

“THE MISSION” STRATEGY APPLICATION TO ELEVATE STUDENTS’ SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The English Department students of Muhammadiyah University of Parepare faced some difficulties in performing speaking. For instance, the students feel anxious and worried about making mistakes, and they lack language and communicative knowledge. Therefore, to help students overcome their problems and enhance their communicative competence, this research was conducted to determine whether applying “The Mission” strategy could elevate English Education Department students’ speaking performance. The researcher in this study conducted a pre-experimental method. The population was the first semester of English Department Students. The researcher used the total sampling method in deciding the research sample. The instruments used in collecting the data were informal interview tests, also known as “Question and Answer”. The result of the data found was analysed by using SPSS Application. The results of the research showed that the students’ speaking performance after giving treatment was significantly improved. It was proved by the data of the students’ mean score post-test was higher than in pre-test (77,00 > 37,77). It indicates that the elaboration of Task-based Instruction with “The Mission” strategy can empower students’ in performing speaking.

Keywords: *Speaking Performance; English Learners; The Mission Strategy*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the countries which remains reflecting English as a foreign language. Therefore English is rarely used as *Lingua Franca* there (Rini, 2014). Nonetheless, it is taught in Indonesia as a subject matter in every level of education, including in universities (Agustin, 2015). Some universities even have English as a department in their faculty, such as English Language Education Department or English Literature Department (Syarifuddin, 2014). The students of the English Department are required to master four skills of English, especially speaking skills. However, mastering speaking for most EFL learners is not that easy (Ariyanti, 2016). That’s not only about being knowledgeable for its pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical rules. There are two other things that learners need to comprehend that involved within oral communication ability, i.e., language function contended with speaking performance and the norm of sociocultural of English itself (Burkart, 1998).

Likewise, the other usual difficulties of EFL learners is the less exposure of communication context that learners engaged with, as a result, it caused poor

achievement in teaching and learning activities, even the ones who have learn English for years sometimes face difficulties of speaking that they are not able to communicate fluently, accurately and properly because of the fact that the EFL learners have lack of English function knowledge and how to use it in appropriate context (language exposure) (Al-Seghayer, 2014). In addition, Aouatef (2015) claimed English oral communication difficulties that might be faced by EFL learners caused by 2 factors those are cognitive and psychological. Nevertheless, even a learner with a superb cognitive achievement has other difficulties on speaking, main psychological factors took a big deal here, motivation, self-esteem / self-confidence, anxiety are likely aspect that affecting students speaking performance (Arifin, 2017).

These difficulties apparently are faced as well by English department students at Muhammadiyah University of Parepare. After conducting an initial observation, the researcher found that there are four common difficulties that have been faced by the students, first of all is the students feel anxiety and lack of self-confidence due to too much worries of making mistakes; moreover, students are running out of idea to express their mind due to the lack of language element knowledge; subsequently some students dominate speaking in the classroom over the others; additionally, the students used to speak of their mother-language tongue.

Despite of, due to Covid-19 outbreak, remote learning or online learning substituted physical learning in schools or universities (Javaid, et. al., 2020). This caused another challenge to the teachers and the students themselves where they are demanded to be technology literate more than ever needed as before. (Jamaluddin, Ratnasih, Gunawan, & Paujiah, 2020). Particularly for the English students at Muhammadiyah University of Parepare, they are using some online platforms in order to attend their speaking class such as WhatsApp, UM Parepare E-Learning, Zoom Cloud Videoconference, Google Classroom, Edmodo, Google Meet and so forth. However, the online speaking learning does not seem running as effective as what it is used to conduct in the physical classroom, network connection issue, incompatible devices, lots of tasks instead of performing speaking are the most difficulties faced by the students.

Based on the plenty information above, the researcher designed a remote learning strategy called “The Mission” by which the strategy used both of

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synchronous and asynchronous learning with some applications to support students performing their speaking skill at home. Therefore, the researcher intends to conduct a pre-experimental research by elaborating “The Mission” strategy in order to find out whether or not elaborating “The Mission” strategy is able to empower students’ speaking performance.

RESEARCH METODOLOGY

The researcher conducted the quantitative research methods by implementing pre-experimental research design. Pre-experimental is used because it is appropriate to be implemented for educational setting. Further, in designing the research, the one group pre-test – post-test design is chosen in which according to (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012, p. 266) this design allows the researcher to administer pre-test and post-test for a single group in which the result of the pre-test and post-test score will be compared after accepting new or unusual treatment in the learning process. In this research, this group will be treated by elaborating the Task-based Instruction with “the Mission” strategy, the design is described similarly by Gay et al. (2012, p. 265):

Figure 1. Research Design



(Gay et al,2012)

Where:

O : Pre-test (before giving treatment) and post-test (after giving treatment)

X : Unusual treatment

Furthermore, the population of this study is the first semester of English Department students at Muhammadiyah University of Parepare academic year 2020/2021 which consists 16 students only in an intact class. Therefore, The researcher used *non probability sampling* technique and by virtue of the few numbers of population which is only 16 students, *total sampling* technique was used where all of the population are taken as the research sample (Sugiyono, 2015, p. 124-125).

In collecting data, the researcher arranged an instrument in the form of informal interview also known as “Question and Answer” for pre-test and post-test administered for the students in order to find out the difference between students’ speaking achievement before and after giving the treatment. Due to emergency remote learning regulation, the pre-test and post-test in the form of interview test was held online in two synchronous platforms (Zoom Cloud Videoconference and WhatsApp audio call) in which allowed students to speak directly in order to gain an actual information of students’ real speaking performance. there were 13 students were interviewed via Zoom cloud meeting and three of them must be interviewed via WhatsApp because their internet connection problem.

The treatment, by the way, was given after distributing pre-test by elaborating Task-based Instruction with “The Mission” strategy. The treatment was accomplished in 8 meetings. In conducting treatment, the researcher provided brief lesson plans, google sites to display the Mission instructions, and Daily Journal to report the students’ completion. In applying “The Mission” the researcher gave the students any kind of tasks in three levels, in each level the student should perform speaking using a different mobile of application for each level.

Speaking to the AI (Robin AI Voice Assistant)

The first level of “The Mission” strategy is speaking to the AI application; the students must practice their speaking by using Robin AI Voice Assistant at least three times with the different topics that had been provided for them. The students should take screenshot of their conversation and upload to their Daily Journal 1 as their tasks’ submission. The had one week to complete this level, but they could submit earlier, and as they submit their task, they could continue to next level.

Speaking with the Strangers (Hallo Speaking App)

In this level the students should talk with at least three stranger and bring one different topic for each stranger they met randomly in Hallo Speaking App. The conversation should last 5 minutes minimum and the students should take screenshot of their calling display and note it down in their Daily Journal 2. They had one week to get this level done, once they completed level 2, they could move up to the last level.

Speaking Standard English (IELTS Speaking App)

This is the last level that the students needed to complete, they should perform speaking as simulation of speaking test of IELTS. They should record their answers of three questions displayed from the App. regarding to a topic that was given to them. Their recorded voice was sent to WhatsApp as their submission besides their submission in their Daily Journal 3. They had one week to accomplish the last level, once they submitted their report, their mission in speaking performance considered done.

Furthermore, after all phases of research were well done (pre-test, treatment, post-test), the researcher analysed the data by calculating students' achievement in pre-test and post-test based on Practical Rating Rubric of Speaking Test (P2RST) formulated by Latifa et.al. (2015) which the students' speaking performance in pre-test and post-test were assessed based on five criteria such as grammar competence, pronunciation competence, each criterion value 0-4 point and categorized the final score into five score classification as follow:

Table 1. Score Classification

Range Percentage	Classification	Category
85 – 100	Very Good	A
70 – 84	Good	B
55 – 69	Fair	C
50 – 54	Poor	D
0 – 49	Very Poor	E

(Peraturan Akademik UM Parepare, 2018)

In addition, the researcher measured the descriptive statistic of the data collected, such as mean score, minimum, and maximum score by using SPSS 21.0.

FINDINGS

This research took 8 virtual meetings in total to be completed, started from 20th October to 8th December 2020. But in administrating pre-test, post-test, and implementing the treatment, the researcher devoted 6 meetings. The findings description shown in these following explanations:

Students' Speaking Performance in Pre-test

The researcher measured the students' current speaking performance by implementing "Question and Answer" session as pre-test before treating them. To score their performances, the researcher used Practical Rating Rubric of Speaking Test (P2RST) organised by Latifa et al. (2015), the result can be seen in the Appendix, afterward, the researcher converted the total of 0-4 scales to 5 classification of UM Parepare scoring regulation and calculated the percentage of the students' speaking performance in pre-test as shown in the table below:

Table 2. Percentage of Students' Speaking Performance in Pre-test

Classification	Range of Score	Intact Class	
		F	%
Very Good	85 – 100	0	0
Good	70 – 84	0	0
Fair	55 – 69	2	13
Poor	50 – 54	3	20
Very Poor	0 – 49	10	67
Total		15	100

Table 2 shows the achievement of the students' speaking performance in pre-test. There are 10 out of 15 students have "very poor" ability in performing speaking in the form of brief interview regarding daily conversation topic. Further, a big difference percentage between the students who are classified as "very poor" (67%) and the students who are classified as "poor", there are 3 of them in that classification, followed by 2 students have "fair" ability in the pre-test. These students got the highest scores in first interview test i.e. 60 and 65. However, those scores were not enough to classify them having neither "very good" nor "good" speaking performance at the first place.

Likewise, the researcher also analysed the descriptive statistic of data collected in order to find the central tendency and the variability which is shown in table below:

Table 3. Descriptive Statistic of Students' Speaking Performance in Pre-test

Items	Value
Minimum Score	20
Maximum Score	65
Range	45
Mean Score	39,67
Standard Deviation	13,70

Table 3 provides the descriptive statistic of the students speaking performance in pre-test. It is seen that the lowest score is 20 which is classified “very poor”, the highest score is 65 which is classified “fair”, and even the mean score (39,67) shows that the students have “very poor” speaking ability in average. This table also indicates the various of data by the distance between the score toward the mean score is approximately far based on the standard deviation which is 13,70.

Students' Speaking Performance in Post-test

The result of students speaking performance after employing Task-Based Instruction with “The Mission” strategy is presented in Table 4.3 below. The data was calculated by using Practical Rating Rubric of Speaking Test (P2RST) organised by Latifa et al. (2015), the result can be seen in the Appendix, then it also was converted from the total of 0-4 scales to 5 classification of UM Parepare scoring regulation and calculated the percentage of the students' speaking performance in pre-test as follow:

Table 4. Percentage of Students' Speaking Performance in Post-test

Classification	Range of Score	Intact Class	
		F	%
Very Good	85 – 100	4	27
Good	70 – 84	10	67
Fair	55 – 69	1	6
Poor	50 – 54	0	0
Very Poor	0 – 49	0	0
Total		15	100

As shown in table 4, in post-test the “good” classification dominates students' achievement of their interview test (67%). There are 4 out of 15 have

reached “very good” ability in performing speaking, followed by a student remains “fair”. Nevertheless, the researcher found zero case in determining “poor” and “very poor” classification, which is very satisfying result.

Derived from the data collected above, the researcher also analysed the descriptive statistic of students’ speaking performance in post-test in order to find the central tendency and the variability which is shown in table below:

Table 5. Descriptive Statistic of Students’ Speaking Performance in Post-test

Items	Value
Minimum Score	20
Maximum Score	65
Range	45
Mean Score	39,67
Standard Deviation	13,70

The highest and the lowest scores are shown in table 4.4, where the highest score (85) is in “very good”, and the lowest score is still in “fair” classification. Table 4.4 also shows the mean score of the students’ achievement is categorized “good”. As a result, the standard deviation of the data is 7.02, it means the data spreads is getting smaller.

The researcher also compared the mean score between students’ pre-test and post-test, the result shown in the graphic below:

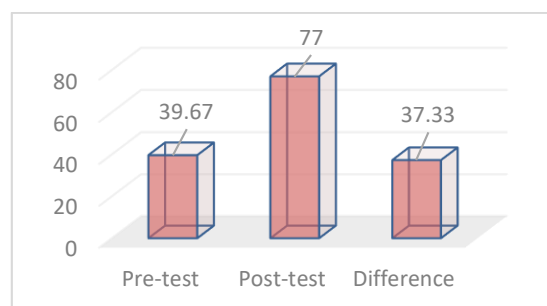


Figure 2. Students’ Mean Score Difference

It is apparent from this figure that the range score between pre-test and post-test is 37,33 in which the post-test score of the students’ speaking performance in the form of interview is higher than their pre-test score. Where in the pre-test their score is classified as “very poor” and in post-test, the mean score is classified “good”. It indicates the elaboration of Task-Based Instruction with “The Mission” strategy empowered their speaking performance.

Additionally, the researcher also provided graphic to show the standard deviation in pre-test and post-test as follow:

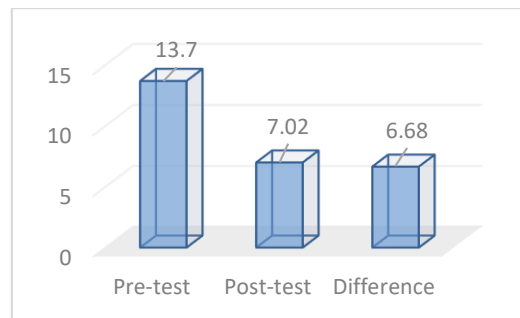


Figure 3. Standard Deviation Difference

This figure illustrates the standard deviation of each test and its' range, it can be seen that the standard deviation of the pre-test is higher than in the post-test. It means that the data spread in pre-test is farther from the mean score rather than in post-test with the difference 6,68. In other word, it can be said that the standard deviation trends is decreasing.

DISCUSSION

Based upon the findings (figure 4.1), it can be stated that students' ability in performing speaking before giving treatment are very poor (UM Parepare, 2018) because their pre-test mean score was only 39,67. The reasonable explanations for this statement as follows:

The students failed to perform their speaking ability based on five criteria proposed by Latifa et al. (2015) that were grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, discourse, and strategic competence. They did a lot of mistakes, such as grammatical error even in very simple utterances, lack of vocabulary so that they used their mother tongue instead, mispronouncing most of lexicon in their utterances, they did not know how to arrange coherent sentences, and if they had nothing to say they would pause in very long time if they run out of idea. Besides, the researcher also found non-linguistic problems related to students speaking performance. These problems were noticed when the researcher conducted initial observation before examining the research and an observation when administering pre-test to the students. The students seemed to feel anxious and worried about

making mistakes, they had lack self-confidence, and being afraid of expressing their idea.

Therefore, the researcher designed speaking learning activities based on teaching principles remarked by Brown (2001, pp. 54–70), some of the principles are to create a meaningful learning, to evoke students' motivation, self-confidence, risk-taking, and their communicative competence. One of the learning approaches that is suitable with these principles is Task-based Instruction. Along with this approach, the researcher specified the learning activities by elaborating Task-based Instruction with “The Mission” strategy with the utilization of ICTs such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of everything, cloud computing etc. to deliver synchronous and asynchronous online learning due to Covid-19 outbreaks.

After treating the students, the researcher administered a post-test to ensure if there any significant difference in students' achievement and condition before and after elaborating Task-based Instruction in their online speaking class. The evidence in table 4.2 presents that the students' achievement in post-test (77) is higher than in the pre-test (39,67). The plausible explanation of this finding is in spite of they still made several mistakes, but their speaking performance based on five criteria explained above (grammar competence, vocabulary competence, pronunciation competence, discourse competence, and strategy competence) are better than before. They were able to reduce their difficulties in performing speaking and improved their language competence. From this viewpoint, it simply can be said that the students' speaking performance is significantly increased after giving treatment.

To strengthen the statement, the researcher approved that the problems faced by the students could be solved with the strategy and gave them some positive opportunity for example: (1) learners talk a lot in English, wherein “The Mission” strategy, the students were not allowed to speak unless in English; (2) Participation is even. Because this task is not done in a group and restricted by time and certain topic, therefore the students have the same chances in expressing their idea orally; (3). Language is at an acceptable level. The topics chosen are common daily conversation topics, even though they are English students at University since they are EFL learners as well, therefore common topic is good starts for them to practice their speaking; and (4) Highly motivated. Because according to the students'

perception of themselves the speaking activities were interesting and meaningful, it triggered them to get engaged in every level of “The Mission” willingly.

Eventually, referring to the discussion above, the researcher believed that the advantages of “The Mission” strategy truly empower students in improving their speaking performance and their self-regulation in learning something new. Even though the disadvantages of “The Mission” remains should be considered since it could cause the obstacles during its implementation, but in the end all of the problems (explained in previous part) were settled, and the students succeeded to deal with it and completed their task (3 levels) on time.

CONCLUSION

This study is set out to determine whether the elaboration of Task-based Instruction with “The Mission” strategy can empower students’ speaking performance. Relying on the findings and discussion presented in Chapter IV, generally this study has found that Elaborating Task-based Instruction with “The Mission” strategy in students’ online speaking class can empower them to increase their speaking performance. The evidence of this statement is the significant improvement of students score achievement in performing speaking where the mean score of students’ post-tests (77) was higher than in pre-test (37,33). it is surely can be concluded that there is significant improvement of the students’ speaking performance after they are taught by elaborating Task-based Instruction with “The Mission” strategy.

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