

The Impact Of Topic Based Group Discussion On Efl Learners' Speaking Performance

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Abstract: *The objective of this research is to know whether there is a significant improvement of the students' speaking performance after being taught through Topic Based Group Discussion or not. The population of this research was the First year students of Senior High School in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. One group pre-test and post-test design was used in this research. The sample was chosen purposively based on the highest score in English that was X Science 1. The data were gained by administering pretest, treatment and posttest. The results are there is significant difference in level 0.05 because t-ratio is higher than t-table ($6593 > 2042$), students' performance was improving after they taught through group discussion, and teaching learning process by using this technique ran well although there are problems which faced by students and English teacher.*

Keywords - *Improvement, speaking, performance, topic based, group discussion*

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I. Introduction

The function of language learning is to master a language and use it as tool of communication. Communicating with others means understanding and talking to them, reading what they have written and even writing to them (Raimes, 1987). Through language, people can express, communicate and show their ideas, feelings, and impression with each other.

However, the fact is different from what happen in senior high schools in Indonesia. The students only learn and teach about receptive skill like reading from their teacher. It makes students can understand English but they cannot use it for daily communication. Goh (2007: ii) says that although speaking is now an essential part of many language curricula, it is probably true to say that while it frequently occurs in class, speaking is less frequently taught. Moreover, Students may know the rules of linguistic usage, but unable to use the language (Widdowson, 1978). In another words, the students are lack of practicing speaking in the class.

To make the students become more interactive, the teacher should teach and stimulate the students to speak in the classroom. As said by Thornbury (2005: IV) that speaking is an interactive and requires the ability to cooperate in the management of speaking turn. Then, interesting topic should be given in the classroom to make a good situation during teaching learning process. Clark and Clark (1997: 223) state that in speaking, a speaker expresses his thought and feeling in words, phrases, and sentences following a certain structure which regulates the meaningful units and meaning of sentences.

Kayi (2006:1) commends that today's world requires that the goal of teaching speaking should improve students' communicative skills, because, only in that way, students can express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriate in each communicative circumstance. Oppositely, there are some problems that make the students are not ready to use speaking and hard to express the ideas in class. For example, some students feel shy although they know what they want to say. It makes the students cannot learn and practice speaking English. Then, students are unable to get the information from the speaker. Basically, students know the vocabulary but the students are unable to understand because they do not know how to pronounce words in the normal speed. In other words, the students have low skill of speaking, especially fluency and comprehensible in aspects of speaking. In this case, it can be conclude that the students are need activities that can stimulate as exercise to improve their speaking performances.

To overcome lack of students' speaking performance, this study applies the technique to help students in their speaking by using topic based group discussion technique in a classroom. According to Ur (1981) says that thinking out some problems and situations together through verbal interchange of ideas is simply called as to discuss. Moreover, Kildsvatter (1996:242) states that a small-group discussion dividing the large classroom into small groups of students to achieve specific objectives permits students to assume more responsibility for their own learning, develop social and leadership skills and become involved in an alternative instructional approach. Referring to those problems, group discussion is used as exercise to improve student's self-confidence and a speaking skill in learning English. Group discussion is meeting of group of people talk informally and based on topic. In discussion, the members or participants will activate their listening and speaking skills. Group

discussions, as usually practiced, are a middle-of-the-road teaching technique for instructors wanting moderate levels of student participation (Zander, 1979). By doing group discussion, students could share issues, opinions and making conclusions to the audiences or outsiders group and discuss it in English.

There are many positive effects of group discussion is explained by Ornstein (2000). He states that dividing students into small group seems to provide an opportunity for students to become more actively engaged in learning and for teacher to monitor students' progress better. It can also enhance students' cooperation and social skills.

The subject of this research was the first grade of grade students of Senior High School in Bandar Lampung, Lampung, Indonesia. The researcher chooses the first grade students because they have already good scores in English subject. In this research, the researcher focuses on the improvement of students' speaking performances. In line with the background of the study, the questions to be answered in this study are to find out significant difference in students' speaking performance after being taught by using topic based group discussion technique and whether or not group discussion can be used to improve students' speaking aspects in terms of vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, pronunciation, and grammar.

II. Methods

This research used quantitative method with one group pre-test and post-test design to take the data referring to Setiyadi (2000: 40). Science 1 class was chosen from the population namely experimental class by using purposive sampling. The class was given pretest, treatment and posttest. The population of the research was the first grade students of a Senior High School in Bandar Lampung.

Pretest, Treatment, Recording, Posttest, and Transcribing are used to collect data. The procedures of the research are: Preparing the Lesson Plan, Preparing the Material, Administering the Pretest, Conducting the Treatment, and Administering the Posttest. In getting the data, this research uses speaking test as the instrument of the research. The speaking test is Interview. In this case, the researcher chooses expressing feeling as a material and let the students express their about some topics. The topics are about something that could be discussed like should do *smoking should be banned*, *Do Teenagers Really Need a Mobile Phone*, and *Is Television Good or Bad for People*. The test is done orally and directly, the researcher called the students one by one to express their ideas in oral way. The researcher asked the students to speak clearly since the students voices are recorded during the test. The form of the test is subjective test since there was no exact answer.

To make the data become more valid and reliable, it used two inter raters. They are the English teacher and the researcher. The researcher recorded the students' performance and gave scores the students' performance. After getting the raw score, the writer tabulates the results of the test and calculating the score of pretest and posttest. Then, SPSS used to calculate mean of pretest and posttest to find out whether there is an increasing or not after the students are taught by using Group Discussion. Repeated Measure t – test used to draw the conclusion. The data computed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20 for window. The hypothesis analyzed at the significance level of 0.05 in which hypothesis will approve if sig < α .

III. Results and Discussions

a. Results

This research was held in five meetings to get the data. The first meeting was pretest followed by three times meeting for treatment. Then, posttest conducted in the fifth meeting to find out the students' improvement in speaking performance. The pretest was administered to 35 students in senior high school in order to measure the students' basic ability before the treatment by using topic based group discussion. The score of the five aspects of speaking tested in pretest were presented in the following table:

Table 1: The Average Score of The Evaluated Components of Speaking in Pretest

Pre-test	The Evaluated Components of Speaking					Total
	Grammar	Vocabulary	Fluency	Pronunciation	Comprehension	
Average	10.4	11.4	12.8	12.45	12.9	60

Posttest was conducted in order to find out the improvement in speaking and also to make sure that topic based group discussion technique could be used to improve students' speaking performance. The score of the three aspects tested in the post test were presented in the following table:

Table 2: The Average Score of Evaluated Components of Speaking in Posttest

Post-test	The Evaluated Components of Speaking					Total
	Grammar	Vocabulary	Fluency	Pronunciation	Comprehension	
Average	13.94	14.4	14.74	14.28	15.08	72.45

The following table showed the increase of students' speaking aspects; grammar, vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and comprehension in experimental class.

Table 3: The Improvement Score of Speaking Aspects in Experimental Class

No	Components	Pretest	Posttest	Increase
1	Grammar	10.4	13.94	3.9
2	Vocabulary	11.4	14.4	3
3	Fluency	12.8	14.74	1.94
4	Pronunciation	12.45	14.28	1.83
5	Comprehension	12.9	15.08	2.18
	Total	60	72.45	12.45

From the result above, it could be concluded that group discussion technique could improve each aspects of speaking, namely: grammar, vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and comprehension in experimental class. The highest aspect of speaking was comprehension.

In the aspect of Grammar, the students can make sentences which consist of subject, verb to be/ verb, and object. Then, Vocabulary, the students speak in better diction because the text or material makes the students understand the vocabulary easily. Besides that, some students in the class have mastered the vocabulary in the form of verb, adjective, and noun.

In Fluency, most of the students answered the questions fluently because they learnt during the treatment. Besides that, in terms of Pronunciation, most of the students could pronounce the words and sentences well because at the treatment the researcher always showed the students how to pronounce the words or sentences in appropriate way more than three times. The last, in Comprehension, the students were able to understand the discussion so they can give opinions fluently.

b. Discussions

Based on the research, there was a significant increase of students' speaking performance after being taught through Topic based Group Discussion technique. It can be seen from the difference of means in pretest and also posttest. The mean score for pretest is 60 and the mean for posttest is 72.45. Topic based Group discussion is one of technique which can increase the students' speaking performance. It might be caused by the real-life situation of the class which makes the student interested in following the lesson. They can use their gesture as the expression when they are presenting the material. Therefore, it is recommended to use topic based Group Discussion in teaching speaking of discussion text.

Pretest and posttest were conducted to get the increase of students' speaking performance. The students were asked to do interview as speaking test by answering several questions about the material/ topics from the teacher. From the result of pretest, it can be reported that the highest mean score in five aspects of speaking was comprehension (12.9) and the lowest mean score was grammar (10.4). Some students' pronunciation in pretest was actually good although there were some errors made by the other students. In the other hand, Most of students were not fluent enough to speak English. They often stopped talking in the middle when they giving opinions about the topic. That might be caused by their frequency to speak English which was lack, as Hetrakul (1995) who says that the students use English more frequent only inside the class and less frequent outside class. From the result of posttest, it can be seen that all aspects of speaking increased after being taught by Group Discussion technique. Then, the result still showed that comprehension became the highest mean score with (15.08), and grammar was in the lowest mean score with (13.94). All of students could pronounce the words better than in pretest. In posttest, students were able to answer the question more fluently than pretest. After that, the students got a lot of vocabularies from three times treatment. Then, their grammar in speaking increased too although they were still making little errors. Last, their comprehension to the material also improved. Based on the result of SPSS 20 on Paired Sample T-Test, there is a different before and after taught by using this technique. Here are the tables:

Table 4: Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	60.00	35	11.272	1.905
	Posttest	72.46	35	7.047	1.191

From the table above, it can be seen that mean in posttest (72.46) is higher than pretest (60.00). Oppositely, the standard deviation in posttest (7.047) is lower than in the pretest (11.272) and also standar error mean with posttest (1.191) and posttest (1.905).

Table 5: Paired Samples Correlations

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 pretest & posttest	35	.326	.056

From the table above it can be seen that correlation between pretest and posttest with total subject 35 is (.326) with sig (.056). It indicates that there is positive correlation between both of them. The table paired sample t-test showed the difference between before and after teaching by using topic based group discussion in experimental class.

Table 6: Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest Posttest	-12.457	11.179	1.890	-16.297	-8.617	-6.593	34	.001

From the table above, it can be seen that there is significant difference between pretest and posttest variables with sig. (2-tailed) column (0.001) is lower than 0.05 points. Moreover, t-table (t column) with 6.593 is higher than t-ratio 2042 (df: 34). The point of t-ratio can be seen from statistical book with df in 34 points. It can be concluded that topic based group discussion can give significant difference in teaching learning process in the classroom.

In terms of the average increase of five aspect of speaking, we can see that comprehension is the one aspect which improved significantly with 2.18 (from 12.9 up to 15.08). This may be caused by the vocabularies were easy to understand by the students. Students could get the information from the teacher and handbook easily. So, the students comprehended the questions in interview then try to speak what in their mind which as the speaking test, and try to answer the question although they could not speak English fluently.

Moreover, Antoni (2014:56) explains the technique for using small group discussion technique as follows; teacher divides the class to be small group, gives the students' roles, gives different topic of each group, and asks the group to discuss it. After that the groups have to present it before the class. Besides on the technique for use small group discussion technique, finally the student can develop their listening and speaking. Group discussion could help the students enhance confidence and fluency in speaking. The results of this research prove that after getting treatment using group discussion, the students can improve the speaking skill.

Based on the explanation of increasing in experimental class seen from each aspect of speaking and means of the total score, it could be concluded that the technique applied, teaching speaking by using group discussion technique, was effective. From the average score of pretest and posttest, it was clear that the means score of posttest was higher than the means score of pretest. It means that there was significant increase of students' performance after being taught by group discussion technique.

Besides giving oral tests and treatments, the researcher take notes in all of the treatments during teaching learning process by using group discussion technique in the class. The results are:

1. At the first treatment, the students were scared of making any error in speaking English. It is happened because the material is about "smoking should be banned" is having hard vocabularies although it is needed by the students. In the other side, this material cannot attract and make students learn. In this case, it is opposite with O'Neill (1990) who argue that materials may be suitable for students' needs, even if they are not designed specifically for them, that textbooks make it possible for students to review and prepare their lessons that textbooks are efficient in terms of time and money, and that textbooks can and should allow for adaptation and improvisation. Here, although the students need to know about smoking. Unfortunately, in this research this material cannot be used to improve the students speaking performance.
2. At the second treatment, the students are trying harder to speak their opinion, although their grammar was still wrong. The topic is about "Is Television Good or Bad for People". Some students are tried because they have knowledge about the Television. Some of them use word television can be used to entertain them. This topic or material could influence the students to learn. Moreover, Allwright (1990) argues that materials should teach students to learn, that they should be resource books for ideas and activities for instruction/learning, and that they should give teachers rationales for what they do. In this case, the materials can teach the students to learn because the television is near with the students. So, they have much more about television function and also the words relate to the television itself.

3. At the third treatment, when materials are interesting, the students speak up to share the ideas in the teaching learning process although they lack of vocabularies. In the last material, it is about "Do Teenagers Really Need a Mobile Phone". It is very good because although the students cannot speak, but they are tried harder to show and share their ideas. Some of them can be said that it is as a tool for communication of people, playing games, as dictionary when in school, etc. It can be said that, when the topics are interesting, the students could do practicing and trying to speaking English.

It was supported by Steinberg's statement (2002: 3 in Arimna, 2009: 3) that adolescence students have great capacity to learn a great potential for creativity and passionate thing which interest them. It could be said that this material is the best from others because it is very close to the students. So, the students want to talk more about the hand phone because hand phone is very needed by them. They try to talk more and create the speaking activity become more active.

Based on the note of the researcher, it can be concluded that the best material which is used in group discussion is about the material that can potentially make the students learn creative and active.

Besides, the English teacher becomes an observer to evaluate the learning process in another point of view. The real English teacher or observer also made notes during three times treatment in terms of strength and also the weakness. The results are:

1. At the first treatment, the observer made note on the strength is "The students were active in teaching discussion text. Then the weakness is "The teacher did not touch the whole students in the classroom".
2. At the second treatment, the observer took note the strength "Generally, the students liked the technique as they could develop their speaking skill based on interesting topic". Then on the weakness "The teacher was not mediate the class enough in during the learning material".
3. At the third treatment, the observer noted on the strength "The topic used was effectively enough in encouraging the students to speak up in learning process". Then on the weakness "the teacher just gave a bit of explanation about the problem".

The observation from the real English teacher can be used to know the advantages and disadvantages during the teaching learning process through group discussion. Then, the advantages can be used and the disadvantages can be revised for the next research.

However, the process of teaching speaking through topic based group discussion in a senior high school in Bandar Lampung which conducted by the researcher ran successfully since it could increase the students' speaking performance. In terms of problems faced by both teacher and the students can be information for the betterment of teaching and learning process.

IV. Conclusions and Suggetions

Based on the discussion and also research findings, the researcher draws the following conclusions:

1. There is difference of students' speaking performance score after being taught through topic based group discussion. It can be seen from the average score of pretest (60) and posttest (72.45).
2. There is significant increase of the students' speaking skill after being taught by topic based Group Discussion technique. It can be seen from the difference of average score in pretest and posttest. The result of posttest is higher than the result of pretest. Then, the hypothesis is accepted because t-ratio is higher than t-table ($6593 > 2042$).
3. The students were not confident to present the material in the first treatment, but the students were confident to speak English in the second and third treatment. It means that, interesting materials can be used as a tool to encourage the students to speak English.

Based on the conclusion above, here some suggestions are given as follows:

1. Based on this research, this technique can be used by the English teachers when they are teaching Discussion text. The English teachers are suggested to use topic based group discussion technique in teaching speaking because it is a new technique that can increase students' speaking skill.
2. For the English teachers who want to use topic based Group Discussion technique are suggested to use interesting materials in teaching so that the students do not feel bored and focus in learning process.
3. Students should be confident to speak English in front of audiences. They should not be shy when making errors. They should be brave to speak English more confident in front of the class.

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