



**THE USE OF PROBLEM BASED LEARNING TO IMPROVE
STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY
(An Experimental Study to Second Grade Students of Darul Ulum
Islamic Boarding, Banda Aceh)**

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ABSTRACT

Speaking skill is one of the basic language skills that has important role for oral communication. This study attempts to find out whether the implementation of Problem Based Learning (PBL) could enhance the students' speaking skill at Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding, Banda Aceh. The population of this study was the students from the second grade of students at Senior High School Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding, Banda Aceh. The sample of this study was the students in class II-IPA I as experimental group and class II-IPA II as control group. Through the quantitative method, the writer analysed the data by means of t-test. The result shows that there was a significant difference in the students' speaking skill taught by implementing Problem Based Learning. The students' mean of pre-test's score was 51.64. Then in post-test, the mean score of the students was 63.64. In other words, problem based learning has successfully enhanced speaking skill of the II-IPA I students. Therefore, Problem Based Learning may be one of the appropriate teaching methods to improve students' English-speaking ability as it gives a chance for students to relate themselves with real-life issues that require real-life solutions.

Keywords: *speaking, teaching speaking, problem based learning.*

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INTRODUCTION

In language learning, the four skills are important to be mastered by language learners; they are complementary to one another. Ur (2009, p. 120) said that among the four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing, speaking seems to be the most important skill. People who know a language are often referred to as the “speaker” of that language, as if speaking includes into all other kinds of knowing. Thus, speaking is one of the skills that must be taught as a part of learning English.

Teaching speaking has come into major focus in many language programs, and it is undeniable that teaching strategies can influence learning outcomes. According to Permendikbud (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan) (2016 p. 166) teaching speaking skill is implicitly stated in core and basic competence (KI-KD) of senior high school syllabus. In the core competence number 7.2, it is stated that the eleventh grade in the first semester must be able to express interpersonal communication, transactional, and functional about his/her self, family, people, and imaginative objects relevant to everyday life at home, school, and society.

Based on the results from a preliminary study at Senior High School Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding, Banda Aceh on April 24, 26, and 27 in 2019, the researcher found that some students could not speak well. There were some factors affecting the students’ difficulty in speaking English. First, the students needed more opportunities to practice speaking because the teachers spent a lot of times teaching reading and structure. As a result, the speaking skill was inadequately taught or was not taught at all. In fact, speaking as a skill needs extended practices. The students cannot speak well without transforming their English knowledge into oral practice.

Second, students were not interested in speaking because some English teachers still used conventional methods in teaching speaking. For example, the teachers still promoted the students learning English through teachers’ explanation of the materials, the teachers gave the students some examples of conversation and asked the students to practice the conversation in pair in front of the class, and the teachers asked students to memorize the conversation. Thus, this method was not effective because students would easily forget the words and the materials if they learned and practiced different topics.

Related to the problems mentioned above, an applicable method of teaching English is required to be implemented by English teachers in connection to teaching English at senior high school. Teachers can adopt many methods in teaching speaking and there are many highly effective methods in teaching and learning process that have been invented in recent years such as Total Physical Response, Audiolingual Method, and Communicative Language Teaching (Richard and Rodgers, 1999). In this research, one of the methods that is considered effective in teaching English speaking is Problem Based Learning (Henceforth called PBL).

Teachers should provide a method or technique to help students reflect on their language experience and practice. Dewey (1938, as cited in Hmelo-Silver, p.236) argued for the importance of practical experience learning in this method. It is a teaching method that students learn by solving problems and reflecting on their experiences. This method is well-suited to helping students become active learners because it situates learning in real world problems and makes students responsible for their learning.

There are research findings related to this study. These findings might be useful for this research. The first one was conducted by Khusain (2016). This study was classroom action research. The result of this research shows that the implementation of PBL could improve the students' oral communication competence in using the language aspects. The second study was conducted by Karyuatry and Irawati (2014). This article reports on a study intended to improve students' speaking ability using PBL strategy so that the students can pass the passing grade.

The reason above has motivated the researcher to implement this method to overcome problems students faced in learning speaking at Darul Ulum Islamic boarding. Based on such an assumption, the researcher is interested in doing an experimental study using Problem Based Learning for the second-grade students of senior high school Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding, Banda Aceh.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Definition of Speaking

Speaking is one of the essential skills in English. It is a skill that cannot be avoided in any circumstances. Brown (2007, p. 267) describes an interactive process in making something meaningful which of course involves processes such as producing, receiving, and comparing

information in speaking. The context is influenced by its form and meaning. For example, what topics are being read, what kind of environment it is being discussed and what the purpose of the conversation itself. In the process of interaction, benefits and feedback from each other is acquired from those who are involved in it.

A key part of speaking class is providing feedback to students. Harmer (2001, p. 250) says when students generate language and see how it is generated, this is called the acquisition process which is often said to be the input output process. Some of the input come from students themselves because they are language learners, and also from people who communicate and use the language with us.

A productive skill in which people produce words or convey messages orally is speaking skill. It is closely related to receptive skills. As Harmer (2001, p. 251) shapes in many situations both productive skills and receptive skills that are combined in practice. Conversation between two or more people is a combination of listening and speaking, in which an understanding of what has been said is needed to be able to understand what the next participant said.

Also, in educational setting, speaking is a main tool for teaching learning activities (Azadi, Aliakbari & Azizifar, 2015). Next, Zyoud (2016) stated that speaking skill is crucial because it is able to determine students' language proficiency. Besides, speaking is potential to develop reading and writing skills, as through mastering speaking skill the person will be able to gain more literacy in communication (Houssain, 2015).

Based on this explanation, it can be said that the process of sharing with others such as knowledge, interests, opinions, ideas is kind of speaking. The process in conveying of ideas, opinions, and feelings is important. And it becomes the main goal in the speaking process in which the speaker's idea can be understand to the listeners.

The Principles of Teaching Speaking

According to Bailey and Nunan (2005), they have been classified five principles of teaching speaking. It will be explained below:

1. Be aware of the differences between second language and foreign language learning contexts.

The target language is not the language of communication in society is the foreign language context (for example, studying English in Japan or studying French in Australia). Learning speaking skills is very challenging for students in the context of a foreign language, because they have little opportunity to use the target language outside the

classroom which is certainly one of the obstacles in learning a foreign language.

Meanwhile, a second language context is the language in which the target language is the language of communication in the community such as English in England or Spanish in Mexico). Second language students include refugees, international students, and immigrants. Even in some countries in Asia have adopted English as a second language. In that context, people who learn languages have more opportunities to use English outside the classroom.

2. Give students practice with both fluency and accuracy.

In language lessons – especially at the beginning and intermediate levels. Learners must be given opportunities to develop both their fluency and their accuracy. They cannot develop fluency if the teacher is constantly interrupting them to correct their oral errors. Teachers must provide students with fluency-building practice and realize that making mistakes is a natural part of learning a new language.

3. Provide opportunities for students to talk by using group work or pair work, and limiting teacher talk.

Pair work and group work activities are very useful for increasing the amount of time students speak the target language during lessons. One further interesting point is that when the teacher walks out of the conversation, students take on a different speaking role that the teacher usually fills (such as asking questions or offering clarification). In this case the teacher is not much involved in the learning process, the teacher is only a facilitator.

4. Plan speaking tasks that involve negotiation for meaning.

Research shows that learners make progress by communicating in the target language because interactions involve trying to make someone understand and make us understood by others. This process is called negotiation of meaning. This involves checking to see if you have understood what someone said, clarifying your understanding, and making sure that someone has got your point.

5. Design classroom activities that involve guidance and practice in both transactional and interactional speaking.

Speaking activities in the classroom need to realize both interactional and transactional goals, because language learners must speak the target language in a transactional and interactional setting. As we know, when we talk to someone outside the classroom, this activity aims for interaction or transactional activities.

Then, communicating with someone for social purposes is interactional speech. This includes the process of building social relationships. Meanwhile, transactional speech includes the way to solve something that involves negotiation and cooperation.

Based on the explanation above, the principles in number 2 and 3 related with PBL. In implementation, the teacher should give opportunities for the students to think critically and get the answer of the problem or learning issue that given by the teacher. Not merely that, the students can practice speak in front of the class to present the answer. The teacher only guides them during in progress of teaching and learning process.

Problem Based Learning

A proper teaching technique for speaking class can lead students to develop their speaking skill with the problem relates to their daily life is very important to improve their speaking ability. An instructional approach where students learn by solving problem; to find a way out of something is Problem Based Learning. The problems are authentic tasks and are solved in the form of social and contextual aspects. Students rely on their current knowledge of the problem at hand, since this really helps them solve problems and also formulate the strategies that will be taken in solving the problem. The application of this approach is applicable in this current study of English referring to Stanford University Newsletter on Teaching (2001, p. 1).

Moreover, students collaborate in small teams to explore the presented problem situation during PBL. Savin & Howell (2004, p. 3) state that through this exploration students are expected to examine gaps in their own knowledge and skills in order to decide what information they need to acquire in order to resolve or manage the problem. The problem is created to be solved as a trigger for students to develop the ideas. In addition, Othman and Shah (2013, p. 1) delineates that Problem Based Learning (PBL) is an approach that involves no teaching; students learn by solving problems that are carefully constructed by the teacher according to the course syllabus assigned to them throughout the semester.

Students find it easier when they face and solve the problem which is not far different from their real lives. Furthermore, Harun et. al (2012, p. 6) stated that PBL focuses more on developing students as independent learners compared to traditional lectures which encourage students to be fed by lecturers and it improves the teaching and learning process.

Students are required to be creative and independent in the learning process. It offers opportunity to provide continuous stimulation for them to engage in the task.

Furthermore, Baden and Major (2004) explain that PBL is an approach in which the students to develop metacognitive skills and to expect students in use reasoning abilities to solve complex problem. Tan (2003) says that PBL includes the life-wide learning goals of self-directed learning, information mining skills, collaborative - team learning reflective and evaluative thinking skills.

On the other hand, Torp & Sage (2002) said the PBL is a powerful strategy for curriculum, instruction and assessment that enrich foundations both in experiential learning theory and philosophy at the professional school level. Delisle (1997) explained that "the problem-based learning can work well with all students, making ideal strategies for heterogeneous classroom where students with mixed abilities can pool their talents collaboratively to invent a solution" (as cited in Tan 2003, p. 30).

In consequence, the problem-based learning is an approach can develop students' abilities in learning, students learn to find the information based on the real-world problems, and learn from their experience to work in group and how to solves some problems.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Instrument

In collecting the data for this study, two instruments were used namely tests and a questionnaire.

1. Test

Tests were used to find out the data about the students' achievement in speaking. Test has given to students in both experiment and control class. It used to measure students' speaking ability before and after the implementation of the PBL method. For this reason, there were two types of tests used as research instruments, they were pre-test and post-test. Pre-test was to identify students' initial ability before experimental teaching. In this study, the writer used an oral test to assess the students' speaking performance.

2. Questionnaire

A questionnaire was also distributed for students in the experimental class. This instrument was to know students' responses to

the implementation of PBL in the teaching of speaking. The writer used closed-ended questionnaire where the answers have been prepared for the questions. The questionnaire consists of fifteen questions related to the implementation of the method. The students have responded to each on the four-point scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The choices were representing the degree of agreement of each respondent.

Technique of Data collection

In collecting the data the researcher administered a pre-test and a post-test. In the first meeting, he conducted the pre-test which is aimed at knowing the students' initial performance in speaking. Then, the treatment was given in the subsequent three meetings.

Technique of Data Analysis

The researcher took some steps in analyzing the data. To analyze the results of students' speaking ability, the researcher used a speaking assessment rubric which contains five aspects of speaking skill, namely pronunciation, accuracy, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary, (Brown, 2004, p. 140).

Then, in examining the hypothesis, the data from the experimental and control group have been determined and compared using the statistical procedure of t-test. As we know, the level of significance degree for this social research was $\alpha=0.05$. So, the criteria of measuring the hypothesis were if $t\text{-test} < t\text{-table}$, H_a accepted. On the contrary, if $t\text{-test} > t\text{-table}$, H_o accepted. ($\text{Sigma}/P > 0.05$), H_o accepted; ($\text{sigma}/P < 0.05$), H_a accepted.

Furthermore, in answering the second research question. The scoring system of questionnaires carried out based on the Likert scale. The data processed using the percentage formula as recommended by Sudjana (2009, p. 43) as follows:

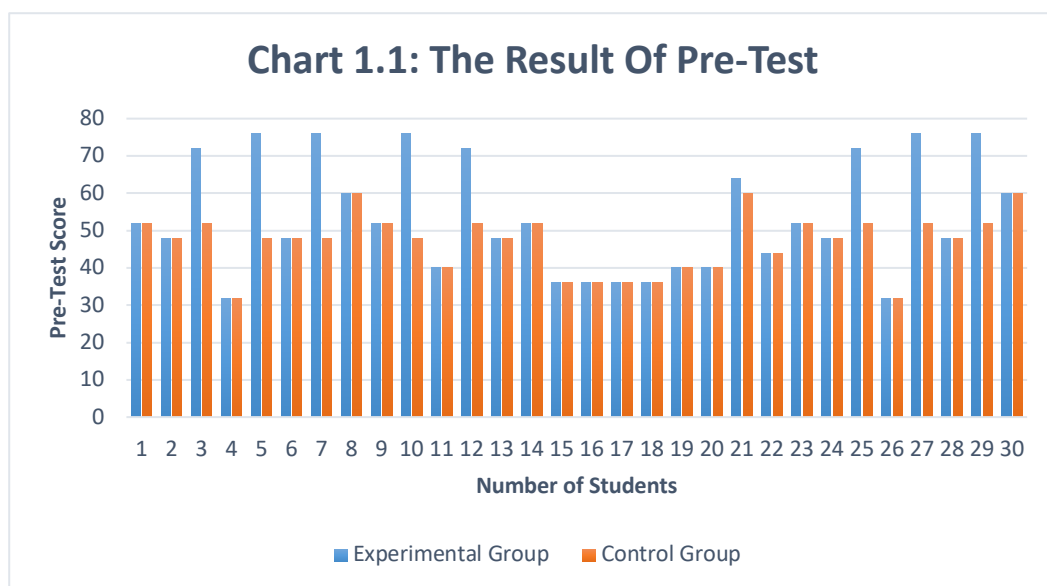
$$P = \frac{f}{n} \times 100 \%$$

Whereas:

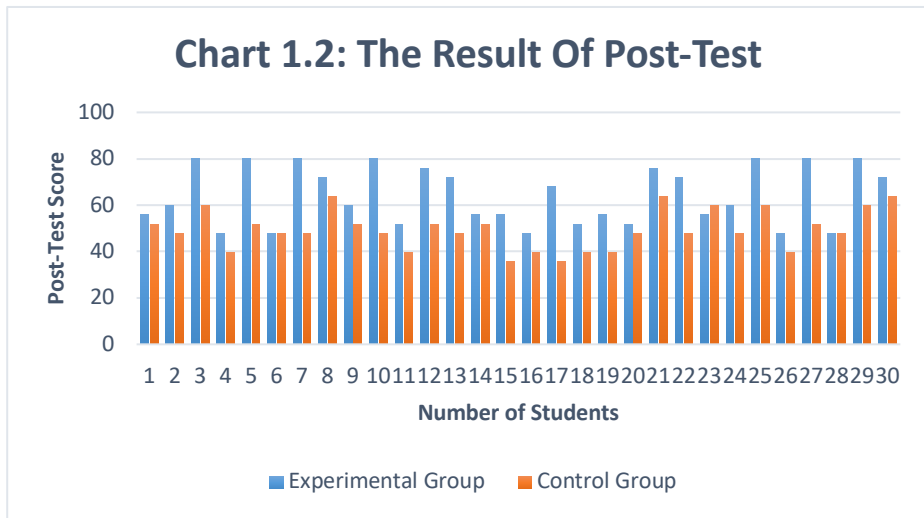
- P : It stands for percentage
- F : It stands frequency
- N : It stands the number of samples

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The result of pre-test was the first test needed to find out students' speaking skill before PBL being implemented. The researcher conducted the speaking test in order to know the initial ability of the students. There were five speaking criteria that the writer assessed during the individual speaking test. The pre-test was given to both experimental group and control group. The data of pre-test score can be seen in the chart 1.1 below:



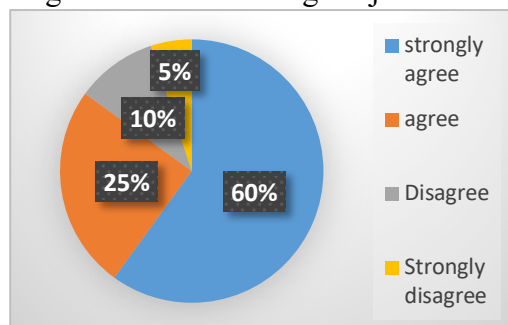
From the chart, it can be said that the students' speaking ability was far from expectation. There were some students from both groups obtained the score under minimum criteria (KKM). Most of the students had scores under 50. Meanwhile, post-test was the final test to measure students' speaking skill and to see the improvement after implementing Problem Based Learning in their speaking class. The writer gave the post-test to both experimental and control group in order to see the impact of Problem Based Learning on their speaking skill. The data of post-test score of both groups can be seen in Chart 1.2.



From the chart above, it can be seen that there was an improvement in the students’ speaking ability, especially the students in the experimental group. The first indicator of success of experimental group students is that nobody gained score one in all sub skills of speaking, a few students received two and most of them reached three and four. It also can be seen that the score of control group students have improvement, but it is not that significant and it is experienced only by very few students.

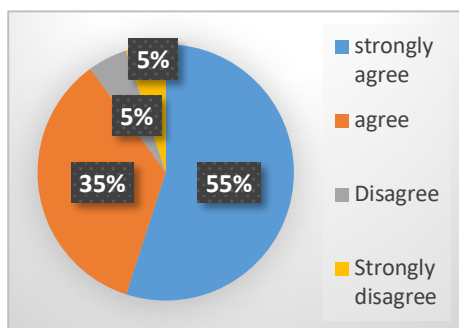
In assessing the data, the researcher applied two methods namely test and questionnaire. The students were answered the questionnaire that containing 15 questions in order to see the response of students toward problem-based learning. And it used statistic model that was proposed by Sudjana (2009) for their answer of each question. The following questions are elaborated below:

1. English is an interesting subject.



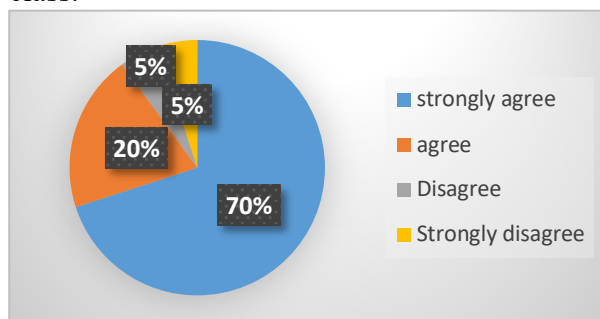
In the first questionnaire, it was a surprise that 60% of students strongly agreed that English is an interesting subject and 25% of students had similar opinion, and the rest of students stated disagree and strongly disagree that English is interesting.

2. In learning with PBL method, I do not feel afraid to perform speaking in front of the class.



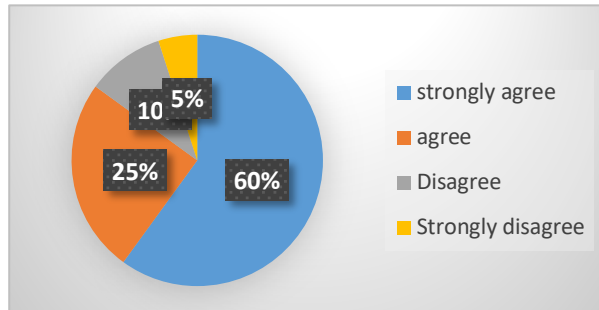
The second questionnaire was about how the students felt after learning English using PBL. It can be seen that 55% of students were no longer afraid to perform speaking in front of the class. 35% of students also felt the same. The rest of students which makes up 10% of the total were still afraid to perform their speaking in front of the class.

3. Teachers need to appreciate me when I perform speaking in the class.



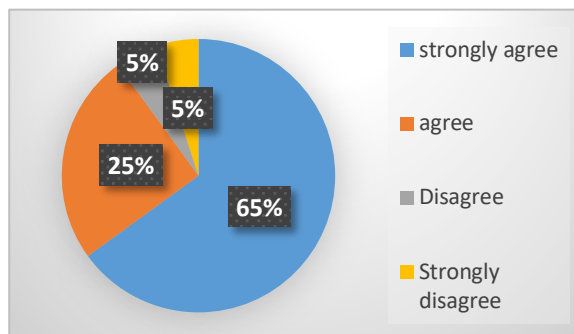
The third questionnaire was about the appreciation given by teacher to the students. The chart shows that almost all students desire for appreciation; 70% of them stated that they need such appreciation. Another 20% of students also need the similar treatment. It was only 10% of students who did not agree and strongly did not agree being appreciated.

4. I really enjoy learning with PBL method.



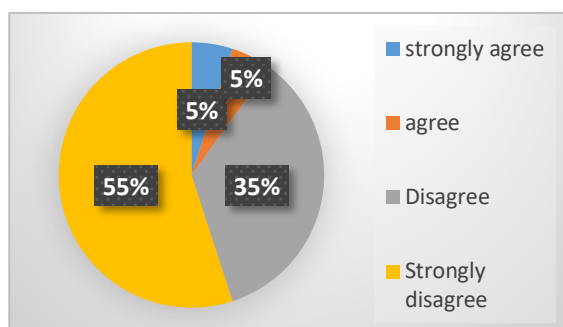
In the fourth questionnaire, 60% students strongly agreed that PBL is fun teaching method. 25% of students thought it was just fun. 10% of them disagreed and only 5% of students strongly disagreed. The distributed questionnaire also wanted to gain the information about students' confidence.

5. I feel confident practicing my English when learning with PBL method.



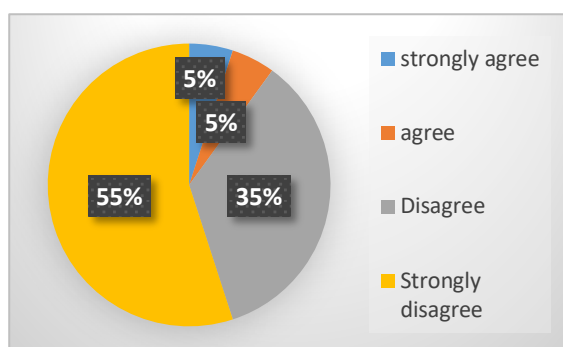
The fifth questionnaire showed 65% of students had better confidence after the PBL being implemented. It was more than half students. 25% of students had a similar experience and only 10% of students who disagreed and strongly disagreed about that.

6. I feel satisfied with my speaking score after learning by using PBL method.



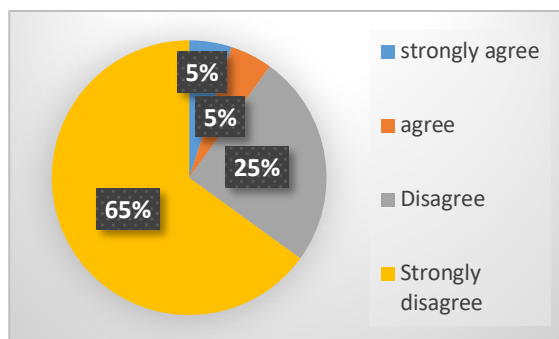
In the sixth questionnaire, it was a surprise that 65% of students feel unsatisfied about their score which means that their speaking ability needed improving. It was only 35% of them who felt satisfaction and the rest of students felt satisfied.

7. I do not like if PBL method will be (often) applied in learning English.



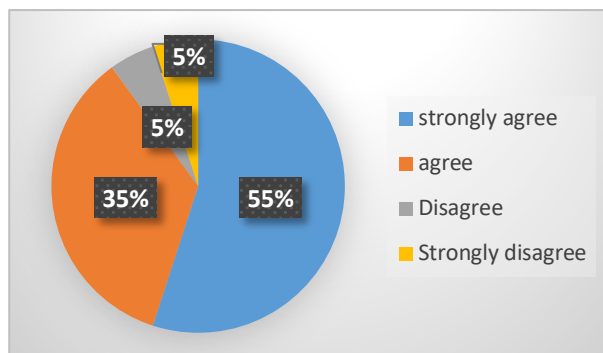
In the seventh questionnaire, there was 55% of students who strongly agreed if PBL is to be applied often and 25% of them also had the same opinion which means that they could experience something new or even better than the method they used to study with. And the rest of them did not seem to really like for PBL to be used often as a teaching method.

8. Speaking English is not important for me.



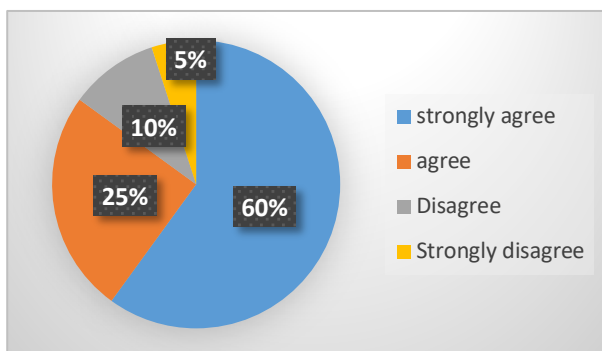
Most of students thought that speaking English was important which can be seen in the eighth questionnaire. 65% of students strongly disagreed that speaking English was not important and 25% of students disagreed. It was only 10% of students thought that speaking English was not important.

9. I think that PBL method is an appropriate method to improve speaking.



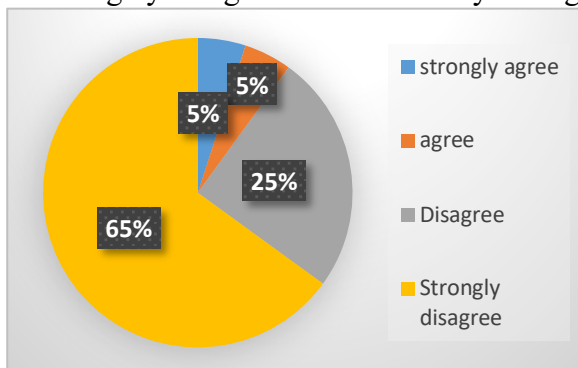
Related to the appropriateness of PBL method, in the ninth questionnaire 55 % of students strongly agree that PBL was an appropriate method for speaking and another 35% of students agree that problem based learning method improve their speaking ability. 5% of the students disagree that PBL were appropriate to be implemented in speaking, also 5% of them strongly disagree that PBL were the appropriate method.

10. When learning with PBL method, I can find the relation between the materials with the use in daily life.



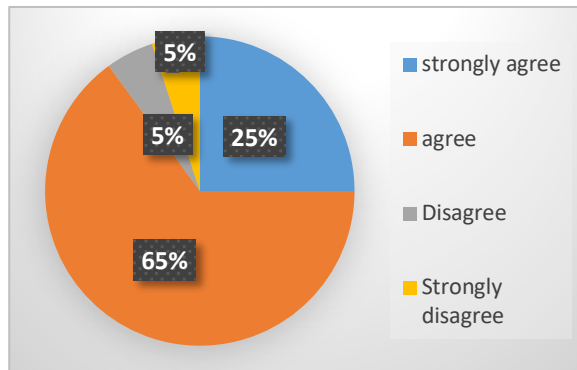
PBL method was very contextual as showed in the tenth questionnaire; 60% students thought that they could find the relation between the materials and the use in daily life and 25% of students also had the same experience. 10% of students disagreed with the statement and and the rest (5%) strongly disagreed.

11. Learning by using PBL model is very boring.



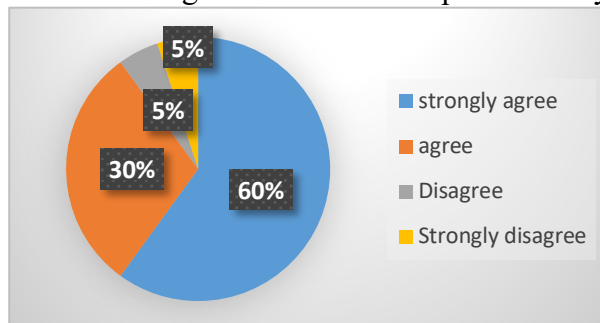
Beside PBL was a fun and appropriate method, it was also very entertaining for most of students. It can be seen in the eleventh questionnaire that 65% of students strongly disagreed that PBL was a boring one and there was also 25% disagreed with the idea. Only 10% of students had opposite idea and it could be for some reasons.

12. PBL method allow me to gain a better understanding of subject material.



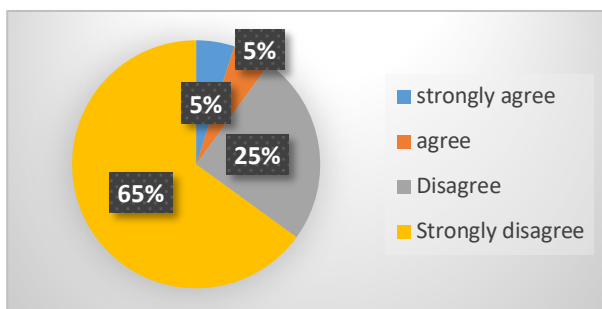
In the twelfth questionnaire, only 25% of students strongly agreed that PBL made them to have a better understanding about materials and 65% of students agreed about the idea that they had a better understanding about the materials. Only 5% disagreed and another 5% strongly disagreed with the idea.

13. When learning with PBL method promotes my critical thinking.



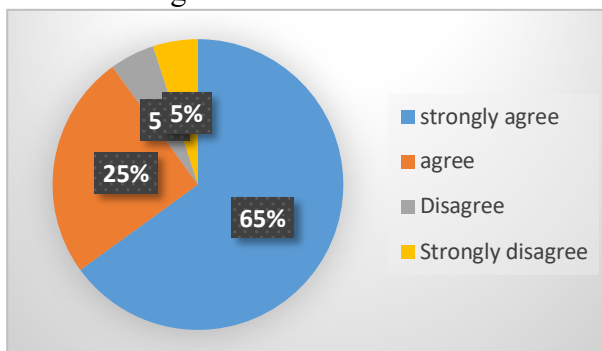
PBL is one of the methods that help students promote their critical thinking. It was proved by looking at the answer of the thirteenth questionnaire that showed 60% of students strongly agreed with the idea and 30% of them agreed. The rest of students did not have the same idea; 5% of them disagreed and another 5% strongly disagreed.

14. Learning speaking with PBL method makes me confused.



The fourteenth questionnaire proved it clearly that 65% of students strongly disagreed that PBL made them confused and 25% of them disagreed with the ideas. Only 10% of the students thought that it was a confusing method.

15. I like learning with PBL method.



The fifteenth questionnaire was the last which was about students' opinion whether they like learning speaking using PBL. The data shows that 65% of the students like PBL and another 25% of them also had the same opinion. It was only 10% of students who did not like the PBL method.

Discussion

This study is aimed to investigate the use of PBL to increase students' speaking skill for students of class II IPA I of Darul Ulum Senior High School Islamic Boarding, Banda Aceh. Experimental teaching, test and questionnaire were the instruments that proposed by the researcher in term of the implementation of problem based learning method to them.

The first research question questioned whether any significant difference in speaking ability between the students who are taught by using problem-based learning and those who are not taught by using

problem-based learning. After evaluating the test, it is found that all of the students' speaking ability was improved. It based on the result that the students' mean score in experimental class improved from 53,33 in pre test then become 64,13 in post test.

This finding was also reported by Karyuatry and Irawati (2014). They found that the students in SMP 21 Malang pass the passing grade and the elements in speaking skill has improved at all. Their average of pronunciation was 2.3 out of 3. The average fluency was 2.4 ou of 3. The average for grammar was 2.1 out of 3. And the average of content was 2.8 out of 3.

In line with them, Rohin (2014) in his research found that PBL improved students' speaking performance. It could be seen from his students' pre-test score was 59.34 and in post-test became 71.84. The students also felt enthusiasm in learning English with PBL method.

In addition, in the pre-test, 19 students gained bad scores and 11 students reached good scores. Whereas in the post-test, there were 17 students achieved bad scores and 13 students recorded good scores. It can be concluded that the students' scores after treatment by using PBL in teaching of speaking were higher than without the use of PBL. From this point of view, it can be said that there was a difference in term of students' scores before and after getting the treatment of PBL method. And, 30 students were improved at their speaking abilities.

Also, the researcher found that fluency and vocabulary are the better improvement in components of speaking. Subsequently, the researcher applied PBL to the students, the students' understanding in speaking were increased, and they can discuss particular topic with reasonable ease. The students of Darul Ulum were able to perform their speaking with sufficient vocabulary to participate in conversations. It can be seen in their speaking performances. Most of them spoke relevant to the topic and gave detailed information in their speaking performances. In this point, their speakings were better in general after the application of PBL.

The second research question was to know the students' responses toward the use of problem-based learning in improving students' speaking ability. From the questionnaire result on page 61, it is shown that 55 % of students strongly agree that PBL was an appropriate method for speaking and another 35% of students agree that problem based learning method improve their speaking ability. 5% of students disagree that PBL were appropriate to be implemented in speaking, also 5% of them strongly disagree that PBL were the appropriate method to

improve their speaking ability. Norman & Schmidt cited in (Noura, 2014) declared that problem-based learning has become beneficial instructional medium, which is widely used in various teaching contexts due to its numerous benefits for educational purposes.

On the other hand, based on the questionnaire analysis, it was reported that 65 % of students felt unsatisfied about their scores, which means their speaking ability need to be improved, and it was only 35 % of students felt satisfied. Also, based on questionnaire analysis, it was found that there are number of reasons why the post-test score is higher than the pre-test score. It was reported that using PBL method in learning English, they can find the relation between the materials with the use in daily life. Therefore, they can enjoy the learning process.

Similarly, the students feel confident in practicing their English when learning with PBL. It helped them to establish their speaking ability. Brown (2007) said that self confidence is the students' belief in their ability that is fully capable of accomplishing a task. He stated that the students' belief can determine their success in language learning.

Then, learning speaking by using PBL also promotes their critical thinking. It means that they have to analyze and deliver what the solution to the problem that is shown by the teacher so that they need to improve their ability, especially in speaking. As mentioned by Sanavi and Tarighat (2014), critical thinking awareness has significantly raised a positive impact on the speaking proficiency to EFL learners.

From the explanation above, it could be considered that most of the second-grade students of senior high school Darul Ulum Islamic boarding Banda Aceh have improved their speaking ability after the use of PBL. The students are more curious, confidence and enjoyed in learning speaking. Bahrudin (2018) reported that teaching using problem-based learning method is effective. It can be attested through observation result which shows tenth grade students at SMAN 4 Pamekasan are enthusiastic and participate in learning process actively.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

From the result of analysis of the research, it is evident that teaching speaking using PBL has contributed to the increase of the students' speaking ability. By using PBL, students learn to speak effectively and directly to the team and present their ideas clearly in order to solve the problem given.

Thus, this answers the main research question, that is, the implementation of problem based learning in speaking class helps students improve their speaking skills in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy, fluency, and grammar. Though, not all students can improve their skill significantly.

It can be seen from the previous chapter that the mean of post-test score of students who were taught using PBL was 64.13 and the mean of post-test score of students who were not taught using Problem-based learning was 49.60. These values indicate that the average experimental group results is higher than the control group.

In terms of student responses, the students felt some advantages of PBL in learning English and PBL could motivate them to increase their speaking skills. Among the five speaking criteria, two criteria show the improvement: pronunciation and vocabulary. Students' speaking ability have improved as PBL has given them stimulation and encouraged them to present their ideas.

Suggestion

The success in teaching speaking not only depends on the lesson program, but more importantly is on how the teacher presents the lesson and uses appropriate teaching method to make the class more enjoyable, interesting, and interactively.

The study would like to give some suggestions. First, for the students, PBL method should be applied intensively for students. It will help them develop their speaking ability. Second, for the teachers, teacher should increase students' motivation and interest in learning English by implementing interesting and appropriate teaching method, which can greatly help students in speaking. PBL is an appropriate method to apply in speaking class because it gives a chance to students to relate themselves with real-life issues that require real-life solutions.

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