Utilizing Problem-Based Learning

to Develop Speaking Skill

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Abstract

Speaking skills are one of the basic language skills that play an important role in oral communication. There are several problems with learning to speak experienced by the eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 14 Palu. The problem is that students lack vocabulary, which makes it difficult to speak. In addition, students' lack of confidence hinders their ability to communicate using English during the English learning process. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to prove that the utilizing of problem-based learning can improve the student's speaking skill of the eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 14 Palu. To answer the problems above, researchers used a quasi-experimental research design with cluster random sampling to choose the sample. The population of this research were students from grade eight students at SMP Negeri 14 Palu. The samples of this research were students of grade VIII Pattimura as the experimental group and grade VIII Jenderal Sudirman as the control group. To obtain data, the researchers used YouTube as a learning medium and a voice recorder as an instrument to obtain answers from students. The results of this research prove that the implementation of problem-based learning can improve students' speaking skill in the VIII Pattimura. The results of this research can help teachers find a new method that is designed to make students actively participate in expressing their ideas and opinions in English.

Keywords: *Speaking skill, problem-based learning, improve*

Introduction

Speaking skills are essential for developing communication. It is known to be the most important skill to be equipped with among the four language skills to enable one to communicate in this globalized world. According to Rao (2019), speaking is determined to be the most important skill in learning a foreign or

second language. At this time, there are still many students who have problems speaking, especially in mastering vocabulary, so they have difficulty expressing the opinions they want to convey.

This research focuses on improving students' speaking skills through the implementation of the problem-based learning method. The problem-based learning method is a method that focuses students on the learning process by introducing relevant problems at the beginning of learning. Students are then invited to learn independently, search for information related to the problem, conduct discussions to find solutions, and draw conclusions based on their own opinions. By discussing and exchanging opinions, students gain many benefits. One of these benefits is that they acquire more vocabulary, which can help them in speaking.

Based on the explanation above, one way to solve the problem of student learning outcomes is to use problem-based learning strategies. Based on previous research conducted by Bahrudin (2018), field notes, observation, documentation, and tests were used to collect data. The results of this research show that teaching using the problem-based learning method is effective and can improve students' speaking skills. Drawing from these findings, the researchers used problem-based learning methods to improve students' learning abilities, using different techniques to collect data such as group discussions, oral tests, and YouTube media.

This research aims to address students' problems with speaking skills, especially their limited vocabulary, which makes it difficult for them to express their opinions. To solve this issue, the researchers used a problem-based learning approach, where students are encouraged to discuss, solve problems, find solutions, and present their opinions. Through this method, students are expected to increase their vocabulary and build greater confidence in expressing their ideas, which supports the overall improvement of their speaking skills.

Method

This research employed a quasi-experimental design to ascertain the outcomes of a certain technique. A quasi-experimental design was chosen because it allows for group comparisons in real classroom settings where random assignment is limited. There were two groups, namely the control group and the experimental group. The population of this research was the eighth-grade students of SMP Negeri 14 Palu in the academic year 2023/2024, with a total number of 88 students. The research sample was selected from the student population, consisting of two classes. In determining the sample, the researchers used cluster random sampling. The sample used was Grade VIII Jenderal Sudirman as the control group and Grade VIII Pattimura as the experimental group.

In collecting data, the researchers focused on instruments to gather quantitative data. The research instrument was an oral test to determine students' speaking ability. This research used pre-tests and post-tests in data collection. Following the course treatment, the researchers analyzed the data to determine each student's score. Quantitative data were processed using SPSS version 29, applying descriptive statistics and inferential statistical tests such as paired sample t-tests and independent sample t-tests to measure the significance of the results.

Results

To find out the results of research related to the utilizing of problem-based learning to develop speaking skills that focus on fluency and accuracy of speaking, the researchers present the results of the research as follows:

Table 1. The Mean Scores of Students in the Pre-test

Descriptive Statistics				
Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Pre-test Experimental	22	33	75	51.41
Pre-test Control	22	67	92	76.09
Valid N (listwise)	22			

Table 1 presents the pre-test speaking scores of students in both the experimental and control groups. The experimental group scored between 33 and 75, with a mean of 51.41, while the control group scored between 67 and 92, with a higher mean of 76.09. This suggests that prior to the implementation of problem-based learning, the control group already had stronger speaking skills compared to the experimental group. The difference indicates a potential imbalance in the initial proficiency levels, which should be considered when interpreting the effects of the teaching intervention.

Table 2. Grouping of Students' Speaking Ability Scores in the Pre-test Experimental Group

Scoring Range Pretest Experimental Group			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Good	1	4.5
	Poor	19	86.4
	Very Poor	2	9.1
	Total	22	100.0

Table 2 shows the distribution of students' speaking scores in the experimental group before the treatment. Only one student (4.5%) was categorized as Good, while the majority (86.4%) were in the Poor category, and two students (9.1%) were classified as Very Poor. This indicates that most students in the

experimental group had relatively low speaking proficiency prior to the implementation of problem-based learning. This reinforces the importance of targeted instructional strategies to improve their performance.

Table 3. Grouping of Students' Speaking Ability Scores in the Pre-test Control Group

	Scoring Range Pretest Control Group		
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Good	2	9.1
	Poor	17	77.3
	Very Poor	3	13.6
	Total	22	100.0

Table 3 shows the speaking ability distribution for the control group in the pre-test. Two students (9.1%) were classified as Good, 17 students (77.3%) as Poor, and three (13.6%) as Very Poor. Like the experimental group, the control group also showed generally low speaking proficiency, though it had slightly more students in the higher categories. These baseline differences suggest a need to examine improvements relative to initial ability. After applying this method, the researchers conducted a post-test, and the results are attached as follows:

Table 4. The Mean Scores of Students in the Post-test

	Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Posttest Experimental	22	70	100	83.09
Posttest Control	22	67	92	76.09
Valid N (listwise)	22			

Table 4 presents the post-test speaking scores for both groups. The experimental group showed a substantial improvement with a mean score of 83.09, compared to 51.41 in the pre-test. The control group also showed a slight improvement with a mean score of 76.09, identical to its pre-test result. Notably, 21 out of 22 students in the experimental group passed the school's standard threshold. These results suggest that the problem-based learning method was effective in enhancing students' speaking performance, particularly in the experimental group.

Table 5. Grouping of Students' Speaking Ability in the Post-test Experimental Group

	Scoring Range Posttest Experimental	
	Frequency	Percent
Valid Very Good	9	40.9
Good	12	54.5
Poor	1	4.5
Total	22	100.0

Table 5 presents, 21 of 22 students in the experimental group achieved the passing standard in the post-test, with 40.9% in the Very Good category and 54.5% in the Good category. Only one student remained in the Poor category. Compared to the pre-test, this distribution shows a dramatic improvement in students' speaking abilities, supporting the effectiveness of the problem-based learning strategy used during instruction.

Table 6. Grouping of Students' Speaking Ability in the Post-test Control Group

	Scoring Range Posttest Control Group	
	Frequency	Percent
Valid Very Good	1	4.5
Good	19	86.4
Poor	2	9.1
Total	22	100.0

In Table 6, the control group also shows improvement compared to the pre-test, with 86.4% of students categorized as Good and one student (4.5%) achieving Very Good. Two students (9.1%) remained in the Poor category. While this indicates progress, the control group's improvement is less dramatic than that of the experimental group, suggesting that traditional instruction may not be as effective as problem-based learning in developing speaking skills.

After getting the mean score of the pre-test and post-test, the researchers used a normality test (Shapiro-wilk) to see whether the data followed a normal distribution. The result of the normality test can be seen in the table.

Table 7 Tests of Normality used Shapiro-Wilk

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest Experimental	.213	22	.010	.893	22	.022
Posttest Experimental	.165	22	.122	.953	22	.358
Pretest Control	.191	22	.035	.940	22	.199
Posttest Control	.262	22	<.001	.878	22	.011

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 7 shows that the post-test experimental and pre-test control groups have significance values > 0.05, indicating normal distribution. The other two groups show values < 0.05, suggesting slight deviations. However, the data are still considered suitable for parametric testing using the paired sample t-test.

Table 8 Paired Samples Test

			Paired Differences						Significance	
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				One-Sided	Two-Sided
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	p	p
Pair 1	Pretest Experimental Post-test Experimental	-31.682	12.737	2.716	-37.329	-26.035	-11.667	21	<.001	<.001
Pair 2	Pretest Control Posttest Control	-23.045	14.477	3.086	-29.464	-16.627	-7.467	21	<.001	<.001

The paired sample t-test results in Table 8 show statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-test scores in both the experimental and control groups ($p < 0.001$). In the experimental group, the mean score increased by 31.68 points, while the control group improved by 23.04 points.

Given a significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0), which states that there is no significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, is rejected. The alternative hypothesis (H_1), which asserts a significant difference in students' speaking scores before and after instruction, is accepted.

This outcome confirms that both groups improved, but the experimental group experienced a greater increase in speaking performance, indicating that problem-based learning was more effective than conventional instruction in developing students' speaking skills—particularly in fluency and accuracy.

Discussion

Based on the results, the researchers discuss the findings related to the research problem. The pre-test results revealed that students' speaking levels were low, with many scoring in the "very poor" category. This low performance was attributed to limited vocabulary mastery and a lack of confidence when speaking English. According to Zalukhu (2023), factors that affect students' speaking skills include vocabulary, grammar, confidence, pronunciation, environment, motivation, and a text-focused curriculum.

To address these issues, the researchers implemented problem-based learning (PBL) to enhance students' speaking skills. Through PBL, students were able to improve their vocabulary, build confidence, and engage in problem-solving through group discussions. Rahmadana and Kaharuddin (2020) highlight that group discussions in PBL help students improve their transactional speaking skills, particularly in exchanging information and participating in formal discussions.

The treatment involved dividing the students into groups, having them watch a pre-selected video on a relevant topic, discussing related issues, creating a recount text, and then presenting their findings to the class. This approach aligns with Daeli (2022), who asserts that the PBL model is effective for teaching speaking because it encourages active learning and peer knowledge sharing.

The results support the conclusion that PBL is an effective method for developing students' speaking skills. As shown by the increase in post-test scores, many students improved from the "very poor" to the "very good" category. The videos exposed students to examples from native speakers, which helped with pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, group discussions allowed students to learn new vocabulary and build confidence in speaking in front of the class. PBL also fostered creativity, allowing students to express themselves more fluently.

These findings align with previous studies, such as Mubarak et al. (2023), who concluded that PBL helps students learn to speak effectively and present ideas clearly. Similarly, Hamsia and Erydani (2022) found that PBL in public speaking classes enhances students' speaking abilities by providing more opportunities for practice. Fahmi et al. (2021) and Trijaya (2020) also confirm that PBL improves speaking skills in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy, fluency, and grammar, as evidenced by significant improvements in the pre-test and post-test scores.

However, it is important to acknowledge potential limitations of the study. For example, the sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study focused only on a specific group of students, and results may vary with different demographic groups or in different teaching contexts. Future research could explore the long-term effects of PBL on speaking skills and investigate whether these improvements are sustained over time.

In conclusion, the implementation of problem-based learning proves to be an effective strategy for improving students' speaking skills. Therefore, the researchers recommend its incorporation into speaking instruction as a means to foster greater vocabulary mastery, confidence, and fluency.

Conclusion

The researchers found that problem-based learning methods could improve students' speaking skills, as demonstrated by a significant increase in the achievement or test scores of students' speaking skills in the experimental group. Thus, the researchers found that the hypothesis was accepted. Problem-based learning methods can improve students' speaking skills by using more engaging methods, like this one. With this method, the researchers recommends the problem-based learning method for teaching, especially in teaching students' speaking skills.

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