

## Conference Paper

# Improving Students' Speaking Ability through Play Scripts

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## Abstract

The research is concerned about the written play script to improve students' speaking ability in Junior High School. Written play script or Drama as one of the literary works is included in the curriculum of teaching Learning in Junior high School. Drama is pedagogy that reaches students of multiple intelligences and different learning styles. It is a multi-sensory mode of learning that engages mind, body, senses, and emotions to create personal connections to the real world and helps to improve comprehension and retention, Prochazka (2009). This research was a Classroom Action research, Burns (2010) in which the data were taken systematically on everyday practice in order to have decisions about what the future practice should be. The research consisted of two cycles, with four meetings in each cycle. The research elaborated planning, action, observation and reflection in each cycle. The qualitative methods were used in this research. The result of the research showed that there were some improvements of the students' speaking ability through written play script. They become more confident and enthusiastic in speaking English.

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## 1. Introduction

Speaking skill is an important aspect to be mastered by the students in learning English as a foreign language. Kayi (2006: 1) states that speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols. Speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching. Despite its importance, for many years, teaching speaking has been undervalued and English language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues because, only in that way, students can express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriate in each communicative circumstance.

The students should have the ability to speak English in order that they can communicate with the others. As an effect to build their ability to speak, teaching the

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speaking skill can be focused on making the students active to speak up when they are involving a speaking activity in the classroom. Therefore, speaking learning in the classroom should be dominated by students.

To overcome this obstacle, there have been many techniques applied and developed; play script activity can be one of the solutions. Play Scripts technique is used in this research because it is necessary to give an interesting technique to increase students' skill in speaking. Here, Play Script is similar to Drama. It is one of the teaching speaking techniques in which the students have to act out the short-written sketches or scenes in group of two, three or four. They have to create their scripts based on the topic given, memorize it and at last they have to act their scripts out in front of the class. This technique is suitable with the characteristics of successful speaking activity. The characteristics are: the learners talk a lot, as much as possible, participation is even, motivation is high, learners are eager to speak because they are interested in the topic and have something new to say about it, and language is of an acceptable level learner express themselves in utterances that are relevant, easily comprehensible to each other, and of an acceptable level of language accuracy. Play script also requires social interaction and negotiation of meaning among heterogeneous group members in which they have to help each other.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Speaking

Speaking skill is an important aspect to be mastered by the students in learning English as a foreign language. Speaking is as a complex skill that involves the knowledge of sounds, structures, vocabularies and culture subsystems of language. It is also a means of communication. Kayi (2006: 1) states that speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts. It involves using the organ of speech to express meanings to the other people.

Thornbury (2005) promotes four speaking genres; those are interactive, non-interactive, planned and unplanned speaking. The example of interactive speaking is when people buy a food at a shop, whereas when people leave a message on an answer machine can be categorized as non-interactive speaking because there is no interaction two people or more. The examples of planned speaking genres are such as a lecture, sermon, and speech. Mean while, the unplanned speaking is when people meet and do a conversation with somebody in the street.

## 2.2. Teaching speaking

Speaking as the communicative competence for the students is must be emphasized by the teacher. The various pedagogical principles of a teaching speaking to language teaching can be expressed in more or less detail. Brown (2001: 275-276) discussed the principles of teaching speaking that can be summarized as follows:

1. Use technique that cover the spectrum of learners needs, from language-based focus on accuracy to message based focus on interaction, meaning and fluency.
2. Provide intrinsically motivating techniques.
3. Encourage the use of authentic language in meaningful contexts.
4. Provide appropriate feedback and correction.
5. Capitalize on the natural link between speaking and listening.
6. Give students opportunities to initiate oral communication.
7. Encourage the development of speaking strategies.

Those principles are very important for the teachers. Teachers must make the speaking activity based on those principles. Those principles will be the guidelines for the teacher to make a good activity.

## 2.3. Teachers' role in speaking

Harmer (2001: 275) states that teachers need to play a number of different roles during the speaking activities. There are three particular relevancies if we are trying to get students to speak fluently, those are:

## 2.4. Prompter

As a teacher should be able to help students who get lost, cannot think what to say next, or maybe lose the fluency I expect of them and can help them by offering discrete suggestions. If this can be done supportively, without disrupting the discussion or forcing the students out of role, it will stop the sense of frustration that some students feel when they come to a dead end of language or ideas.

## 2.5. Participant

Teacher should be good animators when asking students to produce language. Sometimes this can be achieved by setting up an activity clearly and with enthusiasm.

## 2.6. Feedback provider

The teacher's feedback on the students' speaking depends on the teacher's tact and situation. The teacher can give feedback on the content of the activity and the language used directly after the students complete an activity or later at the end of a meeting.

## 2.7. Play script

Scripts provide a rich source of comprehensible input in language that is natural and spoken". In many case, play script always mention Drama. It aims at bringing real life into the classroom. It becomes a powerful teaching and learning tool with profound positive effects on the students' cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. The benefits of regular use of interactive drama techniques can merge into all school subjects and everyday life. Drama is pedagogy that reaches students of multiple intelligences and different learning styles. It is a multi-sensory mode of learning that engages mind, body, senses, and emotions to create personal connections to the real world and helps to improve comprehension and retention. Anton Prochazka (2009: 7)

Drama is the literary form designed for the theater, where actors take the roles of the characters, performs the indicated action, and utter the writer dialogue (M.H. Abrams 1971: 43). Drama is combine thought, language and felling in range of energetic and creative ways, although there are recognizable practices in drama which students might acquire, reaching new understandings implies a creative and personal involvement with the work.

## 3. Research Method

The researcher uses Classroom Action Research design. This study is a phenomenological one because it is designed to describe and interpret the researcher's own experience and problem in her daily teaching practice which focuses on a group of students in a certain class. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) in Burns (2010: 8), "action research has four major steps. There are planning, action, observation and reflection".

In this scheme, the researcher was helped by the teachers to find a problem, formulated a possible solution, implemented the action, and reflected on the outcome of the action.

The researcher tried to find and implement the actual actions in order to improving student's speaking ability through written Play Scripts in the Ninth grade Students of SMP Muhammadiyah 7 Medan. The researcher finds the problems and weaknesses of students' learning of speaking, identifying the collected problems, planning and carrying the actions, and then conducted the evaluation and reflection of the implementations of action.

#### 4. Discussion

This chapter reveals the finding and practice which refer to the efforts to improve students' learning of speaking by using drama.

#### 5. Reconnaissance

The research began with finding problems in the field. Interviews with the English teacher and students were conducted to gain information about the problems of teaching and learning speaking. Beside the interviews, the researcher observed the class to get the descriptions of the speaking teaching and learning process. Based on the classroom observations, the researcher found there were some problems in the students' learning of speaking. It was related to the students' attitude during the lesson. They were shy and afraid to speak in English.

They were doing something unrelated to the lesson and very passive to speak during the learning process. The other problem was the students' speaking competence, especially their pronunciation. After finding the field problems, the researcher and the English teacher discussed further to select the problems based on the feasibility of the problems to be solved collaboratively. From the discussion, the researcher and collaborators agreed to solve the most urgent problems. Those problems were formulated as follows:

1. The students had low motivation in learning speaking
2. The students had low self-confidence in speaking practice
3. There was insufficient students' interaction during learning speaking
4. The students could not pronounce the English words appropriately

The next step was analyzing the problems. Based on the analysis, the problems were caused by several factors, such as the teacher, the students, and the learning technique from data.

Based on those problems, the researcher and the English teacher formulated some actions to overcome the problems. Having discussed and considered the limitation of time, energy, and fund, the researcher agreed to apply some actions.

The actions were giving feedback on students' pronunciation, implementing drama activities, asking the students to perform a dialogue in group, and asking the students to performance the script. The relationship between field problems, main causes

These activities were chosen because of its structure of learning which was appropriate to be implemented on speaking. The drama activity was used to create fun and enjoyable atmosphere during the learning speaking in the classroom. The teacher and the researcher also used various resources and media for supporting the drama activities such as video-recording and reading texts taken from the internet.

## 6. Report of Cycle 1

### 6.1. Planning

The implementation of drama technique was planned and conducted by the teacher and the researcher. In the teaching and learning process, the teacher acted as the observer and the researcher acted as the teacher. It is expected that the research could maximize both the researcher's and the teacher's performance during the action to overcome the feasible problems. In this cycle, there were five actions applied in the teaching speaking process.

### 6.2. Action

The actions were as follows:

1. teaching pronunciation
2. implementing drama technique
3. asking the students to learn a drama script in group
4. asking the students to perform the dialogue in group
5. giving feedback on students' pronunciation

Before the actions, lesson plans were prepared by using three phase methods (Presentation, Practice, and Production). The implementations of the actions were used as the formulations to overcome the feasible problems.

### **6.3. First meeting**

#### **6.3.1. Teaching pronunciation**

The focus of the drama techniques has been generally on accuracy of sounds and stress at a word level. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that both the ability to produce isolated sounds or recognition of the supra-segmental features and fluency contribute to effective communication. The interactive aspect of pronunciation as well as other aspects of English can be emphasized by the use of drama techniques. In classes where these techniques are employed, they help to reduce the stress that accompanies oral production in a foreign language. They are fun, entertaining and relaxing. Moreover, they also increase learner confidence, because they help learners to speak clearer, louder and in a variety of tones.

#### **6.3.2. Implementing drama technique**

The implementation of the drama technique in this cycle was conducted in 3 meetings. In the first meeting, the teacher distributed drama script which had been divided into 4 groups. Students were asked to practice the script in group and played a drama in front of the class. In the second and third meeting, the teacher used drama script with same topics. In implementing the drama technique during the teaching and learning process, the teacher instructed the students to discuss and learned their script.

### **6.4. Second meeting**

#### **6.4.1. Asking the students to learn the script**

In this cycle, the students were asked to have a practice in every group to learn the script. They discussed, shared, and contributed knowledge each other in group.

#### **6.4.2. Asking the students to perform a play in groups**

In this cycle, the students were asked to perform the drama script in groups. This activity increased the students' opportunity to talk with their partner. It was aiming

at improving students' speaking skills. By asking the students to perform their play, they were hoped not to be shy and reluctant when speaking. Moreover, it was aimed at giving them understanding that performing a text was different from reading a written text aloud. It also improves students' interaction when they performed a play.

### 6.4.3. Giving feedback on students' pronunciation

Giving pronunciation feedback in every meeting at the end of the performance was aimed to make the students knew how to pronounce the English words well and make them to be more confident in speaking practice. Pronunciation feedback was given after the students finished their performance. The students should not be interrupted although they made pronunciation mistakes during their performances. It could make them lose their concentration and their self confidence to continue their performances.

## 6.5. Reflections

### 6.5.1. Teaching pronunciation

Teaching pronunciation has been done before researcher applied that drama for treatment in English speaking learning. The teacher taught the students how to read those words in a word's transcript.

### 6.5.2. Implementing drama technique

The actions were conducted in two meetings. After greeting and checking the students' attendance, the teacher gave the warm-up to the students about narrative text as the lead in. Then, the teacher played a short-film of spoken narrative text model and showed the written text through LCD projector. After that, based on the students' number, the teacher divided the class into four drama groups. Every group consisted of five students. And receive scripts which had been divided into 4 groups. Every member of the groups was instructed to learn the character in groups and the researcher and collaborator helped them to correct pronunciation using dictionary. The teacher gave 30 minutes for them to learn the text. In this group, they were instructed to discuss their time on how they would perform the time they had. The students were serious in their practice. Some students opened their dictionary. The class became a little bit noisy. Almost all students involved in this learning activity actively.



In this drama group, the students performed their play. It can be seen that some students were nervous and unconfident in performing their play, but the teacher motivated them.

### **6.5.3. Asking the students to learn the script**

Students had practiced the script in the first meeting. Drama technique itself cannot be separated from practice activity. In the drama group, they discussed each play they had and later performed it into a performance in front of the class. Almost all the students were involved in this activity.

In the second meeting, students were also instructed to have practice in group. In this practice, they had to discuss the player, the expression, and the pronunciation. Then, their group had to perform the story. They paid attention to other's performance. During this activity, interaction between the students and students occurred.

### **6.5.4. Asking the students to perform a dialogue in groups**

In the second meeting, the teacher asked the students to perform their scripts which had been discussed in the groups before. The students performed their play in front of the class. Each group had 10 minutes to perform it. The teacher graded the students' performances by using speaking assessment rubric such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation.

### **6.5.5. Giving feedback on students' pronunciation**

The teacher gave feedback on students' pronunciation mistakes at the end of each group performance. The teacher noted the student's mistakes and told the mistakes to the students. Thus, other students did not make the same mistake. The students also got peer-correction on their pronunciation. Since the performance was conducted in small groups, the students helped each other in correcting the pronunciation if their friend made mistakes. Having implemented the actions in the first cycle, the researcher and the English teacher have a discussion to make a reflection.

Giving pronunciation feedback after students' performance gives positive effect. They became understand to pronounce English words appropriately. Moreover, it is easier for the students to understand the material. By using drama technique, they feel that drama increase their enthusiasm to study hard.

## 7. Conclusions

This research was conducted to help students in learning speaking by maximizing the group work. The implementation of the play script or drama technique in the first and second cycle ran effectively. The students will enjoy to learning in groups. They will have helped each other in solving problems during the learning process. Thus, their involvement and interaction during the learning process were improved. Besides, the use of cooperative learning in drama activity also created more speaking opportunity for the students so that they could improve their pronunciation and self-confidence to speak in English. This technique also created enjoyable atmosphere which could decrease students' boredom in learning. As a result, the process of learning speaking in the classroom became more effective.

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