

USING PICTURE-CUED ASSESSMENT TO ASSESS STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS: A CASE STUDY

Ayu Pratiwi¹, Nur Aisyah Zulkifli²

ayupratiwiap0020@gmail.com¹, nuraisyah.zulkifli@uin-suska.ac.id²

UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the use of picture-cued assessment in assessing students' speaking skills at the eighth grade of an Islamic junior high school (MTs). The research aimed to explore how picture-cued assessment was implemented in the classroom and how it influenced students' speaking performance. This study employed a qualitative case study design involving one English teacher and one class consisting of 20 students. The data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and students' speaking assessment documentation. The findings revealed that picture-cued assessment helped students generate ideas more easily, increased their confidence in speaking, and encouraged active participation during speaking activities. The teacher also found that pictures could stimulate students' vocabulary and improve their fluency in oral communication. However, some students still faced difficulties related to pronunciation and grammatical accuracy. Overall, picture-cued assessment was considered an effective and engaging strategy for assessing students' speaking skills in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: Picture-Cued, Assessment, Speaking Skills, EFL.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most important skills in English language learning because it allows students to communicate ideas, opinions, and information orally (Brown, 2001). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, speaking is often considered challenging for students due to limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and insufficient opportunities to practice speaking (Thornbury, 2005). These challenges are commonly found among students in Islamic junior high schools (MTs), where English is learned as a foreign language.

Assessment in speaking classes plays an essential role in measuring students' oral communication abilities (Brown, 2004). Teachers need appropriate assessment techniques that can motivate students and help them express ideas more effectively. One assessment technique that can be used in speaking classes is picture-cued assessment (Brown, 2004). Picture-cued assessment refers to the use of pictures or visual prompts to encourage students to speak, describe situations, tell stories, or express opinions based on the given images.

Pictures can stimulate students' imagination and provide contextual support during speaking activities (Harmer, 2007). Students often find it easier to speak when they have visual prompts because the pictures help them organize ideas and reduce anxiety. Moreover, picture-cued assessment can create a more interactive and enjoyable learning atmosphere in the classroom.

Several previous studies have discussed the use of pictures in language learning, especially in speaking activities (Thornbury, 2005). However, studies focusing specifically on the implementation of picture-cued assessment in MTs classrooms are still limited. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the implementation of picture-cued assessment in assessing students' speaking skills in one MTs classroom.

The research questions of this study are:

1. How is picture-cued assessment implemented in assessing students' speaking skills?
2. What are the students' responses toward the use of picture-cued assessment in speaking assessment?

METODE PENELITIAN

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate the implementation of picture-cued assessment in assessing students' speaking skills (Creswell, 2012). A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because this study focused on understanding classroom activities, students' responses, and the teacher's experiences during the speaking assessment process. Through qualitative research, the researcher was able to obtain detailed and in-depth information related to the use of picture-cued assessment in the classroom.

The case study design was selected because the researcher intended to explore a particular phenomenon within a specific context, namely the use of picture-cued assessment in one MTs classroom. According to Creswell (2012), a case study allows researchers to investigate a bounded system such as a class, group, or institution in detail through various sources of information. In this study, the researcher focused on one eighth-grade class consisting of 20 students in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of how picture-cued assessment was implemented during speaking activities.

Furthermore, the use of a case study design enabled the researcher to examine the real classroom situation naturally without manipulating the teaching and learning process. The researcher observed how the teacher conducted speaking assessment using pictures, how students responded to the activities, and what challenges appeared during the assessment process. Therefore, this research design was expected to provide rich and meaningful findings related to the implementation of picture-cued assessment in the EFL classroom context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of Picture-Cued Assessment

Based on classroom observations, the teacher implemented picture-cued assessment during speaking activities by using several pictures related to daily life, public places, and everyday situations. The students were asked to observe the pictures and describe them orally in front of the class. This activity encouraged students to express their ideas and practice speaking in a more interactive way.

Before starting the assessment, the teacher introduced several vocabulary items related to the pictures to help students understand the context of the activity. Afterward, the students discussed the pictures individually and in pairs before presenting their descriptions orally. This process helped students prepare their ideas and increased their confidence when speaking in front of their classmates.

During the assessment process, the teacher evaluated students' speaking performance based on several aspects, including pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and comprehension (Brown, 2004). The use of pictures helped students organize their ideas more clearly and reduced their difficulty in generating topics for speaking. As a result, most students were able to speak more confidently and actively during the activity.

The teacher also explained that picture-cued assessment created a more supportive classroom atmosphere because students became more interested and engaged in speaking activities. Students who were usually passive during speaking lessons started to participate more actively because the pictures helped them imagine situations and develop ideas more easily. This finding shows that picture-cued assessment can support students' participation and confidence in EFL speaking classrooms.

Students' Responses toward Picture-Cued Assessment

The interview results showed that most students gave positive responses toward the use of picture-cued assessment in speaking activities. The students stated that the activities

were more interesting and enjoyable compared to ordinary speaking tasks. They also felt more motivated to participate because the pictures made the classroom atmosphere more interactive and less stressful.

Several students explained that the pictures helped them remember vocabulary and understand the topic more easily. The visual prompts allowed them to develop ideas before speaking, so they did not feel confused about what they wanted to say. In addition, many students reported feeling less nervous because they could focus on the pictures while speaking in front of the class.

One student stated:

“The pictures help me speak because I can see the object and imagine the story.”

Another student mentioned:

“I feel more confident when speaking because I know what I want to say from the picture.”

These responses indicate that picture-cued assessment helped students become more confident and comfortable during speaking activities. However, some students still faced difficulties in pronunciation and grammar during the assessment process. A few students occasionally mixed Indonesian and English words because of limited vocabulary and lack of speaking practice. Even so, the students generally showed active participation and positive engagement throughout the speaking activities using picture-cued assessment.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that picture-cued assessment can support students' speaking performance in EFL classrooms. The use of pictures helped students generate ideas more easily and reduced their anxiety during speaking activities. Most students were able to speak more confidently because the pictures provided clear contexts and helped them focus on the topic being discussed. This finding supports Brown's (2001) view that appropriate assessment techniques can encourage students to communicate more actively in language learning.

In addition, the findings are consistent with previous studies which state that visual media can improve students' motivation and participation in English learning activities (Harmer, 2007). During the implementation of picture-cued assessment, the classroom atmosphere became more interactive because students actively discussed the pictures with their classmates and responded to the teacher's questions. The students also appeared more enthusiastic and willing to participate in speaking activities compared to conventional speaking assessments.

The implementation of picture-cued assessment also helped the teacher conduct speaking assessment more effectively. Through the pictures, students could demonstrate their speaking abilities more naturally because they already had visual support to guide their ideas. As a result, the teacher was able to assess students' pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and comprehension more clearly during the speaking performance.

However, this study also found several challenges during the assessment process. Some students still had difficulties in pronunciation and grammatical accuracy while speaking. In several cases, students mixed Indonesian and English words because of limited vocabulary mastery. Therefore, teachers need to provide additional speaking practice, vocabulary enrichment, and pronunciation guidance to help students improve their speaking accuracy and confidence.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the implementation of picture-cued assessment in assessing students' speaking skills in one MTs classroom. The findings revealed that the use of picture-cued assessment helped students generate ideas more easily, increased their confidence, and encouraged them to participate actively during speaking activities. The pictures provided visual support that helped students express their ideas more naturally during the assessment process.

In addition, the use of pictures created a more enjoyable and less stressful speaking assessment atmosphere. Students became more motivated and comfortable when speaking because they could focus on the visual prompts provided by the teacher. The teacher also found that picture-cued assessment was effective in assessing several aspects of speaking, particularly fluency and vocabulary use.

However, some students still experienced difficulties related to pronunciation and grammatical accuracy. Despite these challenges, picture-cued assessment gave positive contributions to the speaking assessment process in the EFL classroom. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to use picture-cued assessment as an alternative strategy to support and assess students' speaking skills more effectively.

REFERENCES

- Ana Sri Lestari, A., & Sholichah, N. I. (2022). Improving speaking ability by using picture series. *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmiah INTAJ*, 6(1), 22–41. <https://doi.org/10.35897/intaj.v6i1.728>
- Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language Testing in Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.
- Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Bygate, M. (1987). *Speaking*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chou, M. H. (2021). Assessing EFL learners' oral performance through analytic speaking rubrics. *TESOL International Journal*, 16(2), 45–59.
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (4th ed.). London: Pearson Longman.
- Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hughes, R., & Hughes, S. (2020). *Teaching and Researching Speaking* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315731451>
- Melati, D. (2023). The use of picture series in improving students' speaking skill at MTs students. *Journal of English Education Studies*, 6(1), 55–64.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). California: Sage Publications.
- Rambe, R. N., Syahfitri, A., Humayroh, A., Alfina, N., Azkia, P., & Rianti, T. D. (2023). Upaya meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara di depan umum. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Sastra Inggris*, 3(2), 11–24. <https://doi.org/10.55606/jupensi.v3i2.1966>
- Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667190>
- Rusdin, R., & Purwati, D. (2023). Speaking up: A comprehensive investigation of EFL secondary students' speaking skill problems in Indonesia's Islamic school context. *Elsya: Journal of English Language Studies*, 5(2), 236–249. <https://doi.org/10.31849/elsya.v5i2.11911>

- Thornbury, S. (2005). *How to Teach Speaking*. London: Pearson Education.
- Wahyuni, S., Indriastuti, N. R., & Mustikawati, D. A. (2018). The Implementation of Picture Series to Improve Students' Speaking Ability at the Second Grade of SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Jetis Ponorogo in Academic Year 2016/2017. *EDUPEDIA*, 2(2), 148–160. <https://doi.org/10.24269/ed.v2i2.147>