

# Using Communicative Games in Improving Students' Speaking Skills

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## Abstract

The aims of the study are to know whether communicative games have an impact on teaching speaking skill and describe how communicative games give an influence on speaking skills of students at junior high schools in Jakarta, Indonesia. Classroom Action Research (CAR) was implemented based on Kurt. L model. The procedures used were planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. It was done into two cycles in each cycle consisted of three meetings. The researcher used collaborative action research with some of the English teachers. In collecting the data, the instruments were interview, observation, questionnaire and test. The test only given to students. The rest of the instruments administered for both teachers and students. The result of the study showed the mean score's pretest reached of 60.42 to 69.02 and post test's score reached up to 78.77. It is important to describe that there is a significant improvement of 13.9% to 41.7% in post test 1 and 83.33% in post test 2. Therefore, the criteria of success had been determined. It is crucial to note that communicative games have contributed a positive impact on teaching learning process. This also implies the communicative games expected to enhance students' enthusiasm and motivation. Clearly, It gives positive improvement on students' active participation, confidence and their fluency in speaking skill. In short it can be described that the strategy of teaching and learning creates good, enjoyable circumstances and reduces the boredom and stress of learning process.

**Keywords:** communicative game, speaking skills

## 1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the basic language skills that have to be mastered by English foreign learners due to its significant and its use for communication. It is very important to be able to speak English regarding that it is the most commonly accepted language in the world so that it will be very beneficial for those who comprehend it not only to improve their knowledge and skills but also easier for them to get a job. More than that, they will not find it difficult to communicate and interact with people around the world when they travel (Gard & Gautam, 2015).

However, in several Asian countries in which English is taught as a foreign language such as South Korea, Japan, Thailand and some other countries in the Middle East, learners' behavior in classroom situation seems not working that it is hoped as it stated in *The East Asian Learner Journal* that learners in Asia are often afraid of making mistakes and being ridiculed in front of their classmates. Besides that, they may also respond in short phrases because they may not feel confident or because they are too shy to speak it out. In addition, young learners of English may also giggle when they are embarrassed or when they are unable to understand the lesson (Byung, 2004).

The researcher has found that there are many similarities and difficulties faced by the students in speaking English such as fear of making mistakes, fear of being laughed by their friend as they have no idea about pronunciation and grammar that they use. Besides, they are also not confident enough to express their idea and feeling hesitant due to the lack of vocabulary that they have. Then, they are also bored in learning English because the teaching-learning activities provided in a conventional way, for instance; the teacher asked the students to perform the text they have memorized. Furthermore, they also cannot speak based on their willingness because what they want to speak is structured by the teacher, in other words they just repeat the word that has been produced. Afterward, those problems make students get lazy or less ability to speak. Those cases are quite problematic considering that even though speaking is not included in final test, in daily teaching and

learning activities it is involved in the scoring and become teachers' concern and consideration in determining whether or not the students pass the subject. Therefore, the researcher considers that it is very necessary to find out an alternative way to create suitable and interesting technique related to the students' condition.

Perhaps this problem cannot be equated with the condition of students in Bali, Lombok and several areas in Indonesia. Due to the the cities have become international tourist destinations in which English is used in their daily activities and even become their 'draw card' to earn more money and to turn lead a more comfortable life. Thus, it is not excessive if Andrea Gunton in his Journal entitled *A comparison of English language learning and use by Balinese people involved in the tourist industry and refugee students* said that without English, few of the people in the Balinese tourist industry will lose their livelihoods (Gunton, 2004).

However, because the influence of tourist industry towards students' motivation in English, it does not mean that we have to wait all the places in Indonesia become international tourist destinations in order that students can be active and motivated to learn English, especially speaking. The researcher thinks that there must be a way to solve students' difficulties in speaking English.

There are many ways to help the students to overcome their difficulties in speaking English. According to Harmer when the teachers want to encourage students to speak, they have to use communicative approach that avoids the concentration towards grammar and vocabulary but emphasizes on the significance of language function (Harmer, 2001). In other words, these activities will involve students in real communication, where the achievement of their communicative task is more important than the accuracy of language they are using.

However, Harmer continued his statements that in order to do these activities, there must be something that makes students interested in communication (Harmer, 2004). In this case, game can be a solution as it stated by Prank that game is used for giving intense and passionate involvement in communication to the students so that they can feel enjoyment and pleasure in learning (Mahmoud & Tanni, 2014). Therefore, teachers have to try to motivate students to speak by using games combined with communicative approach so that hopefully it can create a good circumstance, encourage students to take part actively and improve the quality of students' communicative competence.

Based on the descriptions, a research is carried out to analyze and to prove whether communicative games can improve students speaking skills. In this case, the seventh grade students are chosen as the subject of the study because they are considered as the lower level in speaking skill than the other classes based on the interview toward the English teachers. Here, the researcher tries to propose a strategy in teaching English especially teaching speaking namely "Communicative Game". Based on the introduction and the objectives, it is assumed that Communicative games can improve students' English Speaking skills.

Communicative game is a set of well fun-design activities can stimulate students' interaction in the classroom. These games require them to take part actively in classroom by speaking and writing in order to express their own point of view or give information. More than that, students' confidence will be automatically formed due to its concept in building habits of interaction. Game means "an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun" (Hadfield, 1996). In addition, game is "an activity in which the learners play and usually interact with others" (Wright et al., 2006). They added that in order to express their own point of view or give information, the learners must speak or write as in getting the meaning from others, they have to understand what people are saying or have written (Gate, 2003).

Communicative Games can be an alternative way to overcome students' difficulties in learning how to speak English. In fact, they can improve their speaking skills. However, talking about communicative games cannot be separated from those two terms;" communicative" and "game". The word communicative refers to the *communicative approach* in which teaching-learning activity avoids the concentration towards grammar and vocabulary but emphasizes on the significance of language function (Harmer, 200). In other words, these activities will involve students in real communication, where the achievement of their communicative task is more important than the accuracy of language they use. Therefore, it can give positive impact towards students' motivation and classroom atmosphere which in line with Michael J Wallace (1987), language games are used for increasing emphasis on the importance of motivation and the appropriate kind of positive effective atmosphere in the classroom.

Breaflly, it can be concluded that communicative game is a set of well-design activities which stimulates students' interaction in the classroom. These games require students to take part actively in classroom by speaking and writing in order to express their own point of view or give information. Then, their confidence will be automatically formed due to its concept in building habits of interaction.

By Gate (2003) says, “Speaking is a skill which deserves attention every bit as much as literary skills, in both first and second language. It is the skill students are frequently judged. It is also the vehicle par excellent of social solidarity, social ranking, professional advancement and business” (Jones, 1989).

Furthermore, Jones (1989) defines speaking as a form of communication in which the effective conveyance of what the speaker says is very crucial. In line with this definition, Kush clarified for what is called as effective speaking as an utterance in a set of voices spoken by someone and understood by someone else (Kushartanti et al., 2005). It means that speaking is not as simple as we say something but more than that it is related to the meaning that is constructed so that people can understand what we are saying. As a complement, Brown added that the process of constructing meaning involves producing, receiving, and processing information (Florez, 1999).

Another expert said that “speaking is intentional activity; it serves a purpose the speaker wants to realize” (Levelt, 1989). Therefore, speaking is somebody’s aptitude that is uttered eagerly to make an expression for some reasons. Speaking is the presence of communication goal that has to be realized, for instance the speakers want to express wish and desire to do something; negotiate and solve particular problem; or establish and maintain social relationship with others.

The ability to produce utterance (utterances) is not enough for being a good speaker because speaking is a complex skill that requires the simultaneous use of a number of different abilities that have to be mastered by language learners in order to be able to express their feelings and ideas appropriately.

There are two elements of speaking which are necessary to be considered by the speaker as it stated by Harmer in his book “The Practice of English Language Teaching”, the first is Language Feature which consist of several sub-elements as follows: a. Connected speech is the sounds modifying in producing utterance when people speak. It includes modifying (assimilation), omitting (elision), adding (linking *r*), or weakening (through contraction and stress patterning); b. Expressive device is the stress and pitch variation in producing utterance in order to convey the truth meaning of the messages meant by the speaker. It includes the variation of the volume and speed of the speech. By using these devices people will be able to show what and how they are feeling to whom they are talking to; c. Grammar and lexis: People live in different ways, places, and environments causing different mindset too. Therefore, teachers need to supply their students with various phrases for different function in their speaking classroom activities. For instance, how to express agreement and disagreement, surprise expression, and etc., so when students have an occasion which demand them to use those expression in different stages of an interaction, they know what expression they have to use appropriately; d. Negotiation language: This is the speech clarification. It is the use of language of how to clarify and to show of what a speaker means. Sometimes, people do not hear or understand what other people are saying. Therefore, it is necessary to have an appropriate language of how to clarify to avoid mistakes between the speaker and the listener (Harmer, 2001).

Another element that is needed to be acquired by a successful speaker regarding its importance and preference towards speaking skills is Mental or social processing that involves language processing, interaction, and information processing; a. Language processing: effective speakers need to be able to process language in their own head and put it into coherent order, so that it comes out in forms that is not only comprehensible but also conveys the meanings that are intended; b. Interaction: most speaking involves interaction with one or more participants. This means that effective speaking also involves a good deal of listening, an understanding of how the other participants are feeling, and a knowledge of how linguistically to take turns or allow others to do so; c. *Information processing*: quite apart from our response to others feelings, we need also to be able to process the information they take us the moment we get it. The longer it takes for the penny to drop the less effective we are as instant communicators. However, it should be remembered that this instant response is very culture-specific, and is not prized by speaker in many other language communities (Harmer, 2001). From those explanations, it can be summarized that by mastering language features and mental or social processing as two elements of speaking that have to be considered when they want to speak effectively, they are able to show what and how they are feeling, not only they are able to know what expression they have to use appropriately but also they can know how to clarify in order to avoid mistakes between the speaker and the listener, and the most important thing is they can convey the meanings that they are intended.

## 2. Method

A classroom action research (CAR) was used in this study as the method. The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist the “actor” in improving and/or refining his or her actions” (Sagor, 2000). The participants of the study were the English teacher and 36 students from the seventh grade Junior High School of

6 South Tangerang Jakarta, Indonesia.

It was aimed to reveal students' difficulties in enhancing their speaking skill and to give the solution to the problems occurred by applying a variety of Communicative games to solve students' problem in speaking as it stated by Kurt. L, CAR is a type of classroom research carried out by the teacher in order to solve problems or find answers toward context-specific issues (Tampubolon, 2009).

Based on these considerations, in this study, the researcher used collaborative action research in which he cooperated with one of the English teachers of Junior High School in Jakarta. The teacher acted as an observer while the researcher acted as teacher who taught by using communicative games. The teacher was as an active participant who was not only functioning as an observer but also taking actions by making lesson plan and giving assessment. Then, she collected and analyzed the data together with the researcher. It consists of two cycles in which each cycle contains four phases; planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

After implementing the classroom action research in the seventh grade students of Junior High Schools, the writer conducted the test (post test 1 and 2) in each cycle. To compare the test result between pretest and the tests of each cycle, the writer uses some steps. Those are calculating the students mean score of the test, calculating the class percentage, and calculating the students' improvement score from pretest to post test 1 and post test 2 into percentage. The interview towards the English teacher was also carried out to know her response about implementation of the action. At last, questionnaire was administrated to know the students' responses towards the implementation of communicative game.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 The Result of Post Observational Note

Several things are related to the implementation of communicative games were shown by the observational notes. There might always be strengths and weaknesses. Each of them was always discussed comprehensively by teacher and researcher so that it could be the material for future evaluation. At the end, all these shortcomings could be overcome. As an example, at the beginning of the action the teacher still had difficulty in several things such as time management and class control but then soon after that he corrected his mistake so that it did not happen again in the next phase. From the students' side, at first they looked confused, ashamed and afraid when they were asked to speak. They still had difficulties in expressing their ideas, opinion and thoughts, and they were still hard to pronounce the new vocabularies and also less motivated to play the games. Those problems were discussed and analyzed then communicative game came as a solution so that problem could be overcome. Therefore, the researcher can barely say that communicative games have given positive impact on teaching learning process.

#### 3.2 The Result of Post Questionnaire

Based on the questionnaire that was given to the students after accomplishing the second action of cycle 2. The response is presented in the following table.

Table 1. The result of post questionnaire

No	Matter of Contention	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Students' interest in learning using communicative games technique	55,6	38,9	5,6	0
2	Students confidence in speaking after being thought using communicative games	38,9	50	8,3	2,8
3	Students' interest in speaking after being thought using communicative games	47,2	44,4	5,6	2,8
4	The ease of students in giving and responding expression after being thought using communicative games.	30,6	52,8	11,1	5,6
5	Students' motivation to get used to speak English and to study harder	50	30,6	13,9	5,6

### 3.3 The Result of Post Test

Based on the result of students' speaking achievement, it was found out that the students' speaking skills was gradually improving. Here are the results from all the students' score.

Table 2. The result of students' speaking score

No	NAME OF RESPONDENTS	Y	Y1	Y2
1	Student 1	50	67	79
2	Student 2	48	60	77
3	Student 3	74	76	82
4	Student 4	70	77	89
5	Student 5	66	69	81
6	Student 6	61	62	76
7	Student 7	57	63	79
8	Student 8	45	70	77
9	Student 9	75	80	82
10	Student 10	56	60	81
11	Student 11	55	65	78
12	Student 12	53	67	80
13	Student 13	51	55	64
14	Student 14	54	65	80
15	Student 15	73	78	81
16	Student 16	76	82	81
17	Student 17	46	50	72
18	Student 18	47	55	71
19	Student 19	61	65	79
20	Student 20	63	75	83
21	Student 21	58	65	79
22	Student 22	56	64	79
23	Student 23	76	78	80
24	Student 24	53	69	76
25	Student 25	73	79	82
26	Student 26	77	83	83
27	Student 27	48	56	68
28	Student 28	55	62	79
29	Student 29	56	60	73
30	Student 30	60	75	81
31	Student 31	63	77	81
32	Student 32	47	74	80
33	Student 33	56	64	72
34	Student 34	71	79	84
35	Student 35	67	78	81
36	Student 36	78	81	86
	<b>Total</b>	2175	2485	2836

P = Percentage, Y = students' pretest score, Y1 = students' post test 1 scores, Y2 = students' posttest 2 scores.

To compare the test result between pretest and test 1 and test 2 of each cycle, the researcher uses some steps. Those are calculating the students mean score of the test, calculating the class percentage, and calculating the students' improvement score from pretest to post test 1 and post test 2 into percentage. In analyzing the data of pretest, the first step is to get the mean score of the class. It is calculated as following:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum xi}{n}$$

The second step is to know the percentage of students' score who passed the KKM (75). It is calculated by using as follows:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

To find the improvement score from pretest to post test 1 and post test 2 the following formula is used

$$P = \frac{y_1 - y}{y} \times 100\%$$

Table 3. The improvement score from pre-test to the post-test 1 and post-test 2

Score	Y	Y <sub>1</sub>	Y <sub>2</sub>
Total Score	2175	2485	2836
Students' means score	60.42	69.02	78.77
Students class percentages' score	13.9%	41.7%	83.33%

The following figures are the result of the mean score improvement and percentage per test.

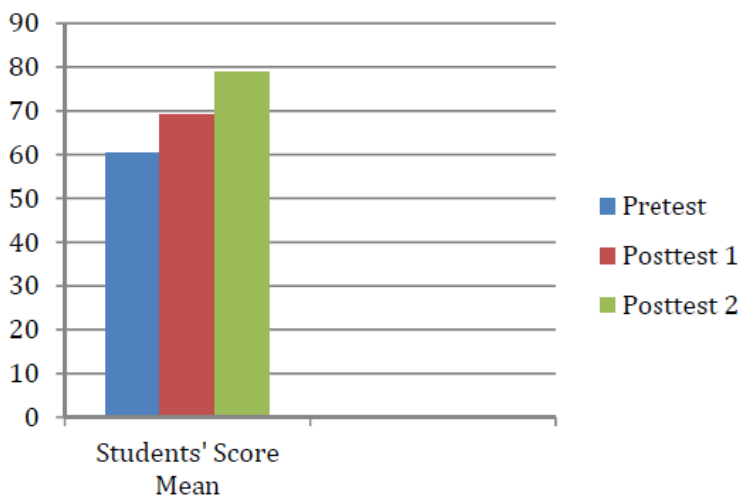


Figure 1. Students' mean score improvement

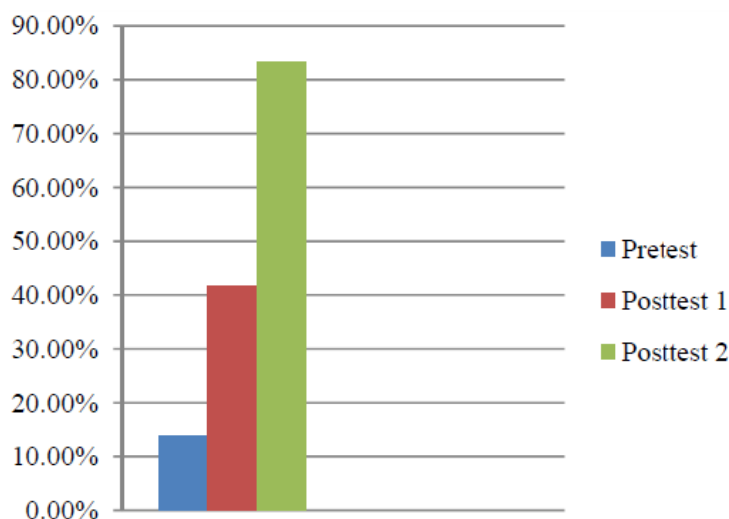


Figure 2. Students' score class percentage per test

### 3.4 The Result of Post Interview

The researcher carried out the post interview towards the English teacher on Tuesday, 2nd January 2016. This interview was conducted after finishing the second cycle. The aim was to know the teacher's view towards teaching-learning activities using communicative games. In this case, the researcher divided the questions into three criteria; the students' condition in English class during Classroom Action Research, the difficulties in implementing communicative games during Classroom Action Research (CAR) and the teacher's opinion towards the effectiveness of communicative games implemented in English speaking activities. According to the teachers' answers within the interview, it was found that the students' condition were better than before in the terms of confidence, participation, enthusiasm and fluency. She said that communicative games can create good circumstances in which students can learn while playing the games. It makes the students feel comfort in their learning and also reduce their boredom and stress. However, she told that this technique needs a good preparation. The more the teacher prepare the more it will lead to success. It also depends on the creativity of teachers in conducting the games; the way they deliver the instruction, the way they control the class and the way they manage the time. At last, she implied that this game must be preserved and continued. In her opinion, communicative games are very beneficial and have a good impact towards English speaking activities in the classroom.

### 4. Discussion

In the preliminary study, the mean score of students on speaking before the research was 60.42. The class percentages which pass the minimum criterion were 13.9%. It means there were only 5 students who could pass the minimum score of 75. The mean score of post test 1 at the first circle was 69.02. The class percentages were 41.7%. It means 15 students who could pass the minimum score. The mean score in the post test 2 at the second circle was 78.77. The class percentages were 83.33%. It means there were 30 who passed the minimum score. The data showed that communicative games used were success.

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study revealed that using communicative game as means of instruction improved the students' achievement and results of speaking skill. Students enjoyed their lesson and got more motivation, interest and confidence through their learning. Therefore, communicative game should be applied as designed activities in teaching speaking skills. It is recommended that the study should be preserved and extended to other language skills.

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