

## THE INFLUENCE OF PYRAMID DISCUSSION TOWARDS STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY

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**Abstract:** The objective of this study was to find out the influence of pyramid discussion towards students' speaking ability at the eleventh grade of SMA Negeri 11 Ambon in academic year of 2016/2017. The research design was quasi-experimental within pre-tests and post-tests given to both experimental class and control class. The students in experimental class were taught by using pyramid discussion while in the control class students were taught by using group investigation.

**Keywords:** *Speaking Ability, Pyramid Discussion*

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### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the mastery of speaking ability has been important for EFL students at senior high school. Its role as the tool of classroom communication is crucial in helping the students, who are intermediate language learners, to participate in learning. They can response their teacher or share thoughts and information with others by speaking English. Thus, students of SMA Negeri 11 Ambon, who are EFL learners, are compulsory to master this ability.

According to Sulistamawati, (2015) the students' ability to communicate in English reflects their speaking ability. Further, Hadfield & Hadfield, (2008) states that the students ability to answer oral questions, take turns in conversation, and express interest are the ability of speaking English. However, as far as the writer is concerned, the students would have speaking ability if they are accustomed with circumstance that promotes speaking. Therefore, teaching speaking in EFL classroom should provide opportunity for the students to interact with their teacher or with other students.

In fact, as far as the writer experienced, teachers are sometimes difficult to teach speaking because the students lack vocabulary and general grammar knowledge of English. Besides that, according to Hadfield & Hadfield, (2008) students are silent in the classroom because they feel shy to speak. Furthermore, the students' inability to utter English words because they use mother language dominantly than English in the classroom.

In addition, the ultimate goal of teaching speaking in EFL classroom is to enable the students to speak in target language (English). Consequently, teachers are required to use teaching principles in order to achieve that goal. According to Bailey & Nunan (p.96), the principles of teaching speaking to intermediate learners as follows;

(1) speaking tasks should involve the negotiation of meaning. (2) teaching strategies have to include both transactional and interpersonal. (3) the activities designed should require a personalization.

As far as the writer is concerned, pyramid discussion inherently promotes these principles above. The implementation of pyramid discussion involves the principles of teaching

speaking above. Besides that, previous researchers have found that pyramid discussion has successfully improved students speaking ability. For instance, Mehran & Knight, (2013) found their students' talking-time extended with pyramid discussion. Then, Sulistamawati (2015), who did research in SMA Kendawangan, found her students' speaking skill had improved after taught by pyramid discussion.

From the write's point of view, students speaking ability as the independent variable of this study will have positive influence after taught by the pyramid discussion. As mentioned by Hadfield & Hadfield, (2008) pyramid discussion enables students to feel at ease in speaking since students work together to answer the given-task. Besides that, according to Jordan, (1990) pyramid discussion can develop students' self-confidence in speaking since they should discuss in pairs and couple of groups before coming up to the whole class agreement.

## The Nature of Speaking

Many experts have their own definitions about speaking. In general, speaking is the verbal use of language to communicate with others (Mustikawati, 2013). However, in educational context, speaking is a productive skill that can be observed directly and all the observation can be colored by the accuracy and effectiveness (Brown, 2004). Based on the definitions above, the researcher infers that speaking is a verbal language that helps the students to communicate with others in EFL classroom.

As a productive skill that can be measured, speaking has some components, they are; pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, accuracy and fluency (Brown, 2000). According to Harmer, (2000) *pronunciation* is defined as the way that students pronounce the words that involves sound, stress and pitch of intonation. Meanwhile *grammar* is defined as description of the language system that deals with how the order, combination, and the form of words in sentences (Hadfield & Hadfield, 2008).

According to Thornbury, (2005) *vocabulary* refers to the word that is speaker used to express the stance. Meanwhile, Bailey & Nunan state that *accuracy* in this context refers to the ability to select the correct words and expressions which are conveyed based on grammatical patterns of English. And *fluency* refers to the capacity to speak fluidly and confidently.

## Teaching Speaking In EFL Context

Conventionally, teaching speaking in English as Foreign Language (EFL) context requires both implicit and explicit way. In implicit teaching, the students have opportunity to re-learn what has been learned without awareness. It is often about understanding of grammar rules. For example, when the students speak ungrammatically, teacher can repeat students' utterance based on English grammar. By contrast, in explicit teaching, students are aware in the process of learning. It can involve language activities such as memorization, hypothesis formation, or testing. Teacher may apply language learning methods or use strategies in the classroom Talley & Hui-Ling (2014).

Dealing with the successful teaching and learning speaking in EFL classroom, both teacher and students have their own roles. The roles are different. According to Talley & Hui-Ling, (2014) teacher role in the EFL classroom is as a promoter which is to provide students with learning speaking opportunity. Besides that, teacher also as the controller since it has power to

control and direct the content and the procedure to learn. Teacher also acts as a facilitator, counselor and authoritative resource for the students in which to scaffold every student until they can learn initially.

In contrast, the students in the EFL classroom have to deal with listening, interaction and performing in the teaching and learning speaking in the language classroom. On top of that, the most important role of students in EFL classroom is being independent the learning process.

### **The Use of Pyramid Discussion in Teaching Speaking**

Pyramid discussion is a group activity which is useful for students. It requires a sequence of different stages (Gibson, 2010). In this activity, the discussion involved pairs and groups activities. The students involved in pairs, group of four, and group of eight. The process continues until the students divided into two largest groups in the classroom. Then, these groups open out into a plenary session or in the whole discussion.

Teacher helps students to build up confidence by rehearsing and repeating arguments that they have already used. The idea behind a pyramid discussion is that learners should come to an agreement when they reach the top of the pyramid.

In order to present clear understanding about pyramid discussion as strategy in teaching speaking, here below the procedure of implementation as cited form to (Burns, 2014) the procedures of pyramid discussion in the classroom are as follow:

- Step 1. The teacher put task or questions on the board.
- Step 2. Then, put students into pairs and tell them to discuss the question after that students come to a conclusion.
- Step 3. When students have agreed in their pairs, teacher put the pairs together into groups of four. In this stage students should first report their conclusions and why after that come to an agreement as a group.
- Step 4. Once the groups of four have come to a conclusion, teacher can put them into groups of eight. They repeat the same procedure: report their conclusion and then agree as a larger group.
- Step 5. Teacher keeps merging two groups until the whole class.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

As it explained in chapter I, the purpose of the study was to find out the influence of pyramid discussion towards students speaking ability at eleventh grade of SMA Negeri 11 Ambon. Therefore, this research design was a Quasi-Experimental. It involved two groups, experimental class and control class. In the experimental class, the researcher treated the students by using pyramid discussion. Meanwhile, in control class the students were treated by using group investigation. The usage of pre-tests and post-tests purposes to measure how significant that the treatments would give influence.

### Research Instrument

Since the research was a quasi-experimental, so the researcher used pre-test and post-test as the data collecting instruments. The scores of students of pre-test were used as the initial condition of students. This initial asserted the conditions of students speaking ability at experimental class and control class before the treatment was conducted. Meanwhile the scores of the post-test were used to measure whether the implementation of these strategies had significantly influence on students' speaking ability or not.

Then the students' scores in experimental class were compared with the score from control class in order to find out whether the hypothesis of the study was accepted or being rejected. The data were compiled by using independent samples T-test statistic. The statistic compared the pre-test result to the post-test result in order to find out the results of the students' speaking ability before and after treatments (Arikunto, 2006).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Research Finding

Based on the result,  $t\text{-test} (3.71) > t\text{-table} (3.3)$ . As the result, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis is rejected and the researcher's hypothesis "*the students who are taught by using pyramid discussion will have a better achievement in speaking than those who are taught by using group investigation*" is accepted.

### Discussion

The students' speaking ability improved because they were more active to speak since pyramid discussion provided them many speaking opportunities. Further, pyramid discussion had enriched students' ideas and developed students' self-confidence before speaking. Pyramid discussion also had successfully omitted students' nervous and increased students' confidence in speaking since they had more speaking opportunities. It also extended students talking time. This strategy required the students to have discussion before reaching the conclusion as pairs or groups. The steps were repeated until the students reached two biggest groups.

By contrast, in the control class, students were taught by using group investigation as teaching strategy. As far as the researcher found, the students speaking ability was slightly

improved. As far as the researcher concerned, this less improvement was because the discussion was monotonous. Students were divided in groups and teacher gave topic to each group, after that student in group must presented the result of their discussion in front the classroom. As a result, the students speaking opportunity was not equally distributed. Some students might get big speaking portion while the others were less.

## SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusion

In sum, based on the finding in previous chapter, the researcher hypothesis “*the students who are taught by using pyramid discussion will have a better achievement in speaking than those who are taught by using group investigation*” was accepted since the obtained score of t-test (3.71) was higher than t-table (3.3). Besides that, the researcher found that pyramid discussion succeeded to improve the students’ speaking ability and as well as extended the students’ talking time during learning process. The procedure of this strategy has provided more opportunity for the students to practice speaking in learning. Moreover, as the researcher found, the implementation of pyramid discussion made students enjoyed and felt comfortable in learning. The data showed that students average score in post-test was higher than in pre-test. Based on the pre-test test result, the data showed that experimental class had better score in speaking than control class even though not significant.

### Suggestion

Even though researcher hypothesis was accepted, the researcher suggested several points of consideration based on personal finding. First, the implementation of pyramid discussion took much time since it required students to move from pairs to group and from another group to a larger group. So that, the effective time management was important for those who wants to use this strategy in teaching speaking. Second, the research suggested that teacher should prepare interesting topic includes the items that will be used to the students before they start to discuss in order to encourage the students to be more active in speaking, it also can help the students to apply this activity and get the good result in improving their speaking ability.

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