Optimalizing Students' Involvement in Speaking (Fitting into ESA Model)

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Abstract

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This study aims to optimalize students'involvement in speaking through ÉSA'(Engage, Study, and Activate).

The classroom action research was applied and 23 students of English Language Education Department, State University of Yogyakarta involved. Observations and in depth-interviews were used to collect data.

Engage technique was employed, that was through discussion activities at the beginning of each meeting. In the **Study** and **Activate** stages the students learnt any relevant language issues from the lecturer's explanation and modeling. To activate learners, all of them were involved in role plays. The same techniques were still implemented in the second cycle with some modification, and the lecturer gave handouts at least a day before the meeting. The research yields several findings: the learners were more active and creative in developing conversations, and could pay more attention to the lecturer as well as in using learning strategies. The time consumption to explain was also relatively shorter.

1. Introduction

The aim of teaching speaking is to enable students to express their ideas, opinions, and feelings in the target language fluently, appropriately, and intelligibly. Because they have to express their ideas in the target language (English), there might be problems faced by the students, such as (1) the lack of knowledge on language aspects and language functions, (2) the lack of fluency in expressing their ideas, and (3) being unconfident in expressing their ideas. These factors may cause students' low involvement in the speaking activities particularly in the classroom.

The teacher is responsible for helping students to solve those problems by designing or constructing a language teaching learning process in which the students can involve actively in all speaking activities in the classroom. ESA (Engange, Study, and Activate) is one of teaching models to motivate the students to get involved

actively in the teaching learning process. During the activities, applying ESA, the students will have a lot of opportunities to practice speaking in the classroom and they will be more confident because they will also learn or study the language aspects (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) of the target language.

1.1. Teaching speaking

According to Spratt, et. al (2005:35) teaching speaking means developing learners' speaking skills by focusing regularly on particular aspects of speaking (fluency, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and body language). In addition, the objective of teaching speaking is the students are able to express their feelings, opinions, and ideas in the target language (English), use English expressions, such as greetings, apologizing, introducing, etc. (Brown and Yule, 1983:27). Expressing ideas and feelings in the target language (English as a foreign language) is not as simple as expressing those in the native language. The students may find difficulties. Thornbury (2005) states that the difficulties in speaking in the target language can be caused by: (1) the lack of knowledge of language elements, e.g. grammar, lexis (vocabulary), and pronunciation, (2) less opportunities to practice speaking, and (3) the low motivation and confidence to speak that may be caused by uninteresting and unfamiliar topics.

In line with their statement, to develop speaking skills, the learners need to be motivated, be exposed to language, and to be given chances to use it. What teaching model, then, needs to be present in a language classroom to help students learn more effectively. Harmer (1998) proposed a teaching model which consists of three elements, i.e. Engage, Study, and Activate, which is called ESA.

1.2. Engage, Study, and Activate

1.2.1. Engage

This is the point in a teaching sequence where the teacher tries to arouse the students' interest or motivation, including their emotion. Activities and materials to engage students can include games, stimulating pictures, telling dramatic stories, etc.

1.2.2. Study

Study activities are those where students are asked to focus on language aspects, such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. In this stage the teacher can explain the grammar of the new language, ask students to practice the pronunciation of some words, and ask students to practice using pronouns in sentences.

12.3. Activate

In this stage the students do exercise or activities which are designed to get students using language as freely and communicatively as they can. The objective is not to focus on language construction and/or practice specific bits of language but to use all which may be appropriate for a given situation or topic.

1.3. Alternatives of the sequence of elements ESA

One type of teaching sequence takes students in a straight line: first the teacher gets the class interested and *engaged*, then they *study* something, and then they try to *activate* it by putting it into production. However, in presenting the ESA elements, the teacher may take students not in a straight line. It will depend on the students' language proficiency levels, topics, lesson objectives, and lesson time. The followings are alternative in presenting the elements Engage, Study, and Activate.
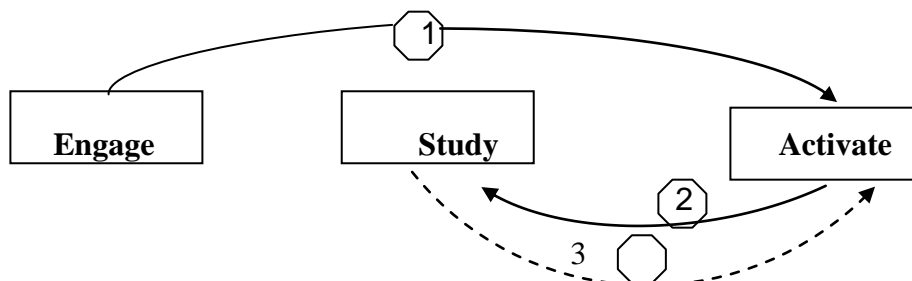
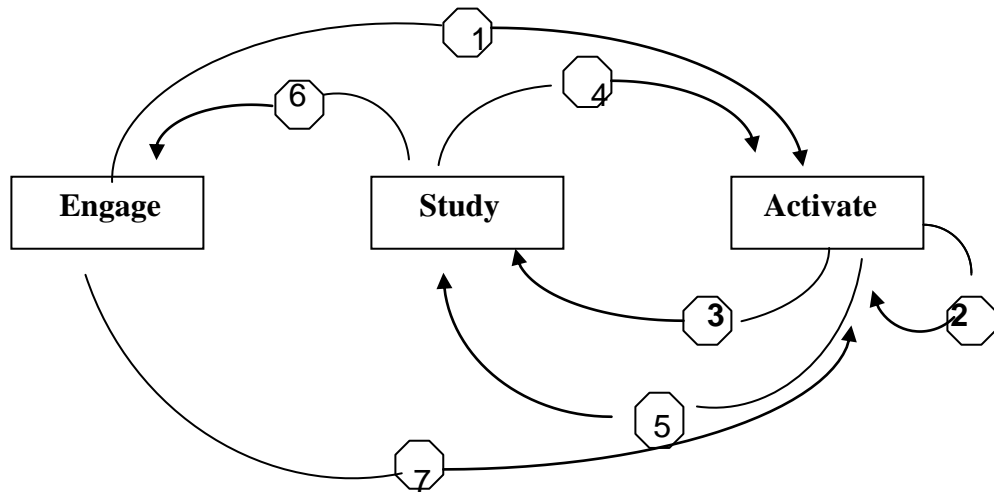1.3.1.Model 'Straight Arrows' (for elementary students)

E-S-A

| Engage | → | Study | → | Activate |
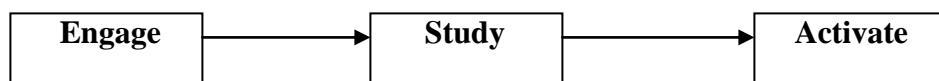
1.3.2. Model 'Boomerang'

E-A-S-A

| Engage | | Study | | Activate |

1.3.3. Model 'Patchwork'

1.4. Research Question

How can teaching model 'ESA' improve the students' involvement in speaking activities in the classroom?

2. Research Method

2.1. Research Design

It is classroom action research. It includes four essential momentums, i.e. planning, action, observation, and reflection. The data in the reconnaissance are used to design the research planning.

2.2. Research Subjects

There were 23 students and two lecturers (one was the lecturer, and another was the researcher/observer) of English Education Department in the Academic Year 2007/2008, participating in this research.

2.3. Data Collection

Observation and in depth-interview were used to collect data. The data were in the forms of words written in the field notes and interview transcripts. The questions on the in depth-interview were based on the result of the observation.

3. Findings

3.1. Problems found in the observations and interviews

3.1.1.The students cannot develop their own conversation naturally and spontanouesly, for example a conversation in a business party, because before the practice they were not introduced with the advanced view about the activitiy and the context of the activity, such as the difinition, participants, topic of talk may include, what the participants may usually talk and do in a business party, etc. Referring to the model ESA, the lecturer did not apply the first stage (i.e. Engange) to arose the students' interest, background knowledge, and to show the context in which the activity occurs.

3.2. There were several grammatical mistakes (e.g. *sold* was said *selled*, *Where does the artist come from?* was said *Where do the artist came from?*), and unapropriate language (e.g. in formal situation *Would you please introduce yourself?* was said *Please introduce!*)

3.3. It can be assumed that before the students practiced the new language or materials, the lecurer did not give any explanation and examples in what context a certain language exponent is used formally or informally, there were still the students who used the language unappropriately.

3.2. Implementation of Actions

3.2.1.Cycle 1

In the first cycle, the first model of ESA (ESA Straight Arrows sequence) was applied. At the beginning of each lesson or *Engage*, the lecturer and the students did a question-answer activity or discussion about the topic of the lesson. The aim of this activity was to make students interested in learning and aware of the context in which the new language is used by giving them general views of the topic. The questions were relevant to the topic, for example 'talk show'. The questions were about the definition of 'talk show', some talk shows that the students had watched on TV, who were involved in the show, what topics were presented, etc.The students could

develop their ideas in the dialogue easily and rapidly, and talk more various topics during the role play because before talking about a certain topic, the students with the teacher discussed it in *Engage*. It is also supported by the information given by the students in an interview.

Researcher (R)   : *Kalian tahu definisi* talk show*? Meeting?*
                                 (Do you know the definition of talk show? Meeting?)
Student (S)   : *Kalau* meeting *itu pertemuan antara beberapa orang, lebih dari dua orang. Kalau* talk show *itu ada* audience*nya.*
                                 (In a meeting, there are some people involved, more than two people. In a talk show, there are audience.)

The lecturer also said the same thing as follows.

Lecturer (L)   : I'm so happy that the students have more understanding of the language and are more active,...

In addition, through getting involved in role plays, the students also got opportunities to practice the new language.

In the second element, *Study*, using OHP the lecturer explained the language functions in a talk show and the language aspects of the expressions. The transperancy was clearer so all students could see and read the information there. This information involved the various expressions/exponents to express the same idea, the levels of formality, the appropriateness of the language expressions used in appropriate contexts, and models to use those expressions in a talk.

Because before practicing the speaking, for example the talk show, they were explained about the language functions in the talk, the exponents to express those functions, they could use some expressions appropriately and fluently. However, some expressions were still unappropriate. For example, in a formal talkshow, the expression 'Question?' was still used to invite the audience to ask questions that it would be more appropriate to say 'Any question please?' or 'Now, I'd like to invite you to ask questions?' Moreover, most of the students (who were the hosts of the

show) in closing the show said 'I think it's enough' that it is supposed to say 'This is the end of the show. Thak you for coming, and Good Bye.'

And, during this stage,while the lecture was explaining, most of the students wrote the expressions or language exponents on their note books. So they paid less attention on the lecturer's explaination and focused on the transparancy. In addition, they did not respond the questions from the lecturer. Here is the data from the field not:

> The students are working in groups and sitting in a small circle. Some of them are *membelakangi* the white board so they are difficult to read the transparancy. Most of them are writing while the lecturer are explaining. Some lecturer's questions are not responded by them.

Even, the lecturer said that she was very tired that she had to explain all materials.

> Lecturer (L)   : I'm so happy that the students have more understanding of the language and are more active, but actually I'm so tired after teaching. Moreover, in one day I have to teach three times or more.

Then, through role play, the students were activated *(Activate)* to practice the new language. The procedures were first, in groups of 3 or 4 they discussed what they would perform. After that they had to perform a talk show in front of the class. This activity could be used to monitor or check their understanding and skills in expressing their opinions, feelings, or ideas.

Feedback from the lecturer was given after the lesson. Grammatical mistakes, mispronunciation, and mistakes in using appropriate expressions were discussed at the end of the lesson and sometimes showed again in the transparancy.

From the reflections of actions implemented in Cycle 1, it can be concluded that the activities from Engange to Activate could improve the students understanding on the topic presented and students'involvement. Moreover, the points to talk the role play or talk show were more various. They could develop an iterative talk show because at the beggining of the lesson, the students and the lecturer disecussed anything relevant to the topics. So they knew how to use the language, when, in what context, an so on.

In addition, through the lecturer's explanation, in Study activity, about language aspects and various language exponents as early as possible, the students could use them appropriately.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that in Cycle 1 there were some improvement in the teaching and learning process, by implementing the 'Straight Arrow' Model of ESA. But, there were still some problems. All are mentioned below.

1. First, the Engage was applied. The activities involved were discussion and question-answer activity about the topic/ the new language that would be learnt. Through these activities the student could develop their ideas during the role play, so the conversation in the role play ran more naturally.

2. The Study through the explanation of language aspects like the language exponents to express certain language functions helped students express their ideas in certain and varied exponents/expressions. However, the use of transparency to explain those exponents was not effective, wasted of time, and lessened the students' concentration.

3. Although the handouts were given at the beginning of the lesson, the students often forgot the expressions and how to use them particularly in the converstations.

3.2.2. Cycle 2

In the second cycle, some activities or actions done in Cycle 1 were still implemented with some modifications. In Engage, discussions and question- answer activities were still done. After that, the lecturer in Study still explained the new materials. However, a day before the lesson began, the students were provided with the handouts, and they had to read and study them before coming to the classroom. It would help the students have more preparation and give them more opportunities/ time to do more speaking practices. Furthermore, the lecturer could save her energy so that she could spend her time to walk around monitoring the students' participation in group discussions and understanding.

In the first cycle, model 'straight arrows' was implemented. And, in Cycle 2 there was a modification. During Activate activities, sometimes the lecturer gave some explanation on language aspects or language functions, or if she found the students find difficulties or make mistakes, she would ask them to check their handouts. It is model 'Boomerang'. It can be seen from the following field notes.

There are strong arguments among the students in a discussion.

L   : Well, who is the chairperson?
S   : (A student is raising his hand)
L   : Look at your handout. Check again how to keep order!
S   : Ok. We can't speak at once. Mr. Ambivalent, would you like to speak first?

There is a student who wants to respond the other's opinion.

S   : No...no...no... I mean...
L   : Mbak…please read again the handout! How to express your disagreement?
S   : I respect your opinion, of course, however….
L   : Yeah great! Before that you can raise your hand first.

When the discussion is over, the chairperson just keeps silent.

L   : Have you found the solution?
S   : Yes.
L   : OK. Now the chairperson, close the meeting.
S   : (Just keep silent)

L	: Look at the copy!
S	:I declare the meeting closed. Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen.
L	: Good!

From the data above we can see that the students' involvement particularly in expressing their opinions increased. Moreover, by checking the handouts, they would be able to use the new language more accurately, fluently, and intelligibly.

After the lesson, there was a small talk between the researcher and the lecturer. In that talk, the lecturer expressed her happiness to the lesson that day : *"I'm happy with my class today.* From her spontaneous expression, it can be concluded that at the end of Cycle 2, there were some improvements in the quality of teaching learning process in Speaking Class, including the improvement of the students' involvement.

4. Conclusions

4.2. Through discussion and question-answer activities, fitting into element Engage, the students'involvement and creativity in developing their performances in speaking increased.

4.3. Reading and studying handouts provided to the students at least a day before the lesson could improve the students'understanding to the materials, attention and concentration on the lecturer and the lesson, reduce time consuming and energy to explain the new materils so the students would get more opportunities to practice the new language in more communicative activities.

4.4. The modifications of model ESA could also improve the students interest, involvement, and understanding on the new materials.

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