

IMPROVING ENGLISH SPEAKING PERFORMANCE THROUGH DISCUSSION GAMES

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ABSTRACT

This experimental research aims to justify whether Discussion Games improve students' performance in speaking and to examine the students' performance in learning speaking through the application. A total of 60 students involved in the study and they were divided equally for both the experimental and control groups. The data were collected from the pre-test, the treatment, the post-test, and questionnaire. The speaking test was given to both groups and the test scores were assessed by two examiners. The data were analyzed and interpreted using the SPSS 17.0 software program. The results reveal that the text types of Discussion Games can improve students' performance in speaking and the application of Discussion Games increase students' performance in learning speaking. The result of the students' speaking score from the pre-test to the post test demonstrates a significant difference with Sig. (2 tailed) is lower than 0.05. Furthermore, the comparison of the students' speaking improvement between the experimental and control groups is 0.000. It means that the improvement is recognized to be of significance and Discussion Games can increase students' performance in speaking. The findings suggest that the experimental class responded positively to Discussion Games and confirmed that the strategy help them improve their speaking skills.

Keywords: *speaking performance, discussion games, experimental study*

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most important and essential skills to practice in order to communicate with others. Having conversation and speaking with other people provides you new information of the world. People who have good performance in speaking are better in sending and receiving information. It is the process of building and sharing meaning through the uses of verbal and non-verbal symbol in various contexts.

To speak in English is not a simple matter because the speaker should be able to master several important elements of English such as: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. In that case, teachers are supposed to be creative in developing their teaching and learning process to create good atmosphere, improve the students' speaking skill, give attention to the elements of speaking and make the English lesson more exciting. Teaching speaking skill focuses on making student active and creative. The greater part of time in the process of learning speaking is supposed to be dominated by students.

Therefore, if students do not learn how to speak or do not get any opportunity to speak in the language classroom, they may soon get demotivated and lose interest in learning. Burn and Joyce (1997) stated that to improve the students' performance in using spoken language, the speaking activity should require: (1) what the spoken material the students present, (2) how the activities are conducted, and (3) what roles should the teacher and the students play and act in the classroom. On the other hand, if the right activities are taught in the right way, speaking in the class can be a lot of fun, raising the students' speaking performance.

Getting students to speak up in class has long been a challenge for language teachers. One of the ways to improve the classroom atmosphere and to motivate students in speaking English is by using Discussion Games. Richard (2008) stated that interaction is the key to improve students speaking performance. Playing a game is a great opportunity to repeat the material in a way which is encouraging and not intimidating if we add the element of challenge and competition into it. Games are easy ways of learning without the students getting bored, and learning should not become boring. Games, therefore, are relevant for adult class university levels too, provided they are adapted to the learners' level. This discussion game is a kind of game in which discussion plays a dominant role. It is expected to be more effective in improving speaking performance. Games are also believed can give the positive effect on the

students' performance and motivation in studying English as well as to increase their speaking performance. Steinberg (1988 as cited in Arifin, 2003) emphasized that games are viable method to achieve many educational objectives such as reinforcement, review, reward, relax, inhibition, reduction, attentiveness, retention and motivation.

The preliminary study shows that (1) students in speaking subject have poor speaking performance and (2) they tend to keep silent in the classroom. Based on the background problem statement above, the researchers formulate the following research questions: 1) To what extent does Discussion Games contribute to the students' speaking performance compared to that of conventional way? How does the Discussion Games improve students' performance in speaking English?

Relating to the problem statements above, the objectives of the research are as follow: 1) To observe whether applying Discussion Games can improve students 'speaking performance; and 2) To find out the way Discussion Games improve the students' speaking performance. Practically, this study is also expected to be an effort in changing the classroom atmosphere of using oral Discussion Games to improve the students' speaking performance. Moreover, the findings are also expected to provide useful information for the future researcher to conduct further research related to the topic. Theoretically, this study is expected to provide new insight of theoretical framework for the teaching of speaking in English classroom and other foreign languages classrooms in general.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many times, the teaching of English language does not fulfill its goals. Even after years of English teaching, the learners do not gain the confidence of using English in and outside the classroom. The learners cannot use the language in real life. Not only their output in the language learning is just limited in doing exercise based on the textbooks and in understanding grammar, but also they are isolated with real communication. Real communication involves ideas, emotions, feelings, appropriateness and adapt performance.

Madya (2002) pointed out that a layman's observation has indicated that senior high school graduates who have learned this language for six years, with almost 900 hours of school teaching, are unable to use this language for communication purposes. This phenomenon can also be observed among university graduates and even

among faculty members. Then, the teaching of English has so far been unable to achieve its main goals despite many efforts made to improve its quality.

This is the domain where Sugar and Betrus (2002) offered some ideas. They advocated the use of games as something beneficial for learning instead of its obstruction. They claimed that games may optimize learning potential on condition the games can be modified and managed well by a facilitator or a teacher. Via games, students can reduce boredom and increase the level of enjoyment in their learning activities.

Salsabilla et al. (2022) promoted meaningful interaction in classroom activities. It lies at cooperative learning where students are implementing discussion games with exchanging their ideas and turn-takings. With a qualitative study, the cooperative learning in the form of discussion games was analyzed in conjunction with many other interactive activities. The results showed the higher level of emotional bonds and mutual support among students in their engagement with these activities.

In another study, Amrullah (2015) modified Discussion Games as an extracurricular activity. He tried to classify games with cooperative and competitive dimensions. Further, he underscored that the most important element of a game is to provide opportunities and courage to use English. In his study, the English club functioned very well and organized with various games including Discussion Games. It was found that the games gained positive responses and the students participated into the activities attentively. In short, they meaningfully learned from other students through the games especially Discussion Games.

A synthesis between cooperative learning and Discussion Games was scrutinized by Sari (2017). She found that the combination of them, which involved three kinds of discussion games as optimist and pessimist, award, and what evident, was likely to create a positive atmosphere and lead to more cooperative dimension in students' learning activities. This finding revealed that the sources of knowledge are not only a teacher but also their peers in inviting them to take part into the discussions. As a result, the students' anxiety gradually alleviated and managed as this emotional challenge is always existing in English classroom teaching.

Elsewhere, Borah (2020) highlighted the improvement in pronunciation, intonation, and organizing ideas in speaking through Discussion Games. Besides, the games were effective in enhancing the

level of confidence of students. This improvement is able to accelerate the students' progress in language proficiency.

The researchers found from the preliminary study that most of the students as language learners were passive. A lot of them were shy to use English in real communication. Many of the students paid more attention to forms and rules when they communicated with others. They also did not practice English wholeheartedly. Only few of them practiced English in the classroom and most of the learners failed to show successful English-speaking performance.

There are many factors that can influence the instructional objectives of English language teaching, namely the students' learning motivation, attitude and interest, the competence of the English teachers, lack of learning facilities, the students' inadequate basic knowledge, irrelevant method and ineffective implementation of communicative approach, and the reluctant English language learners in teaching and learning process.

Based on these reasons, the researchers strive to examine the use of Discussion Games in English Language Teaching (ELT). The result of this research will be useful for teachers in improving students' speaking skills.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is experimental research that was constructed based on the non-equivalent control groups design (Gay, 2006). It involved two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group received Discussion Games treatment, whereas the control group was taught in the conventional way as lecturing.

Both groups were given the pre-test and the post-test. The pre-test was intended to find out the students' level of speaking ability before the treatment while the post-test was aimed to measure the improvement of the student's speaking skills after the interventions. Subsequently, the results between the experimental group and the control group were compared. The design was formulated as follows:

EG	O1	X1	O2
CG	O1	X2	O2

Research design (Adapted from Gay, 2006, p. 258).

EG = Experimental group
CG = Control group
O1 = Pre-test
O2 = Post-test
X1 = Treatment with Discussion Games
X2 = Treatment with conventional way.

The research design above can be formulated as follows:

(O2-O1) - (O4- O3)

Where: O2= Post-test of Experimental Group
O1= Pre-test of Experimental Group
O4= Post-test of Control Group
O3= Pre-test of Control Group

The population of the study was the students of Speaking II Course in the academic year of 2010/2011. There were four classes of the course. Out of the four classes, the researcher chose the second class for the control group and the fourth class for the experimental group. The samples were selected based on the purposive sampling technique because the researcher taught in both classes. Each class has 30 students, so the total numbers of samples were 60 students.

There were two instruments used in this research, namely test and questionnaire. The speaking test was carried out based on a specific text the students prepared themselves, in which every group of students did conversation based on the selected text. Questionnaire includes questions or statements to which the research participants were expected to respond.

There were two types of variables involved in this study: independent and dependent variables. The independent variable in this research is teaching speaking using Discussion Games and the dependent variable is the students' achievement and interest on Discussion Games in ELT.

The process of data collection started with the pre-test. The test was given to both the experimental and control groups. For the experimental group, the test was assigned before the group received the

treatment of interest, which was Discussion Games. Likewise, the pre-test was also assigned to the control group. The objective of this procedure was to find out the students' level of speaking ability before the treatment.

The treatment was conducted for 10 meetings, plus two additional meetings for the pre-test, post-test, and the questionnaire. It was conducted intensively twice a week for three months. The intervention was only carried out for the experimental group and was directly taught by the researchers. The treatment of interest was based on Discussion Games.

Meanwhile, the control group was taught by another English teacher as it was. Subsequently, the post-test was given after the treatment. The pre-test for both groups is the same. The results of both the pre-test and the post-test were calculated in order to measure whether there is a significant improvement on the students' speaking skills after using the Discussion Games strategy.

In addition, the questionnaire was distributed after the post test. It was administered at the last session of data collection procedures. It was aimed to find information about the students' performance on the use of Discussion Games. The data on the students' speaking performances were recorded.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

By comparing the data from the post-test of both the experimental and control groups, it was found that even though both classes improved significantly, the Experimental class showed a higher significant improvement. The mean score classification of the control group only slightly improved from poor to fair while the experimental group showed a larger range of improvement in categories, ranging from poor to fairly good classification.

The outcomes on the students' improvement of both the Experimental and Control groups display a significant difference. The researcher found that the t-observed was higher than the t-table, where t-observed was 9,437 and t-table was 2.000 at 0.05 level of significant at 58 degrees of freedom ($T_{\text{observed}} > T_{\text{table}}$, $\alpha = 0.05$). The Sig.(2 tailed) is 0,000 which was lower than 0,05. Thus, the hypothesis stated that Discussion Games strategy improve the students' competence in speaking than that of the Non-Discussion Games (conventional way) is approved. The comparison data of the two groups' indicates that the null

hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted.

The improvement of students' performance has an interdependency correlation with the questionnaires. The findings show that the highest rank of the mean score is 47.83%, which means that most of the students agree that Discussion Games improved their speaking skills. It was closely followed by Strongly Agree, with a total of 40.50% of the students. There is 10.17% of neutral answer (undecided), around 1.33% of the students disagreed, and only 0.17% respondents strongly disagree.

The finding indicates that Discussion Games strategy is responded positively by the experimental class and its application is preferable. The students are mostly select 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed' in the questionnaire and even the range of percentages is very close. The hypothesis that Discussion Games improves students' speaking performance in learning speaking is agreed. The null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted.

There were many reasons contributing to this improvement as aligned with research studies. Discussion Games has many advantages; as what Amrullah (2015) stated that Discussion Games would improve students' enthusiasm and activeness in learning speakin. In addition to that, learning by strategy of Discussion Games is performing in which learning opportunities were immense as what claimed by Sugar and Betrus (2002). Next, the students are more active in practicing speaking in the class because the encouragement is present and emotional support is also made available (Salsabilla, et al., 2022).

Next, the present study also found that Discussion Games helps the students' pronunciation and intonation in speaking English as well as builds confidence in the learner's competence in speaking English as what Borah (2020) claimed in her research. Indeed, the study did not find about organizing ability in students' speaking, but the students could performed more fluently than before as they felt more confident after Discussion Games were implemented in their classroom activities.

In general, Discussion Games strategy motivates the students to speak English outside the class and most of the students claimed that they enjoyed learning by Discussion Games.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Discussion Games strategy improves students' speaking performance better compared to that of Non-Discussion Games (conventional way). By comparison, the post-test's mean score classification of control group improved only from poor (45.4000) to fair (58.8667) categories while the Experimental group shows a larger range from poor (47,7000) to good (66,4333) classification. The outcomes of the students' improvement in both Groups display a significant difference. The researcher found that the t-observed is higher than t-table, where the t-observed is 2.294 and the t-table is 2.000 at 0.05 level of significant at 58 degrees of freedom ($T\text{-observed} > T\text{-table}$, $\alpha = 0.05$). The Sig.(2 tailed) is 0,025, which is lower than 0,05. Thus, the hypothesis stated that Discussion Games strategy improve the students' competence in speaking than that of the Non-Discussion Games (conventional way) is approved. The comparison data of the two groups' improvement indicate that the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted.

The Discussion Games improves students' performance in learning reading comprehension. The findings prove that Discussion Games is responded positively by the experimental class and its application is preferable. The students mostly choose 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' in the questionnaire and even the range of percentage is very close. There are only few students who chose 'undecided' and 'disagreed'. This study has been a beneficial experience for the researchers in many ways. It provides an insight into the positive ways that the learners perceive toward Discussion Games, which indicate its potential for promoting improved learning of English language teaching.

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