VIRTUAL ICE BREAKER TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH ONLINE LEARNING

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Abstract

This research aimed at investigating the effectiveness of Virtual Ice Breaker to improve the students' speaking skills through online learning. A quasi experimental design was employed with a cluster random sampling technique. The students were classified into the experimental group and control group. The data were obtained through speaking test, observation and interview. The assessment covered pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. The results showed that Virtual Ice-Breaker was effective to improve the students' speaking skills proven with the score in experimental group (80.14) was higher than that in control group (73.13). Furthermore, the significance score (Sig. 2-tailed) was $0.000 < 0.05$ meaning that the Alternative Hypothesis was accepted while Null Hypothesis was rejected. In other words, students' speaking skills have improved. observations and interviews conducted in the experimental group Indicated that the students gave good responses and showed enthusiasm during the speaking classes implementing Virtual Ice-Breaker .In conclusion, Virtual Ice-Breaker is effective to improve students' speaking skills . The teachers may use Ice-Breaker in their online classroom activities to create effective and interesting learning atmospheres.

Introduction

Language is the most important aspect of human interaction because in daily life people communicate and interact with others by using a language. Language takes a big part in human life. In a wide community, English has become a global language. Based on data taken from Statista (2021) an online portal statistic, English is the most widely spoken language in the world, with more than 1.35 billion speakers. This means that many countries around the world use English as the language of communication. Therefore, English is important to be taught and learned by the students. In Indonesia, English is a compulsory subject that is taught from high school to university.

Unfortunately, the situations and conditions have suddenly changed. The world is being hit by the Covid-19 virus outbreak. To reduce the spread of the virus in society, the government implemented a policy to limit and temporarily stop the activities carried out outside the home. Surely, this has a big impact on the world of education. The face-to-face learning activities have turned into an online or e-learning system. As a result of this changing learning system, the teachers and students have difficulty living it, especially in conducting speaking activities in online classroom. According to the previous research about the effect of e-learning in students' speaking skill by Rahmawati, Sihombing, C. Ginting, E. K. B., Arimonnaria, E. (2021), it stated that there were some difficulties happened on students' speaking skill during online learning. There were mispronunciation and the lack vocabulary.

The teachers as the main component of education are challenged to be as creative as possible to provide opportunities for students to expose and enhance students' speaking skill, especially in online learning. The teacher must create an effective and pleasant classroom atmosphere although virtually, such as build a good interaction, held activities that stimulate students' speaking skill and provide students motivation to eager to speak English. The appropriate strategy to be applied in teaching speaking is to use fun learning strategies that motivate students to speak up and express themselves courageously. This strategy is called "Ice Breaker". Soenarno (2005) explained that an ice breaker is a way to make the audience of seminar, training or meeting to be concentrated. According to him, an ice breaker could change from a situation of being bored, sleepy and tense into relaxing and enthusiastic. These can alleviate several major problems that oftenly happened during online classes.

The ice breaker strategy that is usually done directly, can be converted into a virtual form, so it can be called as a virtual ice breaker. According to Katy Mrvova (2021), virtual ice breakers are small online team-building activities that help remote teams to connect on a personal level and enjoy some fun social time together. In online learning, especially in conducting speaking class, a virtual ice breaker is very suitable to be implemented. This strategy could help the teachers in conducting speaking in online learning activities. It is because virtual ice breaker can be a tool for students to practice their speaking skill by using many types of oral ice breaker in a fun and entertaining way.

Teaching Speaking at Junior High School
According to Richards & Renandya (2002), speaking is one of the central elements of communication. Because the main purpose of speaking is to communicate (Tarigan: 2009). In learning English, students often find it difficult to speak. There are some problems in speaking skill among students that are often come across in class. The problems are inhibition, lack of topical knowledge, low participation and mother-tongue use (Tuan & Mai, 2015). So, in making the teaching-learning process more successful, the teachers should have a strategy to be applied in teaching speaking. As Brown (2007) defines that strategies are those specific

attacks that we can make on a given problem and that vary considerably within each individual.

In creating successful speaking activities for students in online learning, teachers need the right strategy to make it happen. There are many strategies or methods that are appropriate to teach speaking in Junior High School. Based on *Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Nomor 22 Tahun 2016 Tentang Standar Proses Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah*, the learning process in the education unit is organized in interactive, inspirational, fun, challenging, motivating students to participate actively and providing sufficient space for the initiative, creativity and independence according to the talents, interests and physical and psychological development of students. Therefore, the teacher should create a speaking class that is interactive, fun and motivating for students to learn in teaching speaking.

Teaching speaking in Junior High School should be based on the standard of competence as stated in the standard of graduate competency. Based on the standard of competencies in the class VIII syllabus of Junior High School Curriculum 2013 in English subject, many of topics require speaking activities in learning process. These are summarized below:
1. Shows polite and caring behavior in carrying out interpersonal communication with teachers and friends.
2. Shows honest, disciplined, confident and responsible behavior in carrying out transactional communication with teachers and friends.
3. Shows responsible, caring, cooperative and peace-loving behavior in carrying out functional communications.

In building a successful speaking activity, the teacher needs to pay attention to its characteristics. Ur (1996) mentions that there are four characteristics of a successful speaking class:
1. Students actively speak during the teaching learning process.
2. Equal participation, which means that the class is not dominated by just a few students, but all students get the opportunity to speak and the contribution is evenly distributed.
3. High student motivation in themselves. Every student has a desire and contributes to speaking because they are interested in the topics brought up by the teacher in learning.
4. The language is delivered according to the level of the student. The students express themselves in a language that is easily understood by each other and acceptable to the level of language accuracy.

Virtual Ice Breaker
In today's remote learning or online system, the teachers and students have difficulty giving and receiving material. The changing state of the learning process requires teachers and students to learn in remote systems. Especially for teachers who are faced with the new system who are not used to it, so that some of them do

not know how to deal with the conditions of an effective and pleasant online classroom environment. As a result, learning is not effective and tends to be monotonous. In the end, the learning system in the classroom is only in the form of providing material in the form of files and assignments without any prior explanation. This is what makes students often feel bored, unmotivated and not enthusiastic about learning in online. To solve these problems, a virtual ice breaker can be one of the best solutions.

Sunarto (2012) defines ice breaker is a game or simple activity that changes the atmosphere of ice, stiffness, boredom, or sleepiness in learning. This is in line with the problems that often arise in online learning. A virtual ice breaker is a great way of overcoming one of the biggest challenges of managing a remote team. According to Katy Mrvova (2021), virtual ice breakers are small online team-building activities that help remote teams to connect on a personal level and enjoy some fun social time together. The virtual ice breakers are exactly the same as physical ice breakers, but they are done in online. This virtual ice b (Groover)reaker strategy is very suitable to be implemented in online classes. Because virtual ice breakers help to improve students' communication, stimulate creative thinking, build a good relationship between students and teachers and engaging and positive way.

In applying an ice breaker in teaching-learning process, it needs the appropriate strategy in its implementation. Groover (2005) mentions the strategies of using ice breakers, there are objective and execution, group size and appropriateness. Besides, there are several techniques that can be done in implementing ice breaker; singing, yelling, hand clapping, body motion, fairy tale, humor, magic, games and audivisual. The teacher can choose the appropriate ice breaker technique for speaking class according to the learning objectives achieved.

Method

This study was conducted by using quasi-experimental research. The quasi-experimental design aimed to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between an independent and dependent variable. There were two groups to be researched, namely the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group received the specific treatment or effect, while the control group was not given any effect or special treatment. The students in the experimental group were given the treatments by using a virtual ice breaker, while the students in the control group were not given the treatments or by using conventional method.

Results and Discussion
Results
Test Results
There were three phases of the tests given in this study; try out, pre-test and post-test.

a. Try-Out

The researcher conducted a try out test in class VII G. The class contained 36 students. The test was conducted on Monday, 9 August 2021. The test was conducted by online on the Google Meet in the form of an oral test. The

researcher provided a video conversation with the topic "Introducing Yourself". After that, the students were given 7 minutes to practice on their own. In the end, all of the students were asked to record their voices by introducing themselves according to the guideline given and submitting the recording files through Google Classroom. The score was given based on the elements of speaking by David P. Harris (1974), there are pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

b. Pre-Test
   The pre-test was conducted on Tuesday, 10 August 2021 by online. The total number of students who joined the test was 69 students with detail 35 students from the experimental class and 34 students from the control class. The topic was "Introducing Yourself".

   Based on the pre-test data obtained, it was found that the mean score of the pre-test of speaking class in experimental group was 66.97. The students had the basic knowledge of English such as vocabulary and basic tenses which had previously been taught at school, so that no fatal errors were found when speaking. The cases that were often found included incorrect pronunciation that often obscures the true meaning, hesitation in expressing messages so that it interferes with fluency in speaking, limited vocabulary, less confidence and dependence on their first language.

   In the pre-test of control group, it was found that the mean score of the pre-test of speaking class in control group was 66.12. In line to the experimental class, the control class students had the same basic knowledge and similar problems as students in experimental group.

c. Post-Test
   The pre-test was conducted on Wednesday, 25 August 2021 by online. The total number of students who joined the test was 69 students with detail 35 students from the experimental class and 34 students from the control class. The topic was "Introducing Others".

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{Total\ Student's\ Scores}{Number\ of\ Students}$$

Table 1. The Results of the Means

No.	Description	Mean
1.	Pre-test of Experimental Class	$Mean = \dfrac{2.344}{35}$ $= 66.97$

2.	Post-test of Experimental Class	$Mean = \dfrac{2.805}{35}$ $= 80.14$
3.	Pre-test of Control Class	$Mean = \dfrac{2.248}{34}$ $= 66.12$
4.	Post-test of Control Class	$Mean = \dfrac{2.488}{34}$ $= 73.18$

In the post-test, the experimental group got the mean score of 80.14. This indicated that there was a significant increase compared to the pre-test of 66.97. The use of virtual ice breaker treatments made students' scores have an excellent improvement in their speaking skill. The improvement in students' speaking happened, especially in pronunciation, grammar and fluency which were getting better. Meanwhile, the control class got a mean score of 73.18. This showed an increase in score compared to the pre-test which was 66.12. It showed a difference score with the test results in the experimental class. The control class got a lower mean score compared to the experimental class

The data result of the classification percentage of pre-test and pos-test in the experimental and control group are described below:

Table 2. The distribution of frequency and percentage score of experimental class score in pre-test

No.	Score	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
1.	80-100	Excellent	2	2,9%
2.	66-79	Good	18	26,1%
3.	56-65	Average	15	21,7%
4.	40-55	Poor	0	0%
5.	<39	Fail	0	0%

Table 3. The distribution of frequency and percentage score of experimental class score in post-test

No.	Score	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
1.	80-100	Excellent	16	23,2%
2.	66-79	Good	19	27,5%

3.	56-65	Average	0	0%
4.	40-55	Poor	0	0%
5.	<39	Fail	0	0%

Table 4. The distribution of frequency and percentage score of control
class score in pre-test

No.	Score	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
1.	80-100	Excellent	1	1,2%
2.	66-79	Good	17	24,6%
3.	56-65	Average	16	23,2%
4.	40-55	Poor	0	0%
5.	<39	Fail	0	0%

Table 5. The distribution of frequency and percentage score of control
class score in post-test

No.	Score	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
1.	80-100	Excellent	6	8,7%
2.	66-79	Good	24	34,8%
3.	56-65	Average	4	5,8%
4.	40-55	Poor	0	0%
5.	<39	Fail	0	0%

d. Normality Test

The normality test was employed by using Kolmogorov Smirnov in IBM SPSS
25.0. It is presented in the table below:

Table 6. Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Class	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Speaking Test Score	PreTest Experimental	,184	35	,004	,882	35	,001
	PostTest Experimental	,223	35	,000	,861	35	,000

	PreTest Control	,172	34	,012	,927	34	,026
	PostTest Control	,213	34	,000	,865	34	,001

The data was not normally distributed because it shown that in the Kolmogorov Smirnov column, the Sig. section, each test got a value lower than 0.05. Therefore, the researcher used Mann Whitney U Test to to determine the difference in the median of two independent groups if the data scale is not normally distributed. The table is presented below:

Table 7. Test Statistics

	Speaking Test Score
Mann-Whitney U	266,000
Wilcoxon W	861,000
Z	-4,039
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,000

The basis for making decisions for the Mann Whitney Test is to see the results of the Asymp.Sig (2 tailed). If the value of Asymp.Sig (2 tailed) < 0.05, then Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted, but if the value of Asymp.Sig (2 tailed) is > 0.05, then Ha is rejected and Ho is accepted.

It showed that the Asymp.Sig (2-tailed) was 0.000 < 0.05 or it was lower, it can be concluded that there was a difference in the use of ice breaker strategy and students' speaking skill between the experimental class and the control class.

e. Homogeneity Test
   The homogeneity test was employed by using Levene Statistic in IBM SPSS 25.0. It is presented in the table below:

Table 8. Test of Homogeneity of Variance

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	1,750	1	67	,190

Speaking Test Score	Based on Median	1,133	1	67	,291
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1,133	1	66,334	,291
	Based on trimmed mean	1,818	1	67	,182

Before discussing the result, the basis for decision making in the homogeneity test are:
a. If the significance value (Sig.) on Based on Mean > 0.05, then the data is homogeneous.
b. If the significance value (Sig.) on Based on Mean <0.05, then the data is not homogeneous.

According to the calculation on the table above, the Sig. Based on Mean was 0,190. This means the score was 0.190 > 0.05 or the Based on Mean was higher that 0,05. It can be concluded that the data was homogeneously distributed.

f. T-Test
The researcher used the t-test formula by using IBM SPSS 25.0 to certain the calculation of t-test. The result is presented below:

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
							Std.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Mean	Error		
					Sig. (2-	Differen	Differen		
		F	Sig.	T	Df	tailed)	ce	ce	Lower	Upper
Score	Equal variances assumed	1,750	,190	3,959	67	,000	6,966	1,759	3,454	10,478
	Equal variances not assumed			3,963	66,923	,000	6,966	1,758	3,458	10,475

The column that was considered was Equal Variances Assumed. This can be seen on the table above, the score of Sig. (2-tailed) in the Equal Variances Assumed section was 0,000. The basis for the decision was if the significance score (Sig. 2-tailed) < 0,05, then Ho is rejected and Ha is

accepted, but if the significance score (Sig.) > 0,05, then Ha is rejected and Ho is accepted.

a. Null hypothesis (Ho)　　: There is no significance effect of using virtual ice breaker strategy on improving students' speaking skill in online learning.

b. Alternative hypothesis (Ha)　　: There is a significance effect of using virtual ice breaker strategy on improving students' speaking skill in online learning.

Based on the results, the significance score (Sig. 2-tailed) was $0.000 < 0.05$. It means that **Ho was rejected and Ha was accepted** or it can be said that the implementation of virtual ice breaker strategy to improve the students' speaking skill in the experimental group had a significant effect.

Observation results

The observation started on 10-25 August 2021 in the first until fourth meeting. The class were held every Wednesday at 09.00-10.20 WIB (VII H) and 10.30-11.20 WIB (VII F). The observations were made to find out how the virtual ice breaker was implemented in the speaking class in the experimental class.

Based on the results of the observation checklist, the researcher as the teacher was managed to:

a. Gave the instructions clearly so students could understand.

b. Taught using various learning sources accompanied by supporting tools/media for virtual ice breaker activities.

c. Reflected students' prior knowledge such as using clues to start ice breaker.

d. The virtual ice breaker activities were appropriate with the learning topic and students' level.

e. Students paid attention to the teacher very well and always participated enthusiastically.

f. Ice breaker activity took 5-20 minutes at the beginning and in the end of the lesson.

g. Ice breaker used was oral and interactive so that students could be provoked to speak.

h. Held a question-answer session to solved the problem by individually or group spontaneously about any topic.

i. Students participated actively and responsively also they were enthusiastic in lesson.

j. Showed comfortable zone when speak up and felt curious about the topic.

Interview results

The interview was held on Wednesday, 25 August 2021 at 11.30-12.15. It was addressed to 11 students as the representatives of the experimental class students. The interview was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to avoid misunderstanding of

student delivery sentences. There were 8 questions related to online English learning, speaking and virtual ice breaker activities.

Based on the interview results, most of the students showed high satisfaction regarding to the implementation of virtual ice breaker. In the sixth question related to the effect of ice breaker strategy on students' speaking skills, the 11 students simultaneously answered that the use of ice breaker helped students in improving their English speaking skills. In addition, on the eighth question related to the effectiveness of using ice breaker on improving students' English speaking skills, there were 10 students stated that their speaking skills improved during the giving of ice breaker and 1 student revealed that the use of ice breaker a little helped him in speaking. The kinds of ice breaker activities implemented include singing, story telling, asking and answering questions, completing dialogues to practicing conversations. Through the treatments, students could learn directly how to speak well accompanied by fun activities. This also stimulated the students to pronounce words correctly, increased fluency in conveying sentences per sentence, enriched vocabulary and improved understanding of the information conveyed.

Discussion
The Effectiveness of Virtual Ice Breaker on Students' Speaking Skills

In this study, there were 35 students in the experimental class and 34 students in the control class. The total number of the students of these classes was 69 students. From the samples, the degree of freedom (df) was 69, which was obtained from the formula df = N (total students) – 2, so, 69 – 2 = 67. The critical value of df 67 at 5% alpha level of significant was 2.38330. It was also proven by the significant progress on the result of pre-test and post-test of experimental and control group. In the experimental class, the total score for the pre-test was 2.344 while the post-test was 2.805. There was a fairly high difference with a different score of 461. Then in the control class, the total score for the pre-test was 2.248 while the post-test was 2.488. There was a difference in scores as well as a difference of 240. Based on the final total score, there were different scores between the experimental and the control group.

Meanwhile, the mean of pre-test in experimental class was 66.97 while the post-test was 80.14. The difference between the two tests in the experimental class was 13.07. The mean of pre-test in control class was 66.12 while the post-test was 73.18. The difference between the two tests in the control class was 7.06. The mean result of the test in the experimental class was higher than the control class.

In determining the final result, the researcher calculated the data using a non-parametric t-test, namely the Independent Sample T-Test. Based on the results obtained, the significance score (Sig. 2-tailed) was $0.000 < 0.05$, it means the Alternative Hypothesis was accepted where there was a significant effect between the experimental class and the control class. So, it can be concluded that the use of virtual ice breaker strategy was effective in improving students' English speaking skills in online learning.

1) **The Implementation of Virtual Ice Breaker to Improve Students' Speaking Skills**

Based on the results of observations, the researcher was successfully engaged students' participations. The students were actively and responsively participating in the lesson. They showed their enthusiasm by always being involved in every speaking activity on learning. The students dared to perform and interact very well both individually and in pairs. In addition, through virtual ice breaker activities, students began to understand how to pronounce words correctly, add new vocabulary to their own dictionaries, were able to respond and build warm communication among students.

2) **The Students' Responses Toward Virtual Ice Breaker Strategy in Online English Learning**

Based on the results of the interview, the responses of the 11 students showed satisfaction. According to students' responses about the ice breaker given, they agreed it was a fun and exciting during learning process. The students thought that the ice breaker activities encouraged them to be enthusiastic and growing their motivation in learning English. According to them, it could be drawn by several factors. First, the provision of ice breaker made the class atmosphere fun and lively so that students enjoyed participating more. They also argued that class activities that were entertaining, fun and comfortable could make it easier for students to understand the material, especially in speaking practice. Second, the challenging class could create healthy competition between students so that students felt excited. Giving games between students could spur them to compete to be the best

Conclusion

Based on the results of the pre-test and post-test data from the experimental control class, a significant difference in score was obtained. It was proven on the mean scores on both of experimental and control class, where in the experimental group gained higher mean scores (80.14) than the control group (73.18). This means the experimental group which was given treatment got a better score than the control group. In addition, the researcher also conducted a T-Test (Independent Sample T-Test) to find out whether the hypothesis was accepted or not. The result was the significance score (Sig. 2-tailed) was $0.000 < 0.05$. It means that the Alternative Hypothesis was accepted and Null Hypothesis was rejected or it can be said that the implementation of virtual ice breaker strategy to improve the students' speaking skill in the experimental group had a significant effect.

In addition, the implementation of Virtual Ice Breaker Strategy in the experimental class was successful. It can be seen from the observation sheet that the researcher implemented virtual ice breaker strategy. The researcher succeeded in creating a fun dynamic online class to encourage students to speak. As a result, most of the students participated actively in speaking during learning. Furthermore, the use of

Virtual Ice Breaker Strategy in speaking also obtained positive responses from the students. It could be seen on the result from the interview that has been conducted the students stated directly that the treatment had succeeded in helping them in speaking English. From every treatment given, students feel trained in speaking English correctly. The students are required to keep speaking up without hesitation, thus making them dare to speak.

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