

# **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DESCRIBING PICTURE ACTIVITIES IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY AT COKROAMINOTO UNIVERSITY PALOPO**

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## **Abstract**

This research describes the effectiveness of expressing present continuous through describing picture in improving the speaking ability of the second semester students' of English study program at Cokroaminoto University Palopo. Expressing present continuous through describing picture here is formulated in teaching technique of speaking. It is formulated into series of question using present continuous as the guiding point of speaking for the students to talk about the progress events on the picture. The objective of the research is formulated at finding out whether or not the expressing present continuous through describing picture can improve students' speaking ability. The research employs experimental method which applies one group pretest-posttest design. The sample of this research consists of 20 students that are taken through random sampling technique. Based on the result of the data analysis and application of the research, the researcher found that the mean score of posttest (9,3) is greater than the mean score of pretest (5,6). That's why it can be concluded that expressing present continuous through describing picture which is formulated in teaching technique of speaking improves students' speaking ability. They have chance to produce spoken English based on appropriate grammar, especially the present continuous tense.

**Keywords:** Speaking, Describing Picture.

## **INTRODUCTION**

English is the international language. By this statement we can analyze that English holds important role in international communication. English also is spoken either native or non native speakers. That's why we can say that by English, people can communicate and relate with other people although they are from different countries. Beside that English can be used to know some human life aspects like economy, culture, education and so forth. Therefore English exists in regional and international area.

Nowadays technology develops rapidly. The sophisticated technologies like computer, internet, television, and many more can motivate us in learning English because most

technologies introduced surrounding us use English as operating system, or we can say that most technologies are used to fulfill human activities.

There are four skills in English, they are listening, reading, speaking and writing. One thing that we have to know that, many students have been learning English for quiet long time, but they still cannot master English as their daily conversation. The reality shows that studying English particularly speaking is very important but it cannot be proved because the way they learn English especially speaking is not effective and efficient, so that it can become one of the problems that can obstruct the success of learning English particularly speaking.

Analyzing the situation at Cokroaminoto University Palopo particularly the students of English study program, they need to be improved in speaking as the University students must master four skills of English particularly speaking skill. Based on the researcher's experience when he walked around Cokroaminoto University, he spoke to several University students of the first semester, but many of them were not able to speak English well. Here is the following conversation between the researcher and one of them:

Researcher : What are you doing now?

Student : *We a...a...a sit discussed to a...a... friend and a...a... read a... my book friend.*

From the data above, the researcher analyzes that the answer is not correct. The researcher actually asked using present continuous and the student didn't answer in present continuous as well. Actually the correct answer is "*I am sitting, discussing something with my friends and reading my friend's book.*" From the above experience, the researcher was interested in choosing the title about improving the Students' Speaking Ability at the Second Semester of Cokroaminoto University Palopo Academic Year 2008/2009 in Expressing Present Continuous through Describing Picture.

The researcher carried out a research on a teaching technique of speaking in expressing present continuous through describing picture. This teaching technique applied expressing present continuous which was formulated into describing events on the picture. The describing events were guiding points of speaking for the students. These events dialed with the progressive activities. The researcher believed that this teaching technique gave the students chance to practice and improve their speaking ability. Therefore the researcher was curious to see how expressing present continuous through describing picture can improve the speaking ability. This

research was applied on the learning activities of the Second semester students of English Study Program of Cokroaminoto University Palopo.

Heaton (1988:87) defines speaking ability as the ability to communicate ideas appropriately and effectively. In sum, speaking ability is the ability to speak appropriately and effectively in real communicative situation in order to communicate ideas to other. Human beings have feeling, ideas, and thought. As social creatures they need to communicate their feeling, ideas, thought. And by means of speaking they can realize it. Speaking is the most essential way in which the speaker can express himself through language. Hornby in Jaddar (1995:140) states that speaking is used to indicate one's role, position, motive through expressing an opinion. The statement above will guide the researcher to have a research about expressing present progressive through describing picture. The researcher concludes that expressing present progressive through picture is also kind of how the students express their opinion based on the picture

This research focuses on the effectiveness of expressing present continuous through describing picture in improving students' speaking skill at the third semester of English study program of Cokroaminoto Palopo University. It is formulated as a teaching technique of speaking. Expressing present continuous through describing picture is focused to how the students can describe the picture given which is formed into describing progress events on the picture using present continuous as a guidance of student to talk. The aspects of assessing speaking will be accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility.

According to the Oxford learner's pocket dictionary, Oxford University press, new edition (1995:113) states that "Describe" is saying what something is like, whereas "picture" is drawing, photograph (1995:310). That's why the researcher concludes that describing picture is saying what the drawing looks like. Based on the definition, the drawing means in this research is the events are progressing on the picture.

There are many experts of English structures explain about the use of Present Progressive, some of them are cited as follows: Martinet & Thomson (1986:154) explains that present progressive (Present continuous) tense is used for an action happening now.

- Example :
- (+) It's raining now.
  - (-) It's not raining now.
  - (?) Is it raining now ?

Murphy (1994:2) states that we use present continuous (present progressive) when we talk about things happening in a period around now ( for example, today / this week/ this evening, etc), as the

- Example :    (+) you're working today  
              (-) You're not working today  
              (?) are you working today?

1. Swan (1995:463) explains that Progressive verb forms ( also called 'continuous' forms) are made with **be + - ing**

- Example :    (+) I am waiting for the shop to open.  
              (-) I am not waiting for the shop to open  
              (?) Am I waiting for the shop to open?

He also stated that there some common non-progressive verbs. Here is the list of some common verbs which are not often used in progressive forms:

a. mental state and emotional state

<i>believe</i>	<i>love</i>	<i>see</i>
<i>doubt</i>	<i>hate</i>	<i>suppose</i>
<i>feel</i>	<i>prefer</i>	<i>think</i>
<i>imagine</i>	<i>realize</i>	<i>understand</i>
<i>know</i>	<i>recognize</i>	<i>want</i>
<i>(dis)like</i>	<i>remember</i>	<i>wish</i>
<i>Appear</i>	<i>look(= seem)</i>	<i>hear</i>
<i>See(= understand)</i>	<i>smell</i>	

b. Progressive and Non-progressive uses

Comparing the progressive and non-progressive

1. what are you thinking about ( progressive )  
    What do you think of the government? (non-progressive )
2. Why are you smelling the meat? Is it bad?  
    (progressive )  
    Does the meat smell bad? ( non-progressive )
3. I'm just testing the cake to see if it's OK. (progressive) The cake tastes wonderful. (non-progressive )

Aik and Kam Kai Hui ( 1999:299 ) states that the uses of present continuous verb form are as follows:

- a) To express actions happening at the moment of speaking.
  1. He is writing a report at this moment.
  2. I am talking to you
- b) To refer to a temporary activity that is not necessarily happening at the moment of speaking
  1. She is learning English this year.
  2. The students are doing a project this term.
  3. They are writing a book of children's story
- c) to refer to a planned future action
  1. He is coming to dinner next week.
  2. I am meeting my lawyer tomorrow to discuss the sale of my property.
  3. The manager is visiting the factory soon.

From all the statements of the experts above, it can be concluded that present progressive ( continuous ) tense is used to express an action that is happening now, the activity is not happening now but still in progressive and also future activity.

In this research, the writer carried out teaching method which emphasized speaking activity. This teaching method applied describing picture using present continuous and used the progress events as the input. The following teaching steps detailed the teaching method obviously.

1. The first step is dividing the class into four large groups, A, B, C, and D, in order to be easy to control them.
2. The second step is giving each student a picture and telling to study it in a couple of minutes.
3. The third step is describing what the students are going to do with the pictures given and then ask them to construct the progress events individually and orally in the present continuous
4. The fourth step is asking the students to describe the progress events based on what they see on each of their picture in front of the class. Each student will spend the

time for 2 up to 3 minutes to carry out this step. They are going to be invited one by one to tell their explanation.

5. The last step is explaining the mistakes which will be made by the students. The teacher guides the students to improve their accuracy, Fluency, and comprehensibility in speaking.

## METHOD

The design of the research is one group pretest - posttest design. There are two variables in this research. The Variables are: Expressing present continuous through describing picture is as independent variable Student speaking skill is as dependent variable. The population of this research was the second semester students of Cokroaminoto University Palopo. The researcher used cluster random sampling technique and determined 1 class as the sample. The instruments of the research were speaking test, treatment materials and tape recorder. The tape recorder used to record students' speech when they were describing the picture. The speaking test consisted of two sessions. The students were given a picture and explained it based on what they saw on the picture. The explanation was describing events on the picture using present progressive. There were two speaking tests namely pretest and posttest. The treatment materials were the same form of speaking test. The procedure of collecting data in this research is described as follows: Pretest, Treatment and posttest. The data that was collected from the research was tabulated into scoring classification, mean score, test of significance, standard deviation, and percentage of score classification.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The mean score and standard deviation of the students pretest and posttest

**Table 1. The Mean Score and Standard Deviation of the Students Pretest and Posttest**

Type of Test	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Pretest	5,6	2,9223
Posttest	9,3	3,6620

The table shows that the mean score of the pretest is greater than the mean score of pretest (9,3>5.6). The data shows that the students' speaking ability is improved. In order to know whether the pretest and posttest are significantly different, the researcher used the t-test analysis.

The result of t-test is 11,9857. To find out the degree of freedom (df) the researcher used the following formula:

$$df = N - 1$$

$$df = 20 - 1$$

$$df = 19$$

For the level of significance (P) = 0,5 and df = 19, then the value of t-table = 2,0930. Thus, the value of the t-test is greater than t-table (11,9857 > 2,0930). It means that there is significant difference between the pretest and posttest of the students in speaking ability before and after expressing present continuous through describing picture. In other words, expressing present continuous through describing picture is effective in improving students speaking ability.

Concerning the result of the t-test above, it is concluded that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted. It means that expressing present continuous through describing picture which is applied in teaching speaking technique is effective in improve students' speaking ability.

After calculating the data analysis, the researcher found that in pretest, no one student got excellent score for accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility. Analyzing the posttest, no one student got excellent score for accuracy, but there were two students got excellent score for fluency and one student got excellent score for comprehensibility.

Some important data analyzed from the previous section are noted in this section. The first, the mean score obtained by the students in the pretest (5,6) is smaller than the mean score obtained in the posttest (9,3). It means that the student's ability in speaking is improved. The second, from the test statistical analysis, the researcher finds that the value of t-test (11,9857) is greater than t-table (2,0930). They are significantly different.

The mentioned data analysis above proof that expressing present continuous through describing picture which is formulated in teaching speaking method is effective in improving students' speaking ability.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings data analysis and the discussion of the findings, it can be concluded that expressing present continuous through describing picture which is formulated in teaching speaking method using simple present continuous is effective in improving students' speaking ability of the second semester students of English studies program at Cokroaminoto University.

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