

**Improving Students' Motivation in Speaking by Using
Agony Column Technique**

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IMPROVING STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN SPEAKING BY USING AGONY COLUMN TECHNIQUE

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Abstrak: Siswa kelas XI SMA Koperasi Pontianak kurang termotivasi dalam berpartisipasi belajar Bahasa Inggris, khususnya pada aspek berbicara. Oleh karena itu, penerapan teknik Agony Column untuk meningkatkan motivasi siswa dalam berbicara, dalam hal usaha dan ketekunan siswa. Metode penelitian ini merupakan penelitian tindakan kelas yang diterapkan pada 27 siswa kelas XI SMA Koperasi Pontianak. Pengumpulan datanya melalui pengamatan dan angket. Hasil analisis data pengamatan menunjukkan adanya peningkatan motivasi pada siklus pertama dan kedua. Hasil motivasi siswa pada siklus pertama adalah rendah sekitar 31% dan meningkat menjadi sedang sekitar 52% pada siklus kedua. Hasil analisis angket menunjukkan respon siswa terhadap usaha belajar 67%, ketekunan belajar 68%, dan keikutsertaan menggunakan Agony Column 71%.

Kata kunci: Motivasi, teknik Agony Column, usaha, ketekunan.

Abstract: Most of eleventh grade students SMAKoperasi were less motivated in participating in English learning classroom activity, especially in speaking activity. Therefore, Agony Column technique was applied to improve students' motivation in speaking in terms of students' effort and persistence. This study was conducted by applying classroom action research on the 27 students of the eleventh grade of SMAKoperasiPontianak. The data were collected by using observational data and questionnaire. Based on the data revealed in observation, there were improvements in students' motivation from the first and second cycle. Students' motivation in first cycle score was 31% which was in the low motivation and became 52% in second cycle which was in the moderate motivation. Then, based on the data revealed in questionnaire, it was found that students' responses in effort was 67%, in persistence was 68%, and their participating by Agony Column was 71%.

Keywords: Motivation, Agony Column technique, effort, persistence.

Motivation plays an important role in teaching and learning process. It determines to become a successful student or not. When the students are motivated to learn they will engage in learning and influence their performance. Dörnyei (2001) defines motivation is "the choice of particular actions, the effort expended on it and persistence with it" (p.7). Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece (2008)

also suggested that the choice of task, effort, and persistence as the relevant indexes of motivation that usefully inform the study of students' motivation.

In the reality, based on the preliminary research in SMA Koperasi Pontianak, it was found that the students were less motivated. The students were unwilling to speak English because they did not know how to say in English. Some of the students only said short of words in conversation. And the rest said that the material or the topic was not interesting.

Based on the problems above, the students were less motivated. In order to achieve the goal to make students motivated in speaking the teacher should design an interesting and attractive technique. It is very important to create students' interest and motivation that are essential to the effective English speaking. The technique should be able to stimulate oral production, so that the students can get the opportunities to practice actively in expressing their speaking skill. Therefore, to improve students' motivation in speaking is using Agony Column technique.

One of the ways suggested in solving students' problems in motivating to speak is using Agony Column. Agony Column is an activity that students respond or give opinion of the problem written in the newspapers or magazine. In the magazine or newspaper there is a place for letters or called agony column that contained describing relationship problems or other personal problems from readers (Nation & Newton, 2009).

The purpose of using this technique is to improve students' motivation in speaking skill, where activity is to train students to speak and encourage them to speak fluently. It is focus on students-centered, aims to make students to communicate and the teacher plays a role more as facilitator rather than as a teacher (Widiati&Cahyo, 2006).

Rossiter (2003) asserted that Agony Column is an activity for enhancing L2 learners' cognitive and affective experience, such as discussion of the ideal language learner and cooperative learning activities. Agony Column is a technique to solve a problem, as Jonassen (2003) argued that learning to solve problems is perhaps the most important skill that students can acquire. By using this technique, the students learn how to solve a problem that happens around them. They become better problem solvers. Then, by using Agony Column technique can engage students in the lively discussion because they will solve the problems around their life.

Since Agony Column is a group work, it will reduce the students' anxieties to speak. Then, the teacher will provide materials. The teacher would choose the materials based on the age-appropriate, meet students' personal needs, and language level that will be discussed in the class. By using this technique, it is expected that students will speak out and involve students and teacher in using the language in the class.

Agony Column was popularized by Richard W. Hall in 1971. He used Agony Column in his class for reading, writing, and discussing activity. In addition, the result by using Agony Column was remarkable success (Hall, 1971). The previous research also conducted by Peacock (1997) showed that results indicate that overall class motivation significantly increased when the learners used authentic materials. The subject were 29 American high school students studying

German as a foreign language. One of Peacock's authentic materials is agony column from a local English-language newspaper.

From the information above it is clear that students and teacher have to involve in using the language in the class to make students familiarize in speaking English. Then, by using Agony Column technique is the way to improve students' motivation in speaking English.

The subject of this research is the eleventh grade students of SMA Koperasi, in the Academic Year of 2012/2013. The researcher does a research in the eleventh grade of Science 2. In the curriculum, the students are expected to be able to communicate in transactional and interpersonal conversation accurately and fluently but the students still have low motivation to speak English. That is why researcher chooses SMA Koperasi as a subject of this research.

According to Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece (2008) the indexes to measure motivation is choice of task, effort, and persistence. But, in this study the researcher only used effort and persistence to measure the students' motivation.

Effort is related to the students attempt to improve their skill. When the students have a great deal of effort in class, it means they are motivated to learn. It can be seen from they are not falling asleep to more active engagement in the class. Effort is a behavioral indicators so it is observable. The behavioral indicators of students are adapted from Pintrich (2003) include taking detailed notes, asking good questions in class, being willing to take risks in the class by stating ideas or opinion, discussing the ideas with the classmate, responding the classmates ideas, and sustaining the ideas or opinion. Effort is important part in motivation. When the students expect that they can master the lesson but they do not have effort, it will influence the outcomes.

Persistence is related to the students' commitment to do the task even the students find the obstacles. If the students persist at task even in the face of the difficulty, means that they are motivated to do the task. Persistence is easily observable in general because teachers do have some opportunities to observe the students actually working on the task during class time. The indicators are adapted from Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece (2008) shown when the students engage on task although they find the difficulties or obstacles, accomplish the task on time, and speak confidently when they are wrong in English pronunciation and grammar.

METHOD

In doing this research, the researcher used the appropriate method that was Classroom Action Research, where the researcher paid more attention in teaching and learning process. Burns (2010) said, "The central idea of classroom action research is to intervene in a deliberate way in the problematic situation in order to bring about changes and, even better, improvements in practice" (p. 2). Thus, the researcher used an activity that expected can solve students' problems in the classroom and improved their skill.

In addition, Kemmis and Mc Taggart (as cited in Burns, 2010) stated that there are three defining characteristics of classroom action research; it is carried out by practitioners (for their own purposes, classroom teachers), it is collaborative, and it is aimed at changing things. Classroom action research is a

research where the researcher as collaborator and teacher work as team in conducting the preliminary study, planning action, implementing the action, analyzing the data and making reflection. The teacher is exploring his own teaching contexts to make a better improvement in teaching learning process. In short, teacher reflects his own teaching, knows the problems faced by students, and decides what action that should be taken in order to make a better improvement. Kemmis and Mc Taggart stated that classroom action research involves four broad phase in a cycle of research. The phases are planning, action, observation, and reflection.

The procedures of the classroom action research would be explained as follows:

a. Planning

In the planning, the researcher identified the issues that happen in the eleventh grade of SMA Koperasi and developed a plan of action in order to bring about improvements. Then, the researcher also prepared the lesson plan, the teaching and learning material by using Agony Column technique, observation sheet, field note and questionnaire.

b. Action

In this stage, the teacher implemented the planning by using Agony Column to motivate students' speaking. First, the teacher brainstormed the students by giving them the pictures related to give advice, and then the teacher explained the expression of giving advice. Then, teacher divided students into some groups. The teacher gave agony columns to the students. The students solved the problem and wrote their solution in the response column. After they discussed, the teacher asked the students to perform about the result of their discussion in solving the problem.

c. Observation

In the observation, the researcher observed the students' motivation to speak English by Agony Column. This is the important stage where the researcher is observing the whole teaching learning process and assembling the data through observation sheet and field note.

d. Reflecting

In this stage, both researcher and teacher reflected of what had happened in the planning to observation stage. This stage determined the success of the technique being used; whether it worked well or there were still weaknesses toward the process. Based on the observation sheet, field notes, and questionnaire the researcher would get the important feedback. The feedback is very important in re-planning in the next cycle. It can change the action or add some more actions in order to improve students' motivation in speaking. The researcher and teacher observed the outcome of the treatment. After getting the result of the observation sheet, the teacher and the researcher determined whether there was another cycle to improve the result and the process or not. Therefore, there are four aspects in reflecting: analyzing the result of observation data, getting the meaning from analyzing data, explaining the result of the data, and then concluding the result whether students' motivation in speaking will improve or not.

The subject of the research was the eleventh grade students of SMA Koperasi in academic year 2012/2013. The total of participants were 27 students, consists of 18 female students and 9 male students. This was purposive sampling in order to be able to cover the issues to be explored.

Tools of data collecting in this research were observation sheet, field note, and questionnaire. The observation sheet was divided based on the indexes of motivation used to gauge motivation. The indexes were students' effort and persistence. In observation sheet, the researcher would observe directly, and gave the score in each description item. The score range was 0, 1, 3, and 5. The score 0 if the students never do the activity. The score 1 if the students have not been working very hard and spending less time focusing on the task, score 3 if students have been working well and spending less some of focusing on the task, and score 5 if the students have been working very hard and spending the time only focusing on the task. For the less structured observations, the researcher may rely on field notes for detailed descriptions of the students' behavior which is not considered and expected in the observation checklist table. The questionnaire would be analyzed by using Likert Scale rule which has five choices: strongly disagree, disagree, have no opinion, agree, and strongly agree.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This research was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of four phases of Classroom Action Research: planning, acting, observation, and reflecting phase. Based on the result of the research, there were 3 data: observation sheet, field note, and questionnaire. In observation sheet, the researcher used two indexes: effort and persistence to observe students' motivation in speaking by using Agony Column technique. Based on the observation sheet analysis, the average score of the students' motivation in speaking in first cycle was 31%. It was observed that 23 students (85%) had low motivation, 4 students (14%) had moderate motivation, and none of student had high motivation. And then, the average score of the students' motivation in speaking in second cycle was 52% which was qualified as moderate motivation. It was observed that 2 students (7,5%) had low motivation, 23 students (85%) had moderate motivation, and 2 students had high motivation (7,5%). The improvement of students' individual motivation from first cycle to second cycle can be seen in the chart 1.

In the field note, the researcher described the students' behavior which was not considered and expected in the observation sheet. In the first cycle, it was found that the students just gave short answers like yes/no and used Bahasa Indonesia to respond teacher's questions, they students paid attention to the teacher's explanation but they seemed passive, they were afraid of making mistakes in speaking English, they were busy with their own business and a bit passive in their own group. Then, in the second cycle, their responses were not only short answer anymore, but longer answer than previous cycle. But, still there were a few students who used Bahasa Indonesia. The students were more active

than the first cycle; from the pre-activity to the post-activity. There were a few students who were busy with their own business. Sometimes they still used Bahasa, but many times they used English, although they were wrong. So, there was improvement from first cycle to second cycle.

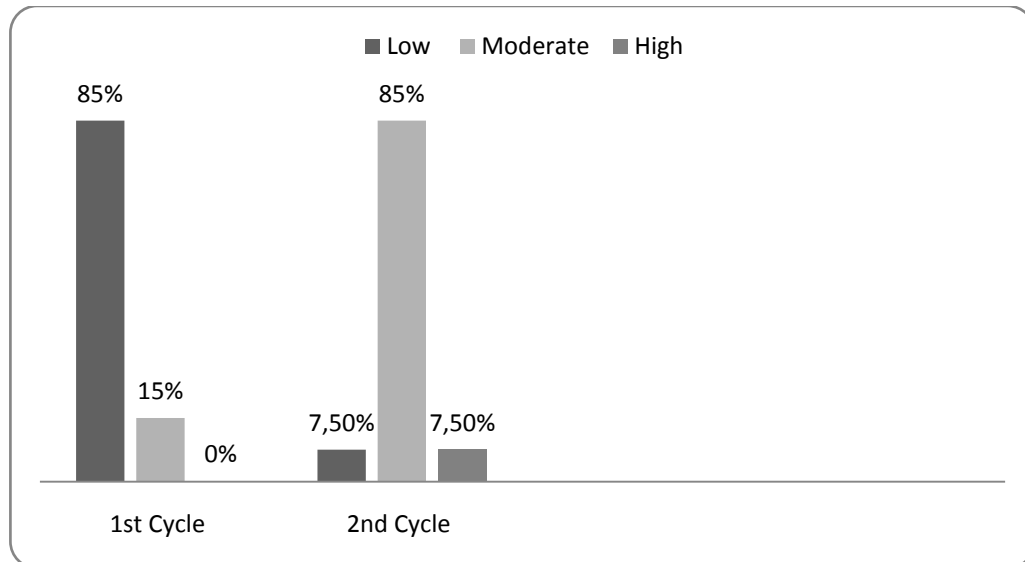


Chart 1 Students' Classification in Motivation

The questionnaires, which was designed by the researcher was administered at the end of the class. The questionnaires were distributed to the 27 students in the Science class of SMA Koperasi. It aimed to strengthen the observational data and to increase the validity of the research.

The accumulated data from the questionnaire is focused on evaluating students' effort, persistence, and participating by using agony column. In effort consists of four points; starting ideas and opinion, asking the question, responding the members' opinion, and sustaining the arguments. In persistence consists of three points: being confidence, being on time, and having commitment. In participating by using agony column consists of three points: foster critical thinking, reduce anxiety, contextual material. Here are the percentages of students' response of the question related to their motivation in speaking by using agony column on the table 1.

Table 1 Description of the result of questionnaire

Indexes Motivation	Number of Students	Percentage	Motivation
Effort	27	67%	Moderate
Persistence	27	68%	Moderate
Participating by using agony column technique	27	71%	High

Discussion

Motivation plays an important role as a key factor in determining the students to be a successful learner or no Motivation, gives desire to the students so they have awareness that language learning is their responsible. Lack of motivation makes the students cannot achieve the language learning. This research focused on improving students' motivation in speaking English that indicated by their effort and persistence.

Based on the preliminary research, the students' problems were not active, less spirited, easy to give up, and they did not try hard when the task was difficult. Thus, the researcher used Agony Column technique to improve students' motivation in speaking English. Agony column is about solving the problems. By using Agony Column they are asked to solve the problem which is familiar around their life. The materials should be contextual and based on the age-appropriate, meet students' personal needs, and language level that will be discussed in the class. Satriani, et al., (2012) said that "Contextual teaching and learning motivates the learners to take charge of their own learning and to relate between knowledge and its application to the various contexts of their lives." The contextual materials can motivate the students and develop their interest and curiosity. Since Agony Column is working in small group discussion, it will reduce students anxiety (Young, 1991). Group discussion The students will encourage to speak more and without any shyness by using this technique. The contextual material, small group discussion, and problem-solving activity are the advantages of agony column that expected motivating students to speak.

Based on the observational data in the first cycle, it was found that some students still reluctant to make effort and persistence in speaking English. Some of the students did not pay attention to the material and they were little bit confused in running the discussion. It made the teacher and researcher needed more hard effort to give and explain to the students in order to make them understand the lesson. It was taking a long time to explain the materials to them. Then, the other problems, some students were unable to make direct sentences and express their ideas. It found that in a group had no any variety answer. When a dominant student in every group expressed his/her ideas, the other member just followed it. They did not try to express the new idea. And then, some students did not persist in involving the discussion, when they got difficulties they were easy to give up. When they did not know how to say it in English, they used Bahasa. Meanwhile, there were only few students who involved in the discussion, made effort in speaking and persisted when they were difficult. Based on the observational data, students' percentage in the first cycle was 31% which was categorized as low motivation.

However, in the second cycle, the teacher had already prepared the solutions from the possibilities, as in the first cycle. The researcher and teacher prepared the lesson plan, teaching media, and teaching materials. There were some changes that were done in order to improve the weaknesses in teaching learning process of the first cycle. To avoid time consuming, the researcher prepared the teaching media before the class begun. The materials for the discussion were different from the previous cycle to make them more interesting in discussing. Then, the teacher

and researcher prepared the video in the pre-activity to trigger them to speak. The students were getting better than previous cycle. They involved in discussion, although it was hard for them to make direct sentence, but they were not easy to give up. Most of the students were brave to express their ideas. But, there were still few students who were shy to express the ideas. Based on the observational data students percentage in the first cycle was 52%, which was categorized as moderate motivation. Their motivation improved, although it was not significant. It might also be influenced by the external factor of students' problems, in which their low score when entranced this school, and financial problem so some of them have part-time job.

The students' improvement in the second cycle also is strengthened by the result of the questionnaire. Based on the data it showed that by using agony column they have improved their motivation in speaking that indicted by effort and persistence. The data showed 67% for students' effort, 68% for students' persistence, and 71% for students' participating by Agony Column. Based on the data showed the students were motivated to the material, made effort and persistence to speak English.

Then, this research also proves the previous research that Agony Column can improve students' motivation in speaking. The previous research Peacock (1997) stated that results indicate that overall class motivation significantly increased when the learners used authentic materials. One of Peacock's authentic materials is agony column from a local English-language newspaper.

The researcher concluded that this technique improved students speaking skill. Due to the limitation of the time and the schedule of midterm examination which would be run in the class, the researcher stopped the research in the second cycle. The students' improvement was not too high. However they followed the learning process well. They were motivated to speak English by involving the discussion although they still faced the difficulties and made mistakes.

In conclusion, the researcher had answered the research problems by describing teaching and learning process by using Agony Column and the result of observational data and questionnaire. In the teaching and learning process there happened improvement from the students' motivation of their effort and persistence. Meanwhile, it was also strengthened by the result of the questionnaire, that by using Agony Column technique they improved their motivation in speaking. In other words, Agony Column improve students' motivation in speaking on giving advice to the students' of Science.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

Agony column was able to improve students' motivation in speaking. Based on observation sheet, it can be seen from the students' improvement in first cycle and second cycle. In the first cycle the students' motivation score was 31% which was in the low motivation. Then, in the second cycle, the students' motivation score was 52% which was in the moderate motivation.

The students were motivated to participate in the discussion. It was indicated by the students who made effort in speaking activity. They involved in the discussion by giving the idea, then the other responding, asked question when they did not understand, they were brave delivered their result of discussion and sustained their argument when the others students did not agree. The students' effort in the first cycle was low, 27, 5%. Then, it improved to 45% as moderate in the second cycle. This data also supported from the data of questionnaire. The percentage of the students' effort was 67%.

Then, the students who were persistent to keep the motivation until they reach their goals were the indication of the motivation also. They engaged on the tasks although they found the difficulties in making direct sentence before speaking, accomplished the task on time, and spoke confidently when they were wrong in speaking English. Based on observation it improved from 34, 2% to 58%. This data also supported from the data of questionnaire. The percentage of the students' persistence was 68%.

Suggestions

Based on the research findings, the researcher would like to propose some suggestions to improve the teaching and learning activity especially in students' motivation in speaking. The suggestions of this would be defined as follows: (1) It is necessary for the teacher to make a better preparation for each meeting, so it can avoid time consuming in each meeting and teaching learning process can run well. (2) It is necessary for the teacher to make some modification of Agony Column which is appropriate to the students' skill. Not only used in speaking skill but also in integrated skill. (3) It is necessary to teach contextual material to the students. The topic should be chosen appropriately based on students' level and ability. So the students have the prior knowledge about it. It is much easier to provoke them to engage on the discussion. (4) This research focused on students' effort and persistence as indicator of motivation. It would be better if there is further research that will develop these findings to correlate the students' effort and persistence and their achievement.

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