Information Gap in Teaching Speaking

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Abstract

This study aims at examining whether or not the use of information gap technique can improve students’ performance in English speaking ability and helps teachers in teaching speaking. In order to cope the problems faced by the students in learning speaking, the experimental of pre-test and post-test design was undertaken. The instrument used to collect the data in this study was a set of test. The collected data were analyzed by using descriptive statistic formula. The result of the test was analyzed by using speaking criteria suggested by Brown (2001). From the result of the study it reveals that the result of post-test is higher than the result of pre-test after the information gap technique was applied. It shows that the implementation of information gap can give a significant improvement to the students. It explicitly means that information gap can be one of alternative techniques used by teacher in teaching English particularly in teaching speaking in junior high schools.

Keyword: Information gap technique, Speaking, Communicative approach

1. INTRODUCTION

The mastery of speaking skill in English is a priority for many second language or foreign language learners, Richards (2008, p.19) because the English is one of the international languages that can be applied in as a tool of communication to communicate with people around the world. From a pragmatic view of performance, listening and speaking are almost always closely interrelated by Brown (2003, p.140).

Speaking skill is one of the four language skills which should be trained by teacher especially language teacher. Teaching speaking of English as a foreign language to junior high school students is not easy. Teachers must not only teach how to speak in English but also pay much attention to their student's pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. Based on the researcher observation, she found that she found the students’ problems in learning speaking. The students thought that learning English was really difficult for them, especially for speaking English. The fact that the most of
students faced the problems in assessing speaking English in many aspects in speaking skill.

The students had a difficult time to express the idea when the teachers asked them to speak in English class. One of the reasons was the students were lack in vocabulary. The students’ pronunciation also got many errors in speaking English and it made them feel embarrassed to tell their ideas. The students also do not acquire the lesson about pronunciation when they are learning and it make them afraid to ask the teacher.

She also found that the students had a really difficult time in comprehend the lesson when it comes to learn speaking English. They were also had problems in constructing sentences and utterances into a correct grammatical while they were speaking English. The students still had a confused to what they should use to put words into a good sentence or grammatically correct, for example the sentences to make a daily conversation.

The students also had troubles in speaking class because they were rarely practice English with their friends and unable to convey the idea in English. Therefore, when they were asked to speak English, they still needed a long time to answer the oral questions and they tried to speak with stagnating voice because having troubles of remembering the vocabulary that can be used and thinking about the correct sentences that should be said.

In addition, most of the students in this school got a low score below the Standard Minimum score. It showed some difficulties that the students faced in improving speaking skill. The Standard Minimum (KKM) was 65 for speaking skill. The Standard Minimum was collected by English teacher in SMPN13 Banda Aceh. Based on the reality, most of students got lower score than the Standard Minimum in the school. It showed that students had many difficulties in improving speaking skill.

Moreover, the class still implements teacher-centered form that make the situation was getting worse. The situation was where the teacher dominated the class with talking a lot and also made the students easily avoid the teachers’ explanation. As a result, teacher could not provide many chances to the students to speak English more freely in order to explore students’ potential in speaking. Consequently, both teacher and students could not complete the lesson goals.

Therefore she decided to find out an interesting way in teaching English speaking. An Information Gap is one of the interesting techniques that can be used in teaching speaking. Information gap technique that is used in teaching speaking can give the students same opportunity in asking and answering questions with each other. This technique also could give the opportunity to the teacher in helping students completed the lesson easily.

Then, the students’ grammar, pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary are not only evaluated by the teacher but also by the other students and even by themselves. As stated by Ur (1996), the information gap principle with applying this activity and the task can make the students feel free to join the learning process more actively. The results, in learning, are the students’ motivation to learn English more enthusiastically.

Relating to the description above, the researcher believes that to make the students learn English speaking more eager, the information gap technique can give the impact in teaching speaking skill in the class. Therefore, the researcher wants to use this technique to improve students speaking skill. Based on that
case, the researcher has formulated the research question: can Information Gap Technique affect ninth grade students’ speaking skill in SMPN 13 Banda Aceh?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Speaking Skill

Speaking skill is the verbal communication between two people with a certain purpose. It is also mean that speaking is about having a conversation to tell and share information in spoken words. Therefore, in every language classes, speaking skill become one of the most important skill that should be learnt. For some reasons, people do the communication in spoken words. According to Harmer (2002, p.78) speaking is also about the way we put words together in correct sequences is often influenced by whether or not we are doing it in speech or writing.

Speaking is the process of sharing information to other people. In order to master the speaking skill, there are five components to test the ability of people who can speak English well by Brown (2001). The six components are: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, task, and comprehension.

In using the language in oral form, it is needed an ability which is called speaking skill. Between the four skills to acquire in the second language target, speaking skill become the most complex skill to be acquired with precision. According to Brown (2003, p.141-142), types of speaking is divided into five types. There are, interactive, intensive, imitative responsive, and extensive.

By using this approach hopes that the students are able to use the target language to communicate not only to acquire language but also they can apply in their daily life (Nasir, et al.2016). Furthermore, Freeman (2000, p.74) argues that the goal of communicative approach is to enable students to communicate in the target language. Thus, the students are able to learn English easier and more enjoyable. Based on the explanation above, the researcher concluded that the communicative approach is the way to reach the successful language learning with the real practice in learning process.

2.2 Information Gap Technique

This technique is kind of the real communication but more likely drills. Neu and Reeser (1997, p.128) said that information gap activity as a condition where a person that want to share a certain information in solving a problem and gathering it or making decisions of it. While addition explanation from Harmer (1983, p.43) said information gap is an activity that make a gap between two people in order to spare the gap with some important information in the conversation so the speakers will have same information.

By implementing this activity, to complete the exercises, the students would acquire the grammar, vocabulary, and communication strategies at the same time. Ur (1996, p.281) said that an interesting type of task can be seen from the need to comprehend and to transfer the information, to figure out what is in their partners answer to complete the task. According to Stern (1999, p.32) concluded it as an activity that involved two students in a pair having different information to deliver it to the other students.

Currently, many researchers stated description about gap that defined the difference. In a pair of two students, A and B, the A student has some information that B student does not have, it will give a breach or “gap” between
them. If the A student asks, that make the B student needs to dig out the information which A student has which means the conversation has reasons for having in communications.

From the explanation procedure of information gap technique above, the researcher concluded that during the conversation between the students, the teacher presents or introduces the target language, setting it in a real context in order to make the learners understand how the target language is used in real condition.

Types of Gap activities can be divided into three types. There are reasoning gap, opinion gap, experience gap, knowledge gap, and the last is information gap. Types of information in this activity is divided into two types. The first one is supplied-to-the-learner. It is kind of information that commonly discussed the literature of the language in using this type on this technique. It is also when the gap is produced by providing the information for another members of groups that do not have that important information. Susanti (2007, p.12) also said that this type of information is called to find the differences.

The second is supplied-by-the-learner type. This type is to do the gap activity that the information has already be there from the both speakers (i.e. family topic of them) and it is a different activity to make it as a particular information that already be known, Jacobs (1998, p.4). The information gap activity has two types. There are one-way and two-way. McKay and Tom (1999) stated for Applied Linguistics (2004, p.4), one-way type occurs when the first student has the information that the second or another student does not have. Then the two-way type is happened when the first student does not have the same information, so they will share it to complete the task or the exercises.

Freeman (1986, p.132) said that in information gap technique exists when each student has the information as an exchange to share it and to complete the task. The information gap technique has some characteristics. There are pairing work and grouping work. The students need to produce an interaction among them to elicit the information. Through pairing students and grouping work, the students can pick up more chances to be involved in the conversation and more trustful about speaking after doing a practice in cooperating.

There are also personalization and individualization. Information gap activities collect views not only from other but also from one’s own contributions as well. Personalization activity give students chances to tell their ideas or opinions to share their experiences in real life. Individualization activities allow learners to act in their own manner and style and on the topics of their own choice. The last is interest. Interest is also important to be implemented in this kind of activity.

2.4. Advantages and disadvantages in Implementing Information Gap

The information gap activity is one of the technique which is suggested by many researchers because of the beneficial of this activity is for both of teacher and the students. It can be for teacher-to-students or student-to-studenti and also in the form of group working or pair working. As stated by Kayi (2006), information gap activity should be implemented in pairing or grouping work. The A student will share the information that the B student does not have or vice-versa.
The benefits of this activity are the effectiveness that can be required by the students because they can speak more extensively in English. Moreover, Basturkmen (1994, p.50), this activity is for fascinating the position in completing the task and to promote the authentic of target language for the students which is used in the classroom. According to Raptou (2002, p.211), says that the information gap activity is very interesting technique for students who learn French, because it is very helpful for them to improve their speaking ability in the target language.

Then, the benefits are students have chances to speak or having interactions with their friends with many reasons in the speaking class. Because they have exercises to be completed. Therefore, this activity is effectively to be used as a technique to increase students’ potential in creating a conversation between them and to improve students’ ability in speaking skill. Then, teachers must be involved effectively in students’ speaking activity to produce an enjoyable learning.

3. METHODS

The research design used in this study is experimental quantitative research. Prasetyo and Jannah (2005) state that experimental research is a study that treats or creates a condition to the subject research. This type involves one group, which was given pre-test, treatment, and post-test. In this case, the treatment that was used by the writer means was information gap technique. The students are given the treatment by the researcher.

According to Arikunto (2010), a population is a set (or collection) of all elements possessing one or more attributes of interest. This study will be conducted at SMPN 13 Banda Aceh. The population in this study is the ninth grade students in SMPN 13 Banda Aceh. There were five classes of ninth grade students. There are around 25 students in each class. The number of research population was 125 students.

According to Cohen (2000, p.92), sample is a smaller group or subset of the total population in such a way that the knowledge gained is representative of the total population under study. Cohen (2000, p.100) said that every member of population in simple random sampling has the same chance of being chosen. The probability of a member that is chosen is not effect to other members in the population.

The researcher did the research for five meetings including pre-test, treatment, and post-test. There were some steps in teaching process for the experimental class. First meeting, the researcher gave pre-test for the experimental class, the students were asked to speak to complete the task that was given by the teacher. After students finished the test, the researcher started to teaching English by greetings and doing the lesson based on lesson plan. After that, the researcher wrote the topic of the materials that was going to be discussed in the class. Then the students were given a short description about the topic to gain their knowledge about the material. The researcher taught for three meetings by using information gap technique, each meeting only lasted 40 minutes. Each meeting gave students’ opportunity to speak by information gap technique. All of students had to speak to gather information to complete the test which is given by the teacher. The last meeting, the
students were given the post-test to measure students’ achievement in speaking skill after applying information gap technique.

To analyze the collected data, the writer used statistical formula as Arikunto (2010). The data was analyzed by using a statistical formula to prove the hypothesis. The components of the formula namely; gain (d), mean score, squared deviation and hypothesis testing. The hypothesis above must be proven by using the degree of freedom (d.b/df) and the critical value (t) to calculate (df).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to ninth grade students’ of SMPN 13 Banda Aceh. The pre-test was carried out on Friday, November 12th, 2016. It was started from 10.20 until 11.20 for doing thirteen pairs of students. It meant that the students had around four minutes sixty seconds for completing a conversation. From the pre-test result, it was found that there was no student could reach good scores (Poor=30-45, Fair=50-65, Good=70-85, Very Good=90-100). Furthermore, the average score of pre-test was only 43.8 with the highest score was 60 and the lowest score was 30.

Table 1. The results of students’ pre-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Test Score</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following part would be presented the results of students’ post-test in the Table 4.2.2. The post-test was carried out on Saturday, November 25th, 2016. It was started from 08.30 until 10.00 for doing thirteen pairs of students. From the post-test result, it was found that only two students got poor score and one student could reach good scores. Furthermore, the average score of post-test 67.11 with the highest score was 90 and the lowest score was 50.
Table 2. Post Test Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Test Score</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the Table above, it can be seen that the highest score of pre-test is 60 and the lowest score is 30. Meanwhile the total of students’ score is 1140. To find the mean score of pre-test, the researcher divided total of students’ score with all of sample and the average score is 43.8. Then, the highest score of post-test is 90 and the lowest score is 50. For the total students’ score is 1745 while the average score is 67.11. Based on the table, it can be concluded that students’ post-test is higher than pre-test. It means there are differences in both tests. Teaching by using information gap technique has increased score of their speaking ability.

First of all, the researcher calculated mean score of students’ pre-test and post-test of experimental class, each of mean score was found different in result. It was measured based on Arikunto (2010) formula, which was obtained from different score between per-test and post-test, it was divided to total number of students or all of sample. After getting the t-score, the researcher consulted the critical value on the table to check whether the difference was significant or not. Before the experimental was conducted, the level of significance to be used in the experimental; had been divided first. For this experimental, the researcher used 5% (α = 0.05) alpha level of significance as usually used in educational research. The number of subject in this experiment was 26. The degree of freedom (df) was N-1 = 26-1 = 25 is 1.71. The obtained t-score was 11.75. The result of t-score was higher that t-table (t = 11.75 > t_table = 1.71. It means the alternative hypothesis (Ha) of this research is accepted (the implementation of information gap technique helps students in improving speaking ability).

This is the summary of research findings which are tabulated as follow. The table shows the data from experimental group pre-test and post-test.

Table 1. Data of Both Group Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>x</th>
<th>∑d</th>
<th>Md</th>
<th>∑x²d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>43.84</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>23.26</td>
<td>2547.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After analyzing all of the data by using statistical formula, it was found that this study supported the alternative hypothesis. In doing this research, the writer refers to alternative hypothesis (Ha) and null hypothesis (Ho). The level of significant is 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$). The sample of this experiment was 26. The degree of freedom (df) was N-1 = 26-1 = 25 is 1.71. The obtained t-score was 11.75. The result of t-score was higher that t-table ($t = 11.75 > t_{table} = 1.71$). The (Ha) is accepted, and the (Ho) is rejected.

The improvements could be seen from the result of the final result test. The result of students' pre-test was 1140 and the result of students' post-test was 1745. It could be concluded that the different of students' score after the treatment gave a good impact for students' speaking skill.

The results of the findings in this study reveal that the implementation of information gap technique as a technique in teaching speaking for junior high school had a very significant effect to improve students' speaking skill. The information gap activities were successfully implemented and the objective of the research had been achieved.

This technique beneficial in teaching speaking as it supports cooperative learning, where students working together can help each other. In conclusion, the results informed that in teaching speaking, we should find the right technique that can encourage us to speak the target language. It means that this technique is proved to be one of the techniques in teaching that can improve oral proficiency to students, especially for junior high school students.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This technique is a constructed output activities type. The tasks that is commonly used with information gap technique are expressing opinions, obtaining missing information, conveying telephone message, completing the story, etc. In order to get used with this technique, it needs practicing with every particular parts of language. This technique is kind of the real communication but more likely drills in language classroom.

From the conclusion above, there are some suggestions that are suggested by the researcher to the teacher and other researchers. For the teachers: teaching English to student's junior high school is not easy because from the beginning the teacher should make sure that students have fully understood what they should do in English class. Before implement the information gap technique, teachers should explain well how is this technique will be going. Then, the materials should be appropriate and not too difficult for the students. Teacher should present the language in joyful, interesting and understandable way. For the last, the teachers must keep control in students' activities.

REFERENCES

