Is the Direct Method still Effective in Teaching English Speaking Skills in Indonesia?

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Abstract

This study aimed to find out whether the direct method is still effective in teaching English speaking skills especially in Indonesia context. By employing a classroom action research and library research, it was found that the direct method has been underlooked by teachers and researchers in recent years. It could be seen from the decrease of publication under this theme at least the ones indexed by Google Scholar. Both the classroom action research and library research conducted suggested that the direct method is still effective in teaching English speaking skills in Indonesia. However, some suggestions were also made for the implementation of the direct method to be effective in the classrooms including the classroom activities, visual aids, and teacher's foreign language proficiency.

Keywords: *the effect of direct method to students' speaking skill, how to use direct method in teaching speaking, methods in teaching speaking, recent studies on direct method*

1. Background

Speaking skill is the main parameter of someone's language mastery. We call a baby has acquired a language when he speaks his first word the first time. As he acquires new vocabularies, we don't usually say that he has acquired more words but we say that his speaking skill develops. This tendency also applies in the context of foreign or second language learning, as pointed by Richard (2008, p.19), that the mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for second or foreign language learners. As a result, students often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English courses based on how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language abilities. Although, in university, we evaluate students' English mastery through different language skills evaluation (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), it is very possible that we value students' effort to improve their language by looking at the fluency and grammaticality of

their utterances. Perhaps, it is so because we tend to value the students' success in language learning when they can use the language for daily interaction need.

The importance of speaking skill, of course, is not to substitute writing skill as an important language skill to develop and master. However, looking at the emergence of speaking mastery, it is imperative to look at the methods used in the speaking classrooms. Today, many speaking teachers use at least three teaching methods in teaching speaking, they are Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method, and Audio-Lingual Method as noted by Djauhar (2021). The direct method is usually considered as a "better" method than the grammar-translation method (Young, 1922; Djauhar, 2021) because of its possibilities to foster all language skills. It is also considered as the product of reform movement which was reacting to the restrictions of grammar-translation method (Harmer, 2007, p.63). However, as Bovee's classic question "how can the meaning of French words be conveyed to the students without using their English equivalents?" (Bovee, 1919, p.63). Bovee's question was in the context of the teaching of French vocabularies to English speaker students. In our context, assume that English is not our students' mother tongue, the question may sound "how can the meaning of what we teach in English be conveyed to the students without using their mother tongue equivalents?" Even until now, this classic question is still flying over our heads although we keep using the direct method in the speaking classroom; some classrooms in universities even apply the direct method in teaching non-linguistic subject to English language students. Meanwhile, recent research has shown that the grammar-translation method was still found effective in teaching English (Zulkarnain and Widiati, 2021). Are the teachers "returning" to the grammar translation method and reconsidering the effectiveness of the direct method?

This article does not aim to compare the grammar translation method (or any other methods) and the direct method, its effectiveness, in the teaching of speaking skill. Recent studies (Batool et al, 2017, p.38; Djauhar, 2021) showed that the effectiveness of the direct method somehow depends on the teacher's language ability, physical and mental strength, and imagination skill. In other words, the direct method, if practiced by "unready" teachers, couldn't bear the answer to Bovee's classic question above. Nevertheless, to evaluate the teacher's readiness in applying the direct method in the speaking classroom is also beyond of this article.

This article is written based on our recent study in an English Education Program of a University in Indonesia. We wanted to see if the direct method (applied by the teacher in the given context) could improve the students' speaking skill. Moreover, this article also reviews recent studies accomplished in Indonesia contexts related to the effectiveness of the direct method in teaching language skills, especially speaking skills. The synthesis will lead us to the answer to the question "is the direct method still effective in teaching English speaking in Indonesia?"

2. Theoretical Basis

Speaking ability and speaking skill

Speaking is a natural human ability as long as he does not experience defects in the articulation organs or in his brain. A child can already be said to "have language" when he is able to pronounce words with appropriate references. But being skilled at speaking is another story. Therefore, a distinction between speaking ability and speaking skill must be made.

In language learning, speaking is always considered a natural productive skill, unlike writing which, although a productive skill, requires conscious and planned learning and practice to be mastered. A child who does not have the opportunity to go to school for one reason or another, can still have good speaking abilities because his language acquisition is supported by the environment in which he gets the experience of communication. Meanwhile, writing abilities can only be obtained through learning, although not formally.

The speaking ability must be understood as merely the ability to speak while the speaking skills must be understood as skills needed to speak well in any situations or speaking events. To speak well, fluency in pronunciation alone and the understanding of utterance are not enough, as Harmer (2007, p.343) summarized:

> If students want to be able to speak fluently in English, they need to be able to pronounce phonemes correctly, use appropriate stress and intonation patterns and speak in connected speech. But there is more to it than that. Speakers of English – especially where it is a second language – will have to be able to speak in a range of different genres and situations, and they will have to be able to use a range of conversational and conversational repair strategies. They will need to be able to survive in typical functional exchanges too.

In the quote above, Harmer indirectly illustrates the difference between "able to speak" and "skilled at speaking" although he does not explain this difference; perhaps that is not the purpose of the above statement. We feel it is important to make this distinction because formal language learning, be it in school or in college, is intended to make learners skilled at speaking, especially in classrooms where English is studied as a second or foreign language. Even in the classrooms where English is the students' mother tongue (e.g. in America or England), teachers need to provide the speaking learning experience to their students.

In the English-native-speaker primary schools, the term *speaking* is replaceable to *talk*. The word *talk* should refer to the ability to speak and not to speaking skill. However, even in this context, the students (children) are taught to talk by their teachers by applying available methods and techniques, although the ability to talk is natural to the children and be provided by daily environment. In line with this, Elizabeth Grugeon (in Grugeon et al, 2005, p.1) opened her chapter:

> Talk is a wonderful ready-made resource that each child brings to the first day of school – unlike the resources for reading and writing that the school provides. The danger is that we take talk for granted; we don't think we have to do anything.

Grugeon used the word *talk* because she referred to children ability to speak. Moreover, she referred to the children who English is their native language. The children learn to talk by acquiring the vocabularies and grammar transacted around them. However, in the school, the teachers need to use particular methods and techniques to foster the children ability to talk. The children, of course, are not in a position to master speaking skill like Harmer mentioned above.

In the classrooms where English is a second or foreign language (e.g. in Indonesia), a student may be a very beginner in English. The student may have stored some vocabularies in his memory but not with grammar, not to mention pronunciation and speech comprehension. In this situation, when the student enters a university (e.g. in English Education Program), in

the speaking class, he will not "learn to talk in English" but to have speaking skills like pointed out by Harmer or established in the speaking course lesson plan. While it is impossible to attain a degree of English speaking skill without having English speaking ability, the students cannot be even seen like the children who are learning to talk in their mother tongue.

In university, the students are supposed to have fundamental competence in the chosen field. For example, the students of English Education Program – whom English is not their mother tongue – are supposed to have a certain degree of English competence. They enter the university to deepen, widen, and strengthen their English competence. Unfortunately, based on our experiences as English teachers in university level, most of the students enter English Education Program with only learning motivation; to teach them English means to start from zero. Only few students who are good at English in the first semester and those are who already have a certain degree of English competence.

Dealing with the students with minimum English competence, the teachers need to work harder because in one hand, they have to teach the students to "talk in English" while in the other hand, they have to teach speaking skills to the students. Many methods have been developed by experts that can be implemented by the teachers in teaching speaking skills in Indonesia classrooms, as we outlined below.

Speaking Skill Teaching Methods

Harmer (2007, pp.348-352) listed and briefly discussed at least six classroom speaking activities namely acting from script, communication games, discussion, prepared talks, questionnaires, and stimulation and role play. They are activities especially designed in teaching speaking skills, either in schools or universities whether English is the first, second, or foreign language. In other chapter, he listed the popular methodology in English teaching including the ones we have mentioned, communicative language teaching, task-based learning, lexical approach, presentation-practice-production (PPP) and so on. These methods, however, are developed to help the teachers to teach all language skills, not only speaking skills. For example, in term of PPP, Thornbury (1973, p.38) wrote:

> The three-step PPP process was aimed at developing automatic habits largely through classroom processes of modelling, repetition, and controlled practice. PPP was applied originally to the teaching of grammar, but, by extension it has been used to structure the teaching of language skills as well, including speaking.

A method, according to Harmer (2007, p.62) is the practical realization of an approach (theories about the nature of language and language learning that describe how people acquire their knowledge of a language and how language is used). He continued, the originators of a method have arrived at decisions about types of activities, roles of teachers and learners, the kinds of material which will be helpful and some model of syllabus organization. Methods, as he wrote, include various procedures and techniques as part of their standard fare.

Both Thornbury (1973) and Harmer (2007) are respected references in ELT but even in those it is not easy to find a method that is especially designed to be used in teaching speaking skills. When Harmer mentioned that the types of activities (as listed above) is one of the main consideration of what method to be used in the classroom, and when Thornbury

mentioned that PPP has to be extended to be used in teaching speaking skills, the English teachers deal with a puzzle to solve; to find the appropriate method based on the activities suggested by Thornbury and Harmer, or just do the activities without being bothered with the method. Meanwhile, talking about the teaching of speaking skill, as implied by Thornbury (1973, pp.11-26), the students need to have the knowledge of genre, discourse, pragmatic, grammar, vocabulary, and phonology, not to mention sociocultural knowledge. While it is safe to assume that not few young English teachers (who are teaching speaking skills to university students who English is not their mother tongue) can't find the clear edge between a method and an activity, picking an activity or two that promise the possibilities for the students to acquire the knowledge listed by Thornbury as what the speakers (have to) know is not an easy task.

Among the language teaching methods listed by Harmer, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is the method nearest to the need in teaching speaking skill. Based on Harmer himself, speaking skills involve the ability to speak in a wide range of speech events and situations. Harmer also confirmed Thornbury who listed several extralinguistic, linguistic, and sociolinguistic knowledge required to have a good speaking skill. It seems like CLT has something to offer to the teachers of English, especially in teaching speaking, in order to provide the students with the required competences to be skilled in speaking, *communicative competence*. This is implied by Richards (2006, p.3):

Communicative competence includes the following aspects of language knowledge: knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions; knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication); knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations); knowing how to maintain communication despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g., through using different kinds of communication strategies).

The CLT offers opportunities to achieve communicative competence when other methods focus more on the grammatical or grammar competence. Although CLT was developed as a method for the teaching of all language skills, the communicative competence is required for the English students to have good speaking skills.

Among the CLT goals, as mentioned by Richards (2006, p.14), is the development of fluency – the natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence – which is contrasted to the development of accuracy. Some activities are planned to develop the students' fluency that confirm some of Thornbury's (1973) awareness-raising activities and appropriation activities, and also Harmer's (2007) activities in the speaking classrooms (e.g., role play, dialog, etc.).

The question that someone may be wondering is whether CLT is effective to be used in the classroom where English is not the mother tongue of the students, and the students only have a small degree of grammatical competence and poor in communicative competence unless they are communicating in their native language. Thornbury (1972, p.27) wrote:

Even among L1 speakers there can be wide variations in the degree of fluency that individuals demonstrate. These differences are exacerbated when it comes to speaking

in a language different from your own. The inevitable lack of fluency involved is a source of frustration and even embarrassment.

The CLT is said to offer the opportunity to develop the students' fluency. However, as stated by Thornbury that speaking in L1 is different from speaking with L2, not to mention foreign language (FL). According to Richards (2006, p.22), one of the core assumptions of CLT is "second language learning is facilitated when the students are engaged in interaction and meaningful communication." The interaction and meaningful communication are provided in the communicative language teaching since the students learn to use (or acquire) language by using the language in "real" communication. Activities like role play, dialogs, or interviews are meant to provide the students with these linguistic experiences. Therefore, CLT is assumed to be beneficial in L2 or FL classrooms especially in speaking classrooms. However, the next question may arise, "in what language do the interaction and meaningful communication occur, including the instruction?"

The CLT has been implemented in the classrooms in Indonesia, both in schools and universities. In Indonesia context, there is a "learning community" branded "Kampung Inggris" located at Pare, East Java. It is called "Kampung Inggris" (English Village) because they teach English there, either to local villagers or tourists. The way English (and other languages) is taught in that village is best known as the CLT today, although there is no formal statement made about the ELT method used in that village. Hermawan and Resi (2018, p.334) described:

> One thing that make Kampung Inggris different is that those who stay in the camp should use English when they are in that area and it is compulsory… Course institutions that operate in Kampung Inggris are not as usual as other courses institutions. Most of the course institutions in Kampung Inggris does not have special places (class rooms) where learning takes place. Learning takes place in many forms of setting. Learning sometimes takes place in veranda or in the living room of the society, in the park with the system of open learning, in the place made of wood or bamboo, some others carried out in car garage and many others.

Based on their description, we can imagine how the English learning, especially speaking, takes place in the village; English is compulsory (direct method, as we will see later) and learning activities take place in real places where genuine interaction and meaningful communication occur (CLT). Our graduates, who willed to continue their studies abroad, chosen this village as the place for their English refinement. This is also mentioned by Hamonangan (2020, p.14) that most of the visitors or learners coming to this village bring other target in their mind; they don't only come to learn English in Pare, but they learn English in Pare so that they can get scholarship to study abroad (e.g., in America or Australia). The reputation of this Kampung Inggris has got attention and trust from people who want to pursue scholarships. One of the factors that make this village a good reputation is their "implementation" of CLT (and direct method).

Nevertheless, several recent studies implied that the quality of Kampung Inggris graduates is still questionable. Ilma and Murtiningsih (2021) conducted a small study on the English speaking mastery of Pare graduates in Bumiayu. They concluded that how long the respondents have studied in Pare does not affect their speaking mastery. There are some of them who have poor mastery even though it has been more than three months studying in

Pare, and there are also those who have good mastery even though only study for one month in that place (p.97). Their table showed that there is no student in excellent criteria, 27% respondents are classified as good, 33% respondents are classified as average, and 40% respondents are classified as poor. Some years before, Nurhayati, Hendrawati, and Angkarini (2013) found that Kampung Inggris is not an English community since not all local people in that region can use English as a daily language. Their table showed that only 5% can use English properly due to taking an English course before, 66.66% respondents can use English with limited English knowledge, 53.65% uses Indonesian for their daily communication (p.86). However, the study was unclear to us since the method of investigation is not properly described and the number of respondent involved in the study is only 15 local (not the students from outside) from the population. These studies are unreliable compared to the fact that Kampung Inggris in Pare has graduated at least 22.000 students of Basic English Course (Hermawan and Resi, 2018, p.334), the trust given by almost uncountable educated young people in Indonesia and other countries around like Malaysia and Thailand as their choice to refine their English (and other languages) skills. Not to mention, as Hermawan and Resi (p.336) wrote that only 10 percent of the course institutions owned by those from Pare – which means 90 percent of those are invested by those from other provinces and even other countries. This shows that Kampung Inggris reputation and potential are not only trusted (by evidence) by the students but also by the businessman in the world.

Direct Method

We have seen how CTL is used in a representation of Indonesia context of ELT. In the practice, we also noted that direct method is also implemented together with CLT in that context. In this section, we present the direct method and its effects on the students' English learning based on the studies carried out in Indonesia context.

The direct method, in its simplest meaning, is a foreign language teaching and learning process where both the teacher and the students don't use the native language. In most universities, especially in English education program, where English is taught as a second or foreign language, the direct method is also implemented in non-linguistic subjects like language philosophy, curriculum design, research methodology, and so forth. However, the main goals of the implementation of the direct method is to foster the students' foreign language acquisition, especially in oral communication skills (listening and speaking), although it was argued by others that this method also contributes to the reading and writing skills.

The term *direct* in this context means the direct relationship between the target language and its meaning, without being mediated by translation processes into native language. The direct method focuses on the direct learning of the target language phonemes or words and its meaning and therefore focuses more on the pragmatic understanding of language and increase in the fluency. The direct method enables the students to learn or acquire the target language like a child acquires his mother tongue naturally. Therefore, the direct method sometimes is called the natural method (Ali, 2020, p.289; Batool et al, 2017, p.37).

Young (1922) had an interesting "alternative way" to see the direct method. If Ali (2020), Batool et al (2017) and Harmer (2007) mentioned that the direct method was a reaction to the grammar-translation method, he pictured the direct method as a "product" or a side-effect of war (or colonialism), where the "colonist" spoke to the "colonized" in his

language. In Indonesia, many elders (most of them had passed) knew Dutch, especially those who were nurses. It is so because they went to the nursing school where the teachers (the doctors) were Dutchmen. Netherlanders "lived" in Indonesia for 346 years and linguistic contact happened in various speech events had left some "traces" to the local languages (vernaculars) in Indonesia. Young didn't attempt to establish another historical background of the direct method. Instead, he demonstrated how "direct method" is applied in a situation that most of us absent-minded of.

In EFL countries, when a teacher delivers his material (of any subjects) in the classroom in English and the students are not allowed to use their native language, the teacher is called implementing the direct method. This tendency sometimes leads us to think that the direct method is usable in teaching any subjects while it is not necessarily the case. Bovee demonstrated that even in teaching several vocabularies with direct method, we need to consider that the vocabularies must be concrete, near the experience of the pupils, and capable of demonstration by means of objects and action (1919, p.65). A mental verb like *dreaming* cannot be demonstrated by action or the students will confuse *dreaming* and *sleeping*. Teaching complex subject like language philosophy with direct method to the students with limited vocabularies and grammar can be counterproductive. The direct method has been demonstrated to have significant features in the language acquisition, especially in oral communication skills, but knowing how to pronounce a word (via direct learning) does not guarantee the knowledge of how it is spelled. It is just a child who knows how to say a word or utter a sentence but it does not mean that he is able to write or read the same word.

The exclusion of native language in the classroom activities is the main feature of the direct method. This enables the direct method to be integrated in any teaching methods or learning models since it is just about what language is to speak. As we see in Hermawan and Resi (2018), how the learning process takes place in Kampung Inggris is described enables us to assume that the direct method is integrated with the CTL. However, since the goal of the courses in that village is language mastery, then the use of direct method (and CTL) in that village aims to provide language acquisition to the students. When the direct method requires the exclusion of the native language and can be integrated with any methods, it seems more like a principle than a method.

Teachers who implement the direct method in teaching FL speaking skills treat the students like children who are learning to speak their native language. Children naturally acquire spoken language far before they were introduced with written language. They acquire language from interaction, either with people around or from electronic media. They can speak well after that even without studying the grammar rules of their native language. They have the ability to correct any "wrong" association between a word and its reference. For example, a child once knew that a cat is a mouse but after hearing his parent mention a cat while pointing to a cat, he subconsciously corrects the association between the word cat and its reference. This fact is what Chomksy would classify into his *Parameter Setting* in his Universal Grammar. Based on this illustration, the direct method is mainly usable in the teaching of oral communication skills and need further consideration to apply it in other areas.

However, the interest in studying the effectiveness of the direct method in teaching speaking skills is far from expectation, especially the last five years. In January 2022, Google search result (by using all-in-title feature) shows only 28 results compared to the researchers'

and teachers' interest to other methods. In the same time, Google search result (again, by using all-in-title feature) shows 146 results when we searched articles discussing the effect of communicative language teaching to speaking skill, and we only found 1 result when we were searching for the effect of grammar-translation method to speaking skill, by using the same searching technique. Most of the studies about direct method and its effect on the students' speaking skills were done in Indonesia. We once thought that Google filtered our search results based on the country but after using a virtual private network (VPN, set to an IP located at America), the result was the same. We used Google because it is the largest search engine compared to other search engines like Bing, Yahoo, or Yandex. Moreover, most of scientific journals publishing responsible articles are indexed by Google Scholar. Therefore, we rely upon this search engine to find how many studies about direct method and its effect on the students' speaking skill filtered by time range.

The current article, which is based on a study we accomplished in the previous year and a synthesis among the other studies under the same theme, is about to tell us whether the direct method is still effective in the teaching of speaking skills, especially in Indonesia where English is learned as a foreign language.

3. Methods

The study we carried out was a classroom action research, in which we collaborated with the English speaking lecturer in the research site, accomplished in two cycles. Each cycle consists of four steps following Norton (2009, p.67), namely plan, observation, action, and reflection where the focused observation was applied following Hopkins (2008, p.88) where the students' speaking aspects (fluency, accuracy, performance, pronunciation, and clarity) are the observed points. The number of cycles was determined by the results achieved by the students-participants. This article, however, involves a library research in which related articles were searched through indexed journals by using keyword search strategies suggested by Mann (2005).

Our study involved 12 randomly-picked students of an English Education Program of a state university in North Maluku, Indonesia. Whereas, 8 articles based on research in Indonesia context (published between 2015 and 2020) were selected to be reviewed and synthesized.

The technique of data collection used in the study was documentation. Regardless of the journal articles, the students-participant of our initial study were taught English speaking skills by using direct method. The conversation activity was applied following Harmer (2005) and Thornbury (1972). The topic was *the function of mobile phones in the students' academic achievement*. After having conversation under the topic with the students using direct method, the students were required to find a partner and have a conversation with the partner about the same topic. Their conversations were recorded in 7-10 minutes. We collected and studied their videos to assess their speaking aspects as mentioned previously. We employed a speaking rubric adapted from Syahdiah and Umasugi (2021) in the students' speaking skill assessment. The students' speaking aspects are scored based on the rubric. Percentage was used to reflect the students' learning achievement and to be compared between the cycles.

The related journal articles were reviewed by using meaning condensation or text condensation strategy in which Malterud (2012) defined as a descriptive and explorative method for thematic cross-case analysis of different types of qualitative data, such as

interview studies, observational studies, and analysis of written text. In the stage, we reduced, organized, and synthesized the content of the articles in terms of their objectives, methods, and results. We paid more attention to the results and conclusions of the studies since our objective was to know whether the direct method is still effective in teaching speaking skills, especially in Indonesia context. The results and conclusions of the studies were synthesized thematically and then discussed respectively.

4. Discussion

This section is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the finding of the classroom action research we conducted and the second part discusses the themes condensed from the related journal articles mentioned in the previous section.

Results from Classroom Action Research

As we mentioned earlier, our study was conducted in two cycles where each cycle consisted of four sequential stages (plan, action, observation, reflection). In this article, however, we don't divide the discussion into smaller parts since we only explained them briefly; the discussions will go in its sequence.

CAR Cycle I

We began the study by gathering the students and provided them with information related to the study. We asked them for willingness to join. There were up to 30 students in the classroom where we were permitted to collect the data. However, considering the technique of data analysis we planned to implement, the number of data must be reduced. Therefore, we randomly picked 12 of them. We set the schedule for the first meeting that took place at a park in the university. In the meantime, we prepared the material to be delivered to the students.

On the day agreed upon with the students, the action phase was carried out. We began to deliver the material through casual talking while native language was excluded. The topic discussed in the first meeting was the function of the mobile phone in the students' academic achievement, especially in language learning. We introduced the concept of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and gave them some examples of mobile applications advantageous to language learning. We also provided them with the danger of mobile app overuse and the potential harm that the students may face in the cyberspace. We closed the talk by asking their opinion about the use of mobile phone in the foreign language learning. This talk took about 18 to 20 minutes.

The students were asked to pick their partner and made a group of 2 students. They were required to do conversation with their partner and their conversations were recorded by themselves. The result, we collected 6 video recordings from 12 students that ranged from 7 to 10 minutes.

After having their first videos, we assessed each students' speaking aspects. Each video was played at least 10 times since there were five aspects to be assessed (fluency, accuracy, clarity, pronunciation, and performance) for each student and there were two students in each video. Some videos must be played more than 10 times due to the sound quality.

The students' speaking aspects were assessed by using a speaking rubric in which each aspect is scored based on the criteria stated in the rubric. We only used descriptive statistics to calculate the scores in which, in this case, was the percentage of the ideal score. The ideal score of each aspect or item, according to the rubric, is 4. Based on this ideal score, the total ideal score was 4 times the number of speaking aspects (5), which resulted in 25. The percentage of the students' speaking scores were found by dividing the total score of each student's achievement by the ideal score and the result was multiplied by 100.

As with the calculation of the percentage on individual scores, so does the calculation of the percentage scores for each assessed speaking aspect. The ideal score for each aspect was collectively obtained from the ideal score for each aspect (4) multiplied by the number of students (12) that resulted in 48. The ideal percentage for each assessed aspect was obtained by dividing the total score per item by the ideal score and multiplied by 100.

To determine the students' position or the effect of the direct method to their speaking skills, the students' score percentage and the speaking aspects score percentage were categorized into three categories as follow:

High achiever   : 67-100

Middle achiever   : 34-66

Low achiever   : 0-33

Here is the students' speaking skill achievement in the cycle I (the students' name and speaking aspects were abbreviated).

Table 1. Students' speaking achievement in cycle I

No	Ss	Flu	Pron	Acc	Clar	Perf	Total	%
1	FA	1	3	3	2	4	13	52
2	FAA	3	2	4	3	3	15	60
3	SM	1	4	4	3	2	13	52
4	N	3	2	2	1	2	10	40
5	UHM	1	3	2	1	3	10	40
6	EJ	1	2	3	1	1	8	32
7	TW	1	2	3	2	3	11	44
8	DW	3	2	4	3	3	15	60
9	RH	3	3	2	1	2	11	44
10	SSL	3	1	2	2	3	12	48
11	NH	2	3	3	2	1	11	44
12	EW	2	3	2	1	2	10	40
	Total	24	32	34	22	29		
	%	50	67	71	46	60		

Based on the categories determined above, from the table we picked 0 high achiever, 11 middle achievers, and 1 low achiever. It could be that the students' speaking skills were already good before this study was conducted. Since this was the first data we obtained from

the study, we didn't attempt to draw any conclusion from the table but the point where we could see the progress the students would make by comparing it with the second data.

As with the categories that applied to the students' speaking achievement, we also set the similar categories to the assessed speaking aspects. The table shows that two aspects (pronunciation and accuracy) fall into high achiever while the rests (fluency, clarity, and performance) are in middle achiever category.

Reflecting on this data, we expected that the second cycle would put some students in the high achiever and no students were expected to be in the low achiever. We wanted to see if the direct method could promote the students' speaking skills so they would also move from the middle to high achiever. Also, we wanted to see if the direct method could move the students' speaking aspects from the middle to higher achiever, although no aspect was found in the low achiever category.

CAR Cycle 2

Two days after the first meeting (it took two days to watch the videos, assess the students' speaking achievement, and tabulate the data), we met with the students at the same place and discussed the results. We also explained that the duration of the session needs to be extended so they could feel more courage to speak. We gave options to the students whether to keep the topic or to change with the new one. They preferred to have a new topic and we agreed to have a conversation about *getting to know with new people*.

We started the new cycle by talking about the advantages of knowing new people and making new friends and how it could enhance our speaking skills. We extended our talk to 30 minutes by giving examples and playing with gestures to strengthen the meaning of our utterances. After having the talk finished, the students' were asked to pick their conversation partners. Some students changed their partners but we missed to note it. They recorded their conversation under the chosen topic and submitted 12 videos that ranged between 3 to 7 minutes.

Using the same rubric, we repeated the steps we did in the cycle I. The students' speaking achievements and the score percentages of the assessed speaking aspects in the cycle II are shown in the following table.

Table 2. Students' speaking achievement in cycle II

No	Ss	Flu	Pron	Acc	Clar	Perf	Total	%
1	FA	3	4	4	3	4	18	72
2	FAA	3	4	4	3	3	17	68
3	SM	4	4	4	4	4	20	80
4	N	3	4	4	3	3	17	68
5	UHM	3	4	4	3	4	18	72
6	EJ	3	3	4	3	4	17	68
7	TW	3	3	4	3	4	17	68
8	DW	3	4	4	3	3	17	68
9	RH	3	2	4	3	3	15	60
10	SSL	2	4	3	4	4	16	64
11	NH	3	4	4	3	3	17	68

12	EW	2	2	4	3	3	14	56
	Total	35	42	47	37	42		
	%	73	88	98	77	88		

As we had the second data, we were enabled to see whether progresses were made in the students' speaking achievement. To do so, we compared the percentages of students' speaking achievement and assessed speaking aspects. The tabulated data were then converted into graphical view by expecting that changes in the students' speaking achievement could be easily readable.

The first graphic below shows the comparison of the students' speaking achievement between cycle I and cycle II scores.

Figure 1. Comparison between students' speaking scores in cycle I and cycle II
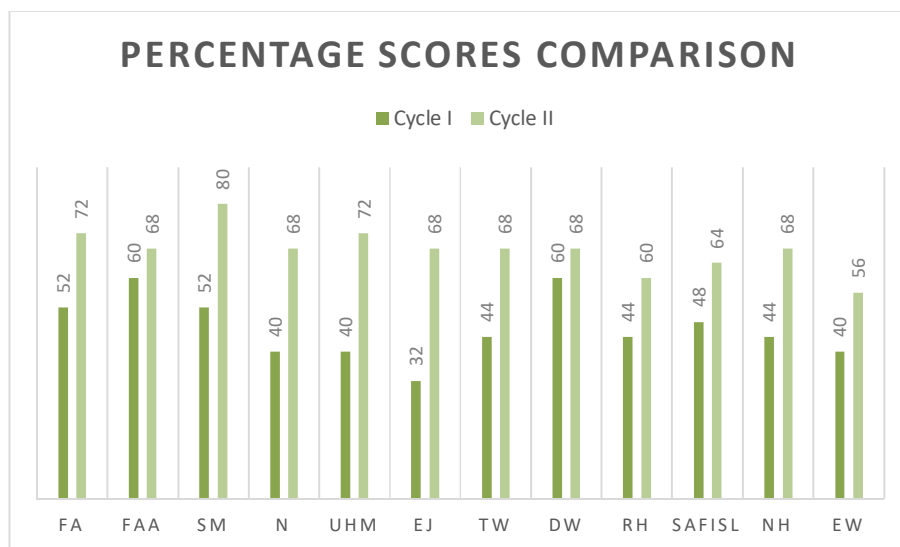
The figure 1 shows us that all students' experienced progress in their speaking skills, based on the rubric we applied. The darker bar is the cycle I score and the lighter bar is the cycle II score percentages. Some students' however, experienced only minor progress. Since the figure 1 does not show us the gain of each student, we decided to find out to what degree that each student gained their progress. Therefore, the figure 2 below was made.

By looking at the figure 2, we can see that only two students experienced minor progress while the rests (10 students) experienced relatively significant progress in their speaking skill. We saw a significant movement of the numbers between the table in cycle I and cycle II. Consequently, most of the students' moved from the middle achiever to high achiever category while there was no student in the low achiever category.

Figure 2. Students' Gain
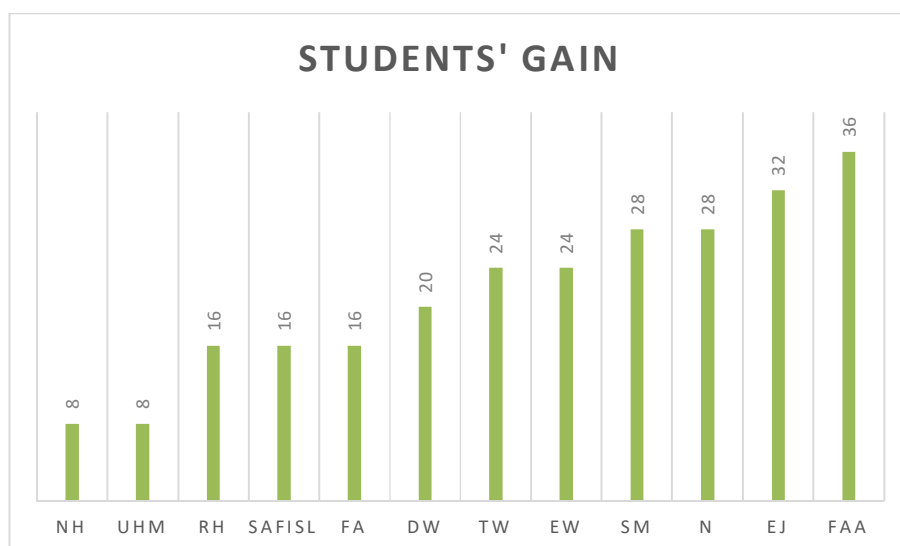
As expected, the students' speaking skills were improved. We tentatively concluded that the direct method promoted their oral communication skill. However, since their progress bar varied, we wanted to know whether the students' speaking skills were improved in all aspects. Therefore, we compared the score percentage of the assessed speaking aspects, and the figure 3 shows the result.

Figure 3. Speaking Aspects Improvement
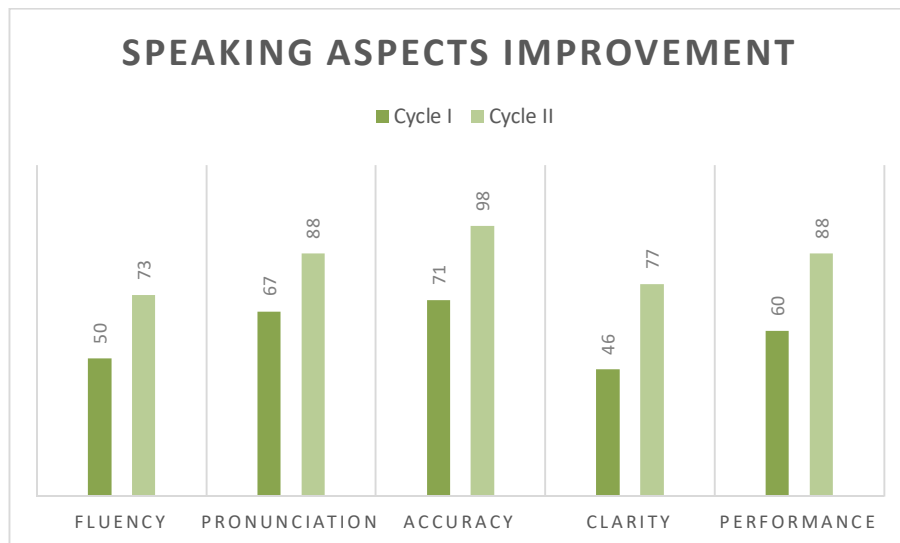
The figure 3 above shows that all speaking aspects were improved to some degree. It was unexpected that the fluency and pronunciation aspect gained only small progress while they are fundamental aspect in fluent speaking skill. To see the gains of all speaking aspects, see the figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Gains of Speaking Aspects

GAINS ON SPEAKING ASPECTS
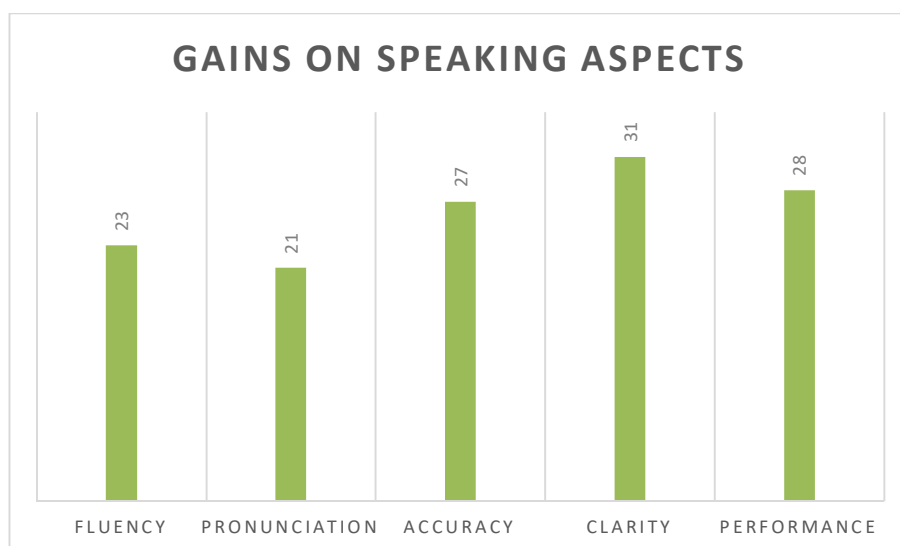
As we can see, the accuracy, clarity, and performance gained relatively significant progress while the fluency and pronunciation aspect gained less. We tentatively concluded that the students' pronunciation requires separate practice that may not be covered by the direct method and requires further study.

Overall, our study demonstrated that the direct method was effective in teaching speaking skill. We were aware that the exposure of speaking practice in the study we conducted could be improved and extended. We assumed that the more the students' practice English speaking using direct method, the more progress they could made in their speaking skills. This assumption opens an opportunity to the further researchers to study the effectiveness of direct method in teaching speaking skills in an extended time and exposure.

Results from Library Research

We retrieved 6 articles discussing the effect of direct method to the students' speaking skills, which were based on the studies conducted in Indonesia context. We will briefly overview each articles and then discuss their results.

Andriyani (2015)

Nila Andriyani wrote her undergraduate thesis based on her study on the use of the direct method in teaching to improve students' speaking skill at Purikids Language Course. The study she conducted was a classroom action research that involved 18 students at the Purikids Language Course where 5 of them are males and 13 females aged between 10-12 years old. She collected the data of her study by using observation, interview, and test. She assessed the students' speaking skill by using a speaking rubric provided by the language course.

Siregar (2016)

Sri Rahmadhani Siregar's was a library research in which she attempted to see the use of the direct method in teaching speaking. She retrieved the relevant literature and synthesized the theories and research findings to achieve her conclusion whether (or not) the direct method is effective in teaching speaking skills.

Cece (2017)

Andi Israwati Lai Cece's was an undergraduate thesis based on her study on the use of direct method to improve speaking skill at the second grade of SMP PGRI 1 Talamate. Her study was designed as a pre-experimental study where she applied only a one-group pre-test post-test design. 25 students were involved in her study. She only used test as her data collection technique. She classified the students' speaking skill based on the categories determined by Indonesian Department of Education and Culture (1985).

Sitorus and Silitonga (2018)

The study that Nurhayati Sitorus and Harpen Silitonga conducted was an experimental study to see the capability of the direct method to improve the students' speaking ability. Their study involved 40 English department students randomly taken from various universities. They used oral test and analyzed their data using t-test.

Haliwanda (2019)

Umar Haliwanda conducted a pre-experimental study at SMK Negeri 1 Bener Meriah-Aceh. He wanted to know the effect of using direct method in teaching speaking at that school. By using a one group pre-test post-test design, he involved 30 students of that school. In testing the students' speaking skill, he employed categories developed by Hughes. The students' scores were then analyzed by using t-test.

Utami, Islamiah, and Perdana (2020)

The study that they conducted was a descriptive qualitative study that involved a teacher in SMPN 24 Banjarmasin. Their study focused on the implementation of direct method in teaching speaking at junior high school. An interview was conducted with the informant – as they called – and the data was analyzed using thematic analysis technique.

Synthesis of the Studies

It was unexpected that the number of publication discussing the effect of direct method towards the students' speaking skills, at least the ones indexed in Google Scholar, was very low – compared to the publication under the other methods in teaching speaking skills. At most, two publications each year in range of 2015 to 2020; we didn't find any publication under this theme indexed by Google Scholar in 2021. Moreover, the studies we retrieved above lacked of methodology and data. For example, there was only one study conducted as an experimental study while two of them were pre-experimental studies that has been criticized for its validity and reliability. Nevertheless, their results need to be taken into account because to some extent they successfully captured the effects of direct method to the students' speaking skills.

In studying the results of those studies, we found several themes to be mentioned and briefly explained, namely the students' speaking skill improvement, the importance of visual aids, and the chance for immediate correction.

Students' speaking skill improvement

All studies we retrieved concluded that the use of direct method, if well-planned and properly conducted, improved the students' speaking skill. Utami, Islamiah, and Perdana (2020, p.45) mentioned that the students' speaking skills improved because the students didn't need to be afraid to speak in public in a foreign language for fear of making mistakes. It could be that in the direct method, students are encouraged to communicate their ideas where in some part it relates to the CLT that focuses more on the communicative competence while the grammatical competence was secondary. In direct method, as noted by Siregar (2016, p.41), grammar is taught inductively and an explicit grammar rule may never be given. It does not mean that grammar is less important in direct method but the goal of the direct method is also to encourage the students to speak in the target language regardless the limitations they may have, as she also said that in direct method correct pronunciation is emphasized but correct structure is not (p.42). Meanwhile, Andriyani (2015, p.80) concluded that the students' speaking skills were improved through the using of direct method because they became more discipline to listen and use the patterns of the sentences so they were able to say it directly based on the topic.

Cece (2017) found that the students' speaking skills were improved especially in the accuracy and fluency aspects. The same is also mentioned by Sitorus and Silitonga (2018, p.84) who said that the improvements occurred due to the trial and error that the students made and Haliwanda (2019, p.161) who also noticed the significant movement of the students' speaking skill from poor to good category. However, there is no further discussion but the statistical data and their interpretation.

Another reason behind the students' speaking skill improvement, according to the studies, is the increase in learning or speaking motivation. Andriyani (2015, p.73) and Cece (2017) implied that the implementation of the direct method in teaching was helpful to attract the students' interest to the materials. Siregar (2016) argued that the students are motivated because they have some activities that help them to be confident to speak. The same was also mentioned by Utami, Islamiah, and Perdana (2020, p.44) that the direct method creates self-confidence for students. Many students, according to them, complain or are not interested in English lessons for fear of the mistakes they will do. This method, as they said, is the answer to the fear; that the students don't have to worry about the grammar as long as their intended meaning is understandable. In line with Siregar (2016) who stated that the correct structure is not heavily emphasized in this method, they also wrote that "wrong and right in the use of grammar does not matter in this method, because the focus is on students being able to master the material without having to be afraid of mistakes."

The importance of visual aids

The visual aids can be pictures, gestures, mimics, or other visible demonstrations that function to link the expression in the target language and its meaning. Siregar (2016, p.41) mentioned that the main purpose of direct method is mastery of foreign language orally so learners are able to communicate English language. To reach this purpose, according to her, learners had to be given exercises to understand words and sentences with meaning through

demonstrations, shows, actions, and mime. It is also stated by Sitorus and Silitonga (2018, p.84) that the teacher must be able to describe the words that the students do not know by using visual aid or explaining them by using her words. Meanwhile, Haliwanda (2019, p.161) said that when the teacher introduces a new target language word or phrase, he demonstrates its meaning through the use of regalia, pictures, or pantomime. The linking between the word and the meaning through visual aid seems to be one of the most important aspect in using the direct method; and this answers the classic question that Bovee (1919) addressed that how can the students know the meaning of the word if their native language is excluded.

Chance for immediate correction

Since direct method relies upon communication between the teacher and students in real situation, the students' can have chance for immediate correction on the mistakes they make during the conversation. Students may make lexical mistake like pronunciation or word-choice and the teacher can correct them immediately. Siregar (2016, p.43) mentioned that the teacher has the students self-correct by asking them to make a choice between what they said and an alternative answer he supplied. Furthermore, she said, a teacher might simply repeat what a student has just said, using a questioning voice to signal the student that something was wrong with it. This is a common practice in the speaking classroom with direct method where the students can immediately correct their mistakes based on the teacher's guide.

All the studies, including ours, concluded that the direct method is still effective to use in English speaking classrooms, especially in Indonesia. However, there is a hindrance that can lead the use of direct method counterproductive, as noted by Siregar (2016), "This method requires teachers who are native speakers or have native-like fluency in the foreign language they teach, but in practice, it is difficult to meet these requirements." Without sufficient language fluency, the students potentially imitate mistakes that the teacher made (e.g., wrong pronunciation). Therefore, although the direct method is still effective to teach English speaking skills, the teacher should consider his language proficiency first.

5. Conclusion

Our studies, both the classroom action research and library research, showed that direct method is still effective in teaching English speaking skills in Indonesia. It was found that students' speaking skills were improved but several speaking aspects might need separate practices. The use of direct method should be accompanied with classroom activities that provide students with real conversational situation like dialogs, conversations, role plays, and so on. It is also important to provide visual aids to help the students linking the expressions and their meaning directly.

It is also important to consider whether it is a method or principle since the core of direct method is the exclusion of the native language where no translation is allowed. This practice can be used in different methods (if it is a method). For example, conversation is found in role play while role play is an activity listed in the communicative language teaching (CTL). If the teacher uses CTL and excluding native language, then the direct method turns to direct principle.

Studies on the effect of the direct method towards the students' speaking skills need more attention since only several publications retrievable from internet today. It shows the lack of interest to the topic while it is still a considerable method to apply and develop in the

foreign speaking classrooms. This opens the opportunities for the further researchers to study direct language and its effects to the students' speaking skills. In the future, the researchers should study the topic with extended time and exposure to see how it runs in a long term.

Last but not least, although the direct method is found still effective, the teachers' foreign language proficiency is also the key. Before we draw a conclusion that the direct method is ineffective, we may need to look at the teachers' proficiency in the foreign language he or she is teaching with the direct method. It could be that we conclude that the direct method is ineffective while it is the teacher's fluency that must be blamed.

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