Students love such story; therefore, the researcher always encouraged the students using such motivating stories.

In this meeting, before playing the planned game, students were grouped into six. They were also exposed to a descriptive text about giraffe to make them focus on the description of animal. In the groups, students read the text aloud and discussed the details. In the meantime, the researcher also supplied them with a vocabulary list dealing with the text and drilled the pronunciation. The

vocabulary list was mostly about adjective to describe things around us, especially about animals, as they would play “21 questions” that focused on animal that day. About fifteen minutes, students exercised and discussed (questioning and answering) the description on giraffe.

After the students had the exercises, the researcher explained the goal and rule of “21 questions” that day. In this session, all students were regrouped into three groups. Every group should have an animal and write it in a piece of paper and then fold it. They should keep the word so that other groups did not know what animal it was. It seemed that the students did not understand soon after the explanation, so the teacher acted it out as a player.

The researcher acted as the player who guessed the first group’s animal. The researcher would ask less than 21 yes/no questions to guess what animal it was. All the members of the group must answer every question only with “yes” or “no”. If the player could mention the word correctly, she won. Otherwise she lost. After the researcher acted as a player to guess the secret word of a group, the students understood how to play the game.

As the game went on, the class became very noisy because one group stated questions, another group solidly answer yes or no together. After all of three groups had played the game at about 15 minutes; the researcher saw there were some active students and some others were silent. So, the next round, the rule of the game should be changed a little bit. The active students helped the researcher to be the facilitator in the game. Students who always silent and shy to speak were asked to get in front of the class one by one acted as the player. A facilitator closed the player eyes with a piece of cloth. Another one wrote an animal name on the board. The player then guessed what animal it was by using yes/no questions.

DISCUSSION

Before conducting a speaking class, teacher always has to motivate student to reduce their hesitation. Daily greeting and small talks were always spoken to students to make them accustomed to daily conversation. As you know that successful communications require good listeners as well as good speakers (Nunan, 1989:32). The researcher always did that kind of familiarization in every meeting in the cycles. Teaching speaking is not easily separated from other objectives (Hughes, 2002:6). Therefore, although the focus of the classroom activity was designed to spoken descriptive text, there was other aim to help students to practice some aspect of linguistic knowledge (descriptive sentences, phrases list and to raise awareness of some socio-linguistic point such as asking someone to repeat an utterance, confirming something, etc.)

The teaching scenario as planned in the lesson plans were conducted flexibly to adjust the immediate circumstances in the classroom. There were some spontaneous change and addition to fit the classroom need. In the first cycle lesson plan, it was not stated that the lesson plan would be done in 2

meeting, but in the implementation, it needed 2 meetings to cover all the material and activities as to deal with the objectives/indicators stated. It was needed more than one challenging game, since in the “just a minute” game, some students used gestures instead of speaking in some sentences. Students need more exposure on defining things.

Another weakness is in “just a minute” game the language feature used was less focused on animal description. The challenging games should “force” students to speak up and explore more animal description. That’s why the learning scenario in the lesson plan should be revised and there was the second lesson plan.

Flexibility in implementing lesson plan is always needed. Richard Leblanc (1998), a York University Ontario wrote in his article “Good Teaching: The Top Ten Requirements” that good teaching (point 4) is not about being rigid about our plan to teach but being flexible, fluid, experimenting, and having the confidence to react and adjust to changing circumstances.

In conducting the second lesson plan, there were still many modifications and adjustments. When the “twenty-one questions” was going on, some students did not state a question. They preferred being silent and seeing their friend busy finding a correct word and preparing sentences. Therefore, a modification on the games rule was made. The silent students were ‘punished’ to be a player that should guess an animal by asking less than 21 questions in front of the class. All students in the class answered yes or no to the questions. To reduce stress, the player eyes were covered with a piece of cloth. By this modification, then silent students finally spoke out their questions.

The next meeting, “describe and draw” was conducted to drill students to adjust “questioning” they have learnt in “21 questions” to stating a description of an animal. This game was played in two rounds. The first round every student got a short description of animal in a clipping. The student read it to his/her group, while the rest tried to figure out what animal it was in simple drawing. By this game, students’ pronunciation was drilled to gather listener understood of what was read. In the second round, the player student got incomplete description about an animal and the picture of the animal. This time the player student read and stated further description about the animal to another group (this rule was made to prevent gesturing or giving any non-verbal clue). The group drew a simple picture and wrote the name of the animal when the time was up to three minutes; they showed the picture and name to match with the picture in the clipping. If they were matched, the group won.

After implementing the games, students’ performance on spoken descriptive text/ descriptive monolog should be evaluated. It was not planned how the test would be conducted in the revised lesson plan. Considering that the evaluation should comfort the student, the researcher invited the students one by one to “talk” outside the classroom about a pet they have. This was also done to get better recording on their voice.

By guessing games, a real-life communication was set in the class. The students communicated in non-predictable sentences. It provided more meaningful communication than that is done in role-playing or acting a dialog. Sentences in model dialog are usually in full-complete or well-formed sentences. While in the games, the sentences were often fragmented. In real life, spoken language consists of short, often fragmentary utterances, repetition and even overlap between the one speaker and another (Nunan, 1989: 26). The games have all those kind.

The activities in the games developed students' interactive skill and provided meaningful learning and fun for the students. All students were happy with the games. In the games they did not feel afraid to make a mistake in speaking. They were challenged and nervous when they played in the front of the class but at the same time they were excited. They were also motivated to find new vocabularies in dictionary when they got difficulties to find a word. This definitely improved their vocabularies. Another thing is that playing guessing game, as the rule set in such a way, permits more chance for all students to practice speaking.

In conclusion, guessing games gave students meaningful & joyful learning activities; guessing games reduced the stress, increased self confidence that students were braver to speak; guessing games gave more chance to exercise speaking ability.

The scores from the pre-action exercise and the evaluation after the first and second cycles that were done by the researcher and two collaborators were submitted, calculated and averaged. It is clearly seen that in the four performance areas, the students' scores were improved. However, the improvement on pronunciation was not satisfying and need further treatment.

CONCLUSION

This research has been done from February to May 2015. The researcher worked together with two collaborators to implement guessing games to improve students' speaking ability in spoken descriptive text. The use of guessing games in teaching and learning spoken descriptive were proved to be effective and joyful that students were not aware of being "drilled" and "forced" to speak and define a certain object. Students were motivated and challenged to find new vocabularies. The games reduced students' stress and tension to speak, thus games increased students' confidence. The implementation of games in the classroom also permits more chance for every student to try the speaking ability.

The teacher always motivated and encouraged the students to speak. They did not need to be afraid of making mistakes in speaking when they played in the games. Therefore, students really enjoyed the games in the class. Since the students were challenged even angered when playing, they got communicative interaction in the game. The language features they used in the games were better remembered. They got more vocabularies and more exercises in speaking

ability. Their performance in spoken descriptive text was improved. The improvement was significant in the idea or content of their description, the organization and grammar & vocabulary. But in pronunciation the improvement was not significant. Students needed more practice and example in the classroom activity.

Realizing that joyful learning is crucial to student, many kinds of games wait to be implemented. This research has already proved that using language games specially guessing games can improve students' speaking ability in spoken descriptive text. The improvements were significant in content, organization and grammar and vocab. In the pronunciation, however, it is needed more intensive teaching and learning strategy to improve it. Other researcher should search for the way how to improve students' pronunciation better.

There are many other kinds of language games very important to be implemented in a classroom activity to gain joyful learning and improvement of students' achievement in language skills. Teacher should always be creative to find and adapt a game to use in the class. Other researcher should explore more on this field to find how language games work in classroom activity.

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