

# Improving Student's Speaking Skill Through Communicative English for Specific Purposes

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**Abstract** — The study discusses more about the important role of English for Specific purposes which is needed by the students in uttering the language performance. The objective of this research is to improve the students speaking skill through the learning of English for specific purposes based on the communicative competence. The communicative competence plays the main role in supporting the students' performance in using the English for specific purposes in various professional activities. The researcher uses a classroom action research to conduct the research. Classroom action research is a research which provides problem solving for improving the quality of teaching given to action in the classroom (Burns, 2010:2). The implication of the study should give a great motivation to the students to perform their English speaking skills communicatively. The students, hopefully, will communicate English actively and feel happy in using the English as a means of communication.

**Keywords** — English For Specific Purposes, Communicative Competence, Classroom Action Research.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is considered as difficult and hard language skill to be practiced to other language skills. It is also the skill which the students will be judged upon the real situation. It is the important skill that the students have to master as they will use it in daily interaction. Many language learners think that mastering speaking ability means mastering the language itself. These learners define whether fluency and accuracy in speaking are the ability to converse with others skills (read, listen or write). They regard speaking as the most important skill they can acquire in oral communication. Brown (2001: 268 -269) proposes focus aspects of speaking skills, namely fluency, accuracy, pronunciation and vocabulary. Accuracy focuses on the use of correct grammar and vocabularies while fluency is the ability to speak smoothly and clearly. The common complaints of the students find in the teaching of speaking are lack of vocabularies and they have understood what the teachers said but they find difficulties in giving feed back or response to the teacher talks about. Another complaint that the students say is that the classroom situation is not communicative. They, sometimes, feel bored and just keep silent whenever the teacher asks.

In order to minimize the problems of the teaching of speaking should be taught in attractive and communicative activities. Harmer (2001:348-352) proposes six classroom speaking activities, namely acting from script, communication games, discussion, prepared talks, questionnaires, simulation and role play. One of those activities is acting from script. The students will communicate through certain theme or topic. To cover the need of the student to be more active, the teacher, then,

make the class into a communicative English for specific purposes (ESP). The ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner, especially to help the students to master the language used at the workplace.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1 Speaking Aspects

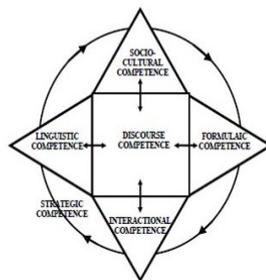
Speaking is an important part of English teaching and learning. For many years, Nunan (2003:49) says that teaching speaking has been undervalued and English teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition drills or memorization of dialogues. More, he adds that speaking is very challenging because the students have limited opportunities to use the target language outside the classroom. However, today's globalization era needs that the goal of teaching speaking should improve students to use communicatively to follow the social and cultural rules in each communicative circumstances, that is, communicative speaking at workplace. Brown and Yule (1983:27) say that the objective of teaching speaking is to enable the learners to express their feelings, opinions, and ideas in the target language (English), use English expressions, such as greetings, introducing, offering the meals (at the restaurant), welcoming the guest (as the receptionist), etc.

Nunan (2003:54-56) defines some principles for designing speaking teaching techniques. They are: being aware of the differences between second language and foreign language contexts, giving students practice with both fluency and accuracy, providing opportunities for students to talk by using group work or pair work and limiting the teacher talk, planning speaking tasks that involve negotiation for meaning, and designing the classroom activities that involve guidance and practice in both transactional and interactional speaking. Moreover, Richard (2006:9) says that what is needed to use language communicatively is communicative competence.

### 2.2 Communicative Competence

To communicate people need a language to express their ideas and feelings because the primary function of the language is as a means of communication. People need to communicate in order to express ideas, find information, and etc. Communication will succeed when there is no misinterpretation between speakers and hearers. The speakers must be aware of what they are doing, because they have certainly tried to understand what the speakers mean. Communication is effective if the purpose of the communication can be accepted well by both speaker and hearer and they have the same perception of what they are talking about. In order to communicate successfully, the speaker must have communicative competence.

According to Celce-Murcia, et al. (1995) the communicative competence covers (a) discourse competence; it refers to competence refers to the selection, sequencing, and arrangement of words, structures, and utterances to achieve a unified spoken message. The sub-areas of discourse competence are cohesion, deixis, coherence, and generic structure; (b) linguistic competence. It refers to linguistic aspects of phonological, lexical, morphological and syntactic; (c) sociocultural competence. It deals with the speaker's pragmatic knowledge, i.e. how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication. It describes the three aspects, namely sociocultural factors, stylistic appropriateness and cultural factor; (d) strategic competence. It refers to specific behaviors or thought processes that students use to enhance their own L2 learning. It includes cognitive, metacognitive and memory related; (e) interactional competence. It describes about actional competence, conversational competence and non verbal/paralinguistic competence; and (f) formulaic competence. It refers to those fixed and prefabricated chunks of language that speakers use heavily in everyday interactions.



Gambar 1. representation of communicative competence in Celce-Murcia et al. (1995: 10)

### 2.3 English For Specific Purpose

ESP is a relatively new discipline within Applied Linguistics that bids a new learner-centered approach to English language teaching whose methodology is based on the specific needs of the learner. Kennedy and Bolitho (1984: 3) point out that ESP is based on „an investigation of the purposes of the learner and the set of communicative needs arising from these purposes“. ESP is learning and learner oriented, with a conception and preference for communicative competence. Hutchinson and Waters (1994:16) described that English for specific purposes can be further subdivided into two main types of English for specific purposes differentiated according to whether the learner requires English for academic study or for work or training (EOP/EVP/VESL: English for Occupational Purposes/English for Vocational Purposes/Vocational English as a Second Language.

Organizing the English for specific purposes is very important step to achieve a satisfying goal in the course. The term 'specific' in ESP refers to a specific purpose for which English is learnt and teacher should be familiar with. Moreover, Hutchinson and Waters (1992: 22) described that the language description for ESP involve questions, e.g: What topic areas will need to be covered?, What does the student need to learn?, What aspects of language will be needed and how will they be described?. Dudley-Evans and

St. John (1998:145-146) discuss criteria for English for specific purposes course design and put forward useful steps for ESP teachers and course designers to consider. They list the concerns surrounding course design in the form of the following questions:

1. Should the course be intensive or extensive?
2. Should the learners performance be assessed or non-assessed?
3. Should the course deal with immediate needs or with delayed needs?
4. Should the role of the teacher be that of the provider of knowledge and activities, or should it as facilitator of activities arising from learners expressed wants?
5. Should the course have a broad focus or narrow focus?
6. Should the course be pre-study or pre-experience or run parallel with the study or experience?
7. Should the materials be common-core or specific to learners study or work?
8. Should the group taking the course be homogenous or should it be heterogeneous?
9. Should the course design be worked out by the language teacher after consultation with learners and the institutions, or should it be subject to a process of negotiation with the learner?

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design applied in this study is classroom action research (CAR). It is a practical study that is used to increase the quality of teaching and learning activity. CAR focuses on problem solutions, personal problem of the teachers themselves. Anne Burns (2010:2) defines action research as the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it. It aims to feed practical judgement in concrete situation. The fundamental aim of action research is to improve practice rather than to produce knowledge. Action research can be conducted by teacher researchers, principles, school counselors, or other stakeholder in the teaching and learning environment to gather information in order to gain effective positive changes on educational practice (Mill, 2003:5). The classroom action research employed in this study followed a series of steps or in cycles as proposed by Kemmis & Mc Taggart (1988:11) which basically comprises four stages: plan, act, observe, and reflect.

Prior to the implementation of the CAR, the study did through procedural step which begin with the preliminary study in search for identifying the real problems in the teaching and learning English. Suyanto (2008) states that a preliminary study starts from sense of dissatisfaction of the present practice which bears problems of teaching and learning. The problems are identified, analyzed and formulated to search for alternative solutions.

#### a. Planning

Preparing the lesson plans or teaching scenarios, instructional materials and media for the teaching of speaking through communicative English for specific purposes and setting up the criteria of success.

#### b. Observing

Collecting data about the effects of the implementation of

communicative English for specific purposes in teaching speaking and evaluating the criteria of success and data source based on the implementation.

*c. Implementing*

Carrying out the teaching learning process based on the lesson plan in teaching speaking through communicative English for specific purposes.

*d. Reflecting*

All relevant data related to the the effects of the strategy are analyzed accordance with the criteria of success and the result of reflection of the first cycle is used as the basis of making decision whether the action is continued to the next cycle or stopped.

**IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

*a. Research Finding of Cycle I*

The situation in the classroom during the teaching and learning process before using communicative English for specific purposes was pasive and fed up. Students had low motivation and they did not have any positive attitude as the learning mostly about memorization. The planning of cycle I was devised ahead to the implementation stage. The planning was established as the response to the preliminary study. This cycle covered six meetings. Each of the meeting started with *pre activity, whilst activity, and post activity.*

*For example:*

**MEETING 1**

*a) Pre activity*

Pre activity was done to arouse the students’ interest. Beginning the class with greeting the students and following with simple questions. All the questions were answered by the students. The questions mosly about the tourism and hotel as it was the English for specific purposes. One of the students was asked what he knew about tourism.

*”tourism takled about travelling. Last year I have a study tour. I go to Bali when I was in Senior High School.....I am never forget my experience.”*

The pre activity was ended by giving appause to that student who was able to tell the class with his knowledge although he was not fluent in speaking.

*b) Whilst activity*

In the main activity, the student presented of introducing his/herself. It was then followed by a small talk and questioning about the his/her introduction.

*“My name is Maaruf, I come from Kendal, I have one brother and I am very happy. I am 18 years old and I love you all...”*

After giving applause to Maaruf, the teacher performed the role model of how to introduce ourselves in a very communicative way.

*c) Post activity*

Finally, the class was ended by asking the students to continue how to introduce themselves in a communicative wasy as the example given and to keep practicing at home.

**MEETING 2**

*a) Pre activity*

In order to arouse the students’ motivation, the activity was started by reviewing the previous materials. The questions were formulated in the teaching and learning activities.

*b) Whilst activity*

Discussing the previous task was letting the students to continue the performance in speaking activity indicating the solution of the problems of the fluency and accuracy. This activity was done in group of two. The class was then continued by comprehending the whole performance, identifying the vocabularies and grammar of their content of speaking.

*c) Post activity*

In the last section of meeting 2, the researcher gave the students reinforcement to what they did. It was aimed at motivating the students to keep learning. Asking the students’ opinion and experience about the class that day was done as a reflection for future performance.

Based on the result of the observation during the implementation of the sratgy for six meetings in Cycle I, it showed that the average percentage of the students’ involvement during the speaking process achived 74.4% or fair level. However, the researcher and observer appreciated the students’ performance with fulfill the criteria of fair fluency and accuracy. In terms of language spoken, fluency, accuracy and content, it can be categorized well.

The reflection phase was done after all data during the teaching and learning process and the result of the students’ speaking were performed. Referring to the criteria of success set up in the study, the researcher formulated three main aspect to analyze to the teaching learning speaking through a communicative English for specific purposes. They were students’ involvement towards the class activities, the students’ achievement in speaking performance, and the average scores they achieved.

Table 1 The recapitulation of Cycle I

Meeting	Percentage	Category
1	75%	Good
2	75%	Good
3	87.5%	Good
4	54.5%	Fair
5	66.7%	Fair
6	87.5%	Good
Average	74.4%	
Criteria of success	75%	
Successful/Fail	Fail	Do the next cycle

*b. Research Finding of Cycle II*

In the cycle II, many revision were made. Since the action of cycle I had not yet met the criteria of success in which the effect to the action did not give a significant change on the students’ speaking ability. Buiding the students’ knowledge upon fluency and accuracy was done through strengthening the students’ mastery on grammar and vocabularies and also the bravery of participation in the speaking class. Group work of two or four was modified into pair work. It was done following the students’ demand

through the replies on the questionnaire of cycle I. Treating the students personally was done to help the students be active and brave to speak English communicatively. The teaching learning activities of cycle II were arranged through four meetings.

Analysis of the action was intended to discuss the findings during the implementation of the strategy. The analysis was based on the findings derived from the data obtained from the observation checklist, field notes, and questionnaires address to the students. The result of analysis became the basic reflection to determine whether the action was continued to next cycle or not by considering criteria of success formulated in the beginning of the study.

After cycle II ended, it was found that the students' awareness towards speaking process increased through the modification of the strategy in cycle II. It was indicated by the facts that the students' involvement during the teaching and learning process was quite high. The results of the students' response to questionnaires showed that their motivation in learning speaking by using a communicative English for specific purpose, classically, was high. The other finding was that most students looked active and brave to proceed the speaking class. As a result, they were so enthusiastic to do the task given by the teacher.

Referring to the students' performance, the researcher found that the students had similar errors as they made in the previous cycle. However, the students' performance on cycle II were much better than those they did in cycle I. Analysis on the criteria of success was done after analyzing the collected data of the implementation of the strategy in the teaching and learning process and the result of the students' activity in cycle II.

Table 2 The recapitulation of Cycle II

Meeting	Percentage	Category
1	87.5%	Good
2	75%	Good
3	67%	Fair
4	80%	Good
Average	74.4%	
Criteria of success	75%	
Successful/Fail	Successful	Stop the cycle

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### a. Conclusions

Based on the research findings and discussions of the study, it can be inferred that the ability of the LPK students in speaking skill was improved through a communicative English for specific purposes. The speaking process approach keeps the students brave to express their ideas and experiences in the real situation. Speaking process gives the students opportunity to experience meaningful interaction to share and communicate their ideas and the use of

communicative English for specific purposes implemented in this study has a positive impact on the improvement of the students' speaking skill. The implementation reveals some strength of communicative English for specific purposes and bravery of speaking process,

- (1) communicative English for specific purposes generate the ideas and experiences,
- (2) it helps the students share the ideas into well manner communication,
- (3) learning community gives the students chance to share and peer correction for correctness in grammar, vocabularies, fluency and accuracy.

In short, communicative ESP is ideal in the teaching of speaking through speaking process of fluency and accuracy. So, the use of communicative ESP could effective to improve the students' competence in teaching speaking.

### b. Suggestions

In line with the research findings, suggestions are addressed to the teachers and students of English, and future researchers. For the English teachers, it is recommended that they use communicative ESP model to improve the students' ability in speaking class. The students are recommended that they practice speaking in various topic of real situation at workplace because it has been proven in this study that communicative ESP inspire the students to express their ideas and experiences and have brought them to be brave in speaking. The other researchers are invited to conduct further research based on the findings on this study to develop better strategies in the teaching of speaking.

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## **AUTHOR'S PROFILE**

The author was born in Semarang on November 5, 1980. She is now also the student of post graduate program at Semarang State University. She learns the English for specific purposes as she knows that English is needed by all the students when they work at certain jobs.

She is a lecturer at Faculty of Language and Culture at University of 17 August 1945 Semarang. She has done several researches about English as a foreign language in her country Indonesia, especially in her hometown Semarang, Central Java.

Dewi, M.Pd has joined the professional membership of TEFLIN in Indonesia. This community discusses more about the English language, English literature and English teaching through the annual seminar.