

English Teachers' Innovative Approach to Teaching Speaking Skills

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Abstract

To facilitate students with speaking proficiency that is applicable in today's real-world communication, an innovative approach to teaching of speaking is needed. The purpose of this research is to investigate what innovative teaching approach that teachers use to teach students English speaking skills that will assist them in real-world communication. This study used a qualitative-descriptive case study design. The data were collected through observations and interviews and analyzed by using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that there are six characteristics of innovative teaching that teachers used when teaching English speaking skills in the classroom. They are teacher-student collaboration, HOTS oriented towards the teaching of speaking, integration of ICT in the teaching of speaking, teaching of speaking that involve 21st-century learning skills, teaching of speaking that strengthen literacy skills, and the teaching of speaking that strengthen character education (SCE). Understanding the innovative teaching of speaking implemented by the teacher as revealed in this study, further studies intended to analyze and deepen the understanding of the impact of these innovative teaching approach on students' speaking performance should be conducted.

Keywords: *English language teaching; innovative approach; speaking skills*

INTRODUCTION

In teaching English, the teacher's role is to improve students' knowledge and skills so that students become more knowledgeable, skillful, and proficient in using English for communication purposes. Today, English is the global language of communication and is essential for success in all areas (Rao, 2019). However, English speaking skills among students are usually weak due to the teacher's focus on teaching only the linguistic system (Bahrani & Soltani, 2012). Teachers seldom provide practical skills that address the common issues students face daily. Uyun (2022) pointed out that many Indonesian schools do not teach students English skills relevant to their daily lives. Besides, English is not widely spoken in Indonesia and this causes students to often lack opportunities to practice and engage with the language outside their classroom environment (Maysaroh et al., 2022). Thus, the emphasis of English learning might lean more towards theory instead of helping students apply the language in real-life situations, such as conversations, writing, or understanding spoken English in different contexts. Additionally, the teacher's teaching method contributes to students' difficulties in understanding English, as it is often teacher-centered. Many students find traditional teaching methods, which emphasize a teacher-led approach, to be dull and make them lose interest in learning the language (Anburaj et al., 2014).

Based on the above-mentioned factors, teachers' teaching techniques may still be ineffective in assisting students in English Language Teaching (ELT). The investigation into how teachers should develop innovative strategies and engage their actual practical experiences in helping students with new learning techniques and methods has emerged. Most of the earlier research indicated that teachers should adopt more creative and innovative approaches in language instruction so that the teaching methods provided can be more effective and students can reach their goals (Asiyah et al., 2021; Fraser, 2019; Budirahayu & Saud, 2023). Moreover, having innovative teaching and learning could be expected to give teachers chances to enhance their instruction, and the results that students achieve at the end of their education depend on standards that meet their real-life needs (Darasawang et al., 2015; Yamin & Purwati, 2021). This indicates that teachers must incorporate innovative methods to improve both the teaching experience and the achievements of students in alignment with the education system's goals that reflect practical application in the real world.

Previous researchers in the field of education have documented the studies of teachers' innovative teaching topics in several focuses such as Asiyah et al. (2021) researched to see the work commitment, professional development, and innovative work of teachers that could affect the quality of learning in elementary schools. Fraser (2019) searched for university academic strategies and commitment to enhancing student learning through innovative teaching practices. Then, Yuzyk et al. (2019) studied research on innovative teaching methods in two higher education institutions in Ukraine and Poland. In addition, Bizami et al. (2023) determined the use of innovative pedagogies and technologies in a blended learning environment in higher education. Meanwhile, in terms of ELT classrooms, Yamin and Purwati (2021) explored ways to employ innovative pedagogy for teaching Indonesian students English as a foreign language through articles. As viewed from the previous studies, research that discussed teachers' innovative teaching in ELT classes is still rarely investigated. Yamin and Purwati (2021) studied innovative teaching in an ELT setting. However, their studies did not focus on particular English skills and rather it was a systematic review research study. Thus, this research carried out a similar study on teachers' innovative teaching characteristics, but researchers did research in speaking skill classes and it aimed to use interviews and observation data. By utilizing interviews and observations, it allowed this study to produce broader insights and significant distinctions from previous research.

Thus, according to the background above, this study seeks to answer the following research question: What innovative teaching characteristics do English teachers perform in teaching speaking skill?

METHOD

This research was a qualitative-descriptive case study design. A descriptive case study is intended to offer a thorough and detailed view of a phenomenon that addresses the "what" questions and captures nuanced aspects of the topic or context (Yin, 2018). This research was aimed to gather specific information about teachers' innovative teaching characteristics performed when they taught speaking skills. This research was set up as a descriptive case study. The participants in this research were two English teachers in a public senior high school who teach English subjects across different programs and grades. Mr. Zaki (pseudonym) taught 10th-grade regular and religion programs students and Mrs. Zara (pseudonym) taught in 11th grade regular and BIC (*Bina Insan Cendekia*) programs students. The researchers conducted observations twice

for each teacher along with one session of interviews. To analyze the data obtained, researchers used thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke (2006). This study applied a deductive approach, adopting predetermined themes from Miyarso (2019) to determine what characteristics define teachers' innovative approach in teaching English speaking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

English teachers performed certain characteristics to make the classes they were teaching innovative. Referring to Miyarso's six characteristics of innovative teaching (2019), data analysis in this research yielded those characteristics. They were teacher-student collaboration, HOTS oriented towards the teaching of speaking, integration of ICT in the teaching of speaking, teaching of speaking that involve 21st-century learning skills, teaching of speaking that strengthen literacy skills, and the teaching of speaking that strengthen character education (SCE). A few themes have several sub-themes as shown in the Table 1 below.

Table 1:
Teachers' Innovative Teaching Characteristics

No	Predetermined themes	Sub-themes
1	Teacher-students collaboration	- Teacher-students collaboration
2	HOTS oriented towards the teaching of speaking	- Connecting information - Stating opinion - Stating pros and cons - Brainstorming
3	Integrated with ICT	- Media technology and communication
4	21st -century learning skills	- Creativity - Collaboration - Critical thinking - Communication
5	Literacy skills	- Reading - Listening
6	Strengthening Character Education (SCE)	- Religiosity - Nationalism - Independently - Mutual cooperation

1. Teacher-students collaboration

Bulturbayevich et al. (2021) defined teacher-student collaboration as an interaction among teacher and students in which the teacher acts as a guide or facilitator of learning and students provide relevant and significant response in returns. English teachers used teacher-student collaboration in their classes for a variety of activities and tasks. Mr. Zaki and his students named what objects are counted as inventions, and before he gave a dialogue task to students, he invited one student to become his pair to do dialogue to provide an example of how to perform a dialogue correctly (Observation 2, 23rd of April 2024). Meanwhile, Mrs. Zara built collaboration by

guiding students with some questions and clues to help them remember and recall last meeting materials and connected them with that day's topic. (Observation 3, 25th of April, 2024). In addition, the teacher and the pupils played a "*hompimpa*" game together and practiced speaking skills such as dialogs and two-way discussions. These two teachers also used question-and-answer sessions to ensure students understood after explaining the information, as well as brainstorming or asking them to create examples of relevant items. Mrs. Zara said,

"I provide theory first and then add examples. This example will be given to students and they have to analyze it. Then I will ask them to talk about what they have analyzed and I will clarify their answers." (Interview, 2nd of May, 2024).

Indeed, interactions between teachers and students assist pupils master the subject content (Bulturbayevich et al., 2021; Yamin & Purwati, 2021). Therefore, it is important to build a strong and supportive connection between teachers and students. It underscores the idea that teaching is not just about imparting knowledge but also about nurturing a positive learning relationship (Aqnia et al., 2024).

These findings are consistent with Miyarso's (2019) assertion that cooperation between teacher-student learning might potentially be performed through a number of activities such as questions and answers, debates, demonstrations, discussion, and role acting, simulations, games, practices, exercises, and experiments. Collaboration between teacher-students happened especially when the teacher delivered the theory-related material.

2. HOTS oriented towards the teaching of speaking

Promoting HOTS in the teaching and learning of speaking occurred when teachers conducted brainstorming sessions and asked students to participate in mentioning, describing, and identifying the invention or purpose of objects around them. When teaching under the topic "Invention Makes Life Easier", Mr. Zaki asked students to name objects around them that can be counted as invention objects. After that, he also asked students and encouraged them to mention the function of the TV (Observation 2, April 23rd, 2024).

HOTS oriented towards the teaching of speaking also occurred when the teacher ask students to discuss pros and cons ideas related to the advantages and disadvantages of a certain concept or topic. When teaching under the topic "full-time students and part-time students", Mrs. Zara divided students into several groups and made them present their ideas on the topic. She divided the entire students into two sides and said, "In this presentation, I want to hear the pros and cons of the topic that you are in charge of" (Observation 3, 25th of April, 2024).

Based on the findings, the teachers exposed students to HOTS activities wherever possible. First, they linked information by assessing students' comprehension of the relationship between two information subjects through brainstorming activity. According to Chaijum (2020; as cited in Widiastuti et al., 2022), brainstorming sessions can motivate students to actively participate in the learning process by developing their ability to ask and process questions. Indeed, one of the teachers' tasks is to help students make connections or correlations between images, symbols, and information (Collins, 2014; Yamin & Purwati, 2021). Second, the teachers wanted students to express their thoughts (pros and cons) on the stories and the chores assigned. Stating pros and cons during the teaching and learning is a powerful teaching method that fosters innovative

thinking and has numerous advantages for students (Othman et al., 2015). This is consistent with Collins' (2014) research finding that students who dare to express opposing viewpoints in front of the class are classified as having strong thinking skills.

3. Integrated with ICT

The two teachers, Mr. Zaki and Mrs. Zara, assigned the use of information and communication technology in the teaching and learning process of speaking. Starting with TV displays and PowerPoint as media for distributing information for students' presentations, and employing smartphones for students to prepare tasks in digital form using Canva apps. In Mrs. Zara's classes (Observation 3 and 4, 25th& 29th of April, 2024), she always involved ICT in the teaching and learning activities. In one occasion, Mrs. Zara said, "Please present your work in digital form and send the file through our group WhatsApp". While students were preparing their tasks, she also played a music video and an English podcast on the TV screen. (Observation 3, 25th of April, 2024). In an interview, Mrs. Zara revealed that,

"If we have finished the material but still have a lot of time, we usually analyze the song by looking for the implied meaning of the song using TV or through students' phones" (Interview, 2nd of May, 2024).

Indeed, ICT should be implemented in as many innovative learning activities as possible (Miyarso, 2019). This innovative teaching with ICT can be used to promote innovative teaching methods by providing student-centered and creative learning through the use of smartphones, laptops, and even the internet (Coombe et al., 2019).

4. 21st century learning skills

This learning skill is known as the 4Cs which include creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication. The data primarily revealed that these 4Cs are integrated one into another. The teachers' creativity can be seen in how they provided students with new speaking tasks using a range of strategies such as singing songs, brief discussions, sentence training, teaching with three teachers, and impromptu speech. For example, during the observation (April 22nd, 2024) Mr. Zaki, asked students to develop the sentences into different kinds of questions using WH-Questions and then asked students to create their own short conversation.

In the interview (May 2nd, 2024), Mr. Zaki revealed that at the beginning of the lesson he tried to sing an Indonesian local song but using English lyrics just to make students interested in learning. Mr. Zaki even adopted an innovative strategy by addressing new methods and collaborating with two teachers. He said,

"When it comes to speaking, I use Train Sentences (sentences like trains). So at first the sentence was short, then another sentence was added. I also once did a program with three teachers in one class. One teacher acts as a class controller or teaches the class and the other two teachers act as models. So, besides the controlling teacher explaining the material, the teacher can also provide examples directly through the two model teachers, either about pronunciation or dialogue" (May 2nd, 2024).

Collaboration, critical thinking, and communication skills are demonstrated by teachers who use collaborative learning to give speaking activities and assignments such as splitting students into small groups for discussion and presentation or partnering students for conversation practice. Collaboration was observed during Mrs. Zara's class. Mrs. Zara told students how the task should be done. She said,

“What you need to do right now is to discuss with your friends about the thesis, the arguments, and also the solutions that you’ll provide to your audiences. After that, you have to come forward to present it to your friends and influence others and by the end of the session your friends will vote on whether they will choose ‘working mom or non-working mom’”. (Observation 3, 25th of April, 2024).

Widiastuti et al. (2022) stated that creative teachers can design classes with a variety of activities that engage students in learning. According to Othman et al. (2015), classroom learning based on teamwork improves students' critical thinking, communication, and speaking skills. When it comes to critical thinking, teachers constantly urge students to think and imagine beyond and assign them activities such as forming discussion and creating hortatory exposition to help them develop their reasoning skills. Students' cognitive maturity would rise if teachers guided them through an activity that improved their reasoning capacity to deal with the task intelligently (Collins, 2014).

5. Literacy skills

Both Mr. Zaki and Mrs. Zara implemented activities which encourage students' literacy skills in variety of methods. They implemented literacy activities by giving students time to read their books before beginning the lesson. They did not limit the books that students could read because reading diverse books allowed them to obtain new perspectives on theory, which then enriched their literacy skills. In one of the interview session, Mr. Zaki said,

“I never set a limit on reading books to students, because even though the books have the same content, if the author has a different way of presenting it, then the students will get more knowledge from a different POV as well in which that will enrich their literacy skills.” (Interview, 2nd of May, 2024)

The ability to listen also relates to literacy skill. Mrs. Zara emphasized these skills in her classroom. She often instructed students to listen carefully. Once she said,

“Please listen to the story carefully and I want you to share your thoughts about the story later” (Observation 1, 22nd of April, 2024).

In terms of improving literacy, Putu et al. (2020) supported the premise that engaging with a variety of choice-based resources improves students' literacy and widen knowledge through reading. Meanwhile, literacy through listening arose naturally from the way students paid attention to the teacher, and the teacher also created an environment in which students could properly listen, such as listening to their friends' PowerPoint presentations and telling interesting story activities that required students to share what they knew about the story being told. This is in line with Miyarso's idea (2019) that classroom literacy design comprises students' listening activities, which teachers can facilitate through various approaches such as listening to teachers' explanations directly or through ICT.

6. Strengthening character education (SCE)

SCE is part of Indonesian educational curriculum that is intended to introduce, train, and develop Indonesian students' characters in reference to Indonesian values, norms, and beliefs. Data from the research revealed that the two teachers educated students values related to religiosity, nationalism, independence, and mutual collaboration. As a society that values religion the most, teachers constantly instructed students to pray to God before and after class, to be sincere and have faith in all they do, and to treat others with respect. Both teachers, Mr. Zaki and Mrs. Zara, always initiated

the class by praying before the lesson. Mr. Zaki even led the prayer word by word and the students repeated it. (Observation 1, 22nd of April, 2024). Mr. Zaki also gave feedback and praised students after doing their performance, and he said,

“So students, to upgrade our English, we must first know the meaning, and you have to be brave to use the words to communicate or just to speak. And last, you need to do it all with full confidence and sincerity of your heart so that Allah will bless your way” (Observation 1, 22nd of April, 2024).

In terms of mutual collaboration value, both teachers frequently involved students in pair or team work when doing learning tasks. Mr. Zaki gave students a task to create dialogue and perform it in pair in front of the class. Meanwhile, Mrs. Zara formed students into several groups to discuss and present previous material about hortatory exposition text (Observation 1 and 3, 22nd & 25th of April, 2024).

Another character education that is found in this research is being independent. Teachers assisted students develop this character by providing projects in groups or individually, as well as requiring them to participate in speaking exercises. Last but not least, mutual cooperation was demonstrated by the students through collaborative works to complete assigned activities, whether in pairs or in groups. According to Istiharoh and Indartono (2020), group activities and debates are the core principle in strengthening character education program, where students will learn the value of cooperation and working together to solve common problems.

CONCLUSION

This research revealed that there were six characteristics or themes of innovative teaching identified during the teaching of speaking skills namely collaborations between teachers and students, HOTS oriented towards the teaching of speaking, integration of ICT in the teaching of speaking, teaching of speaking that involve 21st-century learning skills, teaching of speaking that strengthen literacy skills, and the teaching of speaking that strengthen character education (SCE).

Despite the aforementioned important findings, this research is still lacking of understanding the effectiveness and outcomes of these teachers' innovative teaching. Therefore, further studies intended to analyze and deepen into understanding the impact of these innovative teaching should be conducted. Or else, in the context of innovative teaching in ELT, studying other language skills i.e. listening, reading, and writing, are of no less important. This expanded research has the potential to greatly contribute to the understanding of how innovative teaching characteristics can be improved and adapted for various learning contexts.

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