

## **COLLABORATIVE LEARNING: A STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL**

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### **Abstract**

This research aimed to identify the collaborative English learning at UIN Raden Intan Lampung. Classroom Action Research is the research method in this study. The researchers employed the theory from Harmer (2007) and Dillenbourg (1999) as the fundamental theory in this research. Collaborative learning is an effective strategy for teaching Sharia Economics students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung. There are five stages in this action research: diagnosing, planning, action, observation, and reflection. The findings show that collaborative learning can improve students' speaking ability because this strategy can increase their engagement, confidence, and critical thinking to deliver their ideas in classroom activities.

**Keywords:** *Collaborative, learning, teaching, speaking*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Four skills should be mastered in learning English: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Nasution & Sukmawati, 2019). Any expression of thought that comes from the mind can be expressed by speaking. For instance, in daily lives, most people speak more than write. Moreover, speaking skills are the act of generating words that the listeners can understand. A good speaker is clear and informative when he or He gives information. If the students want to be good speakers, they should make a habit of talking and become part of their daily lives.

According to Burton (1982), speaking is one of the challenging aspects for students to master. Everything is involved when speaking: ideas, what will say, language, grammar and vocabulary, and pronunciation are tough to learn. Meanwhile, speaking is essential for a student to communicate with other people and express their ideas.

Speaking is one way to communicate and interact with other people orally. The ability to speak English is essential for people to interact. Many people use English as a medium of communication, and it makes people who come from different countries easier in making interact and communication. Nunan (1989) states speaking is a productive oral skill, and it consists of producing verbal expressions to transmit meaning. He adds that speaking is more complex than other skills because it occurs in real-time, and the speaker cannot revise or change what he says at that time.

Teaching speaking can help the teacher keep the student's interest during the lesson. It is believed that the best teaching process of primary school will remain in the long-term memory of each student. Collaborative teaching can help the students make and sustain the learning effort. Speaking can be a "bridge" for a teacher in teaching language in the class in a fun and interactive way. Not only teaching speaking English can be more fun for the teacher, but also learning to

speak is something easy and enjoyable for students.

Based on the writer's class observation, it is found that the students have some problems. They are lack vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and they are afraid to talk. Thus, to help students improve their speaking skills, the researcher offers a technique to overcome this problem of teaching speaking through Collaborative learning. To collaborate means to work with a team or group. Collazos et al. (2002) state collaborative learning is an instrumental method in which students are teamed together on an assignment. Collaborative learning concerns the students as a central of the study and the teacher as a facilitator. In collaborative learning, students are divided into several groups to do the teacher's task. It is learning through group work rather than learning by working alone. Thus, the success of one student helps other students to be successful. In addition, there are different terms for this kind of activity, such as cooperative learning, team learning, or group learning.

## **METHOD**

The researchers employed Classroom Action Research to inform practice in a particular situation. This method facilitates the researchers to act simultaneously (changing and action) and research (evaluating and concluding). It means that classroom action research is a way for instructors or teachers to discover what works best in their classroom situation, thus allowing informed teaching decisions. Action research is how practitioners study their practice to solve their practical problems. It means that action research is a collaborative activity where practitioners work together to help one another design and investigate their classrooms.

Action research has been employed for various purposes: for school-based curriculum, as a professional development strategy, in pre-service and graduated courses in education, in systems planning and policy development. Besides, action research can be used as an evaluative tool, which can assist in self-evaluation, whether the "self" is an individual or an institution. CAR will help the teacher discover what works best in their classroom situation. It is a powerful integration of teaching and scholarship that provides a solid basis for instructional decisions. CAR's easily mastered techniques provide insights into teaching that result in continual improvement.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Actions and Observations**

There are five meetings at the first semester in the 2021-2021 academic year as the first cycle in this action research. The materials are expressions of agreement and disagreement and giving suggestions. When the writer conducted the actions, the collaborators took notes in the back of the class to observe the teaching-learning processes and took photographs related to the teaching and learning processes. The collaborators and the writer collected the data of cycle I through classroom observation and interviews. The results of the cycle I will be presented below.

Before conducting the actions, the English lecture used English only to give instructions, and the teaching and learning process was done using more Indonesian and English. Students were not exposed to producing English. They tended to be passive during the teaching and learning process. However, in these actions, the writer used English classrooms to make students familiar with English words and sentences and improve their classroom production and create a good atmosphere of English learning and production. The use of Bahasa Indonesia was limited and avoided as much as possible. The writer did code-switching only when the students found difficulties or were confused in understanding his explanation. However, he tended to simplify his utterances and used gestures to express what He meant. Only when the students still found it difficult to understand important parts of the materials and the learning process would the teacher make the code-switching.

There was a process of improving students' classroom English regarding their responsiveness. The improvement was achieved gradually from one meeting to the next meetings.

At first, they still hesitated to respond to the teacher's questions in English. They still confirmed the instructions or the questions using Indonesian. Students were not accustomed to the use of English all the time. They tended to answer the questions in Indonesian to avoid making mistakes. Their responsiveness was still low. However, students knew that the teacher expected them to respond to her English. The teacher also guided the students to respond to her in English by helping them translate the words or construct their utterances. The teacher also invited and pointed the students to answer her questions. They seemed to hesitate in speaking in English.

Later, in the next four meetings, there was an improvement in students' responsiveness. The students seemed to be more confident and comfortable responding to the teacher using English. They were not afraid of making mistakes again, and the teacher supported them. This improvement happened because the teacher created a warm environment, and the students' mistakes while speaking in English were regarded as something normal they should not be ashamed of. However, the teacher still made some code-switching by considering the conditions of the students. When they asked some vocabulary questions, the teacher would try to explain them by simplifying the explanation or giving examples, but the utterance using Indonesian when needed.

However, they were still confused about other constructions to explain or give reasons for their opinion when they had to express their agreement and disagreement. Dealing with this problem, the teacher usually guided the students and gave some clues on how to start a sentence by determining the subject followed by the verb. The teacher also asked the students to provide some examples if they had difficulties explaining their arguments. In addition, there was an improvement in the class atmosphere. At first, the students were not attentive and did not engage in the discussion. However, the atmosphere of the class was more conducive. The students carefully try to make correct sentences while speaking in front of the course or when they asked the question since the mistakes were treated quite seriously by corrections.

After the actions, the students confirmed that classroom English was essential based on the informal interviews. They enjoyed the class using English because they could try to understand spoken English and try to respond to the interaction in the class by using English. They felt interested, and they felt like learning accurate English. However, they also wanted the teacher to guide them more to use active English. They admitted that they could understand almost all of the teacher's explanations. However, code-switching was also necessary when the students felt confused about the materials.

As stated before, the writer, acting as the teacher in the class, communicated the lesson's objectives in every meeting through interactions. The students knew what they would learn and the purposes they needed to accomplish. It was different from the previous teacher because he was not used to communicating the objectives of the lessons to the students. He directly asked the students to do the tasks so that they were not ready and motivated to join the activities. It made the students confused about the objectives of the lesson and what they had to accomplish. The teacher always had some lead-in activities or interaction to direct the students into specific topics and certain language functions that they needed to perform. After having the lead-in activities, the teacher communicated the study's objectives.

### **Designing Lesson Plans**

Lesson plans are vital before conducting the lessons to ensure that the class can run very well as planned. The lesson plans can also be used to control the class's progress and prevent the teacher from missing or forgetting the materials and tasks used in the class to accomplish the objectives of the lesson and make the teaching and learning process run smoothly effectively.

The writer always conducted the class by following the sequences of classroom activities. Important activities and steps were listed systematically so that the class became more effective and the activities could run smoothly. The time allocation was better managed. He did not forget to give feedback to the students, check their understanding, and give opportunities for students to

ask questions. He also designed each activity in a sequence related to one another. The lesson was delivered systematically, and the students could follow the lesson more easily.

The writer acting as the teacher applied some communicative activities through various informative gap activities, questions and answers, and discussions, such as panel discussions about various topics where the students could use the expressions of their agreement or disagreement and “Give me Suggestions, Please” activity where the students could practice the expressions of giving suggestions.

Communicative activities could stimulate students to produce English using the language functions (Nasution, et.al, 2020). Moreover, students could also share their opinions, suggestions, and experiences to strengthen their reasons and support their arguments. They seemed to try to express themselves in English. Therefore, when the writer applied the communicative activities, the students engaged, and their responses were good. At first, they seemed to hesitate to speak, and they were not accustomed to talking spontaneously and sharing their opinion. However, the discussions were about challenging and suitable topics for students at their age, considering that most of them were university students and graduates. The topics were whether or not people should have a boyfriend or girlfriend while studying, whether money can make people happy, whether or not women should become career women, etc. They were very eager to talk about their opinion. The discussions were conducted in pairs, so it was panel discussions. All of the students gave their idea in turns. The other students, not the panelists, also asked questions and shared their own opinions, so it was proven that they enjoyed the discussions and were involved very well in the class activities.

As far as the teacher was concerned, the panel discussions were challenging for the students. The talks were held in two meetings to ensure that all students got their turn to be the panelists. However, the students found the tasks challenging, although they enjoyed the activity. The activity also gave students many opportunities to talk and practice their English. In the “What Should I do?” activity, the students were more relaxed and enjoyed the activity very much. However, it was a bit difficult to control the class. Students were in groups, and the teacher could not always watch all of them simultaneously; He then could not fully control the students’ production and correct their mistakes. However, the teacher monitored all groups, and He took the time to sit and listen to the students while they were speaking. He gave corrections, remarks, praise, and sometimes jokes.

## Reflection

In this session, the main focus was still on speaking skills, where the teacher emphasized the improvement of the students’ speaking ability. This session also will find out the differences between before and after of the score of the students. First, the teacher gave the topic, ‘In the Restaurant.’ The teacher explained some expressions to provide compliments or admiration to the listener. The teacher also explained the topic on the whiteboard and opened the question and answer session for those who less understood the material. Some students asked the teacher when the compliment expression was used, and the teacher gave the answer and explained that compliment was used to admire someone or something.

The writer did some observations, and the scoring section is essential to see whether the use of the game brings the students to get the optimum score. The speaking test was held in the last meeting of the cycle. The teacher uses five criteria based on the marking guide for speaking. Here is the marking guide of speaking adopted from Brown (2004). The following table is the result of the score of the students after using collaborative learning.

**Table 1. Paired Samples Statistics for Students' Speaking Test**

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
PRE-TEST	64.62	25	6.33	1.10120
POST-TEST	85.49	25	3.74	.66839

Based on the result above, 25 Sharia Economics students took speaking texts of teaching speaking using collaborative learning. The result shows that collaborative learning is acceptable in this study because it helps the students be more active in speaking since in collaborative teachers can use some media. In addition, students can increase their speaking ability by using guessing active games, answering the questions, and guessing anonymous information such as describing people, ordering the menu, cleaning the bath, cleaning the bed, cleaning the kitchen, etc. The final speaking test of public speaking is to speak spontaneously.

According to the result of the tests in speaking using collaborative learning, it was found to improve the students' speaking results. It can be seen from the scores they achieve. Besides, the teacher also marked their improvement in some criteria considered by the teacher. They could speak in 3 minutes given by the teacher. They said without any preparation. They did not even know what they would talk about until they chose the pictures randomly. Then they stated what was on their minds without being afraid of making mistakes as they did. The highest score on the speaking test is 92, and the lowest score on this test is 80, with the average being 84.08. The result also shows that many students achieve a high score with good grammar, fluency, rich vocabulary, right pronunciation, and excellent comprehension of their material. The value of Sig. (2-tailed) is  $0.000 < 0.05$  based on description on table 2. In summary, there is a significant difference between students' speaking test using Collaborative Learning for Sharia Economic students.

**Table 2. Paired Samples Test Significant Difference**

Paired Differences		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation			
-16.86774	7.52658			
Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
1.34002	Lower	Upper		
	-19.62484	-14.11064	-12.469	24
				.000

## CONCLUSIONS

After doing the study, the writer concluded that the materials given by the teacher were attractive and suitable. All of the materials which the teacher provided can use games. In addition, the collaborative method in speaking class activities makes the students more active in the class. Using the games in teaching speaking can improve the students' speaking ability, courage, and confidence to express their opinion in front of the classroom.

The collaborative learning method is good in teaching speaking class activities for Sharia Economics students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung. CAR can give the students opportunities to be active improve their ability in speaking. Besides, teaching speaking using collaborative learning is well suited for practicing the language in real communication, and games can help the teacher keep students' interest during the lesson.

By giving questionnaires to the students, the writer concluded that most Sharia Economics students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung are interested in learning speaking class activities. They enjoy and have fun in speaking class. This is one of the techniques to teach speaking English in-class activities.

Furthermore, the research results show an improvement of the students' speaking English skills in actively communicative by collaborative learning, and the students enjoy studying English. The main point of teaching speaking using a collaborative learning method is to make students more active and confident to speak English.

Based on the conclusion earlier, the writer would like to offer some suggestions. First, the teacher should learn and select the correct method. Collaborative learning is the right method used in teaching speaking strategies to encourage the students to achieve better achievement in speaking. In addition, the teacher should be more selective in choosing teaching materials, games,

and topics to be learned. Finally, the teaching and learning process will be more exciting and fun.

Second, the students should be more active in speaking class and pay attention to the teacher's explanation related to the material learned. However, students face so many problems, such as the students lacking vocabulary and practice. The students should practice, enjoy learning English, and communicate with other people because it is essential and can help the students improve their ability to speak English and make them be more self-confident in speaking English.

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