Improving English Speaking Skills in Learning Descriptive Text Using Series of Pictures

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ABSTRACT

One kind of verbal communication is speaking. By speaking, students can convey messages directly to listeners. However, there are still many students who have difficulty speaking English. One of them was experienced by class X-4 students at SMA Negeri 2 Semarang in the 2023/2024 academic year. Many of them have difficulty speaking English due to weak mastery of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and organization of ideas, which has an impact on their fluency when speaking. This research aims to improve students' English speaking skills using a series of pictures in learning descriptive text. This research is Classroom Action Research (CAR) which uses the model from Kemmis and McTaggart. The media used by the researcher as an example and created by students is a series of pictures which provides detailed, sequential, and structured descriptions of their friends. This research was carried out in 2 cycles. It was found that students experienced an increase in learning outcomes in cycle II with the average score in cycle I was 76.39 and cycle II was 82.08. This happened because The researcher added actions in cycle II by asking students to add detailed images or symbols that helped them remember difficult vocabulary, thus making them speak more fluently when presenting their descriptive text.

Keywords: *Series of pictures, speaking skill, descriptive text*

ABSTRAK

Salah satu bentuk interaksi adalah dalam bentuk lisan atau berbicara. Dengan berbicara, peserta didik dapat menyampaikan pesan secara langsung kepada pendengar. Namun, masih banyak peserta didik yang kesulitan berbicara Bahasa Inggris. Salah satunya yang dialami peserta didik kelas X-4 SMA Negeri 2 Semarang tahun ajaran 2023/2024. Banyak dari mereka yang kesulitan berbicara Bahasa Inggris diakibatkan penguasaan kosakata, pelafalan, tata bahasa, dan pengorganisasian ide yang lemah sehingga berdampak pada kelancaran mereka saat berbicara. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara Bahasa Inggris peserta didik menggunakan gambar berseri pada pembelajaran teks deskripsi. Penelitian ini merupakan Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) yang menggunakan model dari Kemmis dan McTaggart. Media yang digunakan oleh peneliti sebagai contoh dan dibuat oleh peserta didik berupa gambar berseri yang menjelaskan deskripsi tentang teman mereka secara rinci, urut, dan terstruktur. Penelitian ini dilakukan sebanyak 2 siklus. Ditemukan bahwa peserta didik mengalami peningkatan hasil belajar pada siklus II dengan rata-rata nilai pada siklus I adalah 76,39 dan siklus II adalah 82,08. Hal ini terjadi karena peneliti menambahkan tindakan pada siklus II dengan meminta peserta didik untuk menambahkan detail gambar atau simbol yang membantu mereka mengingat kosakata sulit, sehingga membuat mereka berbicara lebih lancar ketika mempresentasikan teks deskripsi mereka.

Kata kunci*: Gambar berseri, keterampilan berbicara, teks deskripsi*

1. INTRODUCTION

English is one of the international languages most often used by almost everyone in the world today. English is spoken as a first language by the majority of the population in many countries, including the United Kingdom, Ireland, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and several countries in the Caribbean. English is the official language in nearly 60 sovereign countries. In addition, it is the third most widely spoken native language in the world, after Mandarin and Spanish. English is also used

as an official second language by the European Union, Commonwealth countries, and the United Nations, as well as many other organizations. As an international language, English functions to connect people in various countries with different parent languages so they can communicate with each other. As a result, community interactions and activities can be well established, because they can understand each other's needs.

By learning English, Indonesian people can build relationships with people from various countries in various crucial sectors. This can have a positive influence on both parties. English language skills include the ability to read, listen, write and speak. This ability to speak plays an important role in world community interactions. The correct use of English according to the rules of pronunciation and grammar according to the context is able to convey the message well. Therefore, Indonesia makes English one of the compulsory subjects and courses that must be studied by Indonesian students. However, Indonesian people are still accustomed to use Indonesian and their regional languages in daily interactions. Besides, many Indonesian people think they will not work or interact with the international world, making them ignore the urgency and benefits of English in their lives. It can be seen in the situation of students in various schools in Indonesia. Being accustomed to using Indonesian and regional languages in everyday life makes it difficult for them to learn English. Low motivation to develop is also one of the contributing factors. Furthermore, fear of being bullied when mispronouncing or pronouncing English words is also the cause of students having low English language skills.

As happened with students in grade X-4 at SMA Negeri 2 Semarang where 8 students could not understand and speak English, 5 students were able to understand English conversation but could not reply or involve in the conversation due to the lack of English vocabulary mastery, 16 students were able to understand English conversations and were able to reply haltingly due to weak mastery of English vocabulary, and 7 students were able to understand and interact using English. Practicing students' English speaking skills can be done by involving text in learning, for example descriptive text. Descriptive text helps students to explain in detail the appearance of a person, animal, object or place according to their characteristics. To make it easier for students to learn descriptive text, the teacher uses a series of pictures, namely several pictures arranged sequentially to form the flow of the descriptive text. Students are also invited to create a series of images according to the descriptive text they have compiled. With this, students are expected to be able to improve their understanding of descriptive texts as well as improve their English speaking skills. Based on the explanation above, this report was prepared based on Classroom Action Research entitled "Improving English Speaking Skills in Learning Descriptive Text Using Series of Pictures". This research aims to enhance students' English speaking skills by using series of pictures in learning descriptive Text.

Skills is an activity in the form of practice or a manifestation of the action of doing something (Nadler, 1986:73). Meanwhile, Dunnette (1976:33) states that skills are the capacity needed to carry out several tasks in the form of development from the results of training and experience that a person has gained. In this case, language skills mean activities or actions required by humans to interact with one another. Nida (1957:19) in (Ilham, M. & Wijiati, I. A., 2020) divides language skills into four components, namely listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills and writing skills.

Speaking skills are an important component of language skills that educators and students must have (Ilham, M. & Wijiati, I. A., 2020: 5). Based on the explanation in the previous point, language skills include pronunciation, articulation and intonation, diction or word choice (vocabulary), and accuracy of the target of the conversation (audience). According to Rahmawaty (2016:10), English speaking skills focus on five factors, namely:

comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar.

Elliot (1982) argues in Madya, S. (1994) that classroom action research is a research related to social situations that take place in the classroom and aims to improve action in it where the entire process is observed and analyzed, then followed by action planning, implementation, observation, and inferring the effects of actions, thereby creating the necessary link between self-evaluation and professional development. Meanwhile, Widayati (2008:88-89) states that classroom action research is research in a classroom context which is implemented to solve problems faced by teachers during learning which aims to improve the quality and results of learning, as well as implementing new things that can improve the quality and results of learning. Meanwhile, Susilo, H., et al. (2011:1) defines classroom action research as a controlled exploration process in cycles carried out by teachers or prospective teachers with the aim of improving systems, ways of working, processes, content, competencies or learning situations which involve active collaboration between teachers, students and related parties who assist and are involved in research.

Descriptive text is a type of text used by writers or speakers to describe or illustrate certain objects, people, animals, places or events to viewers or readers (Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Knapp & Watkins, 2005). Nopriyanto (2017) states that the description process includes explaining the characteristics of the selected object clearly starting from the name and mention, grouping objects, explaining additional attributes, attitudes and traits, functions, and other specific information, so that viewers or listeners can easily knowing what the author or speaker is telling as if they could see the specific object with their own eyes. Gerrot and Wignell (1994) explain that the text structure or schematic/generic structure of descriptive text consists of identification which contains general statements to introduce and identify specific participants in the text and description which contains detailed and systematic descriptions or depictions of objects. specific characteristics, appearance, personality or traits, and habits or qualities (Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Knapp & Watkins, 2005). They also explained that the linguistic features of descriptive text include specific participants or objects, using simple present tense, linking verbs or relational process, action verbs, mental verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and adverbial phrases to add information related to behavior, place or time, and sometimes appear in the form of clauses that act as circumstances or indicative information in the text.

Agustina (2022) states that a series of pictures or picture series is a type of visual media that refers to the image category. A series of pictures are pictures that show activities or events chronologically (Wright, 1997). In addition, before compiling a series of pictures, students are invited to write descriptive text about their friends. Referring to Wright (1989), a series of pictures has a role in writing activities, namely it can motivate students so that they pay attention and participate actively during learning, contribute to the linguistic context used, describe participants objectively, answer questions, and provide information related to the conversation, discussions, and stories.

2. METHOD

This Classroom Action Research was conducted to 36 students of grade X-4 of SMA Negeri 2 Semarang which consisted of two cycles, cycle I and cycle II. The research adapted the Kemmis and McTaggart model which includes four stages in one cycle: Plan, Act, Observe, and Reflect. Susilo, H., et.al. (2011:12) states that stage Act and Observe can be conducted at the same moment.

Plan or planning includes teaching materials, learning plans containing teaching methods, techniques, and observation or evaluation instruments which are prepared based on observations and identification of problems seen before the planning stage (Susilo, H., et al., 2011: 13). In Act stage, the researcher carries out the implementation or execution of the action plan that has been made. The results of this stage are expected to increase the

quality of student learning outcomes (Susilo, H., et al., 2011: 14). At the Observation stage, the researcher makes observations simultaneously with the Act stage where the researcher will collect the essential data obtained during the action process as well as the influence of the action on students' learning outcomes (Susilo, H., et al., 2011: 15). At the Reflect stage, The researcher begins to process the data obtained through the observation process and then analyze the results and impacts (Susilo, H., et al., 2011: 15). The researcher collected data through assessing students' speaking skills which was carried out through individual presentations by bringing the results of series of pictures that students had previously made. This research used instrument of observation and instrument of documentation.

The data of this research was analyzed using the formula based on scoring rubric of speaking skills which had been prepared before. The researcher provided scores for each aspect or factor of speaking skills assessed. The researcher used a score scale of 1 - 4 involving five speaking skill factors, each factor or aspect of which has a weight of 20. The result of calculating the score for each element is the mark or learning result of students on English speaking skills in Descriptive Text learning using the media series of pictures.

The formula to count score weight is:

Score weight = score x 20

Meanwhile to count the final mark using the following formula:

Final grade (scale 1 – 100) = (Total of 5 score weights) : 4

The average score and mark of students' speaking skills is calculated using the following formula:

Average = Total score / mark
　　　　　Number of students

Students are declared to have achieved the learning objectives if the mark obtained is equal to or exceeds the Minimum Completion Criteria (*KKM*) set for English subjects, namely 75. If students get a mark below the *KKM*, they will receive special assistance from the teacher.

Meanwhile, students are declared to have achieved aspects or factors of speaking skills, if students get a score of 3 or 4 on the aspects or factors of speaking skills that are assessed. If students get a score below 3 for particular aspects or factors, they will receive intensive assistance from the teacher to improve their speaking skills in the required aspects.
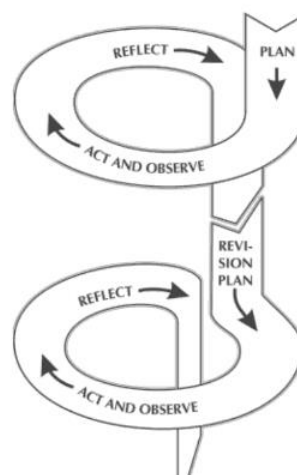
**Figure 1.** CAR plot of Kemmis and McTaggart model in Susilo, H., et.al. (2011:12)

3. RESULTS DAN DISCUSSION

The researcher found that 9 (25%) students in class who failed when presenting Descriptive Text orally, so that the ideas of their Descriptive Texts cannot be conveyed well to the audience. There are also 9 (25%) students who have reached the *KKM* set for English subjects, which is 75. Meanwhile, the remaining 18 (50%) students have been able to exceed the *KKM* of 75. However, The researcher found similarities in the weaknesses of X-4 students in cycle I, namely their speaking skills were hampered due to weak mastery of grammar and vocabulary which also had an impact on conveying story ideas. It is because students are still trying to memorize the descriptive text they have written rather than trying to focus on presenting by looking at the series of pictures they have made. A series of

pictures that lack detail not only makes it difficult for the writer or speaker to explain the description in detail and sequentially, but also makes it difficult for the audience to understand the contents of the Descriptive Text being presented.

By taking a look at the results of cycle I, the researcher added action in cycle II, where students were invited to add detailed pictures and symbols that refer to a verb or vocabulary that is difficult for them to memorize. In cycle II, The researcher found an increase in students' speaking skills in almost all aspects of speaking skills. The researcher found that there were no students who marked below the Minimum Completeness Criteria (*KKM)* for English subjects of 75. The researcher found that 9 students (25%) were able to achieve a *KKM* for English subjects of 75. Meanwhile, 27 other students (75%) were able to exceed the *KKM* for English subjects of 75. A total of 12 students were able to maintain the same score in cycles I and II.

As a result, the researcher found that most of the students' marks in English speaking skills increased from cycle I to cycle II. Students experienced an increase in five aspects of English speaking skills from cycle I to cycle II. Based on the average score for each aspect of speaking skills, the results obtained are depicted in the following graph:
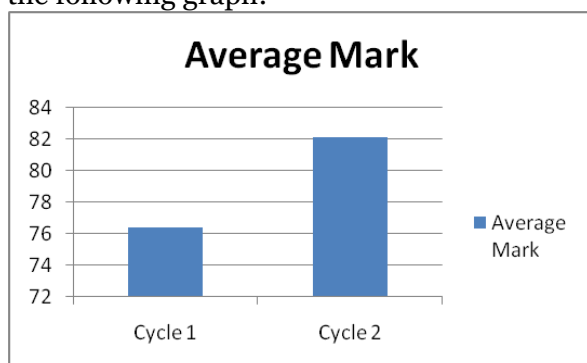
Figure 2. Graph of Average Increase in Students' Marks of Cycle I and II
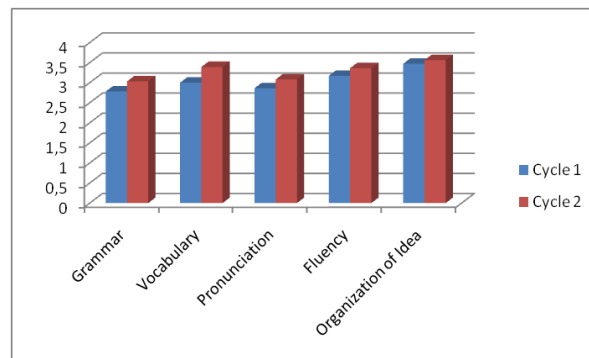
Figure 3. Graph of Average Increase in English Speaking Skills Scores for X-4 Students Based on 5 Aspects

4. CONCLUSION

This Classroom Action Research (CAR) was conducted in two cycles to improve English speaking skill of students in grade X-4 in learning Descriptive Text by using series of pictures where students were asked to present their descriptive texts by using series of pictures which arranged chronologically in detail based on generic structure of descriptive text. It was found that the average mark of students' speaking skills is increasing. It happened after the researcher involved additional action in cycle II when the students were asked to make their series of pictures more detailed by adding some pictures or symbols which could help them memorize their descriptive texts. This result is in line with the increase of English speaking skills aspects from cycle I to cycle II.

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