

## STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL AND ACTIVATION METHOD: THE CASE OF ONE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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### Abstract

This study was aimed to find out whether or not: (1) there was a significant improvement on the eleventh grade students' speaking skill who were taught by using activation method at MAN 3 Palembang before and after the treatment; and (2) there was a significant difference on the eleventh grade students' speaking skill who were taught by using activation method and those who were not at MAN 3 Palembang. In this study, 60 eleventh grade students at MAN 3 Palembang were chosen as the sample. The students were grouped into two (i.e.: experimental group and control group). Experimental group consisted of 30 students, and control group consisted of 30 students. The experimental group was taught by using activation method, and the control group was taught by using teacher's method. The data were collected by giving pretest and posttest to both groups. To analyze the data, *paired sample t-test* and *independent sample t-test* were used. The result of paired sample t-test showed that there was a significant improvement in students' speaking skill for the experimental group. Independent sample t-test analysis showed that there was a significant difference in both of groups who were taught by using the activation method and those who were not (teacher's method).

**Keywords:** activation method, speaking skill

### Introduction

As a social culture, humans beings need to communicate among each other with languages. Language is used by people to express and receive some information, messages, emotions and so on. According to Campbell (2006), language means any distinct linguistic entity variety which is mutually unintelligible with other such entities. Purpose of having intention to be recognized by speaker and the receiver processes the statements in order to recognize their intentions. There are many languages in the world and one of them is English. The most widely spoken language in the world is English (Fromkin, Rodman & Nina, 2003). English is an international language as it is used by many people around the world for different purposes such as to communicate to other people from different countries and to exchange knowledge. Richard and Burns (2012) state that English is the language of globalization, international communication, commerce and trade, tourism, the media, and pop culture, different motivations for learning it come into play.

It is important to learn English because based on the Curriculum or *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* (KTSP) 2006 in Indonesia, English becomes a compulsory subject in school (from junior high school until higher education) and become one of the important subjects to be tested in the national examination (Habibi & Sofwan, 2016; Luschei, 2017; Mukminin, Rohayati, Putra, Habibi, & Aina, 2017). In addition, students' proficiency of English, usually measured by TOEFL and IELTS is one of very basic requirement to study abroad or get better jobs. In Curriculum, there are four main skills that must be learned by the students in English subject. They are speaking, listening, reading and writing. Khameis (2006) states that the four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) naturally appear together in every English class, even in EFL context. Inside the classroom, speaking skill is the most important part of language. Bailey

(2005) states speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information. Speaking is also a medium through which many languages is learnt, and which for many is particularly conducive for learning. Many people think that mastering speaking abilities is the ultimate goal of acquiring a foreign or second language and the other skills are overshadowed by its significance (Mukminin, Noprival, Masbirorotni, Sutarno, Arif, & Maimunah, 2015). People speak for many reasons to be sociable, because they want something, because they want other people to do something, to do something for someone else, to respond to someone else, to express feelings or opinion about something, to exchange information, to refer to an action or event in the past, present, or future, the possibility of something happening, and so on (Lindsay & Knight, 2006). Generally, teacher and students often find some problems in teaching and learning English, especially speaking English. The problems of teacher in teaching speaking English to students according to Brown (2000) and Harmer (2007), are from internal and external factor. Internal problems are native language, age, exposure, innate phonetic ability, identity and language ego, and motivation and concern for good speaking. An external problem is institutional context that puts English as second or foreign language in a nation.

Meanwhile Hetrakul (1995) explains that the problems of student in speaking English are resulted from two causes. The first cause that makes the students difficult in speaking English is that the environment (outside the class) which does not support the students to speak English frequently. The second cause is the problem with English grammar. English always deals with reference of time while Indonesian does not have one. Another problem learners deal with is that takes long time to learn a foreign language. Most of them get disappointed after some months and then speaking a foreign language remains a dream forever (Shahidpour, 2014). In fact, Indonesian's speaking skill is not good enough. Jakarta - EF EPI (English First English Proficiency Index) 2015 reported the average level of English language skill in some countries and the data English speaking skill in Indonesia is in the rank of 32 from 70 participant countries. Based on EF EPI, Indonesia is medium level (52, 91). It means that the quality of English speaking skill in Indonesia is still satisfactory.

During the preliminary study, one of the English teachers at MAN 3 Palembang was interviewed. There were some problems faced by the teacher in teaching speaking. The class-time was often very short; it was once or twice a week, one or two hours daily for lots of subject matters to teach. The teacher also couldn't solve students' problems because it was difficult to distinguish a specific learner with a specific learning problems in very limited time and sometimes teacher felt difficult to interact with the students by using English language. Some students were also interviewed at MAN 3 Palembang and the students said that English was a difficult subject. Sometimes they couldn't speak English fluently because English was different from Indonesia. They couldn't respond the conversation given by the teacher. Although the students could understand what the teacher said, the students couldn't speak English well. Moreover, the students were very shy and afraid of making mistakes in speaking English.

Considering these problems, teaching speaking in Indonesia is not easy (Aleksandrak, 2011). The teacher should make the learning process more interactive. Brown (2000) highlights that developing interactive language teaching is helpful by several models practical uses. Therefore, using a suitable strategy is one of the ways to improve students' speaking skill and it is important to apply an alternative strategy in teaching speaking. Related to this, one of the strategies that can solve students' problems in speaking English is activation method. Shahidpour (2014) designed activation method to help students learn English better and this method helps the learners speak and communicate in the target language, so that this method is appropriate for teaching speaking skill. Activation method of learning consists of three different activation stages which are designed to help students learn better. The method does not focus on teaching but it focuses on the application of the new words by students. The teacher teaches the new words and expressions by applying pictures, definitions, antonyms, translation, etc.

The original idea of the method came from the work of Medina (2008), the American neurologist, who devoted his life to find a way to connect neuroscience and education. He presents 12 different rules by which the human's brain learns namely exercise, survival, wiring, attention, memory, sleep, stress, sense, vision, gender, and exploration. By activation, learning does not occur as long as students have not used the newly taught information by themselves. When they start to use the information by themselves and make different sentences, then the new body of knowledge is activated in their mind and they acquire it.

The most important part of this method is the activation which consists of three stages: translation, asking questions and storytelling. Students are requested to ask questions using the new words, tell a story with the new words, and at last translate some sentences containing the new words. Shahidpour (2014) states that the participants of this method have to be adults and have basic knowledge of the target language (English). The research problems in this study are: 1) Is there any significant improvement on the eleventh grade students' speaking skill who are taught by using activation method at MAN 3 Palembang before and after the treatment? 2) Is there any significant difference on the eleventh grade students' speaking skill who are taught by using activation method and those who are not at MAN 3 Palembang?

## Literature Review

### *Teaching speaking*

Harmer (2002) explains that teaching means to give (someone) knowledge or to instruct or to train (someone). While according Al-Qur'an Surah Al-Alaq (96, 1-5), said that education is the most important things, and how to know about knowledge and everything, we should read and read: From surah Al-Alaq reading is one of important thing in teaching/learning. By reading, people can get a lot of information and knowledge and how to teach well it needs to read something more. Speaking is one of the most important and essential skills that must be practiced to communicate orally. Louma (2004) explain that speaking is a way to distinguish aspects of speaker's personality and attitudes through the manner the spoken language sounds. According to Cornbleet & Carter (2001), there are some aspects of speaking: 1) speaking is face to face; 2) speaking is interactive; 3) speaking happens in real time. Furthermore, Kubiszyn and Borich (2007) state that there are four aspects of speaking, they are as follows: 1) pronunciation-ability to pronounce words correctly; 2) loudness-ability to speak in appropriate word; 3) word usage-ability to use the words correctly; 4) rate-ability to speak in standard rate. MCDonough and Mackey (2000) explains about the form of speaking. There are: 1) incomplete sentences; 2) very little subordination; 3) very few passives; 4) not many explicit logical connectors; 5) topic comment structure; 6) replacing/refining expression; 7) frequent reference to things outside the text; 8) the use of generalized vocabulary; 9) repetition of the same syntactic form; 10) the use of pauses and fillers. The elements of speaking are divided by two features. They are Language features and mental or social processing. (Harmer, 2001): 1) Language Features, (1) connected speech; (2) expressive devices; (3) lexis and grammar; (4) negotiation language. 2) Mental or social processing, (1) language processing; (2) interacting with others; (3) information processing (on the spot).

Either four of five components are generally recognized in analyzing the speaking process: 1) pronunciation; 2) grammar; 3) vocabulary; 4) fluency; 5) comprehension. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) describes five basic types of speaking. Those five types are as follows: 1) imitative; 2) intensive; 3) responsive; 4) interactive; 5) extensive (monologue). Meanwhile, Bailey (2005) mentions three principles which can influence and inform teaching speaking to beginning and false learners, those are: 1) provide something for learners to talk about; 2) create opportunities for students to interact; 3) manipulate physical arrangements to promote speaking practice. The teaching of EFL speaking in Indonesia has been closely connected to the concept of communicative competence which is emphasized within the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The reports, mostly dealing with tertiary-level students, can be

categorized into those dealing with: 1) reports on teaching problems; 2) reports on classroom activities; 3) reports on teaching materials; 4) reports on assessment.

### ***Activation method***

Shahidpour (2014) explains that activation method is a method that uses to make students' speak more fluently and accurately. Activation method of learning consists of three different activation stages: translation, asking questions and storytelling which are designed to help students learn English better. Bonwell and Eison (1991) state that use of active strategy in the classroom is vital because of students' powerful impact upon students' learning. Shahidpour (2014) proposed advantages of activation method as follows: 1) Help students to speak more fluently and accurately in a shorter period of time; 2) It is not used long time to learn a foreign language; 3) Help students learn better.

Another advantages of active learning strategies are to engage students in 1) thinking critically or creatively; 2) speaking with a partner, in a small group, or with the entire class; 3) expressing ideas through writing; 4) exploring personal attitudes and values; 5) giving and receiving feedback; 6) reflecting upon the learning process (Eison, 2010) Shahidpour (2014) explains the procedures of teaching speaking by activation method, as steps the following: 1) the teacher reviews the words taught in the previous session; 2) the teacher starts to teach. One of students reads the new lesson aloud. Whenever students get to a new word-in this book bold ones- the teacher explains that using pictures, definitions, antonyms, synonyms, etc; 3) right after covering the new words, teacher gives some examples using the words and then gives student's different examples in their mother tongue and asks them to translate them into English; 4) the teacher writes some questions and explaining the structure and how to answer them, the teacher asks students to work in pairs; 5) students can ask any kind of questions related with the topic without the teacher's help; 6) the teacher asks them to tell one another a story using a new words; 7) students are asked to prepare speech about the topic and the teacher checks them; 8) At the end of each class students are assigned to watching a film and the students retell about the film briefly.

### **Methodology**

This research belongs to an experimental design. In this study used quasi-experimental design. Quasi-experimental designs do not include the use of random assignment (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). The experimental group was given treatment by using activation method, but the control group was not. This research used Pretest-Posttest Non-equivalent Group Design. This research applied 12 meetings including the pretest and posttest. After the treatment, the researcher gave the posttest which was exactly the same as the pretest. In this research there are two variables, independent variable (X) and dependent variable (Y). The independent variable is activation method (X) and dependent variable is the students' speaking skill (Y).

### ***Population and sample***

The population of this study is 306 students, they are eleventh grade students of MAN 3 Palembang. In this study, the researcher took two classes as a sample to collect the data by using purposive sampling. Eleventh grade students were chosen because they had same characteristics, they had basic English, they were adult, the total number of students were same and they had same teacher. Based on the consultation that has been done by the researcher in the preliminary study in MAN 3 Palembang, the English teacher recommended two classes, XI MIA 1 & XI MIA 2 which consist of 30 students for each class. The experimental group was chosen from the class which has the low mean score from the pretest, while another class with higher mean score from the experimental group became the control group.

### ***Content validity and reliability test***

In order to judge the test has or has not the content validity, a specification of the skills or structures should be made based on the curriculum and syllabus. The researcher devised a topic in accordance with the objectives of the test that was to measure students' speaking achievement. In the test of specification, it includes: objective, indicator, item and number of item. It was formulated based on the syllabus for eleventh grade students. The result showed that the topic is appropriate for the test. To estimate the reliability of the test, inter-rater reliability was applied. Three raters did the scoring for the students' speaking test based on the rubric provided by Brown (2001). The result showed that speaking test with the instruction, topic, time allocation, content and rubric were appropriate. All in all, speaking test was reliable.

### ***Normality and homogeneity tests***

In normality test, the total of sample. Kolmogorov Smirnov Z, significant, and the result were analyzed. Based on the normality test of the students' pretest and posttest score from both groups. It was found that the significance level of normality test of the students' pretest score in control group was 0.589 and posttest score was 0.662 while the significance level of normality test of the students' pretest score in experimental group was 0.975 and posttest score was 0.471. From the result of the output, it could be stated that the obtained data was normal, because it is higher than 0.05. In homogeneity test, the total of sample. Levene statistics, significant, and the result were analyzed. It was found that the significance level of homogeneity test of the students' pretest score in control and experimental group was 0.541 while the significance level of homogeneity test of the students' posttest score in control and experimental group was 0.188. From the scores, it could be stated that the obtained data was homogen, because it is higher than 0.05.

### **Findings and Discussion**

In order to answer the first problem, paired sample t-test was used to measure the significant improvement in experimental group. The data was taken from students' pretest and posttest score in experimental group. The significant of improvement is accepted whenever the p-output (Sig.2-tailed) is lower than 0.05 and t-obtained is higher than t-table (2.045). While the significant of experimental group is rejected when the p-output (Sig.2-tailed) is higher than 0.05 than t-value is lower than t-table (2.045). The further calculation of the paired sample t-test was displayed in the table below:

**Table 1.** Result analysis in measuring significant improvement

		<b>Paired Sample T-</b>		
		<b>test</b>		<b>Ho</b>
Activation			Sig.(2-	
	T	Df	tailed)	Rejected
Method	11.515	29	0.000	

As seen in the table 1 above, it can be seen that the p-output 0.000 and t-obtained 11.515 at the significance level  $p < 0.05$  in two tailed testing with  $df = 29$ . The p-output was  $0.000 < p$ -value and t-obtained  $11.515 > 2.045$ . It can be concluded that the significant improvement was accepted because the p-output was lower than significant level 0.05 and the t-value was higher than 2.045. The result of hypothesis testing was the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. It means that there was a significant improvement on the students' speaking skill who were taught by using activation method.

To measure the significant difference on students' speaking skill between posttest in control and experimental groups. An independent sample t-test was used for testing students' posttest scores in experimental group and posttest in control group. The significant difference is accepted whenever the p-output (Sig.2-tailed) is lower than 0.05 and t-obtained is higher than t-table (2.001) while the significant difference is rejected when the p-output (Sig.2-tailed) is higher than 0.05 than t-value is lower than t-table (2.001). The further calculation of the independent sample t-test was displayed in the table below:

**Table 2.** Result analysis in measuring significant difference

Posttest (Control and Experimental )	Independent Sample T-Test			Ho
	T	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Rejected
	2.776	58	0.007	

From table 2, it can be seen that the p-output was 0.007 and the value of t-obtained was 2.776 at the significance level  $p > 0,05$  in two tailed testing with  $df = 58$ , the critical value of t-table = 2.001 ( $2.776 > 2.001$ ). The significant difference is accepted whenever the p-output (Sig.2-tailed) is lower than 0.05 and t-obtained is higher than t-table (2.001), since the p-output was lower than 0.05 and the value of t-obtained was higher than the critical value of t-table, it means that there was a significant difference on the students' speaking skill between the students who were taught by using activation method in experimental group and those students who were not in control group.

### **Interpretations**

The first, from the result analysis used paired sample t-test, it was found that p-output was lower than 0.05 and the t-obtained was higher than t-table. It could be interpreted that there was significant improvement from students' pretest and posttest score in experimental group, it meant that activation method was significantly improved for the eleventh grade students' speaking skill at MAN 3 Palembang especially XII MIA 2. The factor was in applied of activation method, it was some good influences in teaching and learning process. This result was consistent with many studies, some of them were conducted by Shahidpour (2014) who found that activation method significantly affects on students' speaking skill and Dewi (2014) who also found that activation strategy was effective to improve students' reading comprehension. It could be stated that the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted and the null hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) was rejected.

Second, from the result analysis used independent sample t-test measuring means significant difference from students' posttest score in control and experimental group, it was found that there was significant difference in control and experimental groups since the p-output was lower than 0.05 and the t-obtained was higher than t-table. It could be interpreted that improving the eleventh grade students' speaking skill who were taught by using activation method and those who were not (teachers' method) was significantly difference. Thus, it meant that the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted and the null hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) was rejected.

There were some factors showed the reason why activation method could improve students' speaking skill at MAN 3 Palembang especially XI MIA 2. First, activation method could made the students were accustomed to used English in their real life communication especially in their conversation class because they got many new vocabularies and they can make some sentences and dialogues by themselves. Second, the students could apply the conversation in the class. It means that the students might apply the conversation with others in the class or their real daily life. Third, the students interested and fun in learning English especially speaking skill. They

showed their contribution and participated well in teaching and learning process by giving some questions that they wanted to know and always speak English during the class. It is necessary with (Bonwell and Eison, 1991, p. 5) who state that use of this strategy in the classroom is vital because of students' powerful impact upon students' learning because this strategy has good impact for teacher and students.

Based on the statement above, it could be interpreted that activation method could increase students' score in learning English especially speaking skill. It is line with (Eison, 2010, p. 1) active learning strategy includes a wide range of activities that share the common element of involving students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing. It should also be noted that active learning strategies can (a) be completed by students either in-class or out-of-class, (b) be done by students working either as individuals or in group, and (c) be done either with or without the use of technology tools. On the other hand, it was related to Shahidpour (2014) who states that activation method is a method in teaching speaking English and the functions of this method were to make the students' speak more fluency and accuracy in English. Activation method of learning consists of three different activation stages: translation, asking questions and storytelling which were designed to help students learn English better. In conclusion, this study was answered that activation method was an effective method that could be used as an alternative in teaching English especially speaking English because this method had some advantages for teacher and students.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings and interpretations presented above, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement on the eleventh grade students' speaking skill who were taught by using activation method and there was a significant difference on the eleventh grade students' speaking skill who were taught by using activation method and those who were not at MAN 3 Palembang. The students who were taught by using activation method showed better improvement that can be seen from the result of the students in test. implementation in teaching and learning process, they practiced more to speak English with their friends, the students also could remember the lesson they have learned easily because they did repetition. Activation method can engage the students in learning process. The researcher can concluded that the use of activation method was very useful as one of the methods to improve students' speaking skill.

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