



APPLYING EMPHATIC COMMUNICATION SKILL TO ENCOURAGE SPEAKING PERFORMANCE AT SMA SWASTA KATOLIK 2 KABANJAHE

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Abstract: The main objective of this study is to identify and comprehensively assess the efficacy of applying empathic communication strategies to educational practice, especially on student performance in speaking with the ultimate goal of fostering and strengthening students' speaking performance, which ultimately contributes to their language learning and overall communication skills. In this research, the employment of a quasi-experimental research method has been carefully chosen and implemented to enable a systematic investigation and evaluation of the causal relationship between the application of empathic communication techniques and the enhancement of students' speaking performance, ensuring reliable and valid findings for educational practitioners and policymakers. The results of this study found that there is a significant difference between students' speaking performance by applying emphatic communication and without applying emphatic communication. Where students who receive treatment have an improved score compared to students who do not receive treatment. This shows that emphatic communication is effective in encouraging students' speaking performance. This research makes a valuable contribution by focusing on the application of empathic communication skills to encourage students' speaking performances at SMA KATOLIK 2 Kabanjahe. This research can provide a new direction for improving students' speaking learning through empathic communication skills, as well as opening potential for further research in this area on how to encourage students' speaking performance. This research can be useful in different regions with similar approaches and disciplines, especially in high schools across Indonesia, where the application of empathic communication skills is important

to encourage improved student speaking performance. In addition, the results of this research can be useful for the fields of education, educational psychology, and language studies.

Keywords: educational practice, empathic communication, quasi-experimental research, SMA Katolik 2 Kabanjahe, speaking performance.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a complex and multifaceted skill that is essential to human communication. Speaking is the active use of language to express meanings so that other people can make sense of them (Piaget, 1952). The production of speech sounds and words that convey meaning in a particular linguistic context is a complex process that involves a multitude of cognitive, linguistic, and physiological mechanisms. When we speak, we engage a complex system of motor control that coordinates the movements of our lips, tongue, jaw, and vocal cords in order to produce sounds that correspond to the words we want to express. This system relies on a range of cognitive processes, including planning and executing the movements needed to form speech sounds, as well as monitoring and adjusting our speech output in real time based on feedback from our own auditory and somatosensory systems. Speaking is the ability to communicate one's thoughts and feelings in a way that is both meaningful and appropriate to the situation and the listener (Ladouse, 1994). Speaking is one of the key indicators of a child's cognitive development, as it reflects the child's ability to organize and express their thoughts. From a social and emotional perspective, speaking is viewed as a way of establishing and maintaining social relationships. From the explanation that has been given, we know that speaking is crucial for students. So emphasizing the importance of speaking performance is a factor that must be considered.

Speaking performance can be defined as the ability to effectively communicate ideas, opinions, and emotions through language in various contexts, such as everyday conversations, formal presentations, and public speaking events. Speaking performance encompasses a range of skills, including linguistic knowledge, communicative competence, and public speaking skills. Speaking performance involves a range of skills, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and discourse (Grant, 2015). These skills are essential for effective communication in personal and professional contexts.

One of the factors that encourages student speaking performance is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is a concept that has gained increasing attention in recent years as it has become recognized as an important factor in personal and professional success. Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions in oneself and others and to use this information to guide thinking and behaviour (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in education, both for students and educators. There are five components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1995). One component of emotional intelligence is empathy. Empathy is the projection of one's own personality into the personality of another in order to understand him or her better (Brown, 1994). Empathy can encourage learners to learn languages successfully, and if a learner shows no interest, he will not have a thirst for knowledge (Chen, 2008).

Empathic communication is a type of communication that emphasizes understanding and acknowledging another person's feelings and perspectives (Rosenberg, 2015). Empathic communication is a way of communicating that involves actively listening to the other person, acknowledging their emotions, and showing understanding of their perspective. Empathic communication involves a deep level of empathy, where the communicator not only

acknowledges the other person's emotions but also tries to feel what they are feeling. This type of communication can help build strong relationships, improve understanding, and reduce conflict. Empathic communication involves a deep level of understanding and connection with another person. This form of communication goes beyond just acknowledging the other person's emotions; it requires the communicator to actively feel what the other person is feeling. In order to achieve this level of connection, the communicator needs to be attentive to the other person's nonverbal cues, such as body language and tone of voice. By listening carefully and responding with empathy, the communicator can build trust and rapport with the other person, which can lead to stronger relationships.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the problem of this research is to find out whether Empathic Communication significantly affects students' speaking performance. And this hypothesis is to Identify the effectiveness of applying empathic communication to encourage students' speaking performance.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is experimental research. The essence of experimental research is to examine the effect of treatment on behaviour that arises as a result treatment (Alsa, 2004). Experimental research is research conducted to determine the consequences that arising from a treatment given intentionally by researchers (Hadi, 1985). In line with this, experimental research is research carried out by manipulating which aims to know the consequences of manipulation on observed individual behaviour (Latipun, 2002). Experimental research in principle can be defined as a systematic method to build relationships that contain causal-effect relationship phenomena (Sukardi, 2011). The design to be used is quasi-experimental because the participants are determined and cannot be chosen randomly. Quasi experimental is a type of scientific research that attempts to evaluate the effect of a treatment or intervention on an existing group, but does not allow for randomly allocating subjects to treatment and control groups (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). In this study, the class that will be given treatment is the experimental class. And the control class will be taught using techniques as the teacher usually does. In addition, the researcher will conduct a pre-test for measure students' initial speaking performance and post-test to measure students' speaking performance. Then, the results of students' speaking skills are displayed numerically as a quantitative method.

Population is a generalization area consisting of objects or subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics that are determined by the researcher to be studied and then the conclusion is replaced (Sugiyono, 2013). The population of this study are the eleventh grade social students of SMA RK 2 KABANJAHE. Which is 64 students in total numbers. Sample is a subset of a population that is selected for investigation, with the aim of drawing inferences about the entire population (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). In taking sample, the researcher chose 11 Social 1 as controlled class which has 34 students, and 11 Social 2 as experimental class which has 34 students.

Data in the form of scores are obtain from the results of the pre-test and post-test. The kind of the test is oral test. The data are obtained from tests that would be carried out at the beginning of the meeting in the control class and the experimental class. After applying empathic communication in the experimental class, another test will be carried out. The test will be carried out in the experimental class and the controlled class. Students will write a descriptive text about people or place and then read it in front of their classmates. In collecting data, researchers used oral tests as primary data to measure speaking skills in describing places and people. There is a pre-test and post-test for both classes. The pre-test will do to find out students' initial speaking skills before applying emphatic communication and a post-test will do to find out students' speaking skills after applying emphatic communication in the learning

process for the experimental class. The pre-test and post-test for the experimental and control classes are the same. In the pre-test and post-test, students are asked to do oral tests to describe people and places. Students are given 1 to 3 minutes to explain it. The oral test was measured to determine students' speaking scores based on the speaking skills rubric. The rubric used is the oral rating score adopted from Harris. The rubric consists of several criteria; pronunciation, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar. The writer used the T-test to find out the difference between students' scores which taken from the pre-test and post-test in the experimental class and the controlled class.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

The data shown in this part were collected from students' score in pre-test and post-test of both experimental class and controlled class. The data were described into two tables. Table 4.1 shown the students' score and achievement in experimental class while Table 1 shown the students' score and achievement in controlled class.

No.	Pre-Test	Post-Test
1	65	70
2	60	70
3	60	65
4	50	60
5	60	65
6	65	70
7	65	70
8	45	60
9	55	65
10	45	60
11	55	75
12	65	75
13	45	70
14	55	70
15	55	75
16	55	75
17	55	60
18	65	65
19	55	70
20	55	70
21	65	80

22	55	75
23	55	75
24	55	75
25	65	75
26	55	80
27	55	70
28	80	90
29	55	85
30	65	70
31	55	60
32	55	60
33	55	65
34	65	75

Table.1 Score of Experimental Class

The data above has been analyzed using SPSS software to test the hypothesis whether there is a significant difference between students' speaking performance in the experimental class by applying emphatic communication and students' speaking performance in the controlled class without applying empathic communication. The writer uses the t-test formula. Two classes, namely the experimental class and the controlled class, were compared. The writer uses SPSS to test the data hypothesis where the test used is the t-test. The hypothesis of statistic that used in this research is:

Ha: There is a significant effectiveness of applying emphatic communication to encourage students speaking performance.

H0: There is no a significant effectiveness of applying emphatic communication to encourage students speaking performance.

No.	Pre-Test	Post-Test
1	50	55
2	50	55
3	50	55
4	40	40
5	50	50
6	60	65
7	60	65
8	40	50
9	50	50

10	40	40
11	45	45
12	55	55
13	40	45
14	45	45
15	45	45
16	45	45
17	45	45
18	60	60
19	45	45
20	45	50
21	60	65
22	50	55
23	50	55
24	50	55
25	60	65
26	50	55
27	50	55
28	60	65
29	50	50
30	60	60
31	50	50
32	50	50
33	50	50
34	60	65

Table.2 Score of Controlled Class

The assumption of the hypothesis as follows:

1. If $t\text{-test} > t\text{-table}$ in significant level of 5%, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It means that there is significant difference between the students' speaking performance by applying emphatic communication

and the students' speaking performance without applying emphatic communication the eleventh grade students of SMA RK 2 KABANJAHE.

2. If $t\text{-test} < t\text{-table}$ in significant level of 5%, the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected. It means that there is no significant difference between the students' speaking performance by applying emphatic communication and the students' speaking performance without applying emphatic communication at the eleventh grade students of SMA RK 2 KABANJAHE.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
SCORE	Equal variances assumed	.349	.557	9.737	66
	Equal variances not assumed			9.737	65.962

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
SCORE	Equal variances assumed	.000	17.500	1.797
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	17.500	1.797

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95 % Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
SCORE	Equal variances assumed	13.912	21.088
	Equal variances not assumed	13.912	21.088

From the calculation of the data in table above it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the achievement of students' listening skills between the experiment and the controlled class based on the results, the results of t_0 are higher than $t\text{-table}$ which is determined by the $t\text{-table}$ significance level of 5% and degrees of freedom of 1% ($9.737 > 1.996$). sig (2-tailed) in Table 4.2.3 also shows that sig (0.000) is lower than sig α (0.05). This shows that the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and H_a is approved, in other words that there are significant differences before and after applying emphatic communication to encourage students speaking performance.

Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the efficacy of applying empathic communication strategies to encourage students' speaking performance. The research design employed was a quasi-experimental method, which allowed for a systematic examination of the causal relationship between the application of empathic communication techniques and improvements in students' speaking skills. The results revealed a significant difference between the experimental class, where empathic communication was applied, and the controlled class, where standard teaching techniques were used.

Table. 3 Group Statistics

	CLASS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SCORE	POST TEST EXPERIMENT CLASS	34	70.44	7.320	1.255
	POST TEST CONTROL CLASS	34	52.94	7.499	1.286

From the table above, the results of the study show that there are significant differences in students' speaking learning outcomes between the experimental class using empathic communication and the control class using standard teaching techniques. The average post-test score for the experimental class (70.44) was significantly higher than the average post-test score for the control class (51.94). This finding is in line with previous research that highlighted the positive impact of empathic communication on various aspects of education, including student performance. Empathy is an important component of emotional intelligence, which plays an important role in education. Students who experience empathetic communication from their teachers tend to feel understood, supported, and motivated, which leads to better engagement and performance in the learning process. This can be proven from previous research. One of them is the research conducted by Rashid and Rahman (2016) with the title "The Relationship between Empathy and English Oral Performance among ESL Learners". The study involved 126 Malaysian secondary school students and found that there was a significant positive correlation between empathy and spoken English performance. Researchers suggest that this relationship may be due to the fact that empathy allows students to better understand the perspectives and emotions of their audience, which in turn can help them communicate more effectively. Another study was conducted by Alharbi and Alharbi in 2019 entitled "The Effect of Empathy on EFL Speaking Performance among Saudi Female Students". This study involved 70 Saudi Arabian female students and found that there was a significant positive correlation between empathy and speaking performance. Researchers suggest that empathy can help students better understand the cultural and language differences of their audience, which can lead to more effective communication.

The results of the present study are in agreement with previous research that has highlighted the positive impact of empathic communication on students' learning outcomes and performance. Like the studies conducted by Rashid and Rahman (2016) and Alharbi and Alharbi (2019), the current research found a significant positive correlation between empathic communication and speaking performance. This consistency in findings across studies reinforces the notion that empathy is a crucial factor in enhancing language learning and communication skills. The agreement in results can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, empathic communication fosters a supportive and understanding learning environment. When teachers actively listen to their students, acknowledge their emotions, and show understanding, students feel more motivated and engaged in the learning process. This positive emotional connection with the teacher can lead to improved self-confidence and willingness to participate

in speaking activities, which, in turn, can enhance their speaking performance. Secondly, empathy allows students to better understand the perspectives and emotions of their audience. This understanding is particularly crucial in language learning, as effective communication involves not just transmitting information but also connecting with the listener. When students are taught empathy, they are more likely to consider the needs and expectations of their audience, leading to clearer and more impactful communication. Despite the agreement in results, it is important to acknowledge that each study may have specific contextual factors that could influence the findings. For instance, the current study was conducted in SMA Katolik 2 Kabanjahe, which may have its own unique educational culture and student population. On the other hand, the studies by Rashid and Rahman (2016) and Alharbi and Alharbi (2019) were conducted in different regions and may have involved different student demographics, educational systems, and cultural contexts. Moreover, the present study employed a quasi-experimental design, while the studies by Rashid and Rahman (2016) and Alharbi and Alharbi (2019) did not specify their research design. Quasi-experimental designs can be prone to certain biases and limitations, such as selection bias and lack of randomization, which might influence the outcomes. Therefore, despite the positive correlation found in all three studies, it is crucial to interpret the results with caution and consider the specific research designs and contexts. In conclusion, the results of the present study are consistent with previous research that highlights the positive impact of empathic communication on students' speaking performance. Empathy plays a significant role in creating a supportive learning environment, enhancing student motivation, and facilitating effective communication. However, it is essential to recognize the unique contextual factors and research designs in each study and consider them while interpreting the findings. Future research should continue to explore the relationship between empathic communication and language learning outcomes in various educational settings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the potential benefits of empathy in education.

Several studies have shown the link between emotional intelligence, empathic communication, and academic performance. Mayer and Salovey (1997) emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence in enhancing various cognitive and social skills, which are essential for academic success. They argued that emotional intelligence helps students understand and manage their emotions, handle stress effectively, and establish positive relationships with peers and teachers. Furthermore, research by Chen (2008) explored the relationship between empathy and language learning. It was found that learners who experience empathy from their instructors demonstrate higher levels of motivation and engagement in the language learning process. This emotional connection facilitates a positive learning environment where students feel safe to take risks and participate actively in class discussions, which likely contributed to the improved speaking performance observed in the experimental class. Moreover, the findings of this study are consistent with the works Rosenberg (2015), who emphasized the significance of empathic communication in establishing strong social connections and reducing conflicts. In an educational context, empathic communication not only fosters better student-teacher relationships but also encourages a sense of community among students, leading to a more supportive and conducive learning environment. While this study highlights the positive effects of empathic communication on students' speaking performance, it is essential to acknowledge potential limitations and consider future research directions. One limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could replicate the research with larger and more diverse samples to enhance the robustness of the results.

Additionally, this study focused on the application of empathic communication in a specific context, namely, the teaching of speaking skills. Future research could explore the impact of empathic communication on other language skills, such as listening, reading, and writing, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of its effects on language learning.

Furthermore, it would be valuable to investigate the long-term effects of empathic communication on students' language proficiency and overall academic performance. Longitudinal studies could track students over an extended period to examine the sustainability of the observed improvements and whether empathic communication contributes to their overall language development.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research results indicate that empathic communication significantly affects students' speaking performance. The application of empathic communication in the experimental class led to improved speaking skills compared to the controlled class. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of emotional intelligence and empathic communication in education. Creating an empathic and supportive learning environment can foster better student engagement, motivation, and performance. However, it is essential to consider the limitations of the study and explore further research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of empathic communication on language learning and academic success.

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