

The Use of Multimodalities in Speaking Class

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Submitted : 29 August 2020

Revised : 25 January 2021

Accepted : 25 January 2021

Abstract :

Teaching and learning process for speaking class was quiet challenging during the pandemic since the students could not directly work in pairs or groups. This article described the action research conducted in the speaking class of the 7th graders of SMP Negeri 8 Semarang, year 2020. There were 32 students as the population and the study was conducted in August 2020. The research focused on the transactional dialogue that should be acquired by the 7th graders. The distance learning policy applied in the region forced the teacher to find a way to create an effective speaking class. Multimodalities were then applied to help the students understand dialogues as well as practice their ability in speaking. The use of technology enabled the students to work in pairs and record their dialogue. The result of the cycle was promising since there was a significant improvement in the students' speaking compared to the pre-cycle. However, there were 12 (twelve) students failed to gain the passing grade and based on the questionnaire there were some students found difficulties in recording their dialogue. The second cycle was then conducted based on the reflection of the first cycle. The results of the second cycle show that all of the students passed the passing grade and there was an improvement in the students' speaking performance. The technical problems were also solved. The use of multimodalities to improve the students' speaking skill of SMP Negeri 8 Semarang was proved to be effective.

Keywords : multimodalities, speaking class, and distance learning

Published by:



Perkumpulan Dosen Muslim Indonesia - Sulawesi Selatan

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Introduction

Laver (1994) stated that speech is the prime means of communication and the structure of the society itself would be substantially different if we had failed to develop communication through speech. The statement clearly supported the government idea that students should master speaking at least as has been stated in the curriculum.

According to the curriculum published by the government, there are two kinds of speaking competences that should be achieved by the students; the transactional and interpersonal dialogues and the monologues related the genres. To work on the transactional and interpersonal dialogues, the students need to meet work at least in pairs. However, during the Covid19 pandemic, the students have limited even no chance to work in pairs or groups due to the government's policy of distance learning.

The condition was a kind of challenge for the writer to facilitate the students with the chance to use the language that they had already learned. Moreover, most of the 7th graders coming to SMP Negeri 8 Kota Semarang did not have enough background of English since they didn't learn English when they were in elementary school. The writer concerned this very condition and sought a way to solve the problem.

Through discussion with colleagues and joining the many webinars conducted by universities and other parties concerning about the language teaching and learning, the writer decided to make use of multimodalities under the distance learning circumstance. The distance learning which the writer meant here is when students are separated from teachers and peers and that the method of study is where teachers do not meet in a classroom but use the internet to have classes.

Gee (2003) has outlined the relationship between literacy and learning. According to Gee, language is not the only important communication system in digital media, since visual symbols and signs are as significant as written or spoken language. Gee stresses that in specific domains, content is generated, debated and transformed via distinctive ways of thinking, talking, valuing, acting and, often, writing and reading. Gee places importance on situated and embodied learning contexts outside school and institutionalized domains.

Based on the problems above and the opportunity stated above, the research questions of this study were: 1) How would the multimodalities be applied in the speaking class of the 7th graders of SMP 8 Semarang; 2) To what extent would the students' speaking ability improved by the use of the multimodalities; 3) What would be the students' response to the use of the multimodalities in their speaking class?

In line with the research questions of this study, the objectives of the study were: 1) To describe the application of the multimodalities in the speaking class of the 7th graders of SMP 8 Semarang; 2) To measure the effectiveness of the use of the multimodalities in improving the students' speaking ability; 3) To describe the students' response to the use of the multimodalities in their speaking class.

Method

Since the aims of the study was to improve the quality of the teaching-learning processes, the classroom action research was chosen to be applied in this study. The CAR procedure proposed by Johnson (2007, p. 75) was applied in which a cycle covering the action of (1) planning, (2) implementing, (3) observing, (4) reflecting is used.

The population of the study was the 7F graders of SMP Negeri 8 Semarang having 32 students. The choice of the class was because the writer was teaching in this class. A collaborator was working with the writer too as the observer.

The instruments used in this study were: (1) Observation Form, (2) Performance Test, and (3) Questionnaire. The observation form covered the information about how the teacher conducted the teaching and learning process, while the performance test was conducted to measure the students' speaking ability after each cycle. The questionnaire was given to the students to know their response towards the treatment.

To determine the mean score for each test, the formula below was used (Sudjana, 2002, p. 112):

$$M_{x,y} = \frac{\sum_{x,y}}{N}$$

Where:

M = sample mean

x = individual score from pre-test

y = individual scores from post-test

N = number of participants

$\sum$ = accumulated total

Meanwhile, analysis of the results from the questionnaire used the percentage formula suggested by Sugiono (2007, p. 43) as follows:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100 \%$$

In which:

P = Result expressed as a percentage

F = the frequency

N = number of cases

First of all, the teacher introduced and the used the multimodalities such as WA, Google Classroom, YouTube, and the game-based application in teaching speaking. The multimodalities used for treating the students in this research were both synchronous and asynchronous such as audios, videos, printed materials and google meetings. The teacher instructed the students to watch a video about introduction on a YouTube channel and observed the expressions used in the video. The students were also instructed to listen to models of conversations by accessing the listening materials provided by the textbook lent by the school. The students autonomously did the process. The teacher checked the

students progress by having a google meeting. The meeting was meant to make sure that the students had accessed the materials and that the students had not got any difficulties in understanding the materials as well as producing the similar expressions posed in the materials they had accessed.

To measure the students' competence in doing the dialogue, a performance test was conducted. Since the students didn't meet each other, they were instructed to use any technology they were comfortable with to record their conversation. The following was the rubric used to measure the students' speaking competence:

Table 1. Rubric for Students' Speaking Performance

Speaks Clearly			
Excellent (40)	Very Good (35)	Average (30)	Poor (25)
Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, and mispronounces no words.	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, but mispronounces one word.	Speaks clearly and distinctly most (94-85%) of the time. Mispronounces no more than one word.	Often mumbles or can not be understood OR mispronounces more than one word.
Vocabulary			
Excellent (30)	Very Good (25)	Average (20)	Poor (15)
Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Extends audience vocabulary by defining words that might be new to most of the audience.	Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Includes 1-2 words that might be new to most of the audience, but does not define them.	Uses vocabulary appropriate for the audience. Does not include any vocabulary that might be new to the audience.	Uses several (5 or more) words or phrases that are not understood by the audience.
Uses Complete Sentences			
Excellent (30)	Very Good (25)	Average (20)	Poor (15)
Always (99-100% of time) speaks in complete sentences.	Mostly (80-98%) speaks in complete sentences.	Sometimes (70-80%) speaks in complete sentences.	Rarely speaks in complete sentences.

Source: <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/>

Results

The following is the result of teaching and learning observation:

Table 2. Results of Teaching and Learning Observation

STAGES	ASPECTS	Cycle 1 %	Cycle 2 %
Opening	Apperception and Motivation	93,75	100
	Explaining the Competence and Plan of Activities	87,5	100
Main Activity	Mastery of Subject Matter	100	100
	Implementation of Learning Strategy	93,75	96,88
	Implementation of Scientific Approach	89,29	92,86
	The Use of Learning/Media Resources	90	100
	Involving Students in Learning	100	100
	The Use of the Appropriate Language in the Classroom	100	100
Closing	Reflection, Assessment, Further Tasks	87,5	93,8

The table reveals the teaching and learning process from the opening, to the main activity and the closing. The results show that in the first cycle, the mastery of the subject matter, the involvement of the students, and the use of language instructions were maximum. While others can be categorized as well conducted. The second cycle data shows that the teacher improved her performance in every aspect of the stage.

To measure the effectiveness of the treatment, a speaking performance test was conducted in each cycle. The following is the result of the tests.

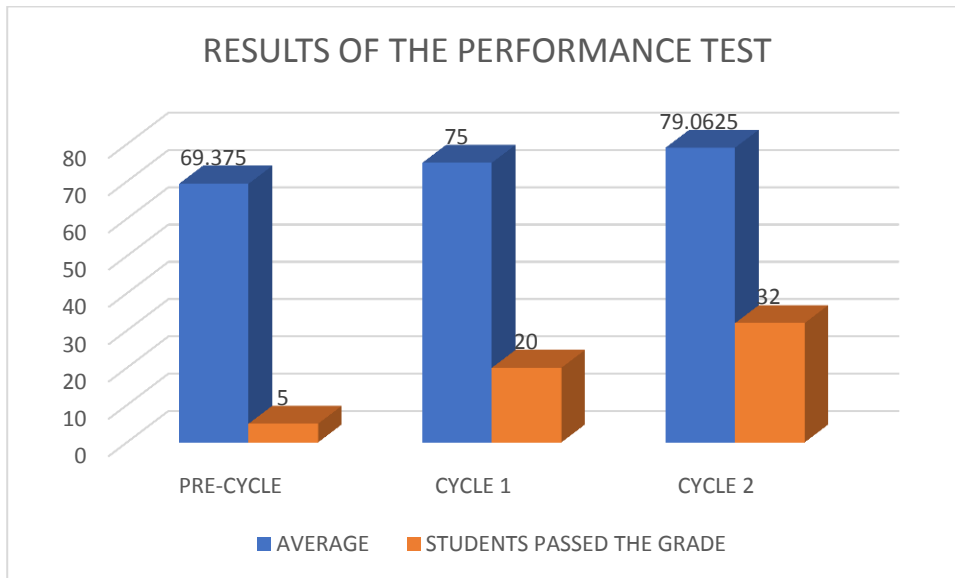


Chart 1. Results of the Performance Tests

From the chart above, we can see that in Cycle 1, the average score gained by the students was 75 and the number of the students passing the grade (KKM) was 20. A significant raise in the average of the score and the number of the students passing the grade occurred compared to the result of the pre-cycle.

However, since there were 12 students who still could not reach the passing grade (KKM), the next cycle or cycle 2 was conducted. The result of the cycle shows that the average score gained by the students was 79,063 and all students successfully passed the grade (KKM).

To reveal how the students feel about the treatment, in this case the use of multimodalities in the speaking class, a questionnaire was given to the students. The following is the responses given by the students regarding to the treatment.

Table 3. Results of Questionnaire

No	Statement	1		2		3		4		Number of Students
		C1	C2	C1	C2	C1	C2	C1	C2	
1	I like watching videos the teachers instructed me to watch.	0	0	2	0	2	4	28	28	32
2	I like listening to the audios the teachers instructed me to watch.	2	0	3	0	5	10	22	22	32
3	I like having a conversation with my partner.	3	0	5	0	10	18	14	14	32
4	I can record the conversation easily.	5	0	5	2	10	20	12	11	32
5	I like getting feedback from my teacher about my speaking practice.	0	0	0	0	2	2	32	30	32

Note:

C1 = Cycle 1

C2 = Cycle 2

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly agree

Discussion

Teacher's Paedagogy Competence

Before the 1st cycle was conducted, there was a briefing between the observer and the teacher. They discussed the details of the planning. The aspects and the indicators of each aspect were discussed to make sure that the goal of the cycle gained. During the reflection the observer and the teacher also discussed the things that should be improved by the teachers.

One of the main problems was when the students encountered difficulties in accessing the audio attached in the google classroom by the teachers. A lot of students failed to access it using their cellphones. Fortunately, the school supported the teaching and learning process by supplying the students with new books provided with listening activities which could be easily accessed using Code Reader. The students just had to download the code reader from play store. The students then scanned the code posed on the pages and they could listen to dialogues done by native speakers.

Another problem was when some students got difficulties to record their dialogues with their partner. The problem was solved by allowing the students to have discussion in WAG. They learned from those who had already succeeded to record their dialogues. As the problems in the first cycle had been solved, the teaching and learning process was improved in the second cycle.

Students' Speaking Performance

To measure the students' performance in speaking using the multimodalities applied by the teacher, a performance test was conducted. The results of the first cycle show that the students there was a significant raise compared to the results of the pre-treatment. The average score was above the passing grade (KKM), and there were 20 (twenty) students passed the grade. However, the results were not satisfying because the percentage of the students having passed was only 63%.

The second cycle was then conducted to improve the condition. The results of the second cycle show that the students' speaking performance was improved and all students passed. The feedback given by the teacher on the first cycle encouraged the students to improve their performance.

Results of Questionnaire

The results of the questionnaire given to the students show that the students embraced the use of multimodalities in the speaking class in a positive manner. Although at the beginning there were some challenges such as the difficulties in understanding the audios and videos and also in recording their dialogues, at the second cycle the students could resolve the problems. Even they stated that they were fond of the videos and the audios assigned by the teacher to watch and listen to. There were only 2 (two) students among 32 (thirty two) who still found difficulties in recording their dialogue. The two students were a pair-work. The problem occurred due to the technical problems related by the gadgets used. The teacher then allowed the students to use a separated-recording technique in which each student solely recorded his/her voice based on their parts and then combined the chunks into a full dialogue. It was more complicated though.

Conclusion

The use of multimodalities in a speaking class of the 7th graders of SMP 8 Semarang proved to be effective. As the students were digital natives, they adapted to the technologies offered. They were able to access the videos and audios as well as the printed material with ease. Feedback given by the teacher was also meaningful in encouraging the students to do their best. Their speaking ability was improving through the treatment conducted.

The results of the study might be different from class to class depending on the students' social-economic and demographic background. However, teachers can still find benefits from the study by omitting some parts or by modifying the treatment. Teacher needs to make sure beforehand that any instructions applied are accessible by the students.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to extend her gratitude to the principal of SMP Negeri 8 Kota Semarang, Mr. Soetadi, S.Pd, M.Pd for the chance, support and endorsement. Special thank goes to her dear students, collaborator, and her family for their endless support during the writing of this paper.

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