



EFL Teacher's Eclectic Teaching Strategies in Teaching Speaking at the Tenth Grade of SMA Islam Athirah Bone

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe the strategies the English teacher utilizes in teaching speaking to the tenth-grade students of SMA Islam Negeri Athirah Bone. This study utilizes a qualitative research design focusing on interviews. The study was conducted with one English teacher as the research subject. The findings of the research indicate that the teacher utilized a variety of strategies, in this case, role-play, dialogue, group discussion, modeling use of media or technology, storytelling, peer teaching, simulation, interactive games, presentations, language games, think-pair-share, task-based learning, question and answer sessions, improvisation activities, use of authentic materials, and error correction and feedback sessions. The result also shows that integrating students' interests and using diverse strategies positively impacts their speaking abilities.

Keywords: *Teaching Strategies, Speaking, EFL*

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a complex skill that involves cognitive, social, and biological processes, such as coordinating the vocal cords, breath, and mouth movements. It is essential for communication, allowing people to convey ideas and understand others. Effective speaking requires words, tone, pace, and non-verbal cues. According to Ali (2020), speaking in English is critical for foreign language learners as it helps them express thoughts and understand messages. However, mastering spoken English is challenging, requiring careful organization, pronunciation, and grammar. Many students excel in writing but struggle with speaking due to fear, limited vocabulary, and pronunciation difficulties (John, 2020).

In Indonesia, high school students face significant challenges in English speaking skills. Limited exposure to English outside the classroom, differences in grammar and pronunciation between the Indonesian language and English, and a lack of motivation contribute to their struggles. Students often view English as just an academic

requirement, which reduces engagement in speaking activities. Additionally, large class sizes and limited resources hinder teachers' ability to provide personalized attention and effective lessons arranged to students' needs. Despite the challenges, innovative teaching methods offer opportunities to enhance EFL speaking skills. Teachers can use technology, interactive activities, and real-world simulations like role-plays, debates, and discussions to boost student engagement and provide practical contexts for applying speaking skills. Collaboration among teachers, policymakers, and stakeholders is essential to address these challenges. Professional development for teachers, adequate resources, and promoting English immersion outside the classroom are some steps that can be done. Teachers must choose strategies based on their students' needs (Turakalova & Marupove, 2021), creating positive environments with suitable materials.

The new *Kurikulum Merdeka*, introduced in 2021, encourages teachers to be more flexible and creative. It focuses on character building, competency development, and knowledge acquisition while fostering critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy. Schools can design curricula for local contexts while meeting national standards. One key teaching approach, Communicative language Teaching (CLT), emphasizes real-life communication and has become widely adopted by ESL students (Kurniawan & Sumani, 2021). CLT encourages meaningful, contextualized learning tasks to improve communicative competence (Sabina, 2019).

Regardless of the teachers' efforts in organizing lessons and using various strategies, the success of the learning process depends heavily on their chosen methods. Cahyani et al. (2023) assert that teachers are critical in providing strategies that meet students' educational needs, particularly in developing speaking skills. This study investigates the strategies used by a teacher, SMA Islam Athirah Bone, focusing on the combination of approaches applied under the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The study explores whether the teacher uses an eclectic approach to teach tenth-grade students, given the importance of speaking as a key skill in language learning.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative case study approach, focusing on the strategies used by an SMA Islam Athirah Bone teacher in teaching speaking to tenth-grade students. The research subject of this research is a highly experienced English teacher (coded TS). Besides this research was conducted at SMA Islam Athirah Bone in a class of 23 tenth-grade students, where an interview was conducted with the English teacher of that class

Data Analysis

The data of this research are analyzed using the data analysis method of Miles et al. (2014). The researcher conducted three steps: Data condensation, where the data was sorted to select the appropriate and suitable data for the research, removing the unnecessary data for the research; the second step is data display, where the data that has been sorted are organized and displayed; and the last step is Drawing a conclusion, where the researcher concluded the result of the research.

RESULTS

Eclectic teaching strategies used by the teacher in teaching speaking

Before presenting the percentage results for teacher and student talk, the researcher clarifies how these percentages differ based on definitions from Flanders (as cited in Hai & Bee, 2006). First, the percentage of teacher talk reflects the total class time the teacher speaks. This is calculated by dividing the sum of entries in columns 1-7 by the total number of entries in the matrix. Second, the percentage of student talk represents the total class time students speak, determined by dividing the sum of entries in columns 8 and 9 by the matrix's total number of columns.

The teacher's approach combined multiple strategies to enhance students' speaking abilities. Below are the key strategies, with detailed explanations and extracts from interviews with the research subject, in this case, the English teacher of SMA Islam Athirah Bone.

Identifying students' interests

Understanding what topics and activities engage students the most is essential for designing lessons that resonate with their interests and enhance participation

Extract 1. TS, July 25th, 2024

"I hold Q&A session with the students to find out what topics that they are interested in. From the results, I summarize several topics that the students like and align them with the lesson materials. By integrating topics, they enjoy the speaking lessons, students become more enthusiastic to participate in the lessons".

This approach demonstrates that teachers can significantly boost student engagement and enthusiasm by identifying and incorporating students' interests into the curriculum. Designing lessons around topics that students are passionate about can lead to more active participation and a more dynamic learning environment.

Think-pair-share and group discussions

Collaborative learning strategies like think-pair-share and group discussions enable students to share ideas and learn from one another, fostering a deeper understanding of the material. While not explicitly mentioned in the interview, these strategies can be inferred as part of the interactive and collaborative activities mentioned, which were observed directly by the researcher, particularly in fun activities and differentiated instruction. These methods can enhance communication skills and allow students to learn from each other's perspectives.

Task-Based learning and Role-playing

Task-based learning and role-playing involve students engaging in practical tasks or simulating real-life scenarios, making the learning experience more relevant and applicable.

Extract 2. TS, July 25th, 2024

"In one of my lessons on mental health, I provide time for students to engage in enjoyable activities that can improve their mood. Each student is free to choose their activity such as reading novels/comics, watching movies, listening to music, calling friends/family, or eating while chatting with friend. Then I ask them to compare their feelings before and after doing their fun activities."

This Task-Based learning example, where students choose an activity and then reflect on their experience, illustrates how real-world tasks can be incorporated into lessons to make learning more meaningful and relatable. Role-playing can also be inferred as a part of these activities, particularly in describing their feelings and experiences.

Language and Interactive games

Incorporating games into language learning makes the process more enjoyable and helps students practice their language skills in a low-pressure environment.

Extract 3. TS, July 25th, 2024

"Fun activities like games make students more enthusiastic. I often use 'Genially' to create game boards, and the speaking process that place directly in the classroom."

Using interactive games in language learning helps create a fun and engaging atmosphere that encourages students to participate actively. This approach reduces anxiety and fosters a positive learning environment where students can practice their language skills more freely.

Error correction Activities

Error correction activities focus on helping students identify and correct their mistakes, which is crucial for improving language accuracy and fluency

Extract 4. TS, July 25th, 2024

"If using 'flipgrid' game boards, or direct speaking sessions, I usually point out the errors to the students, such as in pronunciation, grammar, or words choice"

The systemic approach to error correction during or after speaking activities ensures that students receive immediate feedback, which is essential for language development. By addressing errors promptly, teachers help students refine their language skills and gain confidence in their abilities

Use of technology

Technology integration in language learning enhances the teaching process by providing innovative tools for assessment and practice.

Extract 5. TS, July 25th, 2024

"I usually use 'speech ace', through this website, I prepare questions for students, then students record their answers, which are automatically analyzed to get a score. Besides 'speech ace', I often use 'flipgrid' which allows students to record their speaking sessions using either audio or video"

Platforms like 'speech ace' and 'flipgrid' exemplify how technology can streamline learning by offering immediate feedback and flexible learning options. These tools make learning more accessible and allow students to engage with the material in various formats.

Authentic materials and media

Authentic materials such as real-life texts, videos, and other media expose students to language as it is used in real-world contexts. Although not directly mentioned, using "Genially" for game boards and other platforms like "Flipgrid" can be considered part of incorporating authentic materials and media, as they engage students with real-world tasks and scenarios. The researcher observed this directly.

Using authentic materials and media in language learning helps students connect classroom lessons with real-life language use. This approach enriches the learning experience by providing contextually relevant practice.

Peer teaching and feedback sessions

Peer teaching and feedback sessions allow students to learn from each other and receive constructive feedback, enhancing their understanding and language proficiency.

Extract 6. TS, July 25th, 2024

“In addition to differentiated instruction, I also often use peer teaching, where students with high level assist their peers who are at a middle or low levels.”

Peer teaching fosters a collaborative learning environment where students support one another's learning. This strategy helps lower-level students improve and reinforces the knowledge of higher-level students, making it a mutually beneficial approach.

Differentiated instruction

Differentiated instruction involves designing lessons to meet students' varying needs and abilities in a classroom.

Extract 7. TS, July 25th, 2024

“To address this, I usually implement differentiated instruction, where each student receives different treatment and targets according to their abilities”

Differentiated instruction ensures that all students receive appropriate support and challenges regardless of their proficiency levels. This approach is crucial in a diverse classroom, allowing students to progress at their own pace and achieve their learning goals.

DISCUSSION

The research findings align with previous studies, notably differentiated instruction, peer teaching, and technology integration. Differentiated instruction, as highlighted by Blaz (2024), allows teachers to modify lessons based on students' abilities, and the researcher found that TS's use of this strategy effectively enhanced student learning. Peer teaching was similarly validated by Yang et al. (2021), with TS' frequent use of this method fostering a collaborative learning environment where more proficient students helped their peers, reinforcing their understanding. The integration of technology tools like “speech ace” and “flipgrid” in TS' classroom supported Suvorova et al. (2024), who advocated for digital tools in language learning. These technologies provided real-time feedback and opportunities for interactive learning. These technologies provided real-time feedback and opportunities for interactive learning, thus improving students' speaking skills. Additionally, tools like Bamboozle were found to motivate students and increase engagement, as noted by Aeni et al. (2024).

However, the research also identified contradictions with some previous studies. For example, while Robertson and Padesky (2022) suggested that incorporating students' interests into lessons boosts motivation, this research found that interest-based topics did not always significantly improve speaking skills, particularly in exam-driven contexts. Another contradiction emerged in pronunciation improvement. This finding contrasts with the more optimistic view of technology's role in pronunciation improvement presented by Yang et al. (2021).

The research also linked these findings to key theories, particularly constructivism, communicative language teaching (CLT), and differentiated learning theories. TS' use of peer teaching and collaborative activities aligned with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD), reinforcing the constructivist idea that real-life language is essential for fluency. Furthermore, Ts' differentiated instruction mirrored Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory, which advocates for teaching methods tailored to individual learning styles.

Despite these connections, some findings deviated from theoretical assumptions. For instance, while emphasizing repetition and reinforcement, behaviorist approaches did not align well with the complexities of teaching speaking skills. Ts' approach, which emphasized peer teaching and engagement, proved more effective than rote learning alone. Cognitive overload theory was challenged, as some students found the integration of new technologies overwhelming, suggesting that cognitive demands need theory was called into question, as students in this study benefited from sustained support beyond the initial learning phases, indicating that the gradual removal of scaffolding may need to be more flexible.

The research also highlighted differences with other studies, particularly in the context-specific strategies employed by TS. Unlike broad, generalized methods found in other research, TS' strategies were designed for an Indonesian high school's specific socio-cultural and educational context, emphasizing the importance of adapting global teaching strategies to local environments. Moreover, the research depicted the teacher's role as a facilitator. Promoting student autonomy and peer collaboration marks a departure from traditional teacher-centered models commonly found in earlier studies. This shift towards a more learner-centered approach suggests evolving teaching paradigms and underscores the importance of teacher facilitation in enhancing student learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The research results indicate that the teacher adopted an eclectic approach, combining multiple teaching strategies to cater to the varying needs and interests of the students. This approach included integrating language games to reinforce vocabulary, employing Think-pair-share to encourage peer dialogue, and utilizing task-based

learning to align with students' hobbies. Additionally, the teacher implemented Q&A sessions, improvisation activities, and role-play to create real-life speaking scenarios. Using authentic materials enriched the learning experience by providing contextually relevant language exposure. This eclectic method of blending various strategies underscores the teacher's adaptability and commitment to fostering a dynamic and engaging learning environment.

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