Simulation Strategy and Oral Skill:
A Classroom Action Research at SMPN 1 Citeureup

Rosinta Uli Nuarsih
ocin140@gmail.com
SMPN 1 Citeureup

Abstract

This article reports how simulation strategy applied to improve student's speaking skill. The participants were 36 students of State Junior High School 1Citeureup, Kranggan, West Java. For about two months they were taught speaking using simulationstrategy. The instruments used were speaking test and observation. The data were analyzed using the descriptive analysis technique. It was found that there were improved teaching and learning atmosphere and increased students' oral performance. The students' speaking ability improvement is evidenced by the mean score of students' pretest performance, 44.00, becoming 51.33 (or 17% got improved) in the first cycle and 84.33 (or 92% got improved) in the second cycle. It also revealed that the total percentage improvement of the students' speaking skill was 92%.

Keywords: *simulation strategy, testifying, improvement, oral skill, speaking skill*

Introduction

Language is the starting and ending point of science (Aaronson, 1977; Hutabarat and Dakhi (2018). Language importance as the only effective means of communication is used for shaping and communicating research findings. There will never be a lecture, teaching, learning, or other types of academic activities without language. However, meaningful language (Harel & Rumpe, 2004) has to be met for which effective interaction can be experienced by language users.

Furthermore, the meaningful language can be achieved through language learning. One reason for this is that language is learnable (Dakhi, 2016) as it has a system (Plotkin, 2006) and structure. In the Indonesian context, English has been treated as a compulsory subject (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2012). Six other subjects are Religion Education, Pancasila and Civics Education, Indonesian, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences. For three grades of the senior high school program, i.e. seventh, eighth, and ninth, it is obliged to teach English for four credits every semester where each credit consists of forty minutes.

Two general groups of English learning competence, namely oracy and literacy. The oral skill contains two sub-skills. Those are speaking and listening skill. Moreover, Bachman (1990) as believed by Garbati and Mady (2015) proposed two main components of oral communicative competence: organizational and pragmatic. According to him, organizational competence includes grammatical (e.g., vocabulary, morphology, syntax) and textual competence (e.g., discourse genres). Unlikely, pragmatic competence is composed of illocutionary competence (e.g., requests, promises, offers), and sociolinguistic competence (e.g., sensitivity to language register, dialect).

In the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL), speaking has always been considered as the most essential skill to master. There are many reasons for this view. First, speaking ability is regarded the main measure of knowing a language. Fluency in speaking which reveals one's ability to converse with others, is accepted much more than the ability to read, write, or comprehend oral language as the indicator of language mastery. To emphasize how one's speaking skill is used to judge his language competence, Mc Donough and Shaw (2002:126) stated "in many contexts, speaking is often the skill upon which a person is judged at face value". Second, a greater number of language teaching researches and conferences has been long been focused on approaches and methods for teaching speaking. Third, a huge number of conversation and other speaking course books, audios and videos are continuously published in prints and online as well. The strengthening position of English as a language for international communication has even dramatically increased the need for speaking mastery in English.

Although a great number of studies aimed to find and use the best instructional methods, materials, activities, media, and other requirements that will help the learners master speaking skill has been conducted, many EFL learners still find speaking skills very difficult to master. Such failure could be easily identified in the fact that many students who have been learning English for years but become at a loss when they want to communicate their ideas and feelings in a conversation. Zhang (2009) argued that speaking remains the most difficult skill to master for the majority of English learners, and they are still incompetent in communicating orally in English. Ur (1996) identified four major factors causing difficulty in speaking: (1) Inhibition, as shown in students' worry about making mistakes, being fearful of criticism, or simply feeling shy; (2) the students have nothing to say; (3) low or uneven participation; and (4) mother-tongue use, a common phenomenon in learners having the same mother tongue who tend to use it because it is easier and because they feel less exposed if they are speaking their mother tongue.

Problems in mastering English speaking are also encountered by students at SMPN 1 Citeureup. A preliminary finding obtained from an interview with the some seventh graders and the class English teacher revealed that 85% of students could not speak English well because they lacked confidence and vocabulary.

Current studies revealed there are many activities teachers can use to build up and improve the students' speaking skill. One of them is a simulation (Harmer, 2005, p.348). According to Shannon (1975), the simulation is a process designing a model of a real system and experimenting it for understanding a system behavior and evaluating various strategies for the operation of the system. Such definition suggests two main crucial concepts in the simulation: what to do and what it impacts. What to do in the simulation covers design and experiment. Implying it to the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, an English teacher has to be able to plan a model, can be an act of being a fluent English speaker, and apply it during the teaching and learning process. Secondly, what it impacts refers to the objective of simulation. It indicates that purposes of the simulation are to capture the EFL learners' behavior and to evaluate various learning strategies applied when the simulation is being conducted.

Simulations take a number of forms. They may include elements of a game, a role-play, or an activity that acts as a metaphor. Simulations main element is that they have context. Students must make decisions within its context. Success is usually determined by the industry

and commitment of the participants. The goal is not to win but to acquire knowledge and understanding.

Some current studies revealed that simulation strategy is advantageous and effective to develop students' speaking skills. Ladousse (1987) reported that the advantages of usingsimulation strategy, so-called role play, are functions, structures and vocabulary can be introduced that lead to new experience for the students, phatic forms of language can be enhance, give support to many shy students, fun and enjoyable way to learn English, increases fluency, as well as promotes interaction and motivation. Harmer (2005) cited that the simulation and role-play can be used to encourage general oral fluency or to train students for specific situations. Fitri, Azhar, and Nababan(2013) found that simulation gave the best way to improve students' speaking ability in SMK Darel Hikmah, Pekanbaru. A similar positive finding was also reported by Ayudhya (2015) in teaching English with online learning package.

Responding to the poor speaking skills of the seventh graders at SMPN 1 Citeureup and the effectiveness of simulation strategy, the present researcher was interestedto conduct astudy to to seek the answer for "How is the students' speaking skill improvement taught by applying simulation strategy?" It was expected that the problem encountered could be solved so that conducive language teaching atmosphere could get improved.

Methodology

The study is a classroom action research because it was designed to systematically improve learning goal and atmosphere (Goodnough, 2012). Pardede (2013) accentuated that a classroom action research is a research method conducted by teachers as the main practitioners in the field of education to understand and solve problems related to learning in their class or school. This study was conducted at SMPN 1 Citeureup. The participants were 36 seventh graders consisting of 24females and 12 males. The data were collected through oral/speaking test and observation.The oral test was employed to record quantitative data of the students' speaking development. On the other hand, the observation was to obtain qualitative data of simulation effectiveness in building up a conducive teaching atmosphere.In analyzing the data, a descriptive technique was conducted.

In general, collected data were tabulated, described, discussed as well as interpreted for drawing a conclusion. The students' speaking development was grouped into Very Good (≥ 85), Good (70-84), Fair (55-69), Poor (40-54), and Very Poor (≤ 39), while observation result was descriptively analyzed, interpreted and reported.

Findings and Discussion

Four cyclic procedures of the study,namely planning, action, observation, and reflection were conducted. The planning phase was to design a lesson plan, teaching material, teaching media, test, and observation. Formulating teacher-collaborator's duties was also included in this procedure. Applying what has been planned was a core activity of the action phase. More technically, the researcher taught the students based on the teaching procedure planned with the designed material and media. At the end of the teaching, the speaking test was entirely administered using a video recorder. Moreover, the teaching and learning process was recorded by teacher-collaborator for further reflection of the action.Three observed objectswere teaching atmosphere, teacher's performance, and students' activities. Lastly, the reflection phase, collaboratively conducted with Engish teacher, was to evaluate the teaching process. It was associated with answering 'how' rather than answering 'about' or 'what' (Leitch & Day, 2000) the teaching and learning were as well as teacher and students did. Two main sources of the reflected teaching were speaking test result and observation. The result of the four cyclic procedures of the study is obviously presented as follows.

Table 1:
Students' PretestPerformance

No	Range of Score	Frequency	Percentage	Category
1	≥ 85	0	0%	Very Good
2	70-84	0	0%	Good
3	55-69	4	13%	Fair
4	40-54	24	80%	Poor
5	≤ 39	2	7%	Very Poor
Total		30	100%	

As shown in Table 1, no student is in *very good* and *good* category; 13%of them is in *fair* category; 80%of them is in *poor* category, and 7%of the subjectsis in the *very poor* category. This means 87% of the participants failed the intended speaking skill performance. More surprisingly, it revealed that the mean score of the students was 44.00. Comparing it to the

finding of Fitri, Azhar, and Nababan(2013) figures out a difference. They reported that only 67% of the subjects failed, and 34% was successful. It indicates that their participants were better than my subjects. Of course, we cannot exactly provide a reason why it happened as student's prior knowledge and linguistic competence vary (Nissila, 2006).

Table 2:
Students'Posttest Performance in the Cycle I

No	Range of Score	Frequency	Percentage	Category
1	≥ 85	0	0%	Very Good
2	70-84	0	0%	Good
3	55-69	10	33.33%	Fair
4	40-54	20	66.67%	Poor
5	≤ 39	0	0	Very Poor
Total		30	100%	

Table 2 shows that no student is in *good* category; 33.33%of the students is in *fair* category;20 students are in *poor* category and no studentis in *the very poor* category. Frankly speaking, there was students' speaking improvement.The mean score was 51.33, or 11.33 (17%) higher than the previous test result. Since there was no student achieved a *very good* and *good* category, the finding is identical to the pretest result.

Answering such failure, an observation was analyzed for reflecting teaching and learning atmosphere, teacher's performance, and student's activities. According to the recorded observation, some students were still reluctant to convey their ideas. The students' reluctance to speak is characterized as low learning attitude, one of the reasons for the student's English learning failure (Raja & Selvi, 2011).

Such reluctance is a dangerous obstacle impeding the language learner's confidence to speak. Overcoming the problem, reviewing previous studies on the factors influencing reluctance and adopting them in the improved lesson plan of the cycle II have been employed. According to Hafsah (2017) motivation, inhibition, grammar, and vocabulary are the causes of EFL learners' reluctance. These causes, therefore, can be grouped into psychological and linguistic factors. The motivation and inhibition belong to the psychological factor, while the grammar and vocabulary refer to the linguistic one.Moreover, anxiety, fear of being despised, teacher's strategy, and culture are the reasons argued bySavasci (2014).

Regardless of the dynamics of teaching phases, it is suggested to apply them consistently in line with principles of learning theory we apply. Though there is no exactly the same process of learning, as we know teaching is contextual, substantially violating a certain teaching strategy will have no impact on the targeted learning goal.The violence of teaching procedure by English teacher had no significant impact on the students' oral skill. According to the recorded observation by teacher-collaborator, the teacher paid less attention to the procedure of teaching planned.Referring to Raja and Selvi's (2011) work, this is to say that the problem encountered resulted from teacher's competence. In this regard, teacher's misapplication of the simulation strategy procedure and lesson plan refers to her teaching performance.As a feedback, the teacher noticed the missing step and improved it in the second cycle consistently.

Table 4 shows that there is a significant students' improvement. Twenty-five participants (or 83.33%) finished the test very well. Their score ranges are ≥ 85. It was also found that 5 students (or 16.67%) are in *good* category, and no examinee's score is less than 55. The mean score obtained was 84.33, or 33.00 (64%) higher than the students' posttest performance of the cycle I. Referring to the students'pretest performance score, it shows that the result is 40.33 higher. This means the improvement is 92%.

Table 4:
The Range of Score of Students in Posttest Cycle II

No	Range of Score	Frequency	Percentage	Category
1	≥ 85	25	83.33%	Very Good
2	70-84	5	16.67%	Good
3	55-69	0	0%	Fair
4	40-54	0	0%	Poor
5	≤ 39	0	0%	Very Poor
Total		30	100%	

The improved students' speaking ability was totally supported by a positive teaching and learning atmosphere (Barr, 2016), teacher's performance, and students' activities.It was observed that there were exiting learning, team-work (Hsiung, 2013; Sutherland, Wehby, & Gunter, 2000), and self-confidence. The students were excited to learn, help their peers, pay attention to the teacher's explanation.

The significant improvement of the students' oral skill isunquestionable since Lyu (2006) reported that simulations can offer efficient and effective learning in the classrooms while [by] providing naturalistic environments, which [to] maximize the opportunities of creating real communication in EFL classrooms. The naturalistic environment according to topics the students performed made it possible for them to learn by doing. They did not explore theoretical concepts on how to speak English and on how to be a TV reporter, the topics of teaching material learned. They studied them naturally by doing through simulations.

Another reason for making such improvement experienced by the participants is Hyland's view (1993). It has been argued three main reasons making simulation important to be applied in English language teaching. Firstly, it motivates the language learners. As the English teachers could stimulate the learners to speak English, it assured them to independently express their ideas. The students were given an opportunity to participate in an active learning (Coffman, 2006). Secondly, it encourages interaction. Role-playing as a part of the simulation strategy totally makes the students experience the real world of the knowledge being learned (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2010; Rizk, 2011). Finally, it facilitates a purposeful communication (Guntermann, 1979). An intended and planned topic naturally engages language speakers' thought to deliver what in their own mind. Aprovided topic will make us easier to invite our prior knowledge of the world, schemata, to a frame of ideas we are talking about. In this sense, students' ideas helped them talk fluently and confidently.

The effectiveness of simulation has been also reported by Ayudhya (2015). It was concluded that the mean of communicative speaking testing score in the posttest of total 80 subjects was significantly higher than in the pretest. Though there were different participants of the study, the findings go in a linear direction confirming Ayudhya's (2015) argument that the simulation is appropriate for both high and low learners' English proficiency.

Conclusion and Suggestions

To sum up, the simulation strategy is an appropriate procedure English teachers can apply solving the students' speaking skill problem. Despite the teaching failure in the first cycle of the study as English teacher misapplied the teaching phase and students were reluctant to speak English, the improved teaching and learning atmosphere and the significantly increased students' oral skill testified the effectiveness of simulation strategy.The conducive teaching and learning atmosphere was characterized by exiting learning, team-work, and self-confidence. On

the contrary, the students' speaking ability improvement is evidenced by the mean score of students' pretest performance, 44.00, becoming 51.33 (or 17% got improved) in the first cycle and 84.33 (or 92% got improved) in the second cycle. Such finding, of course, is not surprising as related theories and previous research findings have confirmed the power of simulation in nursing education and EFL learning.

Some suggestions are listed in the following that can be considered by English teacher and further researchers on the intended study field.

1) Interpreting simulation in a broader sense and integrating it with the use of teaching media, like picture (Dakhi, 2017), will make it more interesting and challenging for the further researchers.

2) Since the improved teaching and learning atmosphere and the increased students' oral skill testify the use of the simulation strategy, it is suggested to English teachers to apply such strategy for bringing the students into a realistic knowledge of what being learned.

3) Classroom action research refers to a reflective study on the teaching obstacles encountered in the class. Therefore, it is suggested to conduct an action study for which an interpretation of the true teacher educating by maximizing the potentials of the learners is nurtured in an educator's personality.

References

Aaronson, S. (1977). Style in scientific writing. *Essays of an Information Scientist, III*, 4-13.Andrén, U. (2012).*Self-awareness and self-knowledge in professions: Something we are or skill we learn.* Göteborg: ActaUniversitatisHothoburgenesis.

Al-Mekhlafi, A. M. & Nagaratnam, R. P. (2011). Difficulties in teaching and learning grammar in an EFL context. *International Journal of Instruction, Volume 4 (2).* Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED522689.pdf

Ayudhya, P. S. N. (2015). Effectiveness of simulation in developing English communicative speaking skill in learners with different English proficiency. *Journal of Simulation/Gaming for Learning and Development, Volume 1 (1), pp. 22-33.*

Barr, J. J. (2016). Developing a positive classroom climate. *Idea paper.* https://www.ideaedu.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/IDEA%20Papers/IDEA%20Papers/PaperIDEA_61.pdf

Bachman, L. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Coffman, T. (2006). Using simulations to enhance teaching and learning: Encouraging the creative process. *The VSTE journal, Volume 21 (2).* Retrieved from https://www.vste.org/documents/vj_2006_02.pdf

Dakhi, S.(2016). Foreign Language Acquisition of Souvenir Seller in Bawomataluo Village. *RETORIKA: JurnalIlmu Bahasa, Volume 2 (1)* pp. 16-32. doi: 10.22225/jr.2.1.243.16-32

Fitri, N., Azhar, F., & Nababan, M. (2013*).Using simulation method to improve the speaking ability of the second year students of SMK DarelHikmahPekanbaru (*Undergraduate Thesis, The University of Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia)http://repository.unri.ac.id/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/3258/SIMULATION%20JOURNAL%20%28NUR%20FITRIANI%29.pdf?sequence=1.

Garbati, J. F. & Mady, C. J. (2015). Oral skill development in second languages: A review in search of best practices. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, Volume 5(9), pp. 1763-1770.* DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0509.01

Goodnough(2012). *Class action research.* http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09650790300200203.

Guntermann, G. (1979). Purposeful communication practice: developing functional proficiency in a foreign language. *Foreign language annals.* https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1979.tb00174.x

Harel, D. & Rumpe. B. (2004). Meaningful modeling: What's the semantics of "Semantics"?. *The IEEE Computer Society.* Retrieved from http://www.wisdom.weizmann.ac.il/~harel/papers/ModSemantics.pdf

Harmer. J. (2005). *The practice of English language teaching*(4th ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Hutabarat, H. & Dakhi, S. (2018). *Language effectiveness of undergraduate thesis.* (Research Report). Jakarta: Universitas Kristen Indonesia.

Hsiung, C. (2013). The effectiveness of cooperative learning. *The research journal for engineering education.* https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2168-9830.2012.tb00044.x

Hyland, K. (2009). *Language learning simulations*: A practical guide. *: English Teaching Forum*, 31(4): Retrieved from http//:www.English Teaching Forum Online – Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.html

Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan. (2012). *Dokumen kurikulum 2013.* http://yogyakarta.kemenag.go.id/file/file/dikmad/ldue1388737894.pdf

Kolb, D. A. Boyatzis, R. E. & Mainemelis, C. (2010). *Experimental learning theory: Previous research and new directions.* Retrieved from https://www.d.umn.edu/~kgilbert/educ5165-731/Readings/experiential-learning-theory.pdf

Ladousse G.P. (1987). Role Play. Oxford University Press. Oxford.

Leitch, R. & Day, C. (2000). Action research and reflective practice: Towards a holistic view. *Educational action research, volume 8 (1).* https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790000200108

Lyu, Y. (2006). *Simulation and second/foreign language learning: Improving communication skills through simulations(* Master' thesis, The University of Toledo, Ohio, US). tdr.utoledo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2385&context=thesesdissertations

Maritha, E. & Dakhi, S. (2017). The effectiveness of picture: An empirical evidence in vocabulary mastery. *Journal of English Teaching, Volume 3 (3), pp. 163-176.* http://ejournal.uki.ac.id/index.php/jet/article/view/757/614

Mc Dounough & Shaw. (2002). *Material and method in ELT*. London: Oxford University Press

Nissila, S. (2006). *Dynamic dialogue in learning and teaching.* University of Tempare. https://tampub.uta.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/67639/951-44-6738-8.pdf?sequence=1

Pardede, P. (2013). Meningkatkan Kualitas Pembelajaran Melalui Penelitian Tindakan Kelas. Jurnal Dinamika Pendidikan, 6 (3). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260164144_Meningkatkan_Kualitas_Pembelajaran_Melalui_Penelitian_Tindakan_Kelas

Plotkin, V. (2006). *The language system of English.* Boca Raton: BrownWalker Press.

Raja, B. W. D. & Selvi, K. (2011). Causes of problems in learning English as a second language as perceived by higher secondary students. *Journal of English Language Teaching, Volume 1 (4).* https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1071073.pdf

Rizk, L. (2011). Learning by doing: Toward an experimental approach to professional development. *World library and information congress.* Retrieved from https://www.ifla.org/past-wlic/2011/183-rizk-en.pdf

Savasci, M. (2014). Why are some students reluctant to use L2 in EFL speaking classes? An action research at tertiary level. *Pocedia-social behavioral Sciences,* 116, pp. 2682-2686. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.635

Shannon, R. E. (1975). *Systems simulation-The arts and science.* Prentice-Hall.

Sutherland, K. S., Wehby, J. H., & Gunter, P. L. (2000). The effectiveness of cooperative learning with students with emotional and behavioral disorders: A literature review. *Sage journals.* https://doi.org/10.1177/01987 4290002500309

Ur, P. (1996). *A course in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zhang, S. (2009). The role of input, interaction, and output in the development of oral fluency. *English Language Teaching, Volume 2 (4), pp. 91–100.*