

## Using Picture Series to Improve the Students' Ability in Speaking Narrative Text

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### ABSTRACT

The research aimed at the use of picture series to improve the students' speaking ability of tenth graders in narrative text. In accordance with the findings of preliminary study which showed that the students' speaking performance was low, the researcher chose speaking as the focus skill to be improved. The skill was chosen because the students faced many difficulties to perform this skill, such as the lack of vocabulary, the coherence in speaking, and the difficulty to express the ideas. The study applied a classroom action research that was conducted in two cycles consisting of five meetings. The subject of this research was 34 tenth grade students of SMAN 4 Malang. The findings of the research revealed that using picture series improved the students' speaking score in some aspects of speaking skills, comprising fluency, pronunciation, content, and coherence. Besides, it could make the student eager to be involved in the teaching and learning process.

**Keywords:** *picture series; speaking skill; narrative text; storytelling*

### INTRODUCTION

Related to the Indonesia current curriculum in senior high school, students are expected to master four basic skills in English which are Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading. These four skills are integrated in English learning activity as the competences that the students must achieve. To grade the level of difficulty in acquiring the skill upwardly, Speaking is in the top of the grade as the most difficult skill to acquire and perform. Richard and Renandya (2001) also assume that speaking is the most urgent skill because those who are considered as the ones who understand a language is the one who can speak the language.

Moreover, many students regard that to speak English is harder than write or read it. For instance, in speaking, the process happens in real time in which the people are there waiting for us to speak right then. Unlike reading or writing, it must be done simultaneously both the process of thinking and conveying. Also, in speaking we cannot revise the mistake we made as we can do in writing.

According to Harmer (2007), one of the reasons why speaking considered to be challenging is that the students are often reluctant to speak because they feel shy and are not predisposed to express their ideas in front of other people. In fact, many students just get a little exposure to English and can only use it in English classroom while outside the

classroom they speak their own native language. This kind of condition also makes speaking skill difficult to be developed.

Although the students have been learning English since they were young in elementary school, the researcher found there were many of them who still had problems in speaking English. Based on the preliminary study at SMAN 04 Malang in X Science 4, the researcher captured the students tried very hard to retell about certain past event in front of the class. They looked troubled to share their ideas freely and fluently. Some admitted that they were unconfident to express their ideas to their classmates because they were afraid to make mistakes in grammar. Moreover, the problems also came when they knew what to say but they were not able to express it.

Based on the information above, the researcher highlighted that the students experienced several problems in speaking English. Firstly, they really struggled with English since their vocabularies were not much and they rarely use it. Second, they were not confident to speak because the grammar was still poor or they still had difficulties to pronounce some specific words correctly. The third is the ideas were restricted to be explored and delivered to others. It affected their fluency in speaking. The next problem was they were not able to compose sentence in a right order. Sometimes the topic jumped out from one event to others or some parts were missing and forgot to tell. In this case, it influenced the coherence of the ideas in the students' speaking. Givon (1993) assumes that coherence is fundamentally not an objective property of produced text rather it is a process of comprehending. Coherence means that the listeners or readers can perceive what the ideas of the speaker or writer try to convey. In fact, when the students were asked to speak, they had many words in their mind but they were not able to form the words into coherent sentences.

Picture series is one of the solutions to cope the students' problem in speaking. This media can be used as the students' guidance in developing their speaking skill. Picture series is an illustration that can be used as two-dimensional representation of person, place or thing. It visualizes certain things which are far from us. In relation to the use of picture series in teaching, Gerlach et al (1980) assert that there are several benefits of using pictorial material; included picture series; they are; (1) pictures are very useful for presenting new grammatical and vocabulary items (2) pictorial material allows for meaningful; practice of vocabulary and structures presented by the teacher (3) pictorial material can also provide a stimulus for using the language at the reproduction and manipulation stage to speak, to read, and to write (4) pictures can be used for revision from one lesson to another as well as for long-term revision of vocabulary and structure (5) pictorial material can be used to supplement whatever textbook the teacher is using or whatever course the student have done using textbook (6) pictorial material is easy to collect, to make and to transport. In accordance with all benefits offered by picture series, the researcher decided to use picture series to cope the students' problem and increase their score in speaking performance. Hence, this study was expected to find ways in solving the students' problems and improving their skill in speaking.

## METHOD

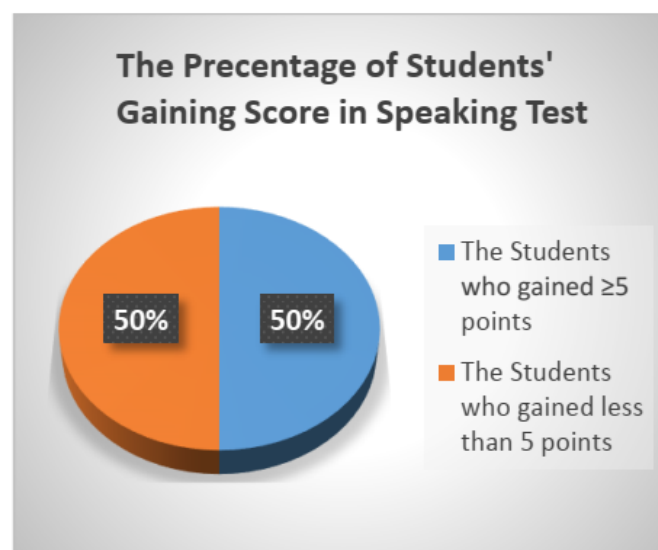
The type of this research is Classroom Action Research (CAR). Burns (2010) says that one of the purposes of conducting CAR is to identify problems or issues that the participants, who mainly include students and teachers, are recognized as problems which are needed to be solved. This is supported by Latief (2015) who states that Classroom Action Research focuses on strategy implemented in the teaching process to improve the quality of teacher's performance as well as students' achievement in learning English.

The research design used in this study is a cyclical process proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1998) which consists of four steps. They are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. According to them, to conduct a research using CAR design, firstly the researcher must identify the problem occurred in the classroom. Then, it proceeds to basic steps in the cyclical process of CAR. It is started with (1) planning the action. In this process the teacher prepares a proper strategy to be applied and developed in the study to solve the problem. The next stage is (2) acting, implementing the strategy which is proposed in the plan to try out whether it can solve the classroom problem or not. After that (3) observing, when the data about students' participation are collected. Then, the stage is followed by (4) reflecting, where the data are analyzed to find out whether the problem has been solved or not.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result in the first cycle revealed that there were only 17 students (50%) out of 34 students who improved their score. It indicated that the result of the first implementation did not meet the criteria of success which needed 75% of the student could gain 5 points after the implementation. The score of students' speaking score was important to measure the students' improvement whether it increased or decreased. Based on the research finding, the researcher could see that the students' speaking skill in narrative text improved. However, it was only 50% students who gained the 5 points after the implementation. It implied there were 17 students who could improve the score while the criterion of success said that it had to be 75% of the students. The percentage could be seen in the following figure:

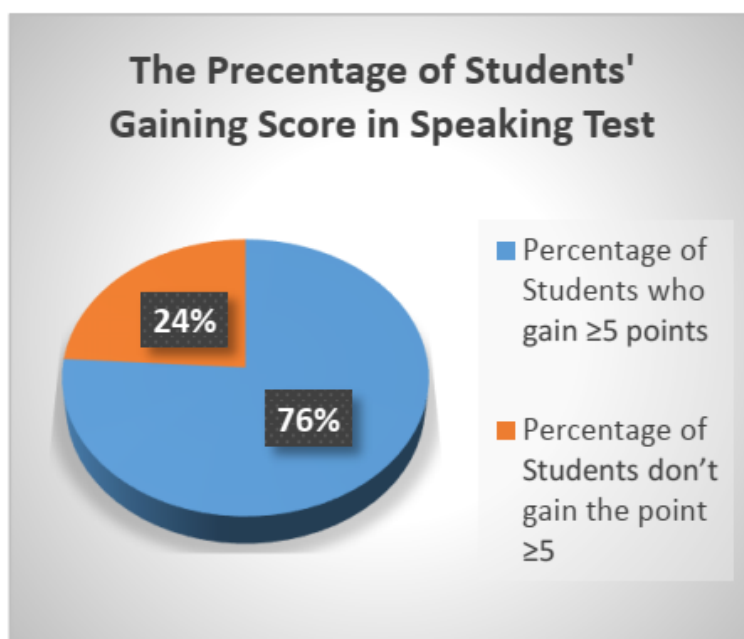
**Figure 1.** The Percentage of Students' Speaking Score (CYCLE 1)



Based on the percentage which didn't meet the criteria of success, the researcher decided to continue the research on Cycle 2. After the researcher revised the Plan and conducted the second cycle, the researcher gained another finding. The result in the second cycle revealed that there were 26 students (76%) out of 34 students who successfully gained  $\geq 5$  after the implementation of cycle 2.

According to the research finding in cycle 2, the researcher can see that the students' speaking score improved, also the number of the students who successfully gained the points on their score was increased. It was shown from the table above that 76% students gained  $\geq 5$  points. The percentage could be seen in the following figure:

**Figure 2.** The Percentage of Students' Speaking Score (CYCLE 2)



As presented in the figure 3.2 above, there was 76% students had improved their scores in speaking test, it indicated that the criterion of success had been achieved in this cycle. Hence, the researcher stopped the research. The complete score of each student can be seen in Appendix.

From the observation checklist, the researcher could see the quality of students' participation in each meeting. The result showed that the students' activities in the first meeting could be done excellently (80.5%). This result achieved the criteria of success. In details, among the whole activities in the first meeting, the students participated excellently in answering the brainstorming part and composing the characteristics of each narrative text independently.

In the second meeting, the students' participation improved from the previous meeting. It was 81.25% which also indicated as excellent participation and met the criteria of success. It can be perceived from how they participated in almost activities. They were all paying attention to the storytelling told by the teacher and arranging the series of picture

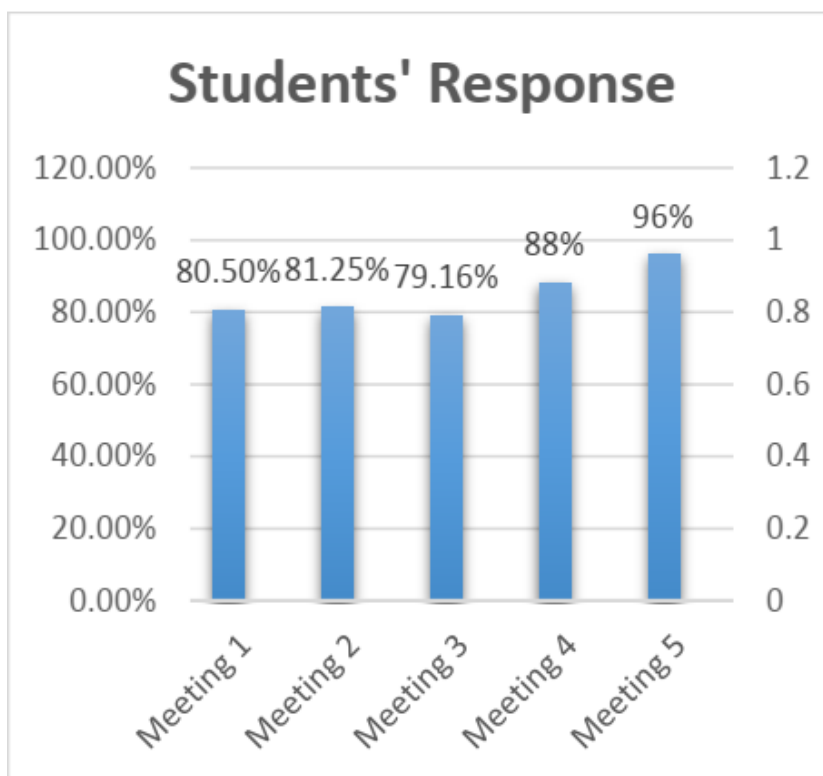
well. In addition, in practicing the storytelling with their pair in a row, it was also ranked as excellent.

The students' participation in the third meeting was decreased into 79.16%. Yet, it was ranked excellent and still met the criteria of success which was 75%. In details, the students did not pay attention to their friend performance. The reason was because they were busy to prepare their own performance, some were still memorizing the monologue while others were confused with their performance. However, they participated excellently when paying attention to the teacher's feedback.

The observation's result showed that the students' participation in the fourth meeting increased again. It was 88% (excellent). Their participation in watching the video and completing the caption of each series of picture was done greatly. The rehearsal of practicing storytelling in group was also great.

In the fifth meeting, the students only had to do the speaking test. The observers signed that the participation of the students was still excellent, that was 96%. Every student attended the class and the test run very well. They all listened and paid attention to the teacher's feedback. The students' participation during the use of picture series as the media combined with the storytelling is described in the following figure.

Figure 3. Students' Response



Based on the data presented in the above figure, the researcher could reflect and conclude that the students' speaking ability in narrative text improved. The field- notes and the observation checklist revealed that the percentage passed the 75%, it indicated that the percentage of both the students' speaking score and response had achieved the criteria of

success. It could be concluded for the student, the use of picture series combined with storytelling was an effective media to be employed in the teaching and learning activity.

## DISCUSSION

The researcher conducted this present study for two cycles. The purpose of this study was to improve the students' ability in speaking narrative text. In accordance to the problems faced by the students in speaking such as, the lack of the vocabulary, the anxious to speak in front of a lot of people, and the common one was feeling confused to express the ideas, the researcher proposed the use of media to overcome the problems. According to Hart and Hicks (2002), media are appropriate for triggering ideas, making difficult subjects more understandable, and for holding attention on important ideas. It might lead the students to remember ideas by becoming more involved with them. Therefore, the students were guided to use media, in this case was picture series, to dissolve their inhibition.

The researcher chose to use picture series because it was expected to help the students to generate and develop their ideas in good format, starting from beginning, development and ending. As stated by Chang (2009), pictures can provoke more powerful; association which enhance critical thinking and imagination than the words alone. By using picture series related to narrative text, it could stimulate students' ideas and make connections between the content of the materials, their imagination, and their real world. Hence, they got more ideas in speaking.

Furthermore, the findings of the research revealed that the students were more interested and relaxed using picture series while they were performing storytelling. They looked motivated during the learning process. This occurrence verifies the ideas proposed by Schwartz (2000) who asserts that pictures are great incentive for language production and can be used in many ways in the process of teaching. Schwartz stresses that "specifically, pictures contribute to: interest and motivation; a sense of the context of the language; a specific reference point or stimulus". It implies that the use of picture series in the teaching process is attractive and interesting. Thus, it can motivate the students to be more engaged and active during the learning activity. Additionally, as one of the problems the students face was felt difficult to express their ideas. One theory which could be the basis to cope the problem was proposed by Gerlach et al (1980), they affirm that one of reasons to use pictorial material, in this case picture series, in teaching is to provide stimulus for using the language at reproduction and manipulation stages to speak, to read, and to write. It verifies that picture series is the appropriate media to be used and applied to solve the students' problem. In brief, based on the findings, the researcher found that the use of picture series combined with storytelling were interesting and fun to be applied in the teaching learning process. It also could improve the students' speaking skill in narrative text. It had become the solution of students' problems in speaking performance and could improve students' score until it could pass the criteria of success set by the researcher.

Meanwhile, the students' respond toward the implementation of picture series as the media, combined with the story telling were positive. In the learning process they got encouragement, enjoyment, and interesting classroom atmosphere. As Shih and Gamon (2001) suggests that knowing students' attitude towards the way of teaching which is

implemented in their class is important since it plays a great role to their success in teaching. It could be one of the indicators to see whether the students are comfortable with the way how the teacher teaches and chooses the proper media in the process of teaching and learning. Regarding to this study, the data related to students' response to the implementation was observation checklist.

The observation sheets were given by the researcher to the observers in each meeting. It was used to spot the students' activity especially their participation during the implementation of the media on both cycles. The results of the observation were analyzed by the researcher to get a conclusion about the students' responses to the implementation of picture series combined with storytelling. The researcher found that the students were interested in the strategy. According the result of the observation and field notes, it could be concluded that for the students, the use of picture series combined with storytelling was interesting and contented strategy to be applied in the teaching and learning activity especially in teaching narrative story. It also could improve the students' speaking score.

To sum up with, designing the activity to teach is important as the way of teaching will influence the classroom activity. As Jones (2008) states that activity in the classroom could impact students' engagement in the process of learning. The students were actively involved in the classroom activity which was new for them thus the students could learn much about the material in the different way and improve their scores.

## CONCLUSION

Picture series is an interesting media to be applied in the activity of production skill such as speaking and writing. Moreover, if it is combined with storytelling, it would be the best strategy to assist the students. This media is powerful strategy to make the students more engaged and relaxed during the learning process. Through the use of picture series, the students are able to share their ideas and tell the story in sequence. In this study, the researcher involved picture series in all learning process, started from the part of brainstorming, main activity, until the assessment. Besides, the researcher also combined it with another technique, which was storytelling.

After analyzing the research findings, the researcher accomplishes that the use of picture series as media combined with storytelling has successfully improved the students' speaking skill in narrative text. There were 26 students (76%) out of 34 who magnificently improved their score at least 5 points. However, there were 8 students (24%) who did not meet the criteria of success. They improved their score but the point improvement was below 5 points.

In accordance to the research findings, the researcher points out some insights to both English teachers and future researchers. English teachers may use picture series not only as the media when the speaking test, but also use the media during the teaching and learning process. The researcher acclaims to the future researches to use the present research findings as the reference for conducting further research of the relevant topics. They may conduct other research about the use of picture series combined with certain technique in improving speaking skill also develop teaching methods used in this research as a way of making revisions to the weakness of this research.

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