

INTEGRATING TARL STRATEGY THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA TO ENHANCE STUDENT'S SPEAKING ABILITY AT SMPN 8 SEMARANG

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Abstract

Speaking is one of the skills that need to be mastered by students when learning English. Speaking is a significant tool for communication. Enhancing students' speaking skills is a constant concern in the classroom. In this rapidly evolving 21st century, various innovative technologies have been introduced to teach speaking skills in the classroom. In this research, various digital media have been used to support the learning process. This Classroom Action Research (CAR) is implemented to develop students' speaking abilities at SMPN 8 Semarang. The aim of this study was to know how far the implementation of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) strategy through digital media can enhance the students' speaking ability at SMPN 8 Semarang in the academic year 2023-2024. In implementing this strategy, two cycles were applied following the procedures for action research: planning, action, observing, and reflecting. In collecting the data, the researcher used four kinds of instruments: classroom observation, document analysis, a pre-test, and a post-test. Therefore, the researcher used the students' test results to measure the improvement in their speaking achievement at the end of the process.

Keywords – Speaking, Digital Media, Teaching at The Right Level (TaRL)

Introduction

In order to communicate successfully, English as a Second Language (ESL) students must strengthen their speaking abilities. In communication, speaking is crucial (Agravat & Raval, 2015). Communication without speech will only be programmed. Since speaking is the primary form of human communication, experts claim that being able to communicate verbally or orally is equivalent to knowing the target language. (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016).

According to a study by Spawa & Hassan (2013), Malaysian students believe that speaking skill is the most important skill to learn. Moreover, in this technology era, the English language is a crucial medium of communication (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016). On the other hand, the focus on mastering and rote learning skills and applying them in examinations eventually eroded communicative competence among the students (Fauzi & Shah, 2017).

Compared to teaching speaking in ESL and English as a native language contexts, teaching speaking in an EFL context is more difficult. This is due to the fact that in an EFL setting, students only learn English as a subject and do not communicate using it, giving them little opportunity to practice the language. If our goal is to help pupils improve their speaking abilities, this task will be difficult.

The teaching and learning of speaking skills is one of the major challenges faced by language learners and teachers, particularly in second language classes. A large portion of an English session used to be spent lecturing by the teacher, while the students would frequently passively absorb linguistic knowledge from the teacher or from the textbook, making it impossible to adequately train and enhance their speaking abilities. Education has changed in an unforeseen way as a result of the widespread use of technological instruments. The technology has had a rapid development with a tremendous effect on kids' speaking ability (Vega Iza, J. I., 2022). Henceforth, the

students believe that speaking would be more fun through digital media (Fauzi and Shah, 2017). The technology will help to enhance their speaking skills, and internet resources to push them to speak.

Manty et al. (2017) investigated the use of Voki among undergraduates. By the end of the research, they were more confident to speak in English, showed positive perceptions with regards to the use of Voki in language learning and agreed that Voki application has helped them to improve their speaking skills. Aikina, T. Y., & Zubkova, O. M. (2015) stated that that implementing the online application Voki in English language teaching and learning meets the mentioned educational objectives.

It is a general knowledge that children in today's schools have a range of academic achievement levels. One student in the same class or learning group frequently has a different degree of knowledge and understanding than the rest. Thus, the instructor must make accommodations for this variety of learning skills in order to deliver effective instruction and achieve the best learning outcomes. This strategy adheres to the TaRL (Teaching at the Right Level) principle. Colle (2019) conducted research on improving students' writing skills by integrating Problem-based Learning (PBL) with the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in class 7. And the study revealed that the writing skills in class 7C improves.

Nowdays, in order to know the students well in the future, a teacher can use diagnostic assessment to address the different academic achievement levels. This assessment provides meaningful data about the student's levels of readiness and accomplishment. A formal or informal diagnostic assessment may utilize tests, observations, interviews, or self-evaluations. This exam can provide teachers with information to help them construct learning modules, choose materials, incorporate media, and arrange assessments in the classroom.

To address those issues, a learning model used to improve the students' speaking skills is Genre Based Approach (GBA). GBA is one educational strategy that assists students

in developing the reasoning and communication skills necessary for successful creativity. It is a learning model in which complex real-world problems facilitate student learning of concepts and principles rather than a direct presentation of facts and concepts (Sidauruk et al., 2020). Thus, the researchers conducted a Collaborative Classroom Action Research entitled Integrating the Teaching at The Right Level (TaRL) using digital media to enhance the speaking ability of SMPN 8 Semarang. While, the objectives in this study including; to examine how far the implementation of TaRL strategy using digital media to enhance the students' speaking ability in the academic year 2023-2024.

Methodology

This research applied collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR) design that focused on improving students' speaking skills by integrating Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach through digital media in Class 8 of SMPN 8 Semarang. The learning model used in this study was the combination of Genre Based Approach (GBA). In conducting this study, the researcher's collaborator was Mr. Budi Hartanto, an SMPN 8 Semarang English teacher from the beginning to the end of the research.

The learning stages of GBA were used in this study that consisted of 4 stages: (1) building knowledge of the field, (2) modeling of the text, (3) joint construction of the text, (4) independent construction of the text. Then, four speaking aspects were measured in students' speaking individually: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. The instruments used in this study were pre & post speaking tests, observation sheets, and e-questionnaire.

A speaking test evaluated the students' speaking skills regarding *Asking and Responding to Expression of Ability*. Meanwhile, observation sheets were used to observe the students' activity during the teaching-learning process. Then, an e-questionnaire was used to find out the students' responses to the learning process in the classroom. In this study, the researchers

used statistical techniques to measure the improvement of students' speaking skills by integrating the Genre Based Approach (GBA) with the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach. There were some stages involved in this technique, and they were: First, the researchers measured the students' writing skills by using a writing scoring rubric. Second, the researchers used the students' criteria to determine the category of students' score as follow:

Tabel 1. Speaking Score Category

Grammar	Pronunciation	Fluency	Intonation	Score
Students use grammar correctly.	Students can pronounce the words very well.	Students can speak very clear and confident.	Students can speak with a good intonation.	5
Students use grammar with one mistake.	Students can pronounce the words with one mistake.	Students can speak good confidence but not very clear.	Students can speak with a mistake in the intonation.	4
Students use grammar with more than one mistake.	Students can pronounce the words more than one mistake.	Students can speak with less confident.	Students can speak with more than one mistake.	3

Result: Total score/12x100

Third, the researchers were tempted to find the class percentage of students' speaking category after gaining the data.

Score Range	Category
0-60	Need Guidance
61-70	Enough
71-80	Good
81-100	Very good

Explanation:

P = percentage

F = frequency

N = number of groups

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

Through this formula, the researchers could identify the success of integrating Genre Based Approach (GBA) with the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in students' speaking skills.

This collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR) was conducted based on Lewin's Action Research Cycle model that

consisted of planning, implementing, observing, analyzing, and reflecting.

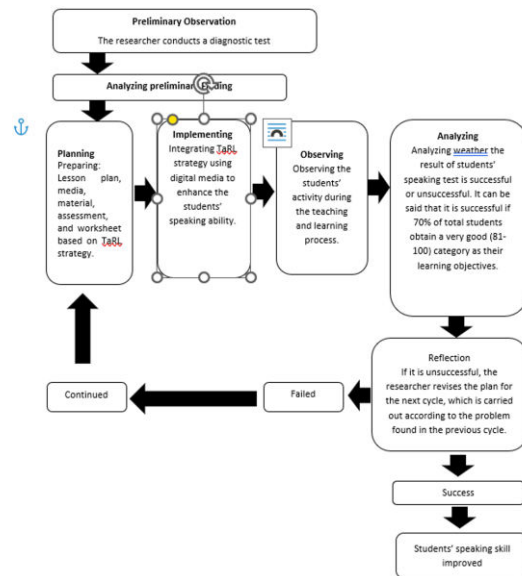


Figure 1. Lewin's Action Research Cycle, From Action Research in Retrospect and Prospect, p. 29, by Stephen Kemmis, 1990

1). Planning: An intervention to solve the learning problem is planned. Preparing lesson plan, media, and teaching materials and tools for data collection are prepared based on TaRL strategy. 2). Implementing: Integrating TaRL strategy using digital media to enhance the students' speaking. 3). Observing: Observing the students' activity during the teaching and learning process. 4). Analyzing: Analyzing whether the result of students' speaking is successful or unsuccessful. 5). Reflecting: If it is unsuccessful, the researcher revises the plan for the next cycle, which is carried out according to the problem in the previous cycle.

Findings and Discussions

Following are the results of pre-test and a discussion of the research:

Data Finding of Pre-Test

As set before, the student's speaking skills in 8. G improve if 70% of the total students 8. G obtained a very good category (81-100) as their learning objectives achievement criteria in their speaking assessment. So, in order to ascertain how many percentages fell into the

very good category, the researcher determined the class percentage. Additionally, the table below shows the data distribution and the percentage of students who scored in the speaking category on the pretest:

Table 2. Data Distribution of Student's Speaking Scores in Pre-Test Session

No	Score	Category	Number of students
1	81	Very good	9
2	75	Good	13
3	70	Enough	6
4	60	Need Guidance	5
Total			33

Table 3. Percentage of Student's Speaking Score Category in Pre-Test Session

Category	Percentage
Very good	27,3%
Good	39,3%
Enough	18,2%
Need Guidance	15,15%
Total Percentage	100%

Based on the data in Table 2. shows that, in Pre-test, there are 13 students who can achieve a good category. And there are nine student out of 33 could obtain a very good category (81-100) in the speaking test. The percentage is 27,3%, which indicates the students' speaking skills in 8. G cannot achieve the class percentage of the speaking score category, namely the very good category (81- 100), yet is 70%. Thus, it needed to be improved on cycle one. By analyzing the finding above and connecting with the result of observation, the researchers could see two problems that improved the speaking skills not maximal, and could not reach the criterion of success in pre-test. The first relates to the implementation of integrating Genre Based Approach (GBA) with the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in the classroom, and the second is to the result of the speaking test. While integrating the Genre Based Approach (GBA) model with the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach, the researcher noticed that MANL, NAN, and RAL from low group

could not participate actively in the group. While the result of the speaking test showed that students of low and medium group could not pronounce correctly.

Dealing with those problems, the researchers planned to take revised action to solve the problems of pre-test in cycle one. The revised action was to maximize the students' participation in a group activity by monitoring them frequently. In addition, massive reinforcement was also essential to make the students more confident to ask questions or give opinions during learning. Then, the researcher also emphasized using regular verbs in the speaking process. The digital media that the researcher used was voice recording.

Data Finding of Cycle One

Data distribution and percentage of students speaking score category in cycle one can be seen in the table below:

Table 4. Data Distribution of Student's Speaking Scores in Cycle One

No	Score	Category	Number of students
1	81-90	Very good	24
2	80	Good	6
3	70	Enough	3
4	-	Need Guidance	-
Total			33

Table 5. Percentage of Student's Speaking Score Category in Cycle One

Category	Percentage
Very good	75%
Good	15,6%
Enough	9,34%
Need Guidance	-
Total Percentage	100%

Table 4. shows that 24 students out of 33 could obtain a very good category (81-100) in their speaking test. Thus, the % of students' category in cycle one is 75%. It indicated that the student's speaking skills in 8. G achieves % class percentage of the speaking score category, namely 70%. By analyzing the

result of the speaking test, the students improved their speaking skills. Most students were enthusiastic about learning; they could participate actively and work cohesively in the group. Furthermore, the students could ask questions and give opinions bravely. Further, the students also could make a conversation related on asking and responding to ability in doing something well.

As mentioned above, class 8. G class in cycle one could achieve a very good category (81-100) in their speaking test, namely 75%. It was indicated that the students in class 8. G obtained the class percentage of the speaking score category, namely 70%. Thus, the researchers ended this study in cycle one because it was enough to prove that integrating Genre Based Approach (GBA) with the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in the classroom could improve speaking skills. The students' speaking test showed an improvement in the students' speaking skills from pre-test to cycle one after being treated through the integrating Genre Based Approach (GBA) with the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in the classroom. It could be proven by looking at the % of students' speaking score category.

In pre-test, there are nine students out of 33 could obtain a very good category (81-100) in the speaking test, where the class percentage was 27,3%, which increased to 47% in cycle one, where 24 students obtained a very good category (81-100). Thus, the % of students' speaking score category in cycle one was 75%. Several factors cause the improvement of students' speaking skills in this study. First, GBA has learning stages that can influence the speaking skills, which are in the third and fourth phases, namely modelling of the text, joint construction of the text, and independent construction of the text. The GBA learning stages are efficient for fostering students' oral communication, and the development of pupils is evident in their social function, text structure, and linguistic features (Nahid, 2018). Additionally, speaking fluency is undoubtedly improved by using voice recordings using a technical tool, particularly in the way that people express themselves in English, giving them more flexibility,

fluency, and confidence when speaking. (Vega Iza, 2022).

Based on the findings and discussion above, the implementation of integrating Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) strategy using digital media to enhance speaking ability in class 8. G of SMPN 8 Semarang is successful in one cycle.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the elaboration above, integrating Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) using digital media to improves the speaking skills in class 8. G of SMPN 8 Semarang is successful in one cycle. The % of student's speaking skills in the very good category (81-100) in cycle one is 27,4%, then it increases in cycle two is 75%. It indicates that the speaking skills in 8. G achieves a % class percentage of students' speaking score category, namely 70%. Since this study has limitations regarding sample size where the sample is just one class, thus it is recommended that further study covers larger samples. It is also recommended to investigate the GBA in improving other language skills such as listening, speaking, and reading to establish more conclusive findings on its roles. In addition, it is also recommended if the researcher will use the technology tool, not only through voice recording to enhance their speaking skill.

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