

IMPROVING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY BY USING THE CARTOON PICTURES SERIES

Jessica Sarsiana Ndoen¹

¹ Widya Mandira Catholic University, Indonesia
aplonialomi@unwira.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify whether using cartoon images can assist eighth-grade students at SMP N 5 Kota Kupang in improving their speaking abilities. The descriptive method was used to characterize speaking skills. This study employed a test to describe a cartoon picture series. This study focused on three distinct components of speaking: grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. According to the analysis, the researcher discovered that (1) eighth-grade students could speak English, particularly when orally describing a cartoon picture series. (2) Students in the eighth grade showed a 'very good' speaking ability level (15.6). The students' speaking ability level for each element is as follows: Grammar has a score of 104, while the average is 5.2, and vocabulary has a score of 108, while the average is 5.4. The average score for pronunciation is 5, while the total score is 100. The researcher provides some recommendations based on the results of the research. The first is recommended for English teachers to train students to speak English in front of the class while presenting something, such as a picture or other learning media, and encourage them to read more to improve their literacy skills. Secondly, the students must practice pronunciation by listening to English-language radio, music, and television shows. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar research using different media and strategies to improve the language learners' speaking ability.

Keywords: *speaking ability, cartoon pictures series*

English has become a compulsory subject and part of the national curriculum from high schools to universities in Indonesia. English subjects in high schools should be emphasized to help students communicate in English. As stated in the School-based Curriculum 2013 (K13) in junior high schools, one of the English learning objectives is understanding and/or producing speech and/or written texts, which are realized in four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In other words, language learning aims to strengthen the students' four abilities through a firm foundation of a vast vocabulary and proper grammar, but this is not the ultimate goal of language learning. Instead, the ultimate goal is to utilize the language (Aggouni, 2015). Speaking skills are considered the most essential skill among the four skills. Speaking is an interactive process of constructing and utilizing meaning, which involves producing, receiving, and processing information (Nurnaningsih & Pratiwi, 2018). Speaking is essential to convey implied and intended meaning. The implied meaning was hinted at or suggested but not directly stated. The intended meaning is something a word directly states. According to Brown, speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information

(Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Its form and meaning are related to the context, including the speakers, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purpose of speaking.

The majority of EFL students struggle with speaking English. Additionally, it is widely accepted that acquiring proficiency in a foreign language in school settings is not easy. Even advanced students frequently end a language course with the impression that they are not adequately equipped to communicate beyond the classroom. Speaking entails having students practice the language in pairs or groups to develop their language skills (Aggouni, 2015).

Although speaking is considered the primary language skill that students should master, it has been widely noticed that most students face difficulties speaking English. Students' lacks of speaking skills are also found in SMP N 5 Kota Kupang. According to preliminary observations and interviews with EFL students in SMPN 5 Kota Kupang, they had difficulties pronouncing English words. Many students could not enunciate common words. They also lack vocabulary and struggle to create English sentences. Their sentences had grammatical errors. The observations and interviews revealed low student participation in the class. Many sat silently at their desks, unwilling to participate in speaking activities. They rarely raised their hands to answer questions. Several blew it when given a chance to speak in front of the class. Students were not adequately exposed to English. English Lessons were primarily taught in Indonesian by the teacher. The teacher solely used English to begin and end the class. Both the teacher and the students spoke in Kupang Malay or Indonesian. If this pattern continues, the students may lose their ability and interest in communicating in English. Based on the problems stated before, the researcher would like to improve students' speaking ability using a cartoon picture series.

The research investigates whether the cartoon picture series is beneficial in teaching speaking and helping students enhance their speaking abilities. It can inspire teachers to create innovative ways to teach speaking. It also pushes teachers to be more creative in their teaching and learning. Using a cartoon picture series in teaching and learning would undoubtedly engage students. The students are inspired to talk as they get new ideas from the cartoon picture series, increasing their vocabulary and thus their English speaking ability. Based on the explanation above, the researcher will conduct this research entitled "Improving High School Students' Speaking Ability by Using Cartoon Pictures Series". The research problems are: (1) Can describing cartoon pictures as a medium improve the speaking ability of eighth-grade students at SMP N 5 Kota Kupang? (2) What is the speaking ability level of the eighth-grade students of SMP N 5 Kota Kupang?

Literature Review

Experts in language learning have proposed many definitions of speaking. According to Bygate (1987), "speaking a second language (L2) requires the development of a specific form of communication ability which contains production circumstances, resembles language in terms of grammatical, lexical, and discourse patterns." People usually have communicative purposes when producing verbal utterances. They may want to give opinions, express feelings or retell stories. From another point of view, Hornby (1995) defines speaking as using words in an ordinary voice, uttering words, knowing and using a language, expressing oneself in words, and making the speech. The focus of language learning is not only on the students' linguistic proficiency, but also on developing their communicative ability. For many second-language students, mastering English speaking abilities is a top priority (Richards, 2015). As a result, the students frequently assess their language learning performance and the efficiency of their English course based on how well they have improved their speaking abilities. In general, according to Harmer (1998), language students should acquire four elements of speaking. Those elements are: pronunciation, vocabulary,

grammar and fluency. Pronunciation should be prioritized because language is primarily a medium of communication that everyone should understand (Seyedabadi et al., 2015). Pronunciation is the students' way of speaking English well. Besides, pronunciation is one of the problematic language components because it deals with phonology. Vocabulary means the appropriate diction used in conversation. Secondly, vocabulary is a critical component of language that cannot be dissociated from learning English. It is challenging to master the four language skills without acquiring or comprehending a range of vocabulary, as vocabulary acquisition is critical for language learning (Nazara, 2019). When students seem unable to expand their vocabulary, they frequently lose interest in learning. Therefore, language teachers should possess considerable knowledge on how to manage an exciting classroom so that the students can succeed in their language learning. Thirdly, grammar concerns how to arrange sentences in conversation and aligns with Heaton's (1988) explanation that students can manipulate the structure and distinguish appropriate grammar from inappropriate ones. The utility of grammar is also to learn the correct way to gain expertise in a language, both in oral and written form. Lastly, fluency can be defined as the ability to speak fluently and accurately, suited to professional necessity. Being fluent means being able to keep the language coming. There may be mistakes and filter repetition, but there are no unusually long pauses in the inflow of talk.

It is widely noticed that the most challenging element of speaking is pronunciation. Pronunciation relates to how to speak accurately. Different pronunciations can suggest different meanings. Meanwhile, other elements like grammar and vocabulary are the elements to express ideas in both oral and written forms of the language. It is essential to arouse students' interest and motivation in language learning, especially for effective and communicative speaking. There are many strategies that teachers can use. Some are communication games, discussions, prepared talks, and picture descriptions. Those activities make students more active in the learning process and, at the same time, make their learning more meaningful and fun. It also provides a rich environment where meaningful communication takes place to develop basic interactive skills necessary for life. The teaching materials must be relevant to the content and learning objectives of the taught classes.

Furthermore, they must be valid, interesting, and capable of providing the most effective instruction possible. One of the teaching media that the teachers can use is pictures. A study conducted by Dakhi and Maritha (2018) discovered several benefits of using pictures in teaching English, including the following: pictures can increase students' motivation, they can entice students' attention, they can assist students in memorizing vocabulary, and they can make teaching and learning activities more interesting.

Pictures can be drawn in various forms and designs. It can be sketches, drafts, graphs, comics, posters, cartoons, board drawings, newspapers, magazines, family photographs, calendars, wall charts, slides, diagrams and maps (Dakhi & Maritha, 2018). The type of pictures used in the research is a cartoon picture. According to the New World Encyclopedia, a cartoon (from Italian *cartone*, meaning "big paper") is a full-size drawing made on paper as a full-size study for artwork. Cartoons were used during the sixteenth century for fresco painting, a technique involving the application of pigment to a wet lime plaster wall which implies that a cartoon picture is an illustration, possibly animated, typically in a non-realistic or semi-realistic style. The specific meaning has evolved, but the modern usage usually refers to either: an image or series of images intended for satire, caricature, or humour; or a motion picture that relies on a sequence of illustrations for its animation. Cartoons as teaching media have regained popularity among educators because they can: (1) enhance understanding, attention, and interest, (2) improve motivation towards learning, (3) improve behaviours, productivity, creativity, and thinking skills,

- (4) decrease anxiety and stress, boost active engagement of students in the learning process, and
- (5) decrease boredom and behaviour disorders.

Some previous research has been conducted using cartoons and pictures with Indonesian EFL students (Isfahani, 2019; Karsono, 2014; Nurnaningsih & Pratiwi, 2018; Nazara, 2019. Karsono, 2014) suggests in his research on grade-eight Students of SMP Negeri 1 Anggana that the students' speaking abilities and participation were improved due to using pictures in the learning process. Nazara (2019) concludes in the research that cartoon movies can assist students in learning new vocabulary. The students could catch up on new words that must be learned in class. Nurnaningsih & Pratiwi (2018) researched to emphasize the purpose of cartoon movies in teaching speaking skills to SMA Muhammadiyah I Sukoharjo Class XI students. They discovered that the students were fascinated by the modern technology of LCDS and animated cartoons, which they had never seen in teaching and learning activities before. Isfahani (2019) researched the influence of the SpongeBob SquarePants cartoon on students' speaking skills in the Eleventh Grade of SMAN 11 Kota Tangerang. She found out that the SpongeBob Square Pants cartoon was one of the suitable media that enhanced students' speaking ability, in order for the students to become more engaged in the class. This current research uses various cartoon pictures to improve junior high school students' speaking ability in SMPN 5 Kota Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive method, which involves gathering data describing events and organizing, tabulating, depicting, and describing the data collection (Glass & Hopkins, 1984). Descriptive studies aim to find out "what is", so observational and survey methods are frequently used to collect descriptive data. Furthermore, qualitative research examines natural object conditions (rather than experiments) and focuses on generalization meaning with researchers as key instruments, data collection techniques and qualitative analysis (Nurnaningsih & Pratiwi, 2018).

There were 360 students in total, divided into 12 classes. Purposive sampling was applied to choose the subjects of the study. The subject of the study was the 8th C class, which consisted of 20 students. Based on the preliminary observation, the students reported a low interest in English, especially speaking. They had no idea how to pronounce commonly used English words, and they did not have the motivation to participate in a speaking class.

In collecting the data, the researcher first made an appointment with the English teacher and students to organize the class. The students agreed to participate in the research. During the English class, the researcher observed the students' participation and administered a speaking test to the students by using cartoon pictures. Each student was asked to describe the cartoon picture given to them. Afterwards, they could orally present their cartoon picture descriptions in about five minutes. The researcher prepared a recorder to record the students' descriptions in the test. The researcher recorded all the descriptions spoken by the students. In analyzing the data, the writer followed some steps as follows:

1. Transcribing the descriptions made by the students
2. Analyzing the descriptions and grouping the students' descriptions into grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation
3. Calculating and scoring the students' descriptions in each element of speaking (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation)
4. Interpreting and describing the findings
5. Concluding the result of the analysis

The students' scores in each element were given after the researcher analyzed the descriptions and the recordings. The scores ranged from the highest level, excellent (6), to the lowest (1). The individual score is derived from the total of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, which is then divided by three. The average score for the class is calculated from the final score of each student divided by the total number of respondents. To find out the students' ability level, the researcher used the standard of measurement as proposed by Hughes (1990) as follows:

Table 1. Range of Students' Speaking Scores

Range of Scores	Level
16-18	Excellent
13-15	Very Good
10-12	Above Average
7-9	Average
4-6	Below Average
1-3	Bad

FINDINGS

The researcher presents the table showing students' scores based on the result of the analysis. The researcher only assessed students' speaking ability from the three aspects, namely: Grammar (SG), Vocabulary (SV), and Pronunciation (SP). The data analysis of students' speaking performance showed the criteria for scoring in the table below:

Table 2. Distribution of students' scores in three elements of oral English proficiency

Students	Cartoon Pictures	SG	SV	SP	Total Score	Speaking Level
S1	Aladdin	6	6	5	17	Excellent
S2	Ariel Mermaid	6	6	5	17	Excellent
S3	Alex	5	5	5	15	Very Good
	Madagascar					
S4	The Beast	4	5	5	14	Very Good
S5	Tarzan	5	6	5	16	Excellent
S6	Belle	6	6	5	17	Excellent
S7	Tom and Jerry	6	5	5	16	Excellent
S8	Donald Duck	5	5	4	14	Very Good
S9	Woody	4	6	5	15	Very Good
S10	Jasmine	4	6	4	14	Very Good
S11	Spongebob	6	5	5	16	Excellent
S12	Dori	5	5	6	16	Excellent
S13	Rapunzel	5	5	5	15	Very Good
S14	Scooby Doo	6	5	6	17	Excellent
S15	Pinocchio	5	5	5	15	Very Good

S16	Elsa	4	5	5	14	Very Good
S17	Shincan	5	5	5	15	Very Good
S18	Mickey Mouse	6	6	5	17	Excellent
S19	Cinderella	5	6	5	16	Excellent
S20	Po	6	5	5	16	Excellent
Total		104	108	100	312	
Average		5,2	5,4	5	15,6	Very Good

Notes:

1. Column 1 shows the students' numbers (1-10)
2. Column 2-4 shows the aspects of speaking (SG, SV, SP)
3. Column 5 shows the total score of the whole aspect. For example:
Student 1: score of grammar (6) + score of vocabulary (6) + score of pronunciation (5) = 17. So the total score of students is 17.
4. Column 6 shows the students' ability levels. The table shows the total score of the whole students of grammar **104**; vocabulary is **108**, and pronunciation is **100**. The average score for the students' grammar is **5.2**, the vocabulary is **5.4** and the pronunciation is **5**.

The class average is calculated from:

$$\frac{\text{Total Score}}{\text{Total of respondents}} = \frac{312}{20} = 15.6 \text{ (Very good).}$$

DISCUSSION

Based on the calculation above, the average score of students' speaking ability is **15.6**, which means that students' ability level is very good. Based on the study's results, each element's level of ability follows: the grand score of grammar is **104**, and the average is **5.2**. The grand score for vocabulary is **108**, and the average is **5.4**. The total score of pronunciation is **100**, and the average is **5**. The percentages of the students' speaking scores are presented in the figure below:

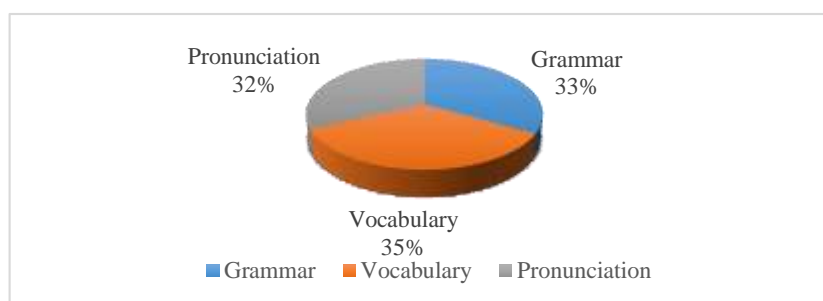


Figure 1. Percentage Students' Speaking Scores

Although the score of students shows their ability level is very good, there were areas of difficulty faced by students in their speaking. It can be seen that the students lack most in their pronunciation, followed by their vocabulary and grammar. They made some errors in pronunciation as follows:

Table 3. Students' Mispronounced words

Words	Errors	Corrections
Prince	/prins/	/prɪns/
Ideal	/ideal/	/aɪ'diəl/
Kind	/kin/	/kaɪnd/
Tail	/tail/	/teɪl/
Lives	/lifs/	/laɪvz/
Claw	/klau/	/klaʊ/
Horn	/hor/	/hɔːrn/
Brave	/brav/	/breɪv/
Talkative	/talketiv/	/'tɑː.kə.tɪv/
Necktie	/nekti/	/'nek.taɪ/
Castle	/kastel/	/'kæs.əl/
Glove	/glov/	/glʌv/
Headscarf	/headskaf/	/'hed.skɑːrf/
Fight	/Figt/	/faɪt/

In terms of their vocabulary mastery, the students mostly presented basic vocabulary. The descriptions were quite short and related to the given topic. Still, they made several errors that related to the word choices; for instance: "she lives in the water (sea)" (S12), "he has black and brown skin (fur)" (S4), "red short (pants)" (S15), "she using (wears) blue dress" (S16). Meanwhile, the students' problems in grammar are commonly related to verb agreement, the use of pronouns and articles.

Based on the analysis above, the students performed well in describing the cartoon pictures. They also showed high interest and participation in their speaking activity. The result is in line with (Isfahani, 2019), in which cartoons can be utilized in the universal school setting to attract the interest of students of all literacy levels and to engage them in the learning process. The cartoon pictures were visually attractive to the students. Therefore, they enjoyed the activity in the class. The same result suggests all students appeared to be engaged and paying attention when using cartoons in the class because they were assigned to things they enjoyed or felt interested in. It is effective to use interesting teaching media and schools should provide engaging textbooks, such as short stories illustrated with popular cartoons, to help students improve their language learning abilities. In particular, Nazara (2019) proposes in the study that a cartoon film or pictures is an engaging, interesting, thought-provoking, and easily accessible teaching medium that can be used to teach vocabulary.

CONCLUSION

Based on the aforementioned analysis, it can be concluded that the eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 5 Kupang can present a descriptive cartoon picture orally in front of the class. Their level of ability is classified as very good. However, the researcher also found that students still committed many errors regarding grammar (subject pronoun, article and infinitive form), vocabulary, and pronunciation. Based on the study result and the conclusion drawn above, it is suggested that the students be trained to speak English in front of the class by presenting something like describing cartoon pictures or other material and motivating them to read more to increase their language skills. For grammar and pronunciation, the students should improve their pronunciation by listening to English songs, movies, YouTube videos or TV programs. They are also advised to enrich themselves with more vocabulary by reading English books. In the

classroom, if the student does not understand what their English teacher teaches, they should ask their English teacher to teach again what they do not understand. The researcher only limits the teaching of speaking by using a cartoon picture as a medium. Besides, it is limited to the evaluation of three speaking elements. They are vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct more research with different and broader aspects of language skills.

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