

IMPROVING STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN SPEAKING THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION METHOD (SGD)

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to find out how effective the use of Small Group Discussion Method (SGD) in teaching speaking especially in asking and giving opinion. It was conducted as an action research which has two cycles. Each cycle has three meetings. The subject of the research was students of eleventh grade IPA-2 at SMA Negeri 1 Sei Rampah which consisted of forty-four students. The instruments of data collection were primary and secondary data. While the primary data was conducted by administering students' speaking score in every cycle, the secondary data was conducted by the three instruments; observation sheet, questionnaire and field notes. Based on the speaking tests, students' score improved from the first evaluation to the last evaluation. In the first test, the mean was 58,55. The second test obtained the mean 67,07 and in the last test the mean of the students was 73,50. Based on the observation sheet, questionnaire sheet and field notes, it was found that learning activity ran well. Most students felt interested in the process of learning activity and involved in their group during the discussion time. The result of the research showed that Small Group Discussion Method was able to improve students' achievement in asking and giving opinion.

Key Words: Speaking, Small Group Discussion, Improving

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Introduction

Nowadays, most students at senior high school in Indonesia are familiar with English. Mastering English language as the second language is a must for students. It is because English is the window of the world. Therefore, the Curriculum of Educational Unit Level (KTSP) had implemented English based on its culture to be taught in every province in this country.

The problematic situation for students in speaking is most of them are not able to express what actually they want to say. It is related to Tzu Pu Wang (2007:2) that the teacher usually spends a lot of time speaking and explaining curriculum in the class. Students are required to sit in their seats passively and listen to the teacher attentively. "Liu, (1997); Wang, (2001) quoted by Tzu Pu Wang states:

"Students tend to memorize English Grammar rules, rote vocabulary and translation skill from the textbooks". In order to get good grades in speaking competence, the teacher might bring the discussion into the classroom.

Speaking is quite important to be owned to students in senior high school. By mastering this skill, they would be able to convey their intention in English and have a confidence to express it when facing native speaker around them. It is also stated in the English syllabus of Curriculum of Educational Unit Level (KTSP) to require students to be able to express and respond some kinds of expressions orally in English. They are asking and expressing opinion, expressing love, expressing sadness, expressing embarrassment, expressing anger and annoying.

Based on researcher's observation during his teaching practice program (PPLT) at SMA Negeri 1 Sei Rampah, the data proved that students' skill in speaking need to be improved. The mean of their speaking skill was 46,14 from 44 students at eleventh grade in the first semester of academic year 2012/2013. For the second

semester, the mean of their speaking score was 50,6. From the mean of the speaking score in the first semester, there were three students who passed the KKM (65) and the left got below the average. It means that only 6,8 % students who passed at the competency of asking and expressing opinion. From the data above, it can be concluded that students' achievement in speaking had decreased significantly.

Fortunately, Learning Revolution had implemented in teaching learning process in the school and it has been socialized to the teachers all over Indonesia. It's also called as Students Centered Learning (SCL), an approach to education focusing on the needs of the students, rather than those of others involved in the educational process, such as teachers and administrators. This approach has many implications for the design of the curriculum, course content and interactivity of courses (<http://en.wikipedia.org>). By this, teacher serves only as facilitator and problem solver to students in order to brainstorm their mind in teaching learning process.

Student-centered learning (SCL) means inverting the traditional teacher-centered understanding of the learning process and putting students at the centre of the learning process. It allows students to actively participate in discovery learning processes from an autonomous viewpoint. Students spend the entire class time constructing a new understanding of the material being learned in a proactive way. A variety of hands-on activities are administered in order to promote successful learning. Unique, yet distinctive learning styles are encouraged in a student-centered classroom, and provide students with varied tools, such as task- and learning-conscious methodologies, creating a better environment for students to learn (<http://en.wikipedia.org>).

From the above, the researcher offers a method to be applied in improving students' speaking skill by the implementation of *Small Group Discussion (SGD)* method. It is related to Kessler: 1992; Wei: 1997 that cooperative learning seems a potential solution to teaching problems. It is one of the teaching methods to improve language learning, academic achievement and social skills by students' interaction.

Yet, Mavis Kelly and Ken Stafford (1993:1) stated:

“Small group work on the other hand provides opportunities for intellectual and personal growth which cannot be achieved so easily in the standard lecture situation. Because the small group is a more personal situation, it provides opportunities for interaction between tutor and lecturer and students and among students”.

Research Methodology

The subject of this study was students of grade eleventh IPA-3 SMA Negeri 1 Sei Rampah which consisted of forty four students. It was chosed because there was a weakness in students' speaking achievement in asking and giving opinion.

The research was conducted as an action research and the whole steps in it had cycles which involved a substantive act to hold improvement. It was related to Wallace (1998:18) stated:

“The important thing is that processes involved are helpful to the practicing teacher's reflection, irrespective of whether they can be verified by someone else. The aim, however, is not to turn the teacher into a researcher, but to help him or her to continue to develop as a teacher, using action research as tool in this process”.

Additionally, Wallace (1998:18) stated that action research is different from other more conventional or traditional types of research in that it was much focused on individual or small-group professional practice and were not so concerned with making general statements. Moreover, Hewitt and Little (2005:1) state that action research was a model of professional development that promotes collaborative inquiry, reflection, and dialogue. On the other hand, Susilo (2007:16) states that in

practice, action research was an action which has meanings through the research procedures including four steps. They are *planning, acting & observing, reflecting* and *re-planning*.

From the definitions given, it can be concluded that action research is the process which the teacher collaborates in evaluating their practice. It focuses on a specific situation with an integrated solution.

Furthermore, Aqib, Maftuh, Sujak and Kawentar (2008:3) state the characteristic of an action research are:

1. An inquiry of practice from within (the research starts from the problem of the teaching learning process).
2. Self-reflective inquiry (the main method is self-reflection, a little bit stretch but still follows the rules of the research).
3. It focuses on the teaching learning process.
4. The objective of the research is to improve the teaching learning process.

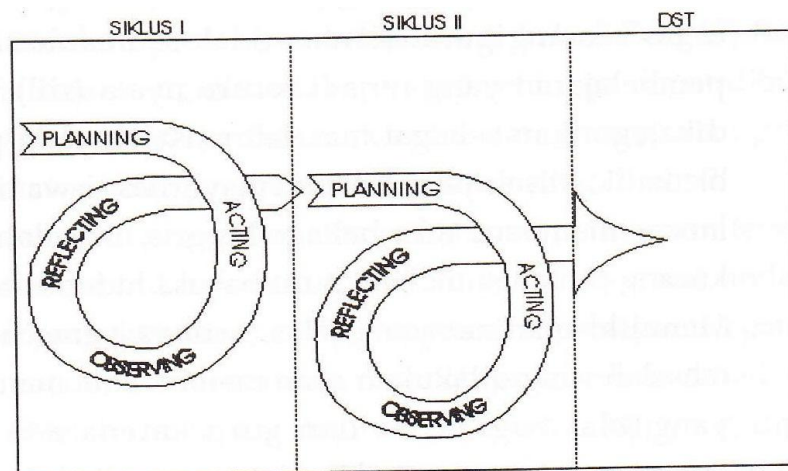


Figure 1. Action research cycles
(Adapted from Susilo, 2007)

From figure 1 it can be concluded that in this research each cycle will be done in four steps, they are planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Cycle two is the improvement from the cycle one.

Scoring the Test

Scoring the test was applied the speaking scoring technique related to Brown (2003:141) that there were five types basic of speaking and each of them has a distinct assessment to do. They were *imitative*, *intensive*, *responsive*, *interactive* and *extensive*. The type of the speaking applied in this research was *interactive*. However, it was related to Brown (2003:142):

The difference between responsive and interactive speaking is the length and complexity of the interaction, which sometimes includes multiple exchanges and/or multiple participants. Interaction can take the two forms of transactional language, which has the purpose of exchanging specific information or interpersonal exchanges, which has the purpose of maintaining social relationship.

Moreover, the five indicators that were assessed in *interactive* speaking were grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency and pronunciation. The specific of its assessment will be tabled below.

Table 1 Scoring the speaking test

COMPONENT	DESCRIPTION	SCORE
Grammar	Unsatisfied Errors in grammar are frequent, but speaker can be understood by a native speaker used to dealing with foreigner attempting to speak his language.	1-4
	Fair Can usually handle elementary construction quite accurately but doesn't have thorough or confident control of the grammar.	5-8
	Good Control of grammar is good. Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversation on practical, social and professional topics.	9-12
	Very Good Able to use the language accurately on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs. Errors in grammar are quite rare.	13-16
	Excellent Equivalent to that of an educated native speaker.	17-20
Vocabulary	Unsatisfied Speaking vocabulary inadequate to express anything but the most elementary needs.	1-4
	Fair Has speaking vocabulary sufficient to express him simply with some circumlocutions.	5-8
	Good	9-12

	Able to speak the language with sufficient vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversation on practical, social and professional topics. Vocabulary is broad enough that he rarely has to grope for a word.		
	Very Good Can understand and participate in any conversation within the range of his experience with a high degree of precision vocabulary.	13-16	
	Excellent Speech on all levels is fully accepted by educated native speakers in all its features including breadth of vocabulary and idioms, colloquialisms and pertinent cultural references.	17-20	
Comprehension	Unsatisfied Within the scope of his very limited language experience can understand simple questions and statements if delivered with slowed speech, repetition or paraphrase.	1-4	
	Fair Can get the gist of most conversations of non-technical subjects.	5-8	
	Good Comprehension is quite complete at a normal rate of speech.	9-12	
	Very Good Can understand any conversation within the range of his experience.	13-16	
	Excellent Equivalent to that of an educated native speaker.	17-20	
		Unsatisfied (No specific fluency description, refer to other four language areas for implied level of fluency).	1-4
Fluency	Fair Can handle with confidence but not with facility most social situations including introductions and casual conversation about current events, as well as work, family and autobiographical information.	5-8	
	Good Can discuss particular interest of competence with reasonable ease. Rarely has to grope for words.	9-12	
	Very Good Able to use language fluently on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs. Can participate in any conversation within the range of his experience with a high degree of fluency.	13-16	
	Excellent Has complete fluency in the language such that his speech is fully accepted by educated native speakers.	17-20	
		Unsatisfied Errors in pronunciation are frequent but can be understood by a native speaker used to dealing with foreigners attempting to speak his language.	1-4
	Pronunciation	Fair Accent is intelligible though often quite faulty.	5-8
Good Errors never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker. Accent may be obviously foreign.		9-12	
Very Good Errors in pronunciation are quite rare.		13-16	
Excellent Equivalent to and fully accepted by educated native speaker.		17-20	

Data Analysis and Research Findings

There were two kinds of data that analyzed in this research, primary and secondary. Both were gathered in two cycles of the research. Each cycle consisted of three meetings. So, in a total, there were six meetings in this research. The research was conducted in class XI IPA-3 which consisted of 44 students.

Based on the primary data, the score of the students improved from the first evaluation up to the third evaluation. the evaluation was done in the first, third and the sixth meeting. While the first cycle of the research conducted in the first and the third meeting, the second cycle conducted in the sixth meeting. The following table is the students' score improvement from the first to the last meeting.

Table 2 Students' score improvement from the first to the last meeting

No	Initial Name	Evaluation I	Evaluation II	Evaluation III
1	AK	57.00	66.00	74.00
2	AS	58.00	64.00	73.00
3	AF	56.00	64.00	73.00
4	AKL	55.00	63.00	72.00
5	AR	57.00	66.00	74.00
6	BPU	51.00	68.00	73.00
7	BS	56.00	66.00	73.00
8	DAA	57.00	66.00	74.00
9	DU	60.00	70.00	78.00
10	ELS	59.00	73.00	77.00
11	FI	59.00	66.00	72.00
12	IA	56.00	67.00	72.00
13	IP	58.00	71.00	75.00
14	IRP	60.00	70.00	74.00
15	I	56.00	66.00	72.00
16	IHA	57.00	64.00	73.00
17	IPA	57.00	67.00	72.00
18	JP	59.00	66.00	72.00
19	L	65.00	71.00	75.00
20	ME	60.00	66.00	72.00
21	MMR	59.00	66.00	72.00
22	MMY	56.00	66.00	72.00

23	MH	64.00	73.00	77.00
24	NA	58.00	67.00	72.00
25	NRH	58.00	66.00	72.00
26	PAA	58.00	66.00	72.00
27	PDV	58.00	66.00	72.00
28	PRS	61.00	71.00	77.00
29	RFZ	61.00	66.00	72.00
30	RN	61.00	67.00	72.00
31	RW	60.00	66.00	72.00
32	R	60.00	70.00	78.00
33	RH	63.00	71.00	76.00
34	SF	61.00	66.00	72.00
35	SS	61.00	71.00	77.00
36	SNH	58.00	65.00	72.00
37	UJ	57.00	66.00	72.00
38	WPS	57.00	65.00	73.00
39	WA	58.00	64.00	72.00
40	WAN	61.00	71.00	77.00
41	WY	58.00	65.00	73.00
42	WAP	59.00	65.00	74.00
43	YHP	58.00	66.00	73.00
44	TGD	58.00	66.00	73.00
$\sum x$		2,576	2,951	3,234
\bar{x}		58.55	67.07	73.50

From those-three evaluations conducted, it was found that by the application of SGD method, students' achievement kept improving from meeting to meeting. Moreover, the details of the students' score improvement can be seen in the following table:

Table 3 The range of students' score improvement

Range of Score Improvement	Initial Name	Total
22-25	BPU	1
18-21	DU, ELS, R	3
14-17	AK, AF, AKL, AR, BS, DAA, IP, IA, I, IHA, MMY, PRS, SS, WPS, WAN, AS, IPA, UJ, WY, WAP, YHP, TGD, IRP, NA, NRH, PAA, PDV, SNH, WA	29
10-13	FI, JP, MMR, MH, RH, ME, RW, RFZ, RN, SF, L.	11
Number of Students		44

a. Students who achieved the improvement about 22-25.

Table 4 Students who achieved the improvement about 22-25

No	Initial Name	The First Evaluation	The Last Evaluation
1	BPU	51,00	73,00

From table 4, it can be seen that there was a student who achieved the improvement at range of 22-25. Actually, he was not really a smart student in the class. He achieved 51,00 for the first evaluation in the first cycle and it significantly improved in the second cycle of the research. He did not pass the KKM (65,00) in the first cycle and after taught intensively by the SGD method, he felt much easier in understanding English especially in asking and giving opinion.

He tried his best in practicing speaking and asked the teacher about what he did not know from the lesson. Surprisingly, in the second and the last evaluation his score had passed the KKM (65). He achieved 73,00 in the second cycle of the research.

b. Students who achieved the improvement about 18-21.

Table 5 Students who achieved the improvement about 18-21

No	Initial Name	The First Evaluation	The Last Evaluation
1	DU	60,00	78,00
2	ELS	59,00	77,00
3	R	60,00	78,00

From table 4.4, it can be seen that the results of the three students almost passed the KKM (65,00) in the first evaluation. Nobody passed the KKM (65,00) in the first cycle of the research. On the one hand, these-three students were active students in the class. On the other hand, they found difficulties in practicing English when teaching learning process. After applying the SGD method and involved them in

practicing speaking, they enjoyed the lesson much more than their friends. Their weaknesses in speaking were because of the lack of teacher's attention in teaching learning process.

c. Students who achieved the improvement about 14-17.

Table 6 Students who achieved the improvement about 14-17

No	Initial Name	The First Evaluation	The Last Evaluation
1	AK	57,00	74,00
2	AF	56,00	73,00
3	AKL	55,00	72,00
4	AR	57,00	74,00
5	BS	56,00	73,00
6	DAA	57,00	74,00
7	IP	57,00	72,00
8	IA	56,00	72,00
9	I	56,00	72,00
10	IHA	57,00	73,00
11	MMY	56,00	72,00
12	PRS	61,00	77,00
13	SS	61,00	77,00
14	WPS	57,00	73,00
15	WAN	61,00	77,00
16	AS	58,00	73,00
17	IPA	57,00	72,00
18	UJ	57,00	72,00
19	WY	58,00	73,00
20	WAP	59,00	74,00
21	YHP	58,00	73,00
22	TGD	58,00	73,00
23	IRP	60,00	74,00
24	NA	58,00	72,00
25	NRH	58,00	72,00
26	PAA	58,00	72,00
27	PDV	58,00	72,00
28	SNH	58,00	72,00
29	WA	58,00	72,00

Most of students achieved the improvement about 14-17. There were twenty-nine students who achieved at that range. Even though the improvement was not as much as in the previous tables, it didn't mean that the twenty-nine students were incompetent in speaking.

d. Students who achieved the improvement about 10-13.

Table 7 Students who achieved the improvement about 10-13

No	Initial Name	The First Evaluation	The Last Evaluation
1	FI	59,00	72,00
2	JP	59,00	72,00
3	MMR	59,00	72,00
4	MH	64,00	77,00
5	RH	63,00	76,00
6	ME	60,00	72,00
7	RW	60,00	72,00
8	RFZ	61,00	72,00
9	RN	61,00	72,00
10	SF	61,00	72,00
11	L	65,00	75,00

The last range was the students' improvement who achieved about 10-13.

Even though the improvement of the score was not as much as the previous tables, they showed a significant improvement as well. While no students passed the KKM (65,00) in the previous tables of the first evaluation, student with the initial L passed the KKM (65,00) in the first evaluation. It showed that they were actually competent students even the improvement was not as much as others.

Based on the observation-sheet given, it can be concluded that the Small Group Discussion Method created a stable, conducive and pleasurable learning activity in the class. So, the students felt much more comfort and happy to improve their English speaking in their groups.

Moreover, from the first statement to the eighth statement of the questionnaire sheet, it proved that the highest percentage of the result was gained by the statement number eight by the result of strongly agree 79,54 percent. It can be concluded that most students felt interested in the learning activity by the application of Small Group Discussion Method and felt more involved as a part of the group. The highest percentage of the agree level was gained by the statement number one that gained the

percentage of 50 percent of the students. It can be concluded that the procedure of the teaching learning process was good enough to improve students' achievement.

Research Findings

In conducting the research, the writer followed the sequences of the Small Group Discussion Method. The writer conducted the research in two cycles which had three meetings for each. Then, he elaborated the objective of the study, explained the material of the lesson and involved students to speak in front of the class in group. At the first evaluation, it was found that students' achievement in speaking still considerably weak. Most students achieved unsatisfactory results. They felt confused to brainstorm their idea in asking and giving opinion. They needed teacher's guidance in making even a simple dialogue in English. Therefore, teacher's guidance and involvement were adversely affected to students' achievement.

Both the questionnaire and field notes showed students' agreement that Small Group Discussion Method considerably affected to their speaking. It helped them so much in establishing the group, sentence building, and ideas in communicating each other. They felt as a part of a group in learning activity, involved in the process of discussion and in the last, performed their conversation about asking and giving opinion in front of the class well. In other words, the Small Group Discussion Method empowered them so much in speaking. These three secondary data supported research findings which actually based on the primary data.

Overall, both primary and secondary data had successfully improved students' achievement in speaking through the application of Small Group Discussion Method.

Conclusion and Suggestion

By the application of Small Group Discussion Method, students' average score increased from the first evaluation in the mean of 58,59 to 67,07 in the second evaluation and it increased in the last evaluation from 67,07 to 73,50. Moreover, there was only a student who passed the KKM (65,00) in the first evaluation and it improved significantly became 39 students who passed the KKM (65,00) in the second evaluation. In the last evaluation, the entire students passed the KKM (65,00).

The observation sheet conducted in each meeting of the cycle. It showed that both teacher and students had a good cooperation in teaching learning process. It created a stable and conducive learning atmosphere during the process of teaching. Moreover, both questionnaire and field notes showed a positive results as well. They showed students' agreement that the Small Group Discussion Method empowered them in the process of teaching. Both questionnaire and field notes were conducted once in each cycle of the research. It can be concluded that the Small Group Discussion Method significantly improved students' achievement in asking and giving opinion.

The results of the research prove that the Small Group Discussion Method could improve students' achievement in asking and giving opinion. Therefore, the followings are suggested:

1. To the English teachers to follow the application of Small Group Discussion method in his/her teaching especially in asking and giving opinion.
2. To the head master of the school to deeply understand about his/her students achievement in asking and giving opinion.

3. To the readers who are interested in observing more about this field of research should explore and enlarge the knowledge about the application of Small Group Discussion Method in other occasions.

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