IMPROVING THE SPEAKING SKILL OF THE NINTH GRADE STUDENTS OF MTS
NU PAKIS USING SONGS

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ABSTRACT: This study is aimed at solving students’ difficulties in speaking English. It focuses on the implementation of English songs in improving the students’ speaking abilities. The study was designed as collaborative classroom action research where the researcher acted as the teacher and the English teacher acted as the observer. The cycle includes the planning stage, implementing the action, observing the action, and reflecting the action. It is concluded that the implementation of songs could solve the problem of the students’ speaking skill and promote students’ interest toward songs.

Keywords: speaking skill, English songs

English is the most widely used language in the world. Nowadays, more people use English to interact and communicate in order to maintain good communication. People need to master the four skills of English, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Mastering these skills is not easy because the rules of English are different from Indonesian.

In Indonesia, English has been chosen as the first foreign language to be taught as a compulsory subject since elementary school. Junior high school students need to learn the language skill (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and the language aspects such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary to support their language skills. Speaking is the most important skill to be mastered by the students. They can correctly express the meaning using the appropriate forms of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. They gradually will speak English fluently based on the respective level.

O’Malley and Pierce (1996) stated that enabling students to communicate effectively through oral language is one of the major responsibilities of any teacher working with English language learners. Further, they explained that to help the students ease their process of developing their speaking performance, teachers as the primary figures in the classroom have to put much more effort in raising the students’ motivation and interest in class. It can be done by establishing a good relationship between the teacher and the students. The teacher should create a low anxiety classroom atmosphere.

Teachers have to realize that in Indonesia, English is a taught as a foreign language that is not used in daily communication in society. Therefore, it is considered as a difficult thing to learn, especially for junior high school students. Thus, teachers should consider a good strategy to be applied so that the students will be motivated and interested in the teaching and
learning process. Moreover, teachers have to create a good learning situation to make students happy, interested, and highly motivated in learning English. There are many ways to improve students’ performance in speaking. One of them is to teach English by using English songs. Wahyudiati (2009)’s previous research showed a satisfactory result of implementing songs technique in improving the students’ speaking performance.

A song was an important thing in learning. Songs are used to achieve the relaxation and harmony needed to increase learning effectiveness. The song used was carefully chosen and prescribed to induce a mental state in which the material was more easily absorbed and retained. It was said to produce an alpha state in which the mind was relaxed and meditative but remained receptive (Williams, 1983). The songs and the lyrics are an audio representation of the living language, rather than an artificially constructed pattern often found in grammar textbooks (Urbancic & Vizmuller, 1981). Songs frequently are closer to the real life experiences of the students than most textbook material, with lyrics that exemplify good examples of authentic language (Willis & Mason, 1994).

One of the weaknesses which students have in learning English, according to the researcher’s observation is speaking ability. Their English speaking ability is still low. The indicators of the problems are as follows: first, the students feel shy to express their ideas in English. Second, the students seem to be in doubt and nervous to speak English; third, the students do not know how to apply different transactional and interactional expressions in different situations. Fourth, the students are afraid of making mistakes in grammar, pronunciation, and intonation. Fifth, the students are afraid to be laughed at by others and they have no courage to express their own English ability. Finally, they never use English in their daily communication either inside, or, moreover, outside the class because of their limited vocabulary. Based on the background of the study, the research problem is formulated as follows: “How can the speaking skills of the ninth graders of MTS NU PAKIS increased through the use of English songs?”

Related to the statement of the problem, this study is directed to describe how teaching English using songs can improve the students’ speaking ability in expressing ideas in the form of daily activities. The result of this study can give contributions to the teaching English in junior high school, other researchers, the headmaster and teachers especially in MTs NU Pakis, Malang.

**METHOD**

This study was to attract the students of MTs NU Pakis grade Nine A to speak English.
The researcher conducted Classroom Action Research (CAR) to solve the students’ problems in speaking. According to Pahaji in Nisa’ (2010:35), CAR is research which is done by the teachers in their classrooms to solve problem faced by the teacher and students in cyclic steps. Pahaji also stated that there are two kinds of CAR: Individual Action Research and Collaborative Action Research. It is in line with the characteristics of CAR by Kasbolah (2001: 15), namely: (1) it is done by the teacher; (2) it starts from the factual problem that appears in the teaching and learning process; (3) there are some actions which are needed to improve the teaching and learning process; and (4) it can be done collaboratively.

This research was conducted in MTs NU Pakis grade nine A class in Malang. The purpose of the research is to attract students in speaking English, especially in introducing themselves to other students. Many students got opportunity to introduce themselves in senior high school at the first meeting when they study. According to Kemmis and Taggrat, the concept of CAR consists of four components; they are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The relationship among the components is considered as cycle one. The researcher and the teacher hope to improve the teacher’s work and to be able to create a good learning process. This research was conducted in MTs NU Pakis grade nine A class Malang. The school is located on Jln. Raya Bunut Wetan 986 Pakis-Malang. The researcher spent 2x40 minutes in each meeting to conduct the research. The visit began on Wednesday November 14, 2012 and finished on Saturday December 1st, 2012. Students study in MTs NU Pakis study from 07.00 am to 12.45 pm. The school has eight field studies. It has 45 meetings in a week. The members of Grade Nine A class are 24 students. The system of learning process is moving class especially for Grade Nine A class. They have the class in S.105 on Wednesday and have another class in S.103 on Saturday.

The researcher conducted the research in two cycles. Each cycle consists these following processes: planning of the action, implementing an action, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988 in Syuryanto, 2011:69). The researcher started the study with a preliminary observation to identify the real problems in the teaching of speaking skill by observing the classroom activities directly and having discussion with the English teacher about students’ problems and teacher’s method. The first observation on November 10, 2012 identified that students were unmotivated in speaking activities. They kept silent almost all the time and did not want to try to answer questions using English. It seemed that it was hard for them to speak English well, although they have learned it approximately for two years. As a result, the students tended to be passive in the classroom, especially in the speaking class activities. In planning, the teacher collaborated with the researcher to solve students speaking.
problem. The researcher collaborated with the teacher to make planning or lesson plan.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The important data obtained during the action research were shown by describing the activities done in each cycle of the research covering the planning, the implementation, the observation, and the reflection of the action. The data were described separately from one cycle to another with the purpose of showing the similarities, the differences, the changes, and the development occurred during and between the cycles. The first cycle was conducted in three meetings on Wednesday, 14 November, on Saturday, 17 November, and 21 November 2012. In the planning, researcher designed a lesson plan and a research instrument. The lesson plan was designed for three meetings each of them lasted for 2x40 minutes. The research instruments were provided before observation, peer assessment and reflection were conducted. The researcher also prepared the teaching aids to support the teaching learning. They were a computer, LCD projector, and songs.

The songs which was considered as a good song was sung by Westlife and the title was *I have a dream*. The researcher chose that song because he considered that it was a kind of slow song and it was suitable with the students’ abilities. The song were played and the students listened to the songs from the loud speakers. Students learned to sing step by step after the researcher gave instructions. They made a group in circle to have a conversation. Both the researcher and teacher considered that grouping was the effective method to make the students talk. The action was implemented twice in a week. The first meeting was on Wednesday, 14 November 2012 and the second meeting was on Saturday, 17 November 2012. The researcher collaborated with the English teacher. The teacher acted as the observer while the lesson was conducted. She observed the students enthusiasm during the learning process. The observer observed from the back row when the researcher was conducting the lesson from the beginning until the end. The observer took notes of the students who were not enthusiastic or not interested in the lesson. The first meeting was conducted on Wednesday 14, November 2012. The researcher taught for 2x40 minutes. The topic was about “Having a dream”. In the beginning, the researcher let the students know his name, address and students could ask him anything about his life. Then, the researcher asked them about their names, address and hobbies. After that, the researcher gave a brief explanation about the purpose of the research.

After that, the researcher started to play the song “I have a dream” in the speakers while the text was displayed on the LCD projector. Students learned to sing the song step by step by following the researcher’s instruction. Then, students wrote vocabulary that they did not know.
The researcher asked them to make a group which consisted of four to five students in each group based on the vocabulary they had written. Students were asked to make a conversation. After that, students did with others in group using the expressions that they have made while the researcher went around and graded them. By the end of the lesson, the researcher asked about what they have learned and their difficulties in learning the lesson. The researcher motivated them to learn to speak English well using songs as a medium of presentation. The second meeting was conducted on Saturday 17, November 2012. The observer entered the class to observe the lesson. She received the same observation sheet and a lesson plan to observe the teaching learning process.

During this meeting, the researcher showed students the expression on the LCD projector. Then, the researcher gave the instruction to follow the expression after him. Students repeated after researcher’s instructions. Students sang a song “I have a dream” together by looking at the text on the LCD projector. Students made a group on their own (each group consists of four to five students). Students practiced the expression of hesitancy and certainty in their groups. Students did the conversation in turns. The teacher went around and gave scores to each group. In the third meeting, the teacher did not attend the class because she got sick. Therefore, the researcher asked the administrator to accompany him and filled in the observation sheet in the class.

The researcher showed the students the “Westlife” song in LCD projector. They listened to the song through the loud speakers. Then, students sang together when the song was played. After that, the researcher gave them the material on the LCD projector and taught them the pronunciation of some new vocabulary and practiced speaking with correct intonation. Next, students practiced in pair on all of the materials. Then, they created dialogues with their pair. After they made it, they practiced with their pairs before they shared with another group in front of the class. Then, the researcher gave them some activities to refresh their mind, which was a game. Students were divided into four groups and each group consisted of six students. They had to whisper to each other from the first student to the last one. The researcher gave them the text outside the class for the first one. Next, the first one whispered the others and wrote the result on the board. The researcher gave rewards to students who got the correct result. After doing the game, students got a cloze test by filling in the blanks based on the text of the song. By the end of lesson, the researcher gave them some feedback on the learning. The researcher asked them about what they had learned, including the difficulties and the lesson that they felt successful. Students answered the questions directly using English.
The involvement was obtained in three meetings. The students did their speaking well and the researcher achieved his criteria of success. Based on the result of the student’s speaking score, it was shown by the comparison between the score of preliminary study and the score of test in Cycle I. The mean score of preliminary study was 55.56% while the mean score in Cycle I was 68.61%. The research finding indicates that the students’ speaking ability developed after the action was implemented. The students’ score increased. It means the score’s achievement is greater than the previous. However, the students’ mean score was 68.61%, which means that the researcher had not achieved the criteria of success that is 75%.

Cycle one was conducted on Wednesday, 24 November 2012 up to 1 December 2012. Since the action in Cycle I had not yet reached the criteria of success in which the effect on the action did not give a significant change on the students’ speaking abilities, some revision on the planning of using songs in the teaching and learning process to improve the speaking skill were needed in Cycle II. The revision was focused on the instructional media and the technique of using songs. Similar to Cycle I, the researcher also designed lesson plan and some research instruments prepared in planning on the action. The lesson plan consisted of the teaching and learning objectives, instructional material and media, the time allocation, and teaching and learning activities of three phase technique. Meanwhile, the research instruments which were set before hand were observation checklist, field notes, and questionnaires. Besides, the researcher also prepared the media such as a song. The topic of the lesson was “Giving support”. In relation to this topic, the song selected for the teaching and learning activities are those which expressed kinds of support for others. The learning process in cycle 2 was held in language laboratory.

Since the second cycle was covered in three meetings, the researcher presented the implementation of the action by describing the activities that existed in each meeting. Meeting one was conducted on Saturday 24, 2012. The researcher directly asked the students to move to the language laboratory. The researcher started to inform the students about the topic. After that, the researcher showed them the other song from Westlife titled “My love” on the LCD projector. The students listened to the song through sound system. They learned to sing together following the researcher instruction step by step. The students were asked to write the difficult words which they did not know at all. Then, they looked for the meaning of the words in dictionary. The researcher asked them to make a conversation about what they had written. The students performed the conversation in pair while the researcher went around and graded them.

After conducting the lesson, the researcher gave them some feedbacks to reflect on the
learning process. The researcher asked questions and the students asked him back. The researcher helped them to solve the problems the students during the learning process. Then, the researcher informed them about the next lesson. The second meeting was conducted on Wednesday, November 28, 2012.

The researcher started by asking the students to do the brainstorming process through singing a Westlife’s song titled “My love”. Then, the researcher gave them some material about expression of hesitancy and certainty. The students uttered the expressions following the researcher’s instructions. After that, the students were asked to discuss the material in pair together. Next, the researcher asked the students to perform their result in front of the class while the researcher gave scores. However, the time was not enough to have all the performance at that time. Therefore, the researcher continued the lesson in the next meeting. The researcher gave them feedback by the end of the lesson before he closed the class. The researcher allowed the students to ask any questions if they got difficulties. Finally, the researcher explained what they had to do in the next meeting. The researcher and the students did brainstorming by singing the song of Westlife titled “My love” through the LCD and played the song. Then, he asked the students to continue the performance like what they did in the previous meeting. When the students performed, the researcher gave them scores. After that, the researcher distributed questionnaire to the students and asked them to fill in. The researcher gave them feedback after the questionnaires were collected to remind them about what they had done during the lesson. The researcher inspired and motivated them to learn English. Students could ask the researcher when they got difficulties especially in speaking English.

The speaking score was obtained in three meetings of cycle 2 (Saturday, November 24, 2012). The result of speaking score made the researcher felt satisfied because most the students did their speaking well. The scores were assessed collaboratively by the English teacher and the researcher using scoring rubric. Based on the result of the student’s speaking score, the improvement was proven by the comparison between the score of test in cycle 1 and the score of test in cycle 2. The mean score of test in cycle 1 was 68.61% while the mean score of test in cycle 2 was 82.78. The research finding indicates that the students’ speaking abilities developed after the action was implemented. Based on this development, the researcher had achieved the criteria of success.

This segment presents the discussion on students’ improvement in speaking ability at MTs NU Pakis through the use of songs. The result of cycle 1 showed that the mean score was 68.61% and 72.7% of the students were interested in songs. The result of cycle 2 showed that
the mean score was 82.78% and 85.0% of the students were interested to learn English using songs. There are some important points which should be discussed in applying songs through different strategies in cycle 1 and cycle 2 as well as the factors affecting students’ speaking abilities and motivation. The strength in implementing songs strategy is that songs can improve the students speaking ability. Before the study was implemented, the students encountered many difficulties to speak English.

The result of the preliminary study showed that only few students could answer the teacher’s questions. Many of them frequently used Indonesian to respond to the teacher’s questions. Some of them were unable to answer the questions in English fluently. Some of them never gave a spontaneous answer in English. The obtained data also showed that there were two main factors affecting the students’ ability in speaking English. They were lack of vocabulary and self-confidence. In cycle 1, the problems could be identified that students faced difficulties in speaking English directly and spontaneously. They listened to the researcher’s explanations. However, they did not understand the meaning. By using the songs and practicing it regularly, the students understood English rules especially simple present tenses. The students knew the differences of *to be* and *verb* in speaking. In cycle 2, they still received low scores in pronunciation similar to the previous cycle. Therefore, the researcher determined to use another song to improve their pronunciation. Their abilities in pronunciation increased gradually in the second cycle.

The researcher decided to make the students perform in front of the class to improve their self-confidence. The researcher added the material of lesson by inserting another vocabulary in their speaking abilities. Suyanto (2001) stated that there are some characteristics of song which are appropriate with the purpose of teaching English to children. The characteristics are as follows: the song consists of words, phrases, or sentences with specific theme, the song should be repetitive, the song is contextualized, so it will have meaning, the song is sung with body movement, the song could be sung by other young learners outside the class, the song has happy tone and fast. In fact, the song that the researcher used in the teaching learning was effective because it possesses Suyanto’s (2001) criteria. The researcher chose one of the slow songs to help students learn more easily.

CONCLUSIONS

Related to the findings and discussions in the previous chapter, it was concluded that the use of songs to improve the teaching of speaking skill of grade nine A at MTs NU Pakis was successful. The use of songs could improve students’ speaking skill. In Cycle I, the procedures
of teaching speaking were listening to the song, repetition song, writing in group, reading in the seat. In Cycle II, the procedures were listening to the song, repetition song, writing in group, reading in front of the class. During the process of teaching and learning, the Nine A grade students seemed to be enthusiastic in learning speaking when the songs were used. The students were interested, especially when the researcher made them listen to the song in speakers and displayed the texts on the LCD projector. In addition, the students still remembered and were familiar of the sentences and the expressions related to the song. They usually sang by themselves or in a group displaying what they had heard in the class. In particular, they were singing “I wonder how, I wonder why, I wonder where they are” and “I try to read, I go to work, I’m laughing with friends, but I can’t stop to keep myself from thinking” in My love song. The explanations above conclude that this study was successful. It was also proven by the development of the speaking score result and the observation checklist result. Students’ mean score in cycle one was improving in cycle two. In cycle one, the mean score was 68.61% and it was increasing into 82.78% in cycle two. The observation checklist and field notes also proved the students’ active involvement in learning indicating that they were more active in cycle two, especially in learning by singing.

REFERENCES