

IMPROVING CLASS VIII A STUDENTS' SPEAKING ACHIEVEMENT BY GIVING VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL REINFORCEMENT AT SMPN 1 SUKOWONO JEMBER IN THE 2011/2012 ACADEMIC YEAR

Hamim Ma'ruf¹⁹, Annur Rofiq²⁰, Siti Sundari²¹

Abstract. *This classroom action research was intended to improve class VIII A students' speaking achievement at SMPN 1 Sukowono. There are 37 students and most of them have difficulty in speaking English. To solve the problems, the researcher used reinforcement. The form of reinforcement was verbal and non-verbal reinforcement. The result in the first cycle showed 70.27% of the students were active in the first meeting and 75.67% of the students were active in the second meeting. There were 67.5% of the students achieved ≥ 65 in speaking test. Dealing with the results, it was necessary to continue the action to the second cycle. In the second cycle, 81% of the students were active in the first meeting and 83.78% of the students were active in the second meeting, and 78.37% of the students got ≥ 65 in speaking test. It means that the minimum requirement percentage of the students who got ≥ 65 had been achieved in cycle II. Thus, teaching speaking by giving verbal and non-verbal reinforcement could improve the students' active participation and their speaking achievement in two cycles.*

Key Words : *verbal and non-verbal reinforcement, speaking achievement, student's participation*

INTRODUCTION

Reinforcement in the process of learning is an important factor that should be done during the process of learning. Reinforcement is any stimulus that increases the probability of responses occurring (Lefrancois, 1982:50). This means that the process of learning contains controlling consequences of a response while its aim is to increase or decrease the probability of the response occurring.

Giving reinforcement can improve complex behaviour in academic skills such as composition and speaking skill. Brigham, Graubard, and Stans (in Flora 2004:138-139) conducted a research about composition skill on male fifth-grade underachieving students. As a result of the research which used reinforcement, not only that the number of words, different words, and new words increased, but also the quality of the student's compositions improved as well. Mechanical aspects (spelling, grammar, and punctuation), vocabulary (variety and word usage), number of ideas, idea development and internal consistency of ideas all improved. Furthermore, during the program, the students were very enthusiastic. From the results of their research, they concluded that

¹⁹ Mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa FKIP UNEJ

²⁰ Staf Pengajar Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa FKIP UNEJ

²¹ Staf Pengajar Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa FKIP UNEJ

academic skills such as writing and speaking can be synthesized by applying specific contingencies of reinforcement to aspects of the skill.

To improve speaking achievement of class VIII A students of SMPN 1 Sukowono, the researcher used reinforcement program in the form of verbal and non-verbal reinforcement. Verbal reinforcement was intended to have a direct and positive effect, encourage, and appreciate the target students.

Using reinforcement in the classroom means the teacher should engage reinforcement strategies for the classroom management. In order to make reinforcement procedures effective, it is recommended that the teacher follows five guidelines when reinforcing students' performance.

1. Reinforcement should be contingent on specific student behaviors. Reinforcement should be delivered immediately following the occurrence of the social or academic skill that the teacher is trying to teach or maintain.
2. The reinforcer should be age appropriate for the student.
3. Use positive reinforcement frequently and intensively when students are learning new and difficult skills.
4. If it is possible, the teacher's position should be close to the student before the teacher delivers the reinforcer. Being close to the student will increase the effectiveness of the giving of reinforcement.
5. Use different types of positive reinforcement. The teacher can use verbal or non-verbal reinforcement to praise the student's good behaviour, and sometimes the teacher needs to combine both of them.

(Adapted from www.afcec.org/tipsforteachers/tips_c4.html)

In this research, reinforcement was delivered immediately to specific students' behaviours. The specific behaviours in this research were related to the indicators of the students' participation in the classroom. They were: (1) The student answers the teacher's question orally. (2) The student follows the teacher's command during the instruction. (3) The student does the speaking exercises given by the teacher. (4) The student performs the dialogue in front of the class in pairs.

The researcher applied the principles above as the rule in giving reinforcement in the classroom action research. The principles were applied when the researcher or teacher used verbal and non-verbal reinforcement in the classroom, if the use of verbal and non-verbal reinforcement was against the principles, then the use of verbal and non-verbal reinforcement was wrong in the application or meaningless.

The researcher followed a set of procedures during the teaching of speaking by giving verbal and non-verbal reinforcement. The procedures were as follows:

1. Delivering reinforcement to the students who answer questions correctly during the teaching of speaking.
2. Delivering reinforcement to the students who classify the expressions in the dialogues.
3. Delivering reinforcement to the students who pronounce English word correctly.
4. Delivering reinforcement to the students who make a sentence correctly.
5. Delivering reinforcement to the students who follow the teacher's commands during the teaching of speaking. The teacher give commands to gain students' attention to focus on the lesson during the class and ask students to make a group.
6. Delivering reinforcement to the students who perform the dialogue in front of the class.

Using reinforcement in the classroom was based on the schedule of reinforcement. The researcher used *continuous reinforcement schedule*. Continuous reinforcement schedule is the baseline and the simplest schedule of reinforcement (Romero and Kemp, 2007; Wortman and Loftus, 1992; Baron, 1994; Santrock, 1991). In this research, the researcher only uses this type of reinforcement schedule because it was easy to be applied in the teaching learning process and the students' motivation could increase rapidly.

The continuous reinforcement schedule was appropriate to be used to deliver positive reinforcement. According to the principles of using reinforcement in the classroom, the students' positive behaviour should be reinforced immediately. The delivering of reinforcement following the occurrence of the social or academic skill that the teacher is trying to teach or maintain will strengthen the behaviour. In line with this, Smith (1995) says that Improvement of the students' positive behaviour should be reinforced immediately and the teacher should not wait until the students' behavior is perfect to deliver reinforcement.

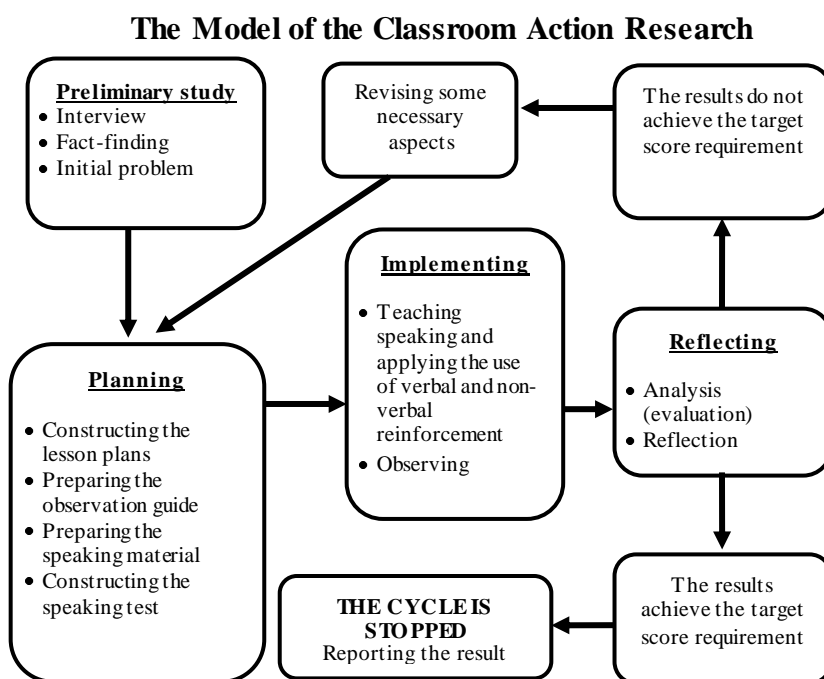
RESEARCH METHODS

The subjects in this research were determined purposively. The researcher determined class VIII A students at SMPN 1 Sukowono Jember in the 2011/2012 academic year purposively based on the following consideration:

1. Based on the results of the informal interview with the English teacher of SMPN 1 Sukowono, it was found that the class VIII A students still had problems in speaking English.
2. Based on the preliminary study, the students of class VIII A had difficulties in speaking English.
3. The English teacher agreed with the researcher to collaborate to conduct the classroom action research in class VIII A.
4. The school principal and the English teacher of SMPN 1 Sukowono permitted the researcher to conduct the classroom action in this class.

The class action research was conducted in a bright, non air-conditioned school building. This research was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle was done in two meetings and one achievement test. Achievement test was conducted in the end of each cycle. The researcher worked collaboratively with the English teacher.

This classroom action research was conducted in the cycle model covering four stages of activities, they are : the planning of the action, the implementation of the action, the observation and evaluation, the data analysis method, and reflection of the action. The design of this classroom action research is illustrated in the following diagram.



(Adapted from Lewin, in Elliot, 1991:70)

The speaking achievement test used transactional/interpersonal text based on the course outline for the second semester of class VIII. Transactional/interpersonal text in the second semester covers the expressions of Asking, giving, and rejecting help, asking and giving opinion, agreement and disagreement, asking, offering, giving, and rejecting things or something.

The speaking test material was constructed according to the institutional based curriculum (KTSP 2006) for English of junior high school. The test materials were constructed based on the syllabus of institutional based curriculum.

The students' speaking performance test were scored based on the Hughes' measurement of speaking test. Based on Hughes' measurement of speaking test, there are five aspects which contain six levels of criteria descriptions, they are fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and content of speech. However, in this speaking test, researcher used five levels from six levels. Heaton (1988:100) says that for most classroom purposes, the rating scale should not have the native speaker performance as the desired goal, and it should be based on realistic expectations of what successful learners can achieve at a particular stage in this development.

Table 1. The example of Hughes' measurement of speaking test

| Student | Students' Speaking Score Test Based on Descriptor | | | | | Total | The Calculation for the Total Score | Final Score |
|---------|--|---|---|---|----|-------|--|----------------|
| | F | P | G | V | CS | | | |
| A | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 18 | $\frac{18}{25} \times 100$ | 72 |

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{obtained score}}{\text{maximum score}} \times 100$$

Notes:

F = Fluency

P = Pronunciation

G = Grammar

V = Vocabulary

CS = Content of Speech

In this research, observation was done by the researcher and the English teacher in each meeting of each cycle. The purpose of this observation was to record the situation in the class during the teaching learning process of speaking by giving verbal and non-verbal reinforcement. In this research, the instrument used was an observation

guide in the form of checklist. The observation checklist was used to record the students' participation during the teaching learning process of speaking.

Table 2. The Form of Observation Checklist

| No | Names | Participation | | | | Active | Passive |
|----|-------|---------------|---|---|---|--------|---------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | |
| 1 | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | |

The indicators of the observation were:

1. The student answers the teacher's question orally
2. The student follows the teacher's command during the instruction
3. The student does the speaking exercise given by the teacher
4. The student performs the dialogue in front of the class in pairs

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The first meeting of cycle I was conducted on March 12th, 2012. The first meeting was done for eighty minutes in which it began from 08:50 to 10:10 and the theme was expression of asking and giving opinion. In the first meeting, the role of the English teacher was observing the students' participation during the teaching learning process of speaking.

The second meeting was conducted on March 15th, 2012. It began from 10:50 to 12:10. The theme in the second meeting was expression of agreement and disagreement. The role of the English teacher was the doer of the action, she taught speaking to the students by applying verbal and non-verbal reinforcement, while the researcher did the observation of the students' participation in the teaching learning process of speaking.

The researcher used verbal reinforcers in the form of "good", "excellent", commenting or marking on the students' workbook, "good job", and "right". Meanwhile, the researcher used non-verbal reinforcers in the form of giving applause, tapping student's shoulder, smiling, raising the thumb up, and giving candy. Sometimes the researcher only applied one reinforcer to reward the student's good behavior, and sometimes the researcher applied both verbal and non-verbal reinforcer at the same time.

In the first meeting, there were 21 students who answered questions, 34 students followed the teacher's command during the instructions, 33 students did speaking

exercises, and 14 students performed a dialogue in front of the class. In conclusion, there were 26 students of 37 students who were active in the first meeting, they were able to fulfill at least three indicators of the students' participation during the process of teaching and learning speaking.

In the second meeting, there were 22 students who answered the questions, 34 students followed the teacher's command during the instructions, 35 students did the speaking exercises, and 16 students performed a dialogue in front of the class. In conclusion, there were 28 students of 37 students who were active in the first meeting, they were able to fulfill at least three indicators of the students' participation during the process of teaching and learning speaking.

From the statements above, it could be concluded that 70.27% of the students were active during the teaching of speaking in the first meeting of cycle I and 75.67% of the students were active during the teaching of speaking in the second meeting of cycle I. It could be said that the percentage of students' active participation had achieved the target percentage that was 70% of the students' active participation.

The speaking test in cycle I as a product evaluation was administered at the third and fourth meeting. It was done to measure the students' progress in speaking after being taught speaking by using verbal and non-verbal reinforcement. The speaking test was done on March 17th and 19th 2012.

The students chose one of the pictures or situations provided randomly, and then they created a dialogue based on the picture or situation chosen. The students were given 15 minutes to create and prepare the dialogue and after that they were given 3 minutes to perform the dialogue in pairs.

Based on the results of speaking test, there were 24 students who achieved score ≥ 65 and 13 students who achieved score below 65. It means that 67.5% of the students achieved scores ≥ 65 as the minimum standard requirement score of English. So, it could be concluded that the action in cycle I did not achieve the evaluation criteria that was 70% of the students got scores at least 65 in the speaking test of the cycle.

The first meeting of cycle II was conducted on March 22nd, 2012. The first meeting was done for eighty minutes in which it began from 10:50 to 12:10 and the theme was expression for offering thing. In the first meeting, the role of the English

teacher was observing the students' participation during the teaching learning process of speaking by giving verbal and non-verbal reinforcement.

The second meeting was conducted on March 26th, 2012. It began from 08:50 to 10:10 and the theme in second meeting was expression of asking and giving information. The role of the English teacher was teaching speaking to the students by applying verbal and non-verbal reinforcement, while the researcher did the observation of the students' participation.

The researcher used verbal reinforcers in the form of "good", "excellent", commenting on the students' workbook, "nice job", "well done", and "right". The researcher made specific when providing the students any type of reinforcers. This was the difference from verbal reinforcement in cycle I. In this cycle, the researcher added social reinforcers while applying verbal reinforcement. Instead of saying "good Rini", the researcher would say "good, Rini, you performed the dialogue well". In this way, the student specifically knew that she got reinforcer because of her good behavior and the effect was stronger than the giving of reinforcement in cycle I. Besides, the researcher used non-verbal in the form of giving applause, tapping the student's shoulder, smiling, raising the thumb up, and giving some candies. The giving of reinforcement in cycle II, the researcher did like the action of cycle I. Sometimes, the researcher used only one reinforcer and sometimes, he used both verbal and non-verbal reinforcement at the same time.

In the first meeting, there were 23 students who answered the questions, 37 students followed the teacher's command during the instructions, 37 students did the speaking exercises, and 18 students performed a dialogue in front of the class. In conclusion, there were 30 students of 37 students who were active in the first meeting, they were able to fulfill at least three indicators of the students' participation during the process of teaching and learning speaking.

In the second meeting, there were 23 students who answered the questions, 37 students followed the teacher's command during the instructions, 37 students did the speaking exercises, and 20 students performed a dialogue in front of the class. In conclusion, there were 31 students of 37 students who were active in the first meeting, they were able to fulfill at least three indicators of the students' participation during the process of teaching and learning speaking.

From the statements above, it could be concluded that 81% of the students were active during the speaking teaching learning process in the first meeting of cycle II and 83.78% of the students were active during the speaking teaching learning process in the second meeting of cycle II. It could be said that the percentage of the students' active participation achieved the targeted percentage that was 70%.

The speaking test in cycle II was done in two days. The first day was administered on March 29th 2012 and the second day was on March 31st 2012. The students chose one of the situations provided in the speaking test randomly, and then they created a dialogue based on the situation chosen. The students were given 15 minutes to create and prepare the dialogue and after that they were given 3 minutes to perform the dialogue in pairs.

Based on the results of speaking test in cycle II, there are 28 students who achieved scores ≥ 65 and 9 students who achieve score below 65. It means that 78.37% of the students achieved scores ≥ 65 as the minimum standard requirement score of English. So, it could be concluded that the action in cycle II achieved the evaluation criteria that was 70% of the students got scores at least 65 in the speaking test of the cycle.

The result of speaking diagnostic test in the preliminary study showed that the percentage of the students who got ≥ 65 was only 35.13%. Based on the fact, cycle I was conducted to improve the students' speaking achievement. The percentage of the students who got ≥ 65 in cycle I improved to be 67.5% (24 of 37 students), but it still did not meet the minimum requirement percentage (70%). Since the actions in cycle I were not successful, then the actions in cycle II were conducted by revising the teaching technique in the first cycle. The result of speaking test in cycle II showed that the percentage of the students who got score ≥ 65 in Cycle II improved to be 78.37% (28 of 37 students) and it met the minimum requirement percentage (70%). The improvement of the students' active participation and their speaking achievement from the preliminary study to Cycle II are presented in the following table.

Table 2. The Improvement of the Students' Active Participation and Their Speaking Achievement from Cycle I to Cycle II

| | Cycle I | | Cycle II | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Meeting 1 | Meeting 2 | Meeting 1 | Meeting 2 |
| The percentage of the students who were active in the teaching learning process | 70.27% | 75.67% | 81% | 83.78% |
| The percentage of the students who got ≥ 65 (the English minimum requirement standard score) | 67.5% | | 78.37% | |

Based on the table above, it could be concluded that there was improvement of both the students' active participation and their speaking achievement in this research from cycle I to cycle II. However, the improvement of the students' speaking achievement in cycle I did not meet the research target, so the action was continued to cycle II. After conducting the actions in cycle II, the results of both students' active participation and their speaking achievement met all of the research targets.

The students looked more enthusiastic after receiving a reinforcer and they tended to work harder on the activities in the teaching learning process of speaking. This fact was proved by Day and Chadwick (1971:318), who said that the underachieving students worked longer, faster, and more accurately during the giving of reinforcement program.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The results of this research proved that the use of verbal and non-verbal reinforcement could improve the VIII A students' active participation and their speaking achievement in the teaching learning process at SMPN 1 Sukowono in the 2011/2012 academic year. The improvement of the students' active participation could be seen from the result of classroom observation in each cycle. In Cycle I, the percentage of the active students was 72.97%. In Cycle II, the percentage of the active students improved to be 82.39%. It means that the minimum requirement percentage of the active students in this research (70%) could be achieved both in Cycle I and Cycle II. The percentage of class VIII A students who got 65 (the English minimum requirement standard score of SMPN 1 Sukowono) in the speaking achievement test

improved from 67.5% (24 of 37 students) in Cycle I to 78.37% (28 of 37 students) in Cycle II.

By considering the result, some suggestions are given to the following people. First, based on the results, it is suggested that the English teacher is suggested to use verbal and non-verbal reinforcement as an alternative teaching technique in the speaking teaching learning process to help the students increase their motivation and improve their academic performance, especially in speaking ability. The use of verbal and non-verbal reinforcement is possible to be used by the English teacher in the speaking teaching learning process by noticing and understanding how to use reinforcement in the classroom. Second, the future researchers are suggested to conduct further researches dealing with the use of verbal and non-verbal reinforcement in the speaking teaching learning process by using the same or different research design with different subjects at different schools.

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