

IMPROVING THE STUDENTS SPEAKING ABILITY BY USING THEMATIC MATERIALS (A CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH TO THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS OF MTsN. MODEL MAKASSAR)

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this study was to improve the speaking ability of the students at the first grade of MTsN. Model Makassar. The method of this research was Classroom Action Research (CAR) that is conducted to the first grade students of MTsN. Model Makassar in academic year 2014/2015. The subject of the research consists of twenty five students; there are twelve boys and thirteen girls. The instruments are spoken test and observation guidelines. The research design applied in this study was a collaborative classroom action research consisting of 2 cycles covering 3 meetings for each cycle. The findings of this study showed improvement of the students' speaking ability from the first to the second cycle have improve highly. Where the mean score of vocabulary terms was 2 for the pre-cycle test become 3.28 for the second cycle post-test. Besides that, the mean score of grammar in the pre-cycle test wa 1.84 increase 3.08 in the second cycle post-test. Same as the pronunciation term, the students score from pre-cycle test to the second cycle test came up from 1.96 to 3.04. Furthermore for the students speaking accuracy and fluency, their score also increase from 1.44 became 2.92. This research was successful to improve the students speaking ability by using thematic materials.

KEY WORDS: Thematic Materials, Speaking Ability, Improve

A. INTRODUCTION

Teaching speaking skill to students is not as easy as imagined. There are always difficulties in teaching this skill, whether in terms of interest to follow the lessons, confidence, and the ability of the students themselves. Therefore, a teacher must be able to be creative in teaching this skill so that students can understand it as natural as possible.

Before doing the research, the researcher found some problems during her teaching internship process. Some of the students do not have basic in English, even for short basic conversation. They were lack of vocabulary and knowledge of making

a sentence. In addition, most of the students were not have a good confidence in speaking. Those problems made the students did not interested in learning English and have no confidence during their English class. As a result, the students join the class just because English is a must. Besides, English studying material was not interested for the students. They were not motivated during their learning process because students did not understand why they have to study the materials.

The problem explained in the previous paragraph make the teacher has an important part for sending the materials to the students so they can understand it well. If the students do not learn how to speak or do not get any opportunity to speak in the language classroom they may soon get de-motivated and lose interest in learning. On the other hand, if the right activities are taught in the right way, speaking in class can be a lot of fun, raising general learner motivation and making the English language classroom a fun and dynamic place to be.

For that reasons, the researcher purpose one specific material of language teaching called "*Thematic Materials*" in which focus on students' interest, creating a sense of purpose and community in the classroom that is really needed by the students nowadays. Thematic materials also emphasize the involvement of students in actively learning process so the students can get direct experience and also trained to find various knowledges by themselves of what they are studying about. By direct experience, students will understand the concepts they are studying and connect them to another concept they have understood.

By using Thematic materials, the students are expected to be more interested in their English class. They can be involved in the class activity by speaking up their opinion related to the theme. Here the students will ask to be more active in communicating what comes in their mind when the teacher introduces a theme. Students in the class will be guided to describe something related to the theme and other will be asked to response their friends. It will be a good way for students to interact with one another.

Furthermore, the research problems of this research was "what is the students' speaking ability in learning English by using thematic materials at the first year students at MTsN. Model Makassar?". Then, the research objective was to find out the improvement of the students speaking ability by using Thematic Materials. In addition, this research was beneficial practically in the context for the students (the can enjoy their class using Thematic Materials), and the lecturers (they can apply this method in teaching English and can be a useful information as a reference for the

teacher). Finally, this study was focused on identifying the students' improvement of speaking ability in learning English through Thematic Materials.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of studies had been conducted in order to investigate the improvement of students speaking ability. One of them is Hasriati (2004) on her thesis "*Improving the Students Speaking Skill through Situational Language Learning at the Second Year of SMPN 2 Kajuara Kab. Bone,*" explained that situational language learning method is a good way to improve the students speaking ability. She found that 73% of the students were effective in learning English and 70% of the students could increase their English through situational language learning. What is in line with the researcher's title here is by using the thematic materials, the teacher can pick a new interesting topic to study in the class and adjust it in the real class situation.

Furthermore, Deliana (2007) reported her research findings that students have to practice more to get improvement in speaking skill. And by practicing, students must have interaction each other to make speaking class situation being alive and that could be happened by doing a dialogue. This practicing can be gain also by using Thematic Materials because by applying this method, students would be more participate during classroom activities and speak everything what came in their mind.

It can be concluded that using thematic materials is effective to improve the students' speaking ability. Therefore, the researcher is interested in using Thematic materials as the study of this research.

Thematic Materials

Diana Mumford in Tarira (2000) states, Thematic Materials or theme based units are a vehicle for teaching a range of skills and content by integrating curriculum areas around a topic. This method of teaching links curriculum strands and capitalizes on children's interests, creating a sense of purpose and community in the classroom. By building on their interests and life experiences, young people's attitudes, skills and knowledge are developed in meaningful ways. Inquiry and communication are activated by a desire to know more, resulting in enthusiastic participation in the learning process (Diana Mumford in Tarira, 2000).

Moreover, there are some benefits of Thematic Materials, they are; fun for departing from the interest and needs of students, provide learning experiences and activities that are relevant to the level of development and needs of the students,

results of learning can last long, because the more memorable and the more meaningful, develop thinking skills of students in accordance with the problems faced, and fostering social skills through teamwork.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher conducted a Classroom Action Research which involved a cycle of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. This research was the first year students at MTsN. Model Makassar. There were 25 students in the class covering 12 boys and 13 girls in academic year of 2014/2015.

The criteria of success of this study were determined by two components, namely classical indicators and individual indicators in which 70% of the students were available obtaining score 3 (good), and 70% of the students responded positively to the use of Thematic Materials in improving their speaking ability. Next, the data gained in this study were both *qualitative* and *quantitative* data. Furthermore, the research instruments used to obtain valid data were *oral test*, and *observation guidelines*. The data obtained was analyzed by using *comparative descriptive analysis*; and *statistical analysis*

The research procedures involved in this study were plan, action, observation, and reflection. The procedures as follows:

1. Plan

In this step, the researcher prepared several equipments before going to action including the instruments of collecting data, they are verbal test, guidelines of observation and students' quiz. In addition, researcher also designed lesson plan for each meeting as a framework in the class.

2. Action

In this section, the researcher will give the students treatment to improve their ability by finding their interest to be used as a theme. The activities of action are structured as follows:

- a. Student will be given warming up before starting the materials, the warming up can be asking the students some vocabulary that related to the theme would introduce
- b. Introducing the theme that students will learn.
- c. Students are guided to use vocabularies into the sentences
- d. Giving the students questions about the theme.
- e. After the students answer the questions, teacher will correct the answer and guide them how to make sentences.

- f. Students will be asked to make a preparation to be presented in front of their friends about the theme, their preparation must be a small note that contain some vocabularies they sometimes forget.
- g. Students will present their presentation.
- h. After presenting their presentation, otomaticly there will be respons such a question or addition they will interact each other.
- i. Almost the end of the class, after presentation, teacher will tell the students about their errors that teacher found during discussing.
- j. In the end of the session, give the students verbal quiz related to the theme discussed among those students so that students quickly come to realize that the topic is not just to learn insede the class, but really count to their life.

3. Observation

A moment to observe the event, movement or process is provided in this step. The researcher observes several things happening in the class when the thematic materials is used. This case, the observer observes the class participation including the students' attitude, interest,emotion and their response in the class. Moreover, the researcher observes the weaknesses of that activities either.Afterward making a note of weaknesses identified in order to recover in the next meeting.

4. Evaluation and Reflection

As the last step, the researcher focuses on analyzing the indicators that have and have not achieved. After analyzing the indicators, the researcher will focus on indicator that have not achieve yet. Next, looking for the problem solving to achieve the indicators. Afterward, the researcher will think the planning and acting in the next meeting.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Findings of Preliminary Study

The pre-cycle study was conducted on March 19th, 2015 at the first year students of MTsN. Model Makassar. From this preliminary study, it was found that most of the students at the class viewed speaking as the most difficult English skill comparing to the three other skills. The speaking problems faced by the students at the class accounted for lack of vocabulary, less ideas, mispronunciation, bad fluency and accuracy and also not confidence in speaking.Furthermore, the results ofpre-cycle testtest as follows;

Table 1. *The Result of Pre-Cycle Test*

Vocabulary	Scores (s)	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
	5	0	0
	4	1	4
	3	2	8
	2	18	72
	1	4	16
	0	0	0
Mean Score: 2		25	100
Grammar	Scores (s)	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
	5	0	0
	4	1	4
	3	4	16
	2	10	40
	1	10	40
	0	0	0
Mean Scores : 1.84		25	100
Pronunciation	Scores (s)	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
	5	0	0
	4	0	0
	3	7	28
	2	10	40
	1	8	32
	0	0	0
Mean Scores : 1.96		25	100
Accuracy and Fluency	Scores (s)	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
	5	0	0
	4	0	0
	3	2	8
	2	7	28
	1	16	64
	0	0	0
Mean Scores : 1.44		25	100
Mean scores' accumulation: 1.81			

Table 1 showed that after calculating all the components the mean score of the students' speaking ability before applied Thematic Materials was only 1.81 classified as *poor*. Therefore, it was concluded that the students' speaking ability should also be improved in order to achieve the criteria of success of this study.

2. The Results of Achievement Writing Test in the First Cycle

The achievement test in the first cycle was conducted on March 30th, 2015 at the first year students of MTsN. Model Makassar. The results as follows;

Table 2. *The Result of post-cycle test (The First Cycle Post-test)*

Vocabulary	Scores (s)	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
	5	0	0
	4	5	20
	3	7	28
	2	10	40
	1	3	12
	0	0	0
Mean Score: 2.56		25	100
Grammar	Scores (s)	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
	5	0	0
	4	3	12
	3	8	32
	2	9	36
	1	5	20
	0	0	0
Mean Scores : 2.36		25	100
Pronunciation	Scores (s)	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
	5	0	0
	4	2	8
	3	11	44
	2	7	28
	1	5	20
	0	0	0
Mean Scores : 2.4		25	100
Accuracy and Fluency	Scores (s)	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
	5	0	0
	4	1	4
	3	7	28
	2	10	40
	1	7	28
	0	0	0
Mean Scores : 2.08		25	100
Mean scores' accumulation: 2,35			

Table 2 showed after calculating all the components the mean score of the students' speaking ability in the achievement oral test in the first cycle was increase from 1.81 to 2.35 classified as *average*. Therefore, it was concluded that the students'

speaking ability still need to be improved because the criteria of success was not gain yet.

3. The Results of Achievement Writing Test in the Second Cycle

The achievement of oral test in the second cycle was conducted on April 11th, 2015 at first year students of MTsN. Model Makassar. The results as follows;

Table 3. *The Result of post-cycle test (The SecondCycle Post-test)*

Vocabulary	Scores (s)	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
	5	1	4
	4	9	36
	3	11	44
	2	4	16
	1	0	0
	0	0	0
Mean Score: 3.28		25	100
Grammar	Scores (s)	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
	5	1	4
	4	6	24
	3	12	48
	2	6	24
	1	0	0
	0	0	0
Mean Scores : 3.08		25	100
Pronunciation	Scores (s)	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
	5	1	4
	4	4	16
	3	15	60
	2	5	20
	1	0	0
	0	0	0
Mean Scores : 3.04		25	100
Accuracy and Fluency	Scores (s)	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
	5	1	4
	4	3	12
	3	14	56
	2	7	28

	1	0	0
	0	0	0
Mean Scores : 2.92		25	100
Mean scores' accumulation: 3.08			

Table 3 showed that after calculating all the components the mean score of the students' speaking ability in the achievement oral test in the second cycle improved significantly in which it was 3.08 classified as *good*. Therefore, it was concluded that this research should be stopped because the students' speaking ability have improved and achieved the criteria of success of this study.

The results of observation being discussed in this section were the observation conducted both in the first cycle and in the second cycle. The results as follows:

Table 4. *The Results of Observation*

Aspects	Indicators	Score		Change 100%
		C1	C2	
Learning Activities	Doing their conversation based on the teacher's instruction.	60	75	+15
	Asking question to their teacher if there is an instruction which is not clear.	65	85	+20
	Giving comments and suggestions about their friends' job.	60	85	+25
	Presenting their discussion result without being appointed by the teacher.	50	70	+20
	Discussing and working together with their friends in doing their assignments.	70	80	+10
	Doing assignments from their teacher well.	70	80	+10
Creativity	Showing their curiosities with asking question to their teacher and friends.	70	85	+10
	Exploring their ideas.	60	70	+10
	Thinking and are not hopeless for looking for answer using books or asking to their friends.	60	65	+5
Feeling of Happiness	Looking happy in learning process.	70	80	+10
	Not feeling sleepy during the teaching and learning process.	70	70	0
Interaction	Discussing with their teacher.	65	75	+10
	Discussing with their friends.	70	70	0
	Working together with their friends.	70	75	+5
Mean Score		60	72,85	+10,71

Based on the table of observation above, the teaching and learning process was beyond the researcher expectation, the class process only got 60% mean score or categorized fairly. But seeing the comparison score above, between results of the first cycle and the second cycle observations showed that were a number of significances for the students' activities. . This case, the mean score of the first cycle observation was **60** whereas the mean score of the second cycle observation achieved **72.85** Furthermore, the students' first class observation was only categorized *fairly good* whereas in the second cycle the observation score achieved *good level*. That means there was a bit improvement of students' participation supporting the conversation in the class with space **10.71**. That improvement caused the researcher becoming proud even that was not very significant but at least the action process in the second cycle worked better. Further, the comparison above showed that almost indicator aspect showed up. Nevertheless, there were a few indicators stay in the same score unlike the researcher hopes.

The data found in this study showed that the successfulness of students in improving their speaking ability was affected by some factors. They are; 1) Thematic Materials was able to press the students' errors in speaking English; 2) Thematic materials could encourage the students' motivation and their involvement into the class; 3) Presenting a theme could be automatically make an interaction each of students; 4) The curiosity of students about a theme can make them explore anything what comes in their minds, it also let them want to understand what they were discussed by asking questions. This step made the students practice their speaking ability.

In contrary, this study was also found some weaknesses of the use of Thematic Materials in teaching speaking. **First**, the students were lack of confidence in doing speaking. **Second**, some of the students still have a less ideas of what they would speak to other friends. **Third**, some of the students can't improve their accuracy and fluency competences because afraid of made mistakes in front of their friends. **Forth**, limited vocabulary made students were lazy to make an interaction such as giving a question or suggestion in speaking activity. **Fifth**, sometimes, many of the students wanted to speak their mind (asking questions, giving suggestions, giving addition, and giving protest) that made class being crowded.

E. CONCLUSION

The results of this study showed that the use of Thematic Materials could improve the students' speaking ability. It could be seen from the improvements of

students' speaking scores and the students' involvements in the teaching and learning process starting from the first cycle to the second cycle. Furthermore, relating to the research findings in the previous discussion, the conclusions are presented in the following statements; 1) A number of the students' problems (*less ideas, mispronunciation, bad fluency and accuracy*) of conducting Thematic Materials at the beginning of research decreased. As a matter of expectation, the second cycle post-test scores indicated that their previous problems in conversation could be decreased even not all recovered perfectly; 2) Thematic Materials was able to press the students' errors in speaking English; 3) The data showed that the students' competence in speaking ability to communicate the theme became higher in the end section of this research. It proved enough the effects as well as the benefits of cooperative learning in enhancing the students' speaking grade; 4) Thematic Materials could encourage the students' motivation and their involvement into the class; 5) This Class Action Research proved enough that students' speaking ability could be improved by utilizing Thematic Materials.

However, the use of Thematic Materials in teaching speaking also has some weaknesses. They were; 1) The students were lack of confidence in doing speaking. 2) Some of the students still have a less ideas of what they would speak to other friends. 3) Some of the students can't improve their accuracy and fluency competences because afraid of made mistakes in front of their friends. 4) Limited vocabulary made students were lazy to make an interaction such as giving a question or suggestion in speaking activity. 5) Sometimes, many of the students wanted to speak their mind (asking questions, giving suggestions, giving addition, and giving protest) that made class being crowded.

F. RECOMMENDATION

The result obtained from this research brings a series of following recommendation including; 1) Utilizing Thematic Materials could be one of some alternatives of guiding students to master in spoken English communication; 2) The teacher could use Thematic Materials to improve the students' involvement in the class including assisting one another, working together and accomplishing the goals actively; 3) Implementing Thematic Materials should be used as one of active methods motivating the students to enjoy learning nowadays; 4) Utilizing Thematic Materials could contribute and support students centered domination in the class. This kind of method forced the students to more actively rather than just keep silent

in the class; 5) In teaching English, the lecturer as well as teachers should give their students opportunity to keep talking rather than giving more speech in front of them. Letting the students keep sharing as long as they can share to others. In addition, motivating that students to be more actively practicing their speaking in order to make their competence better; 6) Specially for the students, being a creative as well as active students and taking involvement in the class while working together with your friends during your circle conversation.

Since this study has been successful to improve the students' speaking ability, it is suggested that the English lecturers/teachers can apply or adapted the above procedures based on the students' situation and problem to improve the students' speaking ability. The researcher also suggests that the lecturers/teachers have to explain the advantages of the use Thematic Materials in speaking course to the students so that they can realize that what they are doing is very useful. Then, the researcher also suggests that the teacher should make those activities as creative as possible because all of the good strategy should be designed as good as possible to attract the students' interest.

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