IMPROVING STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE THROUGH GAMES

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Abstract. *Games can be regarded as central to a language teacher's repertoire and not merely a way of passing the time. Games provide one way of helping the learners to experience language rather than merely study it. They give the teacher an opportunity to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. It is crucial to note that communicative games have contributed a positive impact on teaching learning process. This also implies the communicative games expected to enhance students' enthusiasm and motivation. Clearly, it gives positive improvement on students' active participation, confidence and their fluency in speaking skill. In short it can be described that the strategy of teaching and learning creates good, enjoyable circumstances and reduces the boredom and stress of learning process.*

Keywords: *communicative game, speaking skills, ability to speak.*

Speaking is one of the basic language skills that have to be mastered by English foreign learners due to its significant and its use for communication. It is very important to be able to speak English regarding that it is the most commonly accepted language in the world so that it will be very beneficial for those who comprehend it not only to improve their knowledge and skills but also easier for them to get a job. More than that, they will not find it difficult to communicate and interact with people around the world when they travel (Gard & Gautam, 2015). However, in several Asian countries in which English is taught as a foreign language such as South Korea, Japan, Uzbekistan and some other countries in the Middle East, learners' behavior in classroom situation seems not working that it is hoped as it stated in The East Asian Learner Journal that learners in Asia are often afraid of making mistakes and being ridiculed in front of their classmates. Besides that, they may also respond in short phrases because they may not feel confident or because they are too shy to speak it out. In addition, young learners of English may also giggle when they are embarrassed or when they are unable to understand the lesson. I have found that there are many similarities and difficulties faced by the students in speaking English such as fear of making mistakes, fear of being laughed by their friend as they have no idea about pronunciation and grammar that they use. Besides, they are also not confident enough to express their idea and feeling hesitant due to the lack of vocabulary that they have. Then, they are also bored in learning English because the teaching-learning activities provided in a conventional way, for instance; the teacher asked the students to perform the text they have memorized. Furthermore, they also cannot speak based on their willingness because what they want to speak is structured by the teacher, in other words they just repeat the word that has been produced. Afterward, those problems make students get lazy or less ability to speak. Those cases are quite problematic considering that even though speaking is not included in final test, in daily teaching and learning activities it is involved in the scoring and become teachers' concern and consideration in determining whether or not the students pass the subject.

Communicative Games can be an alternative way to overcome students' difficulties in learning how to speak English. In fact, they can improve their speaking skills. However, talking about communicative games cannot be separated from those two terms;" communicative" and "game". The word communicative refers to the communicative approach in which teaching-learning activity avoids the concentration towards grammar and vocabulary but emphasizes on the significance of language function (Harmer, 200). In other words, these activities will involve students in real communication, where the achievement of their communicative task is more important than the accuracy of language they use. Therefore, it can give positive impact towards students' motivation and classroom atmosphere which in line with Michael J Wallace (1987), language games are used for increasing emphasis on the importance of motivation and the appropriate kind of positive effective atmosphere in the classroom. Briefly, it can be concluded that communicative game is a set of well-design activities which stimulates students' interaction in the classroom. These games require students to take part actively in classroom by speaking and writing in order to express their own point of view or give information. Then, their confidence will be automatically formed due to its concept in building habits of interaction.

By Gate (2003) says, "Speaking is a skill which deserves attention every bit as much as literary skills, in both first and second language. It is the skill students are frequently judged. It is also the vehicle par excellent of social solidarity, social ranking, professional advancement and business" (Jones, 1989). Furthermore, Jones (1989) defines speaking as a form of communication in which the effective conveyance of what the speaker says is very crucial. In line with this definition, Kush clarified for what is called as effective speaking as an utterance in a set of voices spoken by someone and understood by someone else (Kushartanti et al., 2005). It means that speaking is not as simple as we say something but more than that it is related to the meaning that is constructed so that people can understand what we are saying. As a complement, Brown added that the process of constructing meaning involves producing, receiving, and processing information (Florez, 1999). Another expert said that "speaking is intentional activity; it serves a purpose the speaker wants to realize" (Levelt, 1989). Therefore, speaking is somebody's aptitude that is uttered eagerly to make an expression for some reasons. Speaking is the presence of communication goal that has to be realized, for instance the speakers want to express wish and desire to do something; negotiate and solve particular problem; or establish and maintain social relationship with others. The ability to produce utterance (utterances) is not enough for being a good speaker because speaking is a complex skill that requires the simultaneous use of a number of different abilities that have to be mastered by language learners in order to be able to express their feelings and ideas appropriately. There are two elements of speaking which are necessary to be considered by the speaker as it stated by Harmer in his book "The Practice of English Language Teaching", the first is Language Feature which consist of several sub-elements as follows: a. Connected speech is the sounds modifying in producing utterance when people speak. It includes modifying (assimilation), omitting (elision), adding (linking r), or weakening (through contraction and stress patterning); b. Expressive device is the stress and pitch variation in producing utterance in order to convey the truth meaning of the messages meant by the speaker. It includes the variation of the volume and speed of the speech. By using these devices people will be able to show what and how they are feeling to whom they are talking to; c. Grammar and lexis: People live in different ways, places, and environments causing different mindset too. Therefore, teachers need to supply their students with various phrases for different function in their speaking classroom activities. For

instance, how to express agreement and disagreement, surprise expression, and etc., so when students have an occasion which demand them to use those expression in different stages of an interaction, they know what expression they have to use appropriately; d. Negotiation language: This is the speech clarification. It is the use of language of how to clarify and to show of what a speaker means. Sometimes, people do not hear or understand what other people are saying. Therefore, it is necessary to have an appropriate language of how to clarify to avoid mistakes between the speaker and the listener (Harmer, 2001). Another element that is needed to be acquired by a successful speaker regarding its importance and preference towards speaking skills is Mental or social processing that involves language processing, interaction, and information processing; a. Language processing: effective speakers need to be able to process language in their own head and put it into coherent order, so that it comes out in forms that is not only comprehensible but also conveys the meanings that are intended; b. Interaction: most speaking involves interaction with one or more participants. This means that effective speaking also involves a good deal of listening, an understanding of how the other participants are feeling, and a knowledge of how linguistically to take turns or allow others to do so; c. Information processing: quite apart from our response to others feelings, we need also to be able to process the information they take us the moment we get it. The longer it takes for the penny to drop the less effective we are as instant communicators. However, it should be remembered that this instant response is very culture-specific, and is not prized by speaker in many other language communities (Harmer, 2001). From those explanations, it can be summarized that by mastering language features and mental or social processing as two elements of speaking that have to be considered when they want to speak effectively, they are able to show what and how they are feeling, not only they are able to know what expression they have to use appropriately but also they can know how to clarify in order to avoid mistakes between the speaker and the listener, and the most important thing is they can convey the meanings that they are intended.

Conclusion

The study revealed that using communicative game as means of instruction improved the students' achievement and results of speaking skill. Students enjoyed their lesson and got more motivation, interest and confidence through their learning. Therefore, communicative game should be applied as designed activities in teaching speaking skills. It is recommended that the study should be preserved and extended to other language skills.

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