

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GERMAN SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH GROUP DISCUSSION

(Drs. Setiawan, M.Pd.)

ABSTRACT

In the teaching and learning process, the speaking skill of German language is still difficult to master. The fact shows that most learners still rarely use German language either in the classroom situation or in the real life. From the research conducted by Nurhani (2007) it is found that one alternative method of learning which can increase university students' participation is the interactive method. One of the main features of this method is the group division which divided a group into large and small group. In this group the interaction between students can be increase. Based on that explanation, this research will developed a certain learning model which can increase the German speaking skill of university students.

Few important results from this research are as follow: (1) the model is new to the German Department of UPI, (2) after implementing it three times, both lecturers and students are familiar with the situation developed and the discussion become more attractive and conducive in increasing the students skill especially in speaking, (3) the themes provided are still lack of variation and the lecturer roles as the facilitator of the discussion still needed to be developed, (4) this method can increase the students participation in the teaching and learning process, (5) it is recognized that lecturer have to develop a certain strategy in delivering the model of learning in speaking through the discussion technique, (6) by using *Einstieg* (introduction), the students are not only capable in knowing the coverage of the theme, but they also can identify the vocabulary and also the terms related to the theme. This will make the discussion more dynamic, (7) lecturer at least has to consider three aspects in group division: first the student's competency, it means that all students with high learning

achievement are spread into all group. Second, the time in making the groups. Third the class setting, (8) in the class discussion phase, lecturer must to be able to manage the class situation so that the discussion is not monopolize by few students.

Key words: learning model, group discussion technique, and German speaking skill.

A. Preface

Nowadays many language course institutions offer conversation lesson outside their regular program. This shows the community acknowledgement upon the importance of speaking skill. In the teaching and learning process, the speaking skill especially in German language is still difficult to teach. The reality shows that most learners rarely use German language either in the classroom or in their daily life. Many learners who have study foreign language for years are still facing difficulties in dealing with conversation or discourse although they are actually understand the utterance. This is cause by the opportunities which had not been given to them in using the target language or to hear how the language is implemented n real life situation.

It is needed to be understood that learning a language means learning to communicate, which most parts are conducted orally. The *Themen neu* textbook, which is the main reference in the German language curriculum, is design based on the communicative concept that stresses the speaking or oral ability. The text book is also complement by the lecturer hand book (*Lehrerhandbuch*) which contains the steps in delivering the lesson in each unit. The question is, do all steps in the lecturer handbook can be fully implemented in the classroom situation? There is a tendency that in the teaching and learning process, especially in teaching speaking, the German language lecturer encounters obstacles because of the discrepancy between the objectives of the communicative teaching with the reality. The obstacles are caused by: a) the amount of students which are not qualified for a language class that consist of 30 or more students. This condition encourages the lecturer to manage the

classroom situation by applying the *teacher-centered*. This situation cause not all students can receive the same opportunity in practicing their speaking skill; b) the lecturer routine do not delivers the lesson orally. By knowing this, the opportunity for the students to practice their speaking ability is obstruct by the delivering of lesson that stressed more on written practices, c) the lack of the students routine in giving their opinion orally and spontaneously.

Based on that explanation it doesn't mean that the German language learning based on communicative approach that highlighted speaking skill cannot be implemented appropriately. The obstacles needed to be handle by the lecturer initiatives and creativity. One way in dealing with the students' difficulties and increase their speaking skills are by group discussion. Based on that explanation, this theme is chosen as the main study of this research.

B. Theoretical Review

The teaching and learning process can start by a simple activity, such as singing together, guessing picture by standing in front of the class, but psychologically useful in loosing awkwardness and preventing anxiety in dealing with the lesson (Bassano and Christian, 1987).

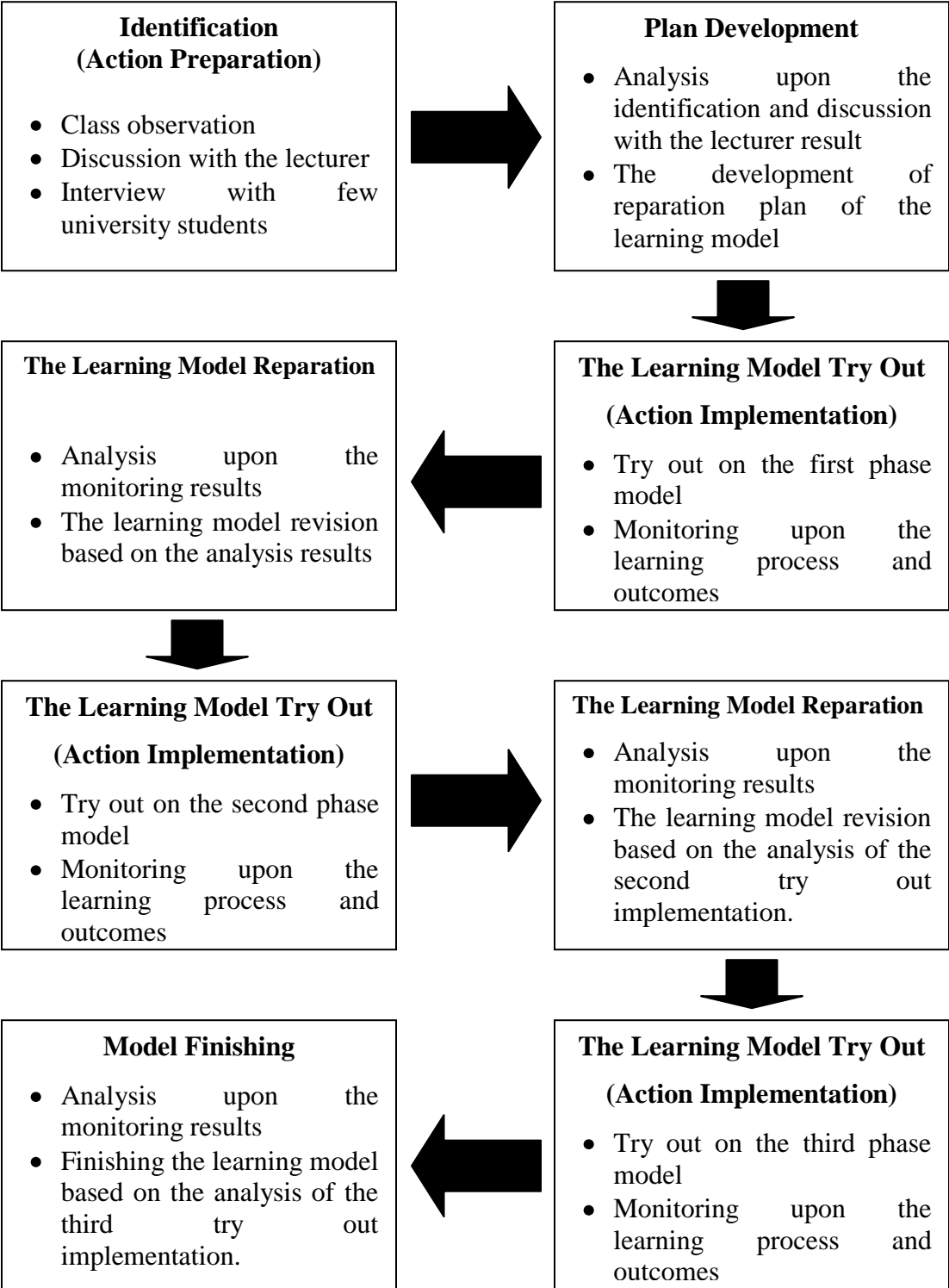
In big classes, the learners can be divided into small groups. From numerous research outcomes on group studying, Slavin in Good and Brophy (1990) concluded that group learning can develop confidence, sympathy, like and being like by peers. In small group the learners are actively involved in speaking and the group dynamic is also increased (Gotebiowska, 1990). By this procedure lecturer can make a small group that consist of active and passive learner to work and appreciate each other, so each member of the group can have the courage to express themselves and to communicate by using the target language. In line with the previous explanation, Weissberg (1988) stress that class division in small group is the most effective form in developing speaking skill. This activity according to Jones (1990) is refer to as classroom copy or model of real life events. In this matter, the classroom represents

the event and the learners become the main actor. With this technique the learners are being given the opportunity to interact with each other in their group based on the role that they choose. The learning model with group discussion is the way in implementing real life language use. With this learning model, learners can be train in using statement functions appropriately by on existing roles in an interaction process. Interaction between learners is the main purpose of the process in learning a language. By knowing that, it is recommended that the lesson material is design by the purpose of easing and increasing the interaction between learners with that material. The interaction process can be train effectively by lesson material in the form of dialog (Dobson, 1980). In the dialog there is an interaction which describes real life communication situation, because the course of the information is not going in the same direction. Beside, the dialog is not only being transferred by words, but also none verbally by gesture, eye contact, physical distance and many others (Sadtono, 1987). In implementing the role play, dialog is a supported teaching material that can increase the achievement of communication in studying a language, because the dialog can be played by learners as the speaker and receiver of information (Hardjono, 1992).

C. Research Methodology

This research is a classroom action research (*penelitian tindakan kelas*) and it is conduct based on a standard science framework which covers these steps: (1) observing and identifying problems encounter by students in speaking Germany, (2) analyzing the result of identification and then designing the learning model that can cope with the problems identified, (3) testing and supervising the learning model and its implementation, (4) conducting evaluation and repairing the learning model based on the evaluation result. Evaluation is apply in each cycle, (5) testing the repaired learning model, and (6) complete the learning model based on evaluation on the last tested action.

Generally, this research can be seen in these following diagrams:



D. Findings and Discussions

After (1) analyzing the initial condition before the experiment, (2) conducting identification through observation, interview with several university students and discussion with the lecturers, and (3) developing the required measures, the research in continue by implementing the learning of speaking by using group discussion. This action is perform three times by the evaluation results as follows:

After measure I

1. At the *asosiogram* writing phase, the learning process did not involve the students' participation.
2. In the discussion of each group there are small groups that are not as active as the others, so the discussions between groups tend to be dominated by certain group.
3. Students have difficulties in determining aspects being discussed. This cause the failure in achieving the discussion target among groups. In its turn, it also causes the discussion to be off course, it means that the aspect which becomes the subject discussed is not shared by other groups.
4. The group discussion and the arrangement of seats consume too many time.
5. During the small group discussion, lecturer cannot observe the course of the discussion in all groups because of the class situation.
6. In big discussion, only particular students that dominate the conversation.

Solution for Problems in Action 1

1. The ideas convey by the students during the making of *asosiogram* are directly noted by students in turn.
2. The determination of group members is decided by lecturer based on their capability. The purpose of this action is for the students, who can relatively

speaking German, to give encouragement to their peers in their group in the discussion and the election of group members don't consume too much time.

3. The *asosiogram* can be reviewed by lecturer and students by taking note of key words that become the focus of the discussion. By the determination of this aspect it is hoped that the course of the discussion can be more effective.
4. The placement of the groups are arranged in the classroom, so the lecturer can observe the process of discussion in all groups.
5. Lecturer is the moderator of the discussion, so he/she can determine who is being given the opportunity to speak. Hence, it is hoped that students who rarely speak will have the opportunity to reveal his/her opinion.

After action II

1. The group division conducted by the lecturer based on the students' competency and the arrangement of their seats still needed a very long period of time.
2. The course of the discussion is effective after the subject matter is determined before the discussion begins.
3. A good class setting allowed the lecturer to move around the groups and supervise the course of the discussion in the small groups.
4. The conversation in the discussion between groups has already involved more students, but there are still plenty of students who seem to hesitate to participate in the discussion.

The solution for problems in action II

1. The lecturer makes a list of groups which is handed over to the students before the day of lecture. This will make the grouping time more effective and efficient.

2. The conversation in the discussion between groups have already involved more students, but there are still plenty of students who seems hesitate to participated in the discussion.

Action III

Action III as the result of repairmen of the two previous actions is able to shows a better discussion process, from the comment of the discussion participant, the amount of students participated in the discussion, and the relevance of theme with the discussion results. Nevertheless, the number of large amount of students, which is around 34 students in a small classroom demand the accuracy of lecturer in arranging the class and giving the opportunity to the students to express their opinion.

Compare with the *teacher oriented* learning style, this learning model in increasing speaking ability has few differences. The class setting in this model in arrange so that the students are demand to involve in an active learning process. The group learning process seems didn't give any space for the students to sit and be a passive listener. This condition can make the learning situation more alive and dynamic, but still in an appropriate and guided manner.

The most important thing in learning speaking skills is that every learner has the opportunity to express their intention, idea, and rebuttal in a previously determine context. The traditional learning that place learners in a line of chairs facing the lectures tend to give less opportunity to each learner to speak and if there is an opportunity it is usually in a short amount of time. When the learner is placed in a small group, then he will have an opportunity to involve actively in the discussion process.

Another important aspect in a discussion is someone can response to other's opinion about a particular topic. The discussion setting in this learning model allowed the students to respond the opinion that he/she agree, criticize other opinion, or conclude all opinion arise in a discussion.

There are few things that needed to be notice for the emendation for this learning model in the future. First, the determination of members and their quantity in a group must have a close attention so the discussion can avoid the stagnation and for each member to have the opportunity in delivering his/her point of view. Second, the course of the discussion must be guided so it does not go over the previously determine theme or topic. Third, it is important for students to recognize the terms and vocabularies which have to be mastered in a discussion. It is hope that through this learning model, students are motivated and their speaking skill can be measured.

E. Conclusions and Suggestions

From few actions conducted it is concludes that the theme given seems to be less variation and the roles of lecturer as the discussion facilitator is needed to be increase so the discussion process can be more attractive.

Although there are no quantitative indicators that shows an increase on the students capability in speaking, but if it is review thoroughly from the learning process and the discussion result perform by the lecturer, then there is an overview that this technique can improve the students participation in the teaching and learning process – by expressing opinion, suggestion, idea, argument and rebuttal upon others point of view so it is expected to increase their speaking ability.

Based on a supervision conducted directly during the learning process or with the use of video recorder, there is an overview that lecturer is demand to develops the proper strategy in implementing the learning model through discussion technique, especially in giving introductory to the theme discussed (*Einstieg*), group division (*Gruppeneinteilung*), and in managing the discussion course (*Durchführung der Diskussion*).

Through *Einstieg*, the basic knowledge of the students upon the theme is activated by the lecturer questions. This phase will influence the next process because in this phase the students do not only acknowledge the coverage to the theme, but

they are also can acknowledge the vocabulary or terms related to the theme. Both of this can make the course of the discussion more dynamic.

In group division, the lecturer must at least consider three aspects: *first* the students' competency, it means that students with better learning achievement are spread around all groups. This can make the process of the discussion runs well. *Second* is the group establishment; the groups have to be established previously so it doesn't consume too many time. *Third* are the classes setting/seats. The arrangement of seats for the small groups has to be arrange appropriately so the lecturer can easily monitored the course of the discussion and answered question if the students didn't understood about particular subject.

The management of the course of the class discussion (*Klassendiskussion*) is a crucial aspect that determines the success of this learning model. After the students discussed in small groups, then they performed a class discussion to delivers the results of their discussion orally or to debate with other groups. In this phase lecturer must be able to encourage the class so the discussion is not monopolize by certain students.

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In the teaching and learning process, the speaking skill of German language is still difficult to master. The fact shows that most learners still rarely use German language either in the classroom situation or in the real life. Many learners who have study foreign language for years are still facing difficulties in dealing with conversation or discourse although they are actually understand the utterance. This is cause by the opportunities which had not been given to them in using the target language or to hear how the language is implemented n real life situation.

Neuf-Munkel und Roland (1991: 50) argued that the most important goal from teaching language is the success of oral communication. Speaking skill has a meaning in its delivery and pronunciation, in other word it convey the feeling and thought to another person in the form of statement, discourse or with spoken language. The definition of speaking skill in learning German language is the capability of students in expressing ideas, suggestions, minds and feelings by discovering the proper expressions with the suitable German vocabularies.

Based on the field test, this purpose of achieving the teaching speaking skills goal still encounters many difficulties. The difficulties are closely related to the huge amount of students in a single classroom, so the students' opportunity to train their speaking skill is insufficient. This can affect their speaking ability achievement. To

overcome these difficulties, it is required to design a certain learning strategy that can give an equal opportunity for students to train and increase their speaking ability.

From the research conducted by Nurhani (2007) it is found that one alternative method of learning which can increase university students' participation is the interactive method. One of the main features of this method is the group division which divided a group into large and small group. In this group the interaction between students can be increase. Based on that explanation, this research will developed a certain learning model which can increase the German speaking skill of university students.

Few important results from this research are as follow: (1) although the group discussion has already become a common knowledge for the lecturer, but in its implementation the model is still new to the German Department of UPI, (2) in the initial implementation of action, both students and the lecturer are still awkward in conducting the learning process based on the way proposed and developed. Nevertheless, after implementing it three times both lecturers and students are familiar with the situation developed and the discussion become more attractive and conducive in increasing the students skill especially in speaking, (3) from the action developed it is shows that the themes provided are still lack of variation and the lecturer roles as the facilitator of the discussion still needed to be developed, (4) Although there are no quantitative indicators that shows an increase on the students capability in speaking, but if it is review thoroughly from the learning process and the discussion result perform by the lecturer, then there is an overview that this technique can improve the students participation in the teaching and learning process – by expressing opinion, suggestion, idea, argument and rebuttal upon others point of view so it is expected to increase their speaking ability. (5) Based on a supervision conducted directly during the learning process or with the use of video recorder, there is an overview that lecturer is demand to develops the proper strategy in implementing the learning model through discussion technique, especially in giving introductory to the theme discussed (*Einstieg*), group division (*Gruppeneinteilung*),

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