

## Conference Paper

# Using Communicative Approach in Teaching Speaking Competence of Young Learners through Home-based Learning

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**ORCID:**Irene Maria C.R: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5804-3140>**Abstract**

This study aims to probe into the use of communicative approach in teaching speaking competence of young learners through Home-based Learning approach. To master a language, the learner should sharpen their speaking skills/competences. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign/second language to young learners. Developing speaking competence will teach young learners English beyond grammar and words function, so that they could freely express their opinions. Being able to express themselves, young learners will have good self-esteem which would in turn help them in learning new things and other languages. However, COVID-19 pandemic urged teachers to alter their method of teaching speaking to young learners as they learn from home and meet their teachers online through a virtual meeting platform. This study found that the materials designed by the teacher do impact in stimulating young language learners to improve their communication skills in English.

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## 1. Introduction

The Indonesian new Education Minister said that English must be taught since primary level. This is especially true in students' communication skills. It means that teachers need to teach English speaking skills to their primary school students. Under the policy of the new minister, some schools can have *Satuan Pendidikan Kerjasama (SPK)* or Education Operation Units curriculum. These units allow those schools to have the combination of national curriculum and international curriculum. *SPK* schools must have *Bahasa Indonesia* and *PKN* in their curriculum as they are the characteristics of Indonesia and teach those subjects in *Bahasa Indonesia*. Then, those schools allow to deliver Mathematics, Science in English while at the same time the students also learn English as one of the subjects. Therefore, it is time for early young learners to learn

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English without despising their identity as Indonesia citizen and maintaining Indonesian value as well.

Setyastuti (2019) in her thesis about the use of Big book as a media to teach speaking mentioned that using the Big book helps students to improve their ability in speaking. Big Book helps students to have the description about a certain story and the improve their vocabulary. It makes them have some ideas to re-tell the story step by step through some activities given by teacher, such as arranging the story in sequence. Finally, they make a book of story from big book and then present in front of the class (p. 80-86).

Bland (2015) also thinks that storytelling followed by picture book is the good way to teach young learners for speaking. From the story telling given, the learners can finally learn to express their ideas and opinion about the story given. At the end, Bland (2015) uses drama to improve the learners' critical thinking because drama has many complex aspects such as culture, values, conflicts and thus drama allows students to use their critical thinking skills (p. 8-9).

From the previous explanation, it can be assumed that speaking helps young learners to improve their ability to grasp new language, especially English. English as one of international language is having great roles to spread the information about all aspects in this world. Many countries which use English as their first or second language have developed in all aspects of life. Those aspects give a great influence in the development of this world, especially the invention for human being. So that, it cannot be denied that English has significant roles as the language to deliver knowledge. As being a part of this world, English must be learned since early years. Therefore, English needs to be learnt since in primary grade level.

In learning English, students should develop listening, reading, speaking, and writing as well. Every skill has its own role to build up student's competency in English and it support each other. So that, they cannot be separated.

Cambridge curriculum as one of curriculum that is used by most *SPK* school has provided the holistic method to teach English for young learners. It uses theme for teaching 4 skills in English and also delivers Mathematics, Science, and Social Study in English. Only *Bahasa Indonesia* and Civic Educations (PPKn) that are delivered in *Bahasa Indonesia*.

However, not all primary students are familiar with English as the main language at school. The books that are used for references are for teaching English as a second language. It is rather difficult for students who never learn English and their parents who have no ideas to teach English at home. Thus, students only catch a little information during their learning process and have no confident to speak in English. They also

have low motivation in trying to speak in English. In the present study, communicative language teaching approach was used in the classroom to find the best method to improve the students' speaking skills so that they are more confident in learning and using English in daily life.

From the problem identification above, several research problems surfaced. Firstly, how did teachers teach speaking to first graders of primary schools? Secondly, how did the cognitive and mental development of the first grader of primary schools occurred? Then, what kind of communicative approach is appropriate? Lastly, how the communicative approach was used in teaching speaking for young learners, especially the first graders, to find the best method through home-based learning.

Through this research, it is expected that the researcher will have sufficient competence to develop interesting learning activities to build young learners' confidence up in speaking and students' ability to participate actively in their home-based learning as well.

## **1.1. Teaching speaking competence**

Some principles need to be considered for teaching speaking competence for young learners as they are still in the beginning stage. First, teachers of young learners need to open chances and more time for the learners to practice pronouncing and speaking English, both in and outside the classroom. As young learners are like sponges, absorb everything, teacher needs to be more careful in pronouncing every words, phrases and sentences since it is rather difficult to change it when there is a mistake in pronouncing. Second, teacher of young learners need to present some vocabulary with some support pictures, drawing, puppet, video, or gesture. Children needs to acquire necessary vocabulary and structure before they are presenting their story, ideas or experiences (Arifin, 2018: 3-5).

## **1.2. Primary students**

### **1.2.1. The characteristics of primary students**

Based on the psychological development, the golden age for the children to learn language is from 3 to 7 years old, with the peak age is 5 years old. Thus, it is very good to teach English during this age. However, learning English as a second language for

young learners is problematical especially when they have not mastered their mother tongue.

The development period of 3 to 7 years old children is included in the beginning and the end of childhood period development. Children who are in their 3 to 6 years old are in their beginning of the childhood whereas 7 years old children are included in the end of childhood period (Santrock, 2012: 18). The interesting part here is that 3-7 years old children pass through two childhood periods, especially for 6- and 7-years old child. The age of 6 or 7 is the starting point for every child to go the next developmental period. A significant changing in language happens during these years, for example, in the process of arranging words. In the beginning period, children will associate the word “dog” to “bark” but when they come to an end period of childhood, they can associate the word “dog” to the other animals that have the same category with “dog”. They can associate “dog” to “cat, horse”. In this period, their language skills keep developing. They can think about the language they learn, the meaning the words and even can explain the words that they produce. They keep developing in reading and writing skill. Finally, it helps them much to learn English, their second or foreign language, since their first language is more powerful than they are still in the first period of their childhood (Santrock, 2012: 317-347).

Related to the children’s development above, it is possible for children to learn a second language. They have the capability to learn other language other than their mother tongue. Hence, it considered appropriate to think about the best method for the young learners to study language, especially English without any burden.

Some of young learners’ characteristics are loving to play game, cheerful, and dare to try new things. They also have confidence to perform their ability as long as they feel comfortable with the situation. These characteristics stimulate the researcher to find the best teaching method that can accommodate all the characteristics mentioned. As Bisri (2016) stated, young learners are excited in trying new things and at the same time are able to overcome their lower self-esteem. Although they have low self-esteem, they will never cease to learn or to do some interesting activities. The worst situation is that when they do not believe that they have capability to overcome their own problem (p. 7).

Reflecting upon the researcher’s experience in SPK school, young learners are brave in expressing themselves in target languages when they feel fun during the learning process. The more fun they feel during the learning process, the faster they grasp the subjects delivered to them since their affective filter is shutting down (Dulay, 1982: 46).

From the four skills in English (listening, speaking, writing, and reading), speaking is more interesting for young learners when it is delivered in a fun way such as through song, rhyme, chants with the repetition lyrics. They feel that learning English is like a game. No grammatical lesson per se is given during the process of learning. Besides, the chosen words and dialect have great influence toward the young learners. As it is mentioned by Beneke & Cheatham (2015) in their article “*Speaking Up for African American*”. They said that students need the creativity and the understanding from their teacher about their social background during learning process at school so that they can understand the standard English better. A teacher needs to implement *spoken language* that the students have known from their surrounding and connect it to the standard English (Beneke & Cheatham, 2015: 131). From these statements, it can be concluded that learning English is more interesting when teacher uses the language that is almost similar with the target language and they usually find it at home, in the movies, or from YouTube.

Supharatyphtin (2014) mentioned that communicative approach is also used in learning English for British accent. During the learning process, he mentioned that learning English must be focused on the communication skills rather than on the grammar (p. 142). He also said that in learning English, speaking is more helpful for young learners, especially if it is not their first language. Communicative approach helps them to understand English as a whole and not only limited by the grammar itself.

In their book, Bos and Vaughn (1993) mentioned that it is important to consider the cultural background and the mother tongue in teaching English as the second language. There are 2 types in teaching English as the second language to the children that teacher needs to consider. First type is *Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills /BICS*. It focusses on the daily language. For instance, during play time children will talk about the games they play, rule of the games, and they will use some body language in communication too. Here, BICS is the beginning step for the children to communicate for them to learn English as their second language, and it usually needs 2 years for them to acquire English. Then, the second type is *Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency or CALP*. It refers to the children ability in connecting the language they find at school with their daily language or with their environment. This is the reason why CALP development tends slower than *BICS*, and it needs for about 4 up to 7 years to acquire this ability (p. 93).

The characteristics of primary students can also be seen through their motoric skills. They are confidence to show up their ability in writing, drawing, and physical exercise. They also love to compare themselves with their peers and it can make them

unconfident when knowing their ability is lower than their peers. They also learn through real things, such as their life, the objects that are often seen in their daily life. Primary students who are in the middle period of childhood are in the period when they gain the self-confident and their ego through the difficult tasks they are accomplished. Teacher in this stage needs to understand their students' condition since they need great appraisal and encouragement from the teacher to feel secure and confident when they are not good in completing the tasks.

In cognitive development, primary students are categorized in concrete operational thinking. Even though it is higher than pre-concrete operational thinking, they still need concrete objects to understand the concepts. Children in this development stage also have the ability to understand:

1. One to one correspondence. For instance, they can understand the concept in addition through giving one pencil to group 1 and one pencil to group 2.
2. Classification of objects, time and events.
3. Classification objects by two similar characteristics. For instance, classification objects by colour and shape.

In moral values, primary students, especially the first and second graders, are really influenced by adult people to view the right and wrong deeds. They learn the good deeds through punishment and appraisal from adult. They learn obedience by responding the physical consequences of their actions (Morrison, 2012: 287-292).

### **1.2.2. The roles of teacher**

Teacher has great roles in conducting learning process in the classroom. Teacher is the role model for the students to grasp the learning sources. Moreover, in CLT, the teacher needs to pay attention to their role in teaching. Harmer (2007) mentions that teacher is a facilitator. There are some classifications for the teacher, as follows.

1. Controller

Teacher tells about the procedure in the classroom during the learning process, read a loud and also transfer the knowledge.

2. Prompter

Teacher tries to encourage students to speak about their opinion by giving a clue and persuades them to use English rather than their mother tongue during learning process.

### 3. Participant

In some opportunities, teacher needs to join students' activities as a person who gives encouragement inside the learning process. It is more fun for the students when teacher gets involved in learning process especially when they prepare their group work.

### 4. Source

Sometimes students need information during learning process. It's the time for the teacher as the resource. Teacher needs to encourage the independent learning of the students by letting other students to give the answer or asking them to check in a dictionary or other resources such as internet. No teacher knows everything.

### 5. Tutor

Teacher can ask and point some students to participate in their projects or activities so that; students can take turn (p. 108-110).

## 1.2.3. Satuan Pendidikan Kerjasama (SPK) curriculum for primary students.

According to *Permendiknas no. 105 tahun 2014*, it is stated that the government starts to make regulation how the *SPK* curriculum is designed. It is mentioned that there are 3 terms found in *SPK* Curriculum, which are Primary school, Indonesian Educational Institution (*Lembaga Pendidikan Indonesia or LPI*), and Non-Indonesian Education Institution (*Lembaga Pendidikan Asing or LPA*):

1. *Primary School is one of formal grade level education that is given for 7-12 years old children.*
2. *Lembaga Pendidikan Indonesia is an institution in Indonesia that formulates the Indonesian Education. It can be the government and/or the institutions that legally work in education.*
3. *Lembaga Pendidikan Asing is an institution that formulates education in another country. There are some educational institutions that are internationally acceptable. They are International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), ABEKA, ACE. Western Association Schools and Colleges (WASC).*

There are some regulations to build *SPK* in a school. Here, the researcher only mentions the regulations in relation in teaching learning for primary students:

1. Primary students must receive *PKN* (character building) and *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian language)
2. The exchange students are only followed by fourth, fifth, and sixth grader
3. The students who join exchange must have English ability, passive English minimum.

### 1.3. Communicative approach

In learning language there are some learning methods used in teaching the second and foreign language to the students. They are grammar-translation method, direct method, and audio-lingual method. The last method is communicative approach (Sadoughvanini & Shamsudin, 2019: 31).

Communicative approach focusses on the ability of the learners to use the target language in their daily life. Hopefully, the learners can communicate with other people in any kind of circumstances. In the learning process, this approach does not focus on the grammatical order of the sentence and language, but on the usage of the language itself in communicating (Sadoughvanini & Shamsudin, 2019: 32).

There are some functions of communicative approach we need to consider. Firstly, people need to know how to use language in different purpose and function, to produce and understand different types of texts, and to maintain communication with others. Then, they also know when using the formal and informal speech with the other persons (Richards, 2006: 3).

Brown and Lee (2015) state that the communicative approach is a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It is a foundation of Second Language Acquisition as it teaches English through the social, cultural and pragmatic features. Thus, it can be concluded some characteristics as follows:

1. Overall goals

CLT suggests focussing on all of the components of speaking competence (grammar, discourse, sociolinguistics and strategy). So that, it combines all the components into one goal

2. Relationship of form and function

It doesn't focus on the form but how the components can help the learner to accomplish the purposes.

3. Fluency and accuracy



It focuses on the fluency of the learners to deliver ideas and encourages learners at other time to attend the correctness. Teacher has responsibility to give feedback on learners' errors on this part.

#### 4. Focus on real-word contexts

The learners should use the language in their daily life (outside the classroom). That's why the classroom should provide the important skills of speaking outside the classroom.

#### 5. Autonomy and strategic involvement

Students or learners should have opportunity to focus on their own learning process through raising the awareness of their own strength, weaknesses, preferences of learning and through developing the appropriate strategies for production and comprehension. It will help them to learn autonomous in language beyond the classroom.

#### 6. Teacher roles

Teacher becomes the facilitator and not become the all-knowing the knowledge. Students need to be encouraged to construct meaning of the language through interaction with other students and teacher.

#### 7. Student roles

Students are actively in learning process such as students-cantered, cooperative, and collaborative learning activities. (2015: 31-32)

### 1.3.1. Communicative language teaching activities

In this research, the main activity is to review their accuracy and give some feedback for errors, since most of the students have learnt English since they were 3 years old. It has a goal to improve their fluency, pronunciation and the voice volume so they can do presentation clearly. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can accommodate the goals above.

There are some strategies in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), according to Rachmajanti (2017) in order to support the activities in classroom, such as *Listen and Draw*, *Same and Different*, *Brainstorming*, *Ranking Activity*, *Information Gap*, *Mind Mapping*, *Know-What-Want to Know-Learned (K-W-L)*, *Interactive Crossword Puzzle*, *Running Dictation*, and *Find Someone Who*. However, there are only two strategies are used as details follows:

### 1. Pre communicative activities

This activity is done before doing communicative activities. It has purpose to prepares students to be ready to do communicative activities. As Rachmajanti (2017) said that brainstorming is an activity to prepare the students to the topic discussed, the researcher has purpose to use this strategy to prepare the learners for the topic discussion. First, the learners will get a certain topic and let them to mention any ideas (in words or sentences) related to the topic. It will stimulate them to speak up about the topic discussion (Rachmajanti, 2017: 22).

### 2. Communicative activities

This activity is done after the learners and the teacher find out the ideas relevant to the topic. Here, the next strategy that will be used is Find Someone Who. The learners will work with their family member to collect information about someone who has relation with the topic discussion. They will be persuaded to interview other group to get the data. Their speaking skills will be needed to do this activity. By trying to speak English, surely their speaking skills will be improved (Rachmajanti, 2017: 27).

### 3. Post communicative activities

At the end of the activity, the learners still use *Find Someone Who* strategy. They will present the result of their interview. It means that they need to speak in front of the camera since one of their family members will take a video of their presentation. This activity still needs them to speak. The opportunity to speak in each activity will help them to enhance their skills. By limiting the pressure, each activity will be done at home and can wear any clothes they want as they are young learners who need to feel happy and comfortable to do it so that their affective filter will decrease.

## 2. Methods

This pandemic situation has changed the education lifestyle in this world and especially in Indonesia as well. Ready or not, all schools in Indonesia are urged to change the learning process from offline learning through online learning. It also urges teacher to develop their learning method by using many kinds of online learning platform in order to deliver the knowledge to their students.

Primary teachers, especially in SPK school, has great impact to stimulate students' spirit of learning English especially in speaking. The right method to be used has

influenced to the students in learning speaking English. Teacher needs to explore many kinds of online platform learning method in order to fulfil the learning outcome.

With some young learners' characteristics, teacher needs to do classroom experiments in order to find out the best method to teach speaking to the first graders of primary students during this pandemic situation.

Here, researcher does classroom experiments to find the best method. Virtual meeting is used to stimulate students' initiative in learning process and in expressing their ideas and thought about topic around them. Then, giving some opportunity to the students to practice their pronunciation is also given. Slide show, audio and video learning are provided to give some experience to listen and repeat the native speaker's pronunciation in some English words. Finally, students can get video example how to present their project orally.

This research was conducted to the first primary graders in My Little Island Primary School as one of the SPK school in Malang. It also uses Cambridge curriculum in learning process. Mathematics, English, Science, and Social Study are delivered in English while Bahasa Indonesia and PKN are delivered in Bahasa Indonesia.

These students mostly have known English since they were in kindergarten, so that they are familiar to listen English even though it still needs some real gesture or pictures and slow speed of English to understand what the teacher mentions to them. The researcher used some online and offline speaking rubrics in order to give score to the students' competence in speaking and to trigger them to speak up their ideas and thought.

### 3. Findings and Discussions

#### 3.1. Communicative language teaching activities through Home-based learning

This pandemic situation has urged school and parents to decide home based learning as the best tools for their children to learn since they are still young and need extra protection from adult to keep them health and safety. It also urges the teacher to design the best method and strategy to deliver the materials to the students. Here the researcher is also becoming the teacher uses 3 steps communicative activities during learning process. In each communicative activity, it uses one strategy to learn.

### 3.1.1. Pre-communicative activities

As the students have familiar with English since they are in Kindergarten, the first topic in the first week of school can be delivered to the students easier. The first topic is about alphabet. It aims to review the letters they know in English. So that, teacher needs to have a virtual meeting. Teacher uses zoom virtual meeting to discuss about alphabet. After singing alphabet song, then teacher share screen of some letters and let students to guess what letter is presented. Then next activity is that they write down the letter mentioned by the teacher and they also need to guess the first letter of each picture given on the screen.

Teacher also needs to share the virtual character points in order to eager the students to answer the questions as young learner loves to get some reward for their effort. So that, teacher needs to use Class Dojo for giving them the reward for being active in class discussion.

By using three online platform, teacher can dig out the previous knowledge of the students about alphabet. From 20 students, 16 students have willingness to join the discussion and 4 students need teacher to call their name for answering the questions.

It can be denied that parents are really having great impact for students learning process. All the activities given are really needed parents to monitor and even help them to answer the questions.

### 3.1.2. Communicative activities

In this pandemic situation, this activity cannot be seen clearly since the students do it at home. When they try to find out the nick name of their family member, mostly their family member directly gives the answer of their questions so that they don't really do interview. It can be found when teacher has a virtual meeting with the students and ask them some questions related to the method how they get the information about their family member's nick name. Even teacher gives them example how to ask questions to their family member, mostly their parents directly tell them the nick name of their family member. In this part, teacher found that 5 students from 20 students who really do the interview to one of their family members about their name and the letters occurred in its name. This interview can happen to these 5 students as their parents let them to construct the questions. It can be found through the questions given to these students during zoom meeting, and to their parents in order to dig out further information about the situation happen during home-based learning about alphabet.

### 3.1.3. Post-communicative activities

Home based learning really makes the students confidence with their presentation. 12 students of 20 students have high score in speaking average. Here the teacher uses i-speaking rubrics in order to find out the effect of doing this method to improve students' competence in speaking. It was found that 16 students of 20 students have clear and good pronunciation, 11 students have a complete sentence in presenting their alphabet project, 12 students who use the main vocabulary in this topic (such as father, mother, sister, brother, "it starts with letter..."), and 8 students who are fluent in presenting their project of alphabet. It is really different with the last academic years which are not having clear pronunciation and fluent when presenting in front of classroom. Learning from home create comfortable feeling from most of them as they look confident and fluent in speaking.

## 4. Conclusion and Suggestion

Teaching speaking competence toward young learners, especially to the first primary graders, are different from adult. Fun activities are required to engage them in learning process. Games, writing box, using tape/CD, using chants/rhyme, and tongue twister are the best method to motivate them in speaking. It also needs to consider the characteristics of the primary students itself. The primary students, especially the first graders, are the age when their language develops much in understanding some words and their meaning. This is the time when they love to explore their language if the surrounding makes them feel comfort and the language has closed relationship with their local culture. On the other hand, they have familiar with their mother tongue so that they are ready to learn new language, English.

SPK as the alternative curriculum can support this learning process. SPK schools have authority to design their own curriculum as long as they still put PKn (character buildings), religion, and Bahasa Indonesia as their primary subjects. Here, SPK schools have opportunity to teach English and become the primary language for other subjects.

However, the first grader needs to feel secure in learning English. Communicative approach helps them much to raise their confidence during learning process by using brainstorming strategy in the pre communicative activity and Find Someone Who. Strategy in the main and post communicative activity, the first primary graders can improve their English through speaking. Their characteristic of being brave to express themselves in a secure and comfortable situation is the great aspects in requiring

English as the foreign language. Home based learning really increases their confidence in speaking English since they do the speaking activities from home, the place where they feel comfortable and secure.

In this disruptive era, schools in Indonesia need to put English as one of the subjects taught to students. The younger they learn English, the easier they improve their ability to express themselves in English and to read some knowledge in English. The prime minister of education also thinks that English should teach since primary level. However, the main purpose in teaching English for primary is communicative activities. Teaching vocab, grammar and skills in English should be started by having some communication. Teacher as the role model must be able to speak English correctly and fluently when teaching English for young learners, especially primary students.

Even though friendly and cheerful role model from the teacher are really required, home based learning really needs teacher's capability and skills to master in using any kinds of online platform learning to encourage students to be active in discussion without feeling stress to learn virtually for about 2 hours in front of the gadget. Teacher also needs to remember that parents become having greater portion in learning process without forcing parents to be a real teacher since they are parents with having different occupation. Teacher really needs to provide students and parents with clear instruction how to operate the gadget and online platform besides the learning process itself.

Home based learning is still new method for mostly primary school in Indonesia. There are still many aspects of online learning method can be applied. It also needs more research related to this method since Indonesia primary teachers need more resources, workshop and experience regarding to the learning method during pandemic situation.

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