A CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH: IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH WORK IN PAIRS TECHNIQUE

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ABSTRACT

This Classroom Action Research (CAR) is implemented to improve students' speaking skills at one of the junior high schools in Batam. The subjects of this research were 32 second-semester students in grade 7. The research was applied in two cycles following the procedures for action research, namely planning, action, observing, and reflecting. The researchers used classroom observation, document analysis, pre-test, and post-test to collect data. The findings show that the Work in Pairs method improves students' speaking skills in class. This can be seen from the improvement of students' speaking skills in each cycle. The students achieved 57.26 for the pre-test which is categorized poor. After implementing Work in Pairs activities in two cycles the students' average scores improved. The post-test was 65,33 in the first cycle and 72,93 in the second cycle. This proves that students responded positively to the Work in Pairs method. It can be concluded that working in pairs activities have a strong influence on improving students' speaking skills.

Keywords: Speaking Skill, Work in Pairs, Classroom Action Research

INTRODUCTION

Gynan and Baker (2011) state that there are four skills in the language that everyone should master in learning English, namely: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. These four language skills are essential for daily life, especially speaking skills. Speaking skills are one of the language skills. The importance of speaking skills was also expressed by Mulya (2016) that speaking is an interaction between speakers and listeners to exchange thoughts, ideas, and opinions. Therefore, speaking skills must be possessed by everyone who learns English because speaking skills are very important for everyone.

The primary purpose of speaking is to communicate. Darmuki (2019) said that by speaking, a person is expected to communicate, convey ideas, and messages, interact, and share information with others to be understood by the other person. Wuryaningtyas (2015) states that speaking has three purposes: informing, entertaining, and persuading. Based on the opinions expressed above, it can be concluded that the primary purpose of speaking is to communicate Angraini (2016).

Based on the researchers' experience in the teaching process, for the 7th-grade students in one of Batam's private junior high schools, speaking English seems challenging to them. It can be reported that many students still had difficulty expressing their ideas in English orally, had limited vocabulary in English, were worried about the structure of speech, and had problems with English pronunciation. Therefore, most of the students were not active when speaking English in class. This research worth

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investigating to be researched because speaking English in this school has never existed before.

One method that can be applied to the problems encountered is to work in pairs. Achmad and Yusuf (2014) Work in pairs is one of the interaction patterns used in language classes. This method might raise students' motivation in learning English, especially in learning speaking skills. Dalisa et al., (2015) found that the Work in Pairs method can reduce students' anxiety in learning English. It is in line with Achmad and Yusuf (2014), they state that after implementing pair work in class, students' speaking anxiety was lower than before the Work in Pairs method was applied and it increase students' confidence in speaking English. Maca (2020) Pair work will provide a great opportunity for learners to be more effective and confident when speaking English.

Based on aforementioned studies, it can be seen that a few researchers tried to improve students' English skill by reducing their anxiety using work in pairs. However, the use of work in pairs was not found to improve speaking skills especially in junior high school level. This reason was also supported by the preliminary research that was found by researchers in which students faced difficulties in speaking skills. Therefore, the researchers intended to investigate students' improvement in speaking skills using work in pairs.

METHODS

The research was a Classroom Action Research (CAR). Garpersz and Uktolseja (2020) state that Classroom Action Research (CAR) is reflective research by taking certain actions aimed at improving learning practices in the classroom professionally and has an essential role in scientific research because it determines the quality of research results. Therefore, the researchers would use the Classroom Action Research to help students improve their speaking skills by solving their speaking problems.

This study used the cycle of Action Research Model based on Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) cited in Burns (2010), which says that the Classroom Action Research (CAR) was conducted in four steps: (1) Planning, (2) Action, (3) Observing, and (4) Reflecting. Planning is the first step to prepare the teaching designed by the researchers. Then the researchers planned several things, including: developing learning plan strategies, preparing teaching materials, and determining assessment criteria. In the action stage, after making a plan, the researchers enforced the plan that had been made. One of the researchers acted as an English teacher in the speaking class based on the lesson plan. Observations paid attention to events in the classroom and interactions between teachers and students, and among students in the classroom. The researchers were a teacher who taught speaking using the Work in Pairs method, and an observer who observed class activities when the implementation of teaching speaking using the Work in Pairs method was taking place. In addition, reflection is an activity to analyze students' scores in speaking tests conducted at the end of these studies. The results of this reflection were used as a basis for consideration to revise the strategy that would be applied in the next cycle if problems need to be solved.

This research was carried out in one of the private junior high schools in Batam. The researchers carried out research in this place because researchers are also completing internships apart from researchers being alumni of the school. The implementation of CAR was carried out for grade 7 with 32 students in one class. The researchers chose research in grade 7 because the researchers were conducting an internship and from the beginning of the 2nd semester the researcher taught the 7th grade.

Before the cycle was applied in the classroom, the researchers had conducted classroom observations to find problems faced by the students in speaking English. To support this finding, the researchers analyzed the recap document of the students' score. After conducting observations and document analysis, the researchers applied a cycle by using the Work in Pairs strategy to improve students' speaking skills. Moreover, before

implementing the Work in Pairs method, students were given a pre-test to get the average grade for the class. After that, the mean of students' speaking skills was measured according to the following categories.

Table 1. The Rubric of Students' Speaking Skill

Speaking Aspects	Very Poor 10-39	Poor 40-60	Quite Good 61-70	Good 71-80	Very Good 81-100
Pronunciation	No Correct Pronunciation	Makes a lot of mistakes in pronunciation	Makes several mistakes in conversation	Makes a few mistakes in conversation	No mistakes in the conversation
Fluency	No speaking produces correctly	Doesn't speak fluently, thinks too long	Speaks rather fluently, somewhat jumpy speaks	Quite fluently, sometimes stops a moment	Speaks very fluently
Vocabulary	Knows no vocabulary is needed	Knows few vocabularies needed	Knows several vocabularies needed	Knows many vocabularies needed	Knows all vocabularies needed
Word Order	No correct order	Poor order	Quite good order	Good order	Very good order
Grammar	No correct grammar	Makes a lot of mistakes in grammar	Makes several mistakes in grammar	Makes a few mistakes in grammar	No mistakes in grammar

After getting the class average, the researchers started implementing Work in Pairs four meetings during the learning process. In this research, the researchers implemented the Work in Pairs method in two cycles. Every meeting in the cycles had a different theme that students had to discuss and present with their pairs. After that, students will be given a post-test in each cycle that aims to improve students speaking skills. After being given a post-test, the researchers processed the students' average scores using Excel, and then the average scores were categorized based on the table above.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers had four months to conduct the research in one of the private schools in Batam. Researchers observed students' skills to speak English. Firstly, the researchers observed the classroom situation for three weeks in January 2022. During those weeks, the results of the observation showed that the students' speaking skill in the 7th-grade junior high school was low. Document analysis was also conducted to determine the students' English speaking skills in a pre-test. It was to support the results of observations so that they are more accurate.

Before implementing the Work in Pairs method in the class, the researchers accumulated the document analysis results of the previous speaking skill and gave a pre-test. Following the observations and the document analysis, the conversation text pre-test was given to 30 students. Two students were sick and didn't go to school. The average pre-test score is 57.26 of the 30 students the score comes in the poor category.

Based on these observations, the speaking class situation was boring and not active. Classes become ineffective because students feel anxious or afraid when speaking in class Afrizal (2015). The learning process was dominated by the teacher. This is parallel with the document analysis conducted by the researchers. They found that the students' speaking scores had a low average. The pre-test score of the students' average speaking skills can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The Students' Average Pre-test Score

No	Aspects	Pre-Test Scores	Category
1.	Pronunciation	58,13	Poor
2.	Fluency	56,03	Poor
3.	Vocabulary	57,96	Poor
4.	Word Order	58,86	Poor
5.	Grammar	55,36	Poor
	AVERAGE	**57,26**	**Poor**

It can be seen from table 2 that the average score of the pre-test is 57.26. Suppose the students' average score is synchronized with the rubric in table 1 that the researchers have determined, the score comes in the poor category.

Hence, the researchers conducted the first cycle using the Work in Pairs method. The Work in Pairs method is students working and learning together in pairs. It can also improve and increase students speaking skills using the English Language. Pushpanathan and Satheesh (2017) state that Work in Pairs is a learning activity that involves learners working together in pairs. It is also increasing the amount of student practice. Zohairy (2014) also stated that Work in Pairs method could enrich and enhance meaningful interactions that will improve their language. Therefore, Pair work can be considered as an effective strategy to improve students' speaking skills.

The first cycle was held on Tuesday, March 8th, 2022. In this cycle, work in pairs was not carried out directly. First, an introduction to the material was given to students. In the next meeting, the researchers asked the students to make groups in pairs with their classmates to implement the Work in Pairs method. The researcher applies this method by holding four meetings, and each meeting the theme has determined the theme of the conversation that will be discussed by students in pairs. The themes for the first cycle are friends, class, home, and place. The atmosphere in the class was quite pleasant when students used the Work in Pairs method to create conversations. They seemed enthusiastic and happy to practice speaking English with their classmates. Achmad and Yusuf (2014) state that after implementing pair work in class, students' speaking anxiety was lower than before the Work in Pairs method was applied and it increase students' confidence in speaking English.

After four meetings of implementing the Work in Pairs method were completed, the researchers gave a post-test. 30 students came in front of the class in pairs and show the results of what they had practiced during the meetings. Then, the researchers assessed and compared the students' speaking skills during the pre-test and post-test in cycle 1. The post-test value after implementing the Work in Pairs method increased compared to the pre-test before the performance of the Work in Pairs method. However, researchers were not satisfied with the post-test results because they were still below the Minimum Completeness Criteria of the school (KKM), which is 70. The post-test outcome in the first cycle can be seen in the table 3.

Table 3. The Students' Average Score between Pre-Test and Post-Test 1 Scores

No	Aspects	Pre-Test Scores	Post-Test 1 Scores	Improvements
1.	Pronunciation	58,13	65,96	7,83
2.	Fluency	56,03	65,12	9,09
3.	Vocabulary	5796	66,46	8,5
4.	Word Order	58,86	64,28	5,42
5.	Grammar	55,36	64,84	9,48
	AVERAGE	**57,26**	**65,33**	**8,06**

It can be seen from Table 3 above that the average score obtained from the pre-test is 57.26, and the post-test 1 is 65.33. Then the average score of the improvement in the pre-test and post-test in cycle 1 was 8.06%. That was an outstanding achievement. However, the results of the average score of the pre-test and first post-test were still below the Minimum Completeness Criteria of the school (KKM).

So, the researchers decided to repeat the cycle. The goal was to increase the score above the Minimum Completeness Criteria of the school (KKM). Based on the observations, anxiety was one of the reasons why the students' pre-test scores were not optimal. In addition, stress was also often a problem among students when speaking in class. Aulia et al., (2020) believe that anxiety in speaking is one of the common obstacles in speaking class. It makes students neglect the opportunity to practice speaking in speaking class.

The implementation of the second cycle was different from the previous cycle. The researcher modified the group because the researcher wanted to see more improvement in the second cycle. In this second cycle, the researcher replaced the previous group and created a new group. The new group is selected by lottery. Four meetings were again carried out to implement the Work in Pairs method. The themes of these meetings were given differently from the first cycle. The students had to describe about the school, things, a pet, and family. Then, at the end of the meeting, a post-test was given by the researchers.

During the second post-test, the researchers found, that only a few students were still less confident and anxious. However, many of them were already better at speaking English. Moreover, their speaking anxiety had been significantly reduced to the relaxed category in their second post-test.

In the second cycle, students felt more enthusiastic about improving their speaking. The students were also more confident and fluent in this cycle. It can be seen that there is an increase in students' speaking skills when doing the second post-test. The results can be seen in the table 4.

Table 4. The Students' Average Score between Post-Test 1 and Post-Test 2 Scores

No	Aspects	Post-Test 1 Scores	Post-Test 2 Scores	Improvements
1.	Pronunciation	65,96	74,15	8,19
2.	Fluency	65,12	72,87	7,75
3.	Vocabulary	66,46	74,40	7,94
4.	Word Order	64,28	72,43	8,15
5.	Grammar	64,84	73,78	8,94
	AVERAGE	**65,33**	**73,61**	**8,19**

Based on table 4, it can be seen that the average score was obtained from the improvement of the first post-test and second post-test. In the first cycle, it was 65,33. In the 1st post-test, the average score of students' speaking skills was low or poor. Meanwhile, in the second cycle, it was 73,61. In the 2nd post-test, the average score of students' speaking skills was in a good category. In this case, after conducting the second

cycle, the average score of students' speaking skills improved. The second cycle can be carried out more successfully in improving students' speaking skills because researcher updated the technique when implementing the Work in Pairs method by changing the pair from cycle 1. Furthermore, the average score of improvement from the 1st post-test and the 2nd post-test is 8.19%. It means that students' speaking skill has improved significantly after implementing Work in Pairs in two cycles. It is in line with Mulya (2016) who states that the method of Work in Pairs is the right method used to improve students' speaking skills because the method requires students to interact with their partners.

CONCLUSION

The research results indicates that the Work in Pairs method positively affects students' speaking skills in English. Working in pairs is a suitable method and effective in solving problems of students who lack self-confidence, are embarrassed to speak English, have anxiety, and have low speaking skills in English. This method can improve students' English speaking in one of the private schools in Batam. This is evidenced by the increasing results of the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2. The results of the pre-test in the first cycle are 57.26. Following the value criteria table that has been determined by the researchers, it is included in the poor category. Then, the researchers implemented the Work in Pairs method for 4 meetings. In this regards, the researchers gave a post-test to see the improvement of students' speaking skills after using the Work in Pairs method. The results of the average score of post-test 1 is 65,33 and still in the poor category. It means that the average score of the improvement in the pre-test and post-test in the first cycle was 8.06%. Researchers need to do the second cycle because it has not reached the target of the KKM class, which is 70. Furthermore, the results of the average score of post-test 2 is 73,61, which is categorized as Good. It indicates that the average score of improvement from post-test 1 and post-test 2 is 8.19%. It means that students' speaking skill has improved significantly after implementing Work in Pairs in two cycles.

The improvement in students' speaking skills using the Work in Pairs method recommends teachers for teaching English speaking using this method. In this regard, the teacher can take several steps: first, the teacher chooses an interesting activity and prepare well. Second, the teacher must not forget to design activity procedures and prepare assessment procedures. When using the Work in Pairs method, the teacher must also manage time effectively so that activities can be carried out properly. Finally, the teacher explains the method properly so that students understand what they have to do. In addition, it is recommended for other researchers to conduct further research using various topics and interesting activities to find out another advantage of this method.

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