Improving Speaking Fluency of The 7th Graders Students Through The Communicative Approach In SMPN 1 Tenggarong

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Abstract: The study was about improving speaking fluency of the students by teaching them using communicative approach. The objective of the study was to find out: 1. How the communicative approach improved the students' speaking fluency, 2. How the perception of the students about communicative approach. This research was conducted by using CAR (Classroom Action Research). This research had two cycles. There were nine classes of the seventh graders in SMPN 1 Tenggarong. The writers chose one class as the subject that had a middle level ability of speaking English. After the first cycle, the students were given a test. After the scores out, the treatment was applied by the writers. To see whether it was successful or not, the writers themselves gave the post-test. Then the writers did the same thing like on the first cycle for the next cycle. The writers also gave an interview with an open-ended question to find out the students' perception of communicative approach. The result showed that there was increased in their speaking fluency. In the first cycle, the score was 75,45 and 77,30. In the second cycle, the score was 79,6 and 81,60. Secondly, the perception of the students toward communicative approach showed that the students had a positive relationship with the teacher and the other students and also had a better cooperation in the class. It also showed how the students became more active in the classroom.
Keywords: speaking fluency, communicative approach.

INTRODUCTION

Mishra et al. (2002) stated that "communication is a dynamic interactive process that involves the effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and values". It shows that in communication, there is a not static or a dynamic process that effectively transfer the information that the speaker wants to deliver. Therefore by transferring it to the receiver in that process, then there is a good communication that has been occurred. Speaking can indicate that the person is capable in one particular language. According to Krauss & Chiu (1998) performing a speaking is one of the things that can be considered as the intended action to fulfill the definite aim orally.

It is very clear that if someone wants to speak in order to reach their aim orally, they must learn about the particular language and perform a speaking activity. It is also support the idea that in interacting or bringing off the good communication, speaking is very necessary. Since there will be something that the speaker wants to deliver to the receiver in communication, and it will be delivered orally. Similar to the Indonesian situation, speaking also becomes an indicator of someone's ability in one particular language. Especially when it comes to English as a foreign language. Still, there is a problem in English learning itself. Based on the writers' observation in SMPN 1 Tenggarong, some of the students think that English is hard. It is because they have to learn the skills in English subjects. They are speaking, listening, writing and reading. To communicate with other people, speaking subject is needed. But speaking is actually one of the students' fears in English learning.

The writers found that the students feel difficult to speak in front of the teacher and their classmates in term of speaking performance. Since there are some aspects that the students must do and affect the quality of speaking itself. They are articulation, self-monitoring and repair, automaticity, fluency and managing talk (Thornbury, 2005). If we are talking about communication, fluency is actually important. It is important because the fluency can affect the listener's interpretation of speaker's fluency and ability to communicate ideas (Gorsuch, 2011).Thus speaking fluently can measure the quality of the communication or the speaking itself.

A good quality of speaking requires fluency from someone who wants to reach the goal of speaking. Therefore the students of SMPN 1 Tenggarong should put the fluency as the requirement to have a good quality of speaking. Based on the students' previous test of English speaking, they still have a lower grade than the standard measured. So the writers are interested in improving their capability of speaking in term of fluency.

To improve the students' fluency in English speaking, the writers used the communicative approach in teaching. By using a communicative approach, the students spoke more often. The writers gave a meaningful and real communication on the learning process. By conducting that strategy for several times, the students got usual with the materials that will be given by the writers. If they got usual with the materials, they could be more confident in their ability and their speaking ability could be improved by the strategy. Therefore, it helps the students' fluency in speaking.

The communicative approach is also known as Communicative Language Learning (CLT). Stated from British Council (2007) "The communicative approach is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. When learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn to use the language". From the statement above, it is very clear that the purpose of language teaching is the communicative itself. It refers to the capability of the students in communicating with other people naturally.

As Hymes (1989) said that the language teaching's purpose is to expand the "communicative competence". It is also similar to the goal of communicative language teaching itself. "*Communicative language teaching sets as its goal the teaching of communicative competence"* (Richards, 2006). Also, the purpose of using communicative language teaching is making the students capable of communicating in the target language; English (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). It can be seen that there is a connection between the language teaching's purpose and communicative language teaching's purpose. It is about communicative competence and the ability to communicate in the target language. From here, the writers can conclude that to be able to communicate in the target language, the learners should have knowledge about the communicative competence.

There are two different types of communicative language teaching, there are "functional communication activities" and "social interaction activities". In functional communication activities, there are such tasks as learners comparing set of pictures and events in a set of picture; discovering missing features in a map or picture; one learner communication behind a screen to another learner and giving instruction on how to draw a picture or shape, or how to complete a map; following direction; and solving problems from share clues in functional communication activities. In social interaction activities, there are conversation and discussion sessions, dialogues and role plays, simulations, skits, improvisations, and debates (Littlewood, 1981).

From the types that Littlewood (1981) has stated before, the writers simply believe that CLT can improve the speaking fluency through the exercises and activities that include the communicative activities. Especially in social interaction activities, the writers takes it as a base of the activities in the classroom. Since it is more focus on conversation, dialogues and so on, therefore it is very suitable to use CLT in improving the speaking fluency in SMPN 1 Tenggarong.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, the writers conducted a classroom action research (CAR). According to Mills (2000)"Action Research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach and how well their students learn."Ferrance (2000) stated that action research is focusing on the intention of the teacher in conducting the research that will inform and change the learners' practices later on. Although there are some differences between Mills and Ferrance in explaining CAR, all of them are still connected by the aim of action research itself. It is related to how well the students learn and how the learners become better in exercises. The aim is to reach the better practices for the learners in the learning environment and the presence of the improvement in learning process also the results. Therefore, in this research, the writers used an action research in improving the students' speaking fluency.

There were four steps in conducting the action research. Those four steps were included in one cycle. According to Huang (2012) there were: *Planning, Action, Observation*, and *Reflection*. As illustrated in the figure below:
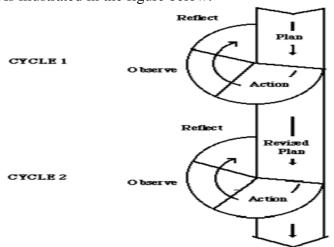

Figure 1: Kemmis and McTaggart model (1988 in Huang, 2012).

Population, Sample, and Setting

The population in this research was the students in the 7th graders of SMPN 1 Tenggarong. The writers decided to choose 33 students as the sample that had a middle level speaking scores. There were three instruments in this research. The main instrument of this research was the writers themselves. The secondary instrument was the speaking test that has been given in a form of pre-test and post-test. It answered the first research question. It was in a form of descriptive text. Then, the last instrument was an interview guide with open-ended questions. The writers conducted the interview to the students whose the highest score until those whose the lowest score. It answered the second research question in a form of descriptive text.

Data Collection Techniques

There were four meetings in two weeks. The first meeting on the first week was for the pre-test one. The second meeting on the first week was for treatment one. At the second week, there was the treatment two on the third meeting and the first post-test was conducted at the last meeting. The writers obtained data of how CLT improved students' speaking skills by comparing the mean of the pre-test and the post-test result. The pre-test had been given in a form of speaking test or oral test which conducted by the teacher (i.e.; the writers). At the same way, the teacher gave the post-test with the same material of the pre-test to see whether the treatment was successful or not in improving students' speaking skill. Afterward, the writers continued to the second cycle with the same steps.

The second was the interview guide. To gather data of students' perception toward communicative approach, the writers interviewed the students. The interview dug information about what they think regarding to the method that the writers used and how it affected them in improving their speaking fluency. The interview applied open-ended questions. It was also conducted after the second cycle.

Data Analysis Techniques

To analyze the data, the procedures below were carried out;

1. The scores from the pre-test and the post-test were presented with a range that the school has, the highest score will be 100 and the lowest score was 75. The writers also presented the mean score of the first cycle and the second cycle.

2. The writers transcribed the interview recording. In analyzing the data, the researcher used the data analysis technique based on Ary, et al (2002) He gives three classifications in the analysis steps, namely: 1. classifying until data coding (organizing). 2. Drawing information from the arranged patterns (summarizing), and 3. Giving meaning to the pattern relations (interpreting).

FINDINGS

Regarding the improved speaking fluency of the 7th grader's students through the communicative approach in SMPN 1 Tenggarong, the following table will illustrate the result of pre-test and post-test, by comparing the mean of each test in the first cycle and the second cycle.
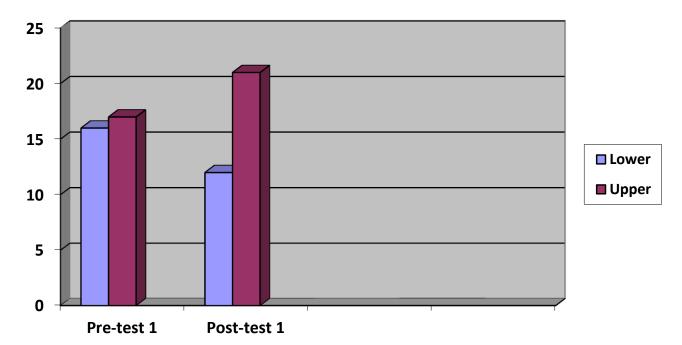

Figure 2: First cycle's chart

It can be seen that from the chart above, the students who got the lower score and the upper score in speaking subject did not have a significant difference. But in the post-test, the numbers of students who got the upper score were improved quite a lot if it is compared to the pre-test result.

In the pre-test of this cycle, the students who got the lower school were 16 in total. The lowest score was 69 and the highest was 74. The rest 17 students got the upper score wit range;75 - 85. Then, in the post-test, there was an improvement. The students who got the lower scores became 12 students with range 71 -74. And the other 21 students obtained an upper score, with range; 76 - 87.

The writers decided to conduct the second cycle since there were still some students with the lower scores. The writers tried to be more open to the students on the second cycle because, on the first cycle, the writers were a little bit closed to the students. It showed that when the writers became more open to the students, the results became different from the first cycle. As it can be seen in the following graph.
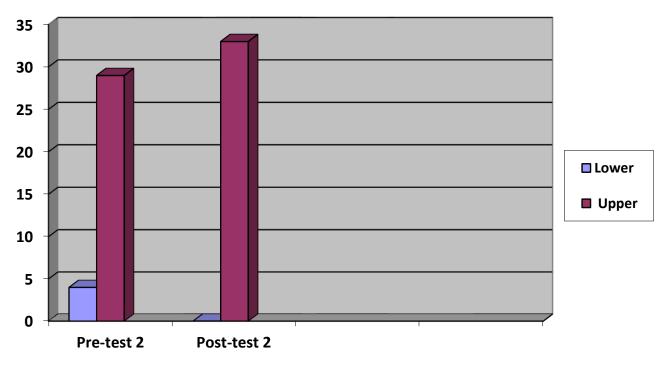

Figure 3: Second cycle's chart

From the chart above, there was a significant improvement if it compared to the results of the first cycle. On the pre-test of the second cycle, there were almost no students who got the lower score. The students who got the lower score were only 4 students. So that, it made the other 29 students got the upper score. Regarding the lower score, there were 2

students got 73, 1 student who got 72 and 1 students got 74. In this pre-test, the range result for the other 29 was 75 to 90.

For the post-test on this cycle, there were no longer the students who got the lower score. They all passed the KKM which meant that they all got the upper score. Their lowest score was 75 and their highest score was 92.

After the writers finished the second cycle. The writers conducted the interview. There were five questions with the open-ended questions type. The writers had an interview with the 4 students of SMPN 1 Tenggarong.

The first interview question was "What do you think about the teacher's English teaching?" Based on that question, I1 and I2 agreed for one thing. They said the class became very fun because they spoke a lot in the class. But for I3 and I4, they felt that speaking was not their favorite. I3 also said that the teacher talked too much in English so he could not understand. I4 also said that it was too tiring to talk in front of the class.

The second interview question was "What do you like about the teacher's teaching?" In accordance to this question, those four students had different answers. I1 said that the teacher was really easygoing. I2 talked about how she liked the teacher's smile and the way the teacher spoke. I3 also shared that he liked it when there was a game in the class. Then I4 thought that the class was fun besides the speaking part.

The next question was "What are the things that you do not like about the teacher's teaching?" For I1, I2 and I3, they did not think that there was something wrong about the teacher's teaching. As for I4, he liked the class but not the speaking.

The fourth question was "Do you think it is a good idea to teach English the way I did? Why?" All of the interviewees were agreed on one thing. They all thought that the teacher's way of teaching was good and they all agreed that it was good to teach using communicative approach (CLT).

The last question was "Give some advice or suggestions in the teacher's English teaching!" I1 thought that the teacher herself is already nice, she said to keep it. I2 even hoped that the teacher would teach them a little bit longer. I3 asked more games and I4 suggested the teacher open the English course.

DISCUSSION

As the writers finished this research with two cycles, the writers also showed how communicative approach (CLT) improved the speaking fluency of the students. It showed from the data that the writers analyzed before. It can be seen that based on the scores from

pre-test and post-test in each cycle, the students reached the high score for their speaking. Even before the treatment, their scores were quite good.

From the mean score of the pre-test and the post-test in each cycle, there were quite significant improvements. Like on the first cycle, the mean score of the pre-test was 75,45 and the mean of the post-test was 77,3. Which were categorized as an upper score. Then on the second cycle, the mean score of the pre-test was 79,6 and the mean of the post-test was 81,6. It showed that almost all of the students got the upper scores. It also proved that the treatment that the teacher applied was successful to improve the speaking fluency of the 7th grader's students in SMPN 1 Tenggarong.

After finished the cycles, the writers started to reveal the data of the interview. This interview section showed how communicative approach improved the speaking fluency based on the students' answers to the questions. Based on the first question, the interview transcript showed that the students felt happy to talk a lot in the classroom. The writers found on Q1: I1: 2: *"I think it is good to miss. You are kind of fun. Then… Well, I like…"* and also Q1: I2: 2: *"I think it is fun. I don't like speaking English before but after you …"*. It was related to what Littlewood (1981) said that "The learners' ultimate objective is to take part in communication with others. Their motivation to learn is more likely to be sustained if they can see how their classroom learning is related to this objective…" By how the students like to speak in the classroom or in front of the class, it means that the students have this objective too. So they got motivated in the learning itself.

Next, from the answers on Q2: I1: 7: *"Hehehe… Also, you are an easygoing person. You joke a lot too. It……..",* Q2: I2: 6: *"smile on your face. The way you speak too, it is good to hear your…",* Q2: I4: 5: *"I like the way you care about us in the class miss. I appreciate it",* which related to the third question, it is found that there was a positive relationship between students and teacher. We can see on Q3: I1: 11: *"Nothing miss. I like all about you hehe…"* and Q3: I2: 10: *"I don't think I have one miss".* From these second question and third question, it can be related to the students' answers with what (Littlewood, 1981) has mentioned about "Communicative activity provides opportunities for positive personal relationships… These relationships can help to 'humanize' the classroom and to create an environment that supports the individual in his efforts to learn."

Because of that positive relationship with the students, the writers did not have the bad sides according to the students themselves. Then for the fourth interview question, it is related to the fifth question too. We can see the student's answer that related to the statement that Littlewood said on Q4: I1: 15: *"it is a good idea. You make us active in the class and it is*

fun". Littlewood (1981) has said that "……unnecessary intervention on the teacher's part may prevent the learners becoming genuinely involved in the activity…… However, this does not mean that…… the teacher should be a passive observer. His function becomes less dominant than before but no less important." It is also related to the fifth question when the students gave the suggestion to the teacher on Q5: I1: 19*: "hmmm… I think that you should be yourself all the time. Keep……",* Q5: I2: 17: "*I think you should become a real teacher and teach us forever*" and Q5: I4: 16: "*You are a good teacher miss. I think you should open the English……*" Because of the writers did not get involved a lot in the learning process so that the students gave a lot of compliments when they were asked to give a suggestion to the writers.

From the results of this research, the writers could see the change of the scores and also the change of their behavior. From the first meeting with the writers, the students seemed not excited with English lesson. Because they thought it was hard. But after the treatment, the students felt more comfortable and started to became more active in the class. Also, even though at the first the students were really hard to be controlled but after the treatment, the students were unexpectedly cooperated very well with the writers. Based on these findings, the writers believed that the change of the students' behavior was also the big factor and related to the change of the scores as well.

CONCLUSION

As the writers found during the research, the writers finally come to the conclusion to answer the first research question: "How did the communicative approach improve the speaking fluency of the 7th grader's students of SMPN 1 Tenggarong?" Through the two cycles, the students got a better score even from the first post-test. The writers believed that it was because of the treatment and the ability of the students as well. The treatment with the communicative approach (CLT) forced the students to think quickly and said their opinion right away. It made the students accustomed in speaking which also trained their speaking fluency. The ability of the students was also a big factor. Some of the students were fast and caught up quickly. But some other students, they needed time to adjust before reach the upper score. Lastly, all of the students' scores were in an upper score. It means that their speaking fluency was improved.

The result of the interview was to answer the second research question: "How was the perception of the students about the communicative approach in improving their speaking fluency?" The answers showed how the treatment went and according to the results, the

treatment went well. It also indicated how the students liked to be in the classroom because of the treatment. The writers applied some strategy in teaching speaking by using communicative approach. First, the writers gave the students opportunity to train their communication ability which also their objective even outside the class. Second, the teacher also made a positive relationship like joking and caring to the students so that the class went smoothly. Last, the writers only gave a little intervention in the classroom. It gave the students more space to improve their speaking fluency. That was how the writers applied the communicative approach.

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