IMPLEMENTING PAIR-WORK ACTIVITIES USING FUNCTIONAL LANGUAGE EXAMPLES TO IMPROVE THE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL OF SMP NEGERI 21 SAMARINDA

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to find out the solutions of the students' problem on speaking skill , through implementing pair work activities using functional languages examples.

The goal of teaching speaking skill is to communicate efficiency. Learners should be able to make themselves understood, using their current proficiency to the fullest. They should try to avoid confusion in the message due to faulty pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary, and to observe the social and cultural rules that apply in each communication situation.

Learning to speak English requires more than knowing its grammatical and semantic rules. Students need to know how native speakers use the language in the context of structured interpersonal exchange. Effective oral communication requires the ability to use the language appropriately in social interactions.

This research used a classroom action research (CAR) of the targeted to the first year students of SMP Negeri 21 Samarinda to be achieved. Based on analysis and discussion of the findings that the implementation of pair – work activities using functional language examples in teaching speaking was useful to improve the students' speaking competence. Both pair – work and functional examples provided good models and facilitated students to practice and to keep repeating using the spoken language to achieve a particular level proficiency.

Key Words : Speaking, Pair work, Functional Language

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the study

Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994:123; Burns & Joyce, 1997:98). Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving. However, speech is not always unpredictable. Language functions (or patterns) that tend to occur in certain discourse situations (e.g., declining an invitation or requesting time off from work), can be identified and charted.

In line with the problems faced by teachers and students of SMP Negeri 21 Samarinda above, the researcher as an English teacher of this school is triggered to conduct the study. The researcher's study is started with a preliminary speaking test to the seventh year students. This test exposed that the students' speaking skill is not good enough. Their average score on speaking, which was taken in January 2011 was averagely 58.80, while the ideal achievement learning criteria for SMP Negeri 21 Samarinda locally known as '*KKBM-Kriteria Ketuntasan Belajar Mengajar*' is 70. The speaking test given to these students purely tested their language production where they had to converse in pair with the partners they had selected themselves. Their voices were then recorded for scoring. For this type of test, its format was not objective, but subjective.

My own experience teaching speaking in lower intermediate classes reveal that the learners' difficulties with speaking skill have been caused by they do not know what to say and how to say things in the target language. With the models of the target language, it is a lot easier for them to conduct communication. Functional language examples are models which learners can adopt for their communication purposes.

2. Research questions

Related to the background to the study, the research questions are formulated as follows:
1) How can pair-work using functional language examples be implemented to improve the students' speaking skill of SMP Negeri 21 Samarinda?
2) Is there any improvement in the students' speaking skill with the implementation of pair-work using functional language examples at SMP Negeri 21 Samarinda?

3. Objectives of the study

In line with the aforementioned research problems, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1) To see the implementation of pair-work using functional language examples to improve the Students' speaking skill of SMP Negeri 21 Samarinda.
2) To see the improvement of the students' speaking skills of SMP Negeri 21 Samarinda.

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Speaking

Speaking is one of the four skill of English that belongs to productive skill. To grasp this skill as it explained before requires many supported competences. All of them surely integrated each other.

Many ideas of teaching speaking have been exposed by experts of teaching English as a second language. Mostly the theories put the essence of teaching speaking in real context. In so doing, teaching speaking should not be considered how to speak in what experience students may exposure.
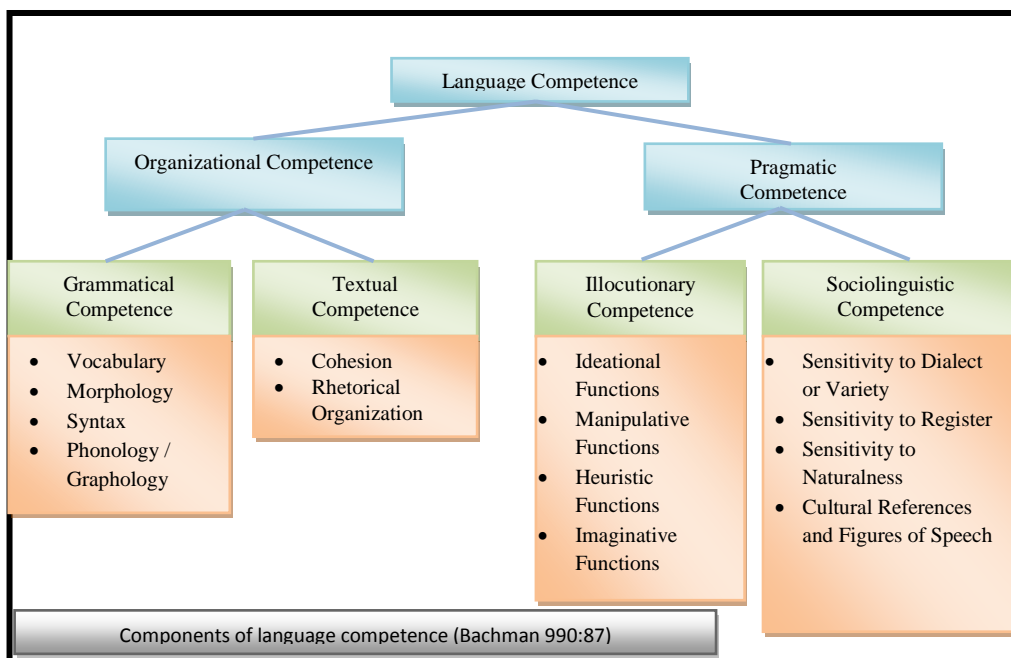
2. Nature of speaking

Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols (Brickerton, 1996:1). Meanwhile, Chaney (1988:13) defines speaking as "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in variety of contexts". Also, Butler-Pascoe & Wiburg (2003:96) view speaking in the larger context of communication with focus on the speakers' ability to take in messages, negotiate meaning, and produce comprehensible input. **Knowledge of speaking skill**

3. Communicative competence

Specifically, communicative competence is defined as the ability to function in a truly communicative setting-that is, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the informal input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, or more interlocutor (Savignon, 1997:15).

To clarify the communicative competence, it is essential presenting Bachman model as follows:

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                      ┌──────────────────────┐
                      │ Language Competence  │
                      └──────────────────────┘
             ┌────────────────┐        ┌────────────────┐
             │ Organizational │        │   Pragmatic    │
             │   Competence   │        │   Competence   │
             └────────────────┘        └────────────────┘
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Grammatical Competence	Textual Competence	Illocutionary Competence	Sociolinguistic Competence
• Vocabulary • Morphology • Syntax • Phonology / Graphology	• Cohesion • Rhetorical Organization	• Ideational Functions • Manipulative Functions • Heuristic Functions • Imaginative Functions	• Sensitivity to Dialect or Variety • Sensitivity to Register • Sensitivity to Naturalness • Cultural References and Figures of Speech

Components of language competence (Bachman 990:87)

4. Language function examples

The idea of language functions derived from what is called '*Performatives',* which was first introduced by a philosopher J.L. Austin. According to Austin in Hurford, Heasley and Smith (2007: 267) words and sentences when uttered are used to do things, carry out socially significant acts, in addition to merely describing aspects of the world.

a. Functional language examples

The systematic relationship between language structure and function is described by Halliday (1985) in Nunan (1999: 279).

"Every text – that is, everything that is said or written-unfolds in some context of use; furthermore, it is the use of language that, over tens of thousands of generations, have shaped the system. Language has evolved to satisfy human needs; and the way it is organised is functional with respect to those needs-it is not arbitrary. A functional grammar is essentially a 'natural' grammar, in the sense that everything in it can be explained, ultimately, by reference to how language is used".

5. Pair work

The learning strategies have shifted from traditional teacher-centered to student-centered orientation, of which pair work is part of it. Chaplin in Suprijono (2010:56) defines group as a collection of individuals who have some characteristic in common or who are pursuing a common goal. Two or more persons who interact in any way constitute a group. It is not necessary, however, for the members of a group to interact directly or in face to face manner. Based on this definition it can be classified that a pair work is a group work.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

1. Research design

Being classified as a classroom action research (CAR), this study was designed in order to be able to improve the students' speaking competence through the implementation of 'Functional Language Examples and Pair-Work Activities. An expert in classroom action research, Koshy (2006:1) defines action research as an enquiry undertaken with rigor and understanding so as to constantly refine practice; the emerging evidence-based outcomes will then contribute to the researching practitioner's continuing professional development during which the researchers constructs his or her knowledge of specific issues. Furthermore, Koshy (2006:3) comments that action research creates new knowledge based on enquiries conducted within specific and often practical contexts. Another expert in education research, Ary, et. al(2006:538) add that the goal of action research in education is to create an inquiry stance toward teaching where questioning one's own practice becomes part of the work and of the teaching culture.
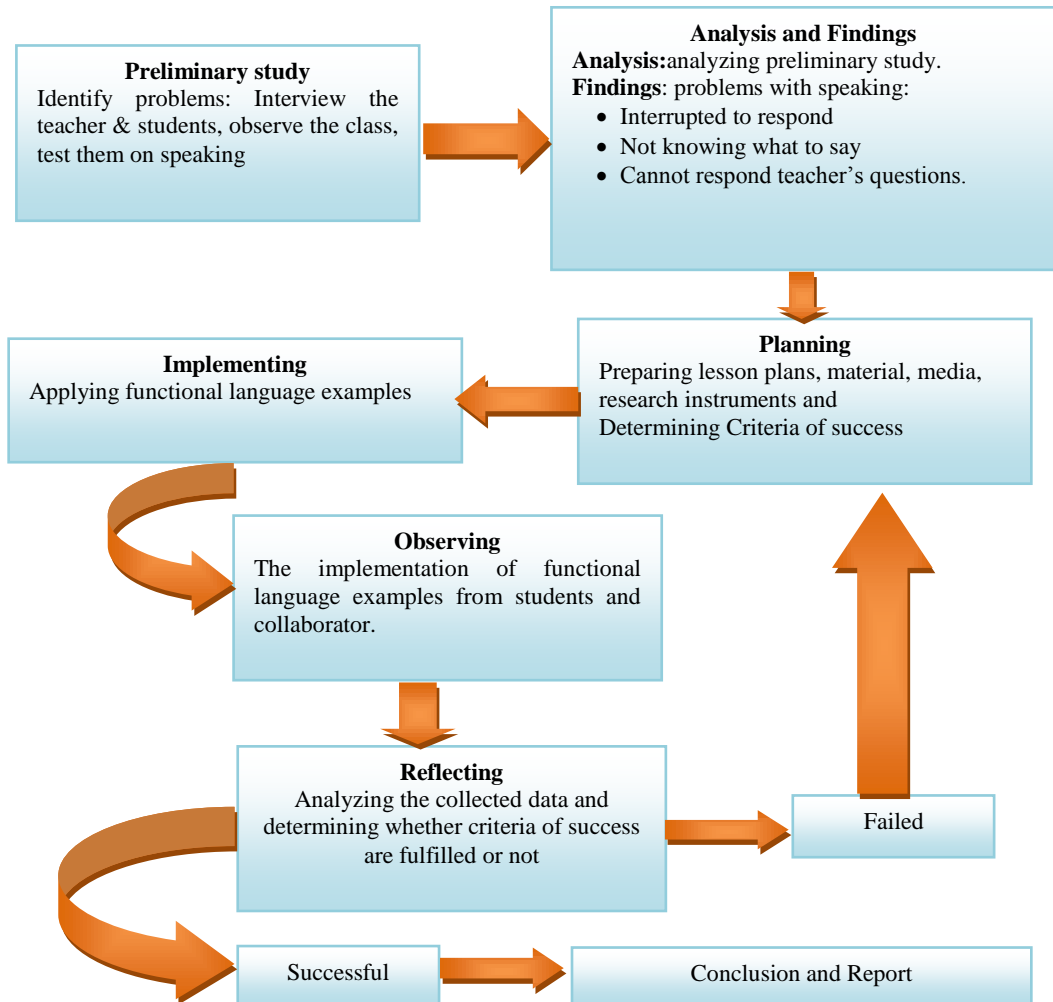
2. Research setting and subjects

Intended for the students' improvement on speaking competence, this study was conducted at SMP Negeri 21 located on Jalan Tongkol Samarinda. The research subjects selected was the first year students of this junior high school during the 2011/2012 academic year consisting of around 30 students.

3. Research procedures

Aiming at solving students' problems found in the preliminary study, this action research had the following steps :
1) Planning a change.
2) Acting and observing the process and consequence of the change.
3) Reflecting on these processes and consequences and then replanting.

4) Acting and observing.

Preliminary study
Identify problems: Interview the teacher & students, observe the class, test them on speaking

Analysis and Findings
Analysis: analyzing preliminary study.
Findings: problems with speaking:
- Interrupted to respond
- Not knowing what to say
- Cannot respond teacher's questions.

Planning
Preparing lesson plans, material, media, research instruments and Determining Criteria of success

Implementing
Applying functional language examples

Observing
The implementation of functional language examples from students and collaborator.

Reflecting
Analyzing the collected data and determining whether criteria of success are fulfilled or not

Failed

Successful

Conclusion and Report

(Adopted from Kemmis & Mc Taggart 2000:595 cited in Koshy 2006: 4)
Figure 3.1 Cycles in Classroom Action Research

D. THE FINDINGS

Process as targeted in the action research that cycle 1 had to be extended to cycle 2 to achieve the expected improvement in the students' overall score.
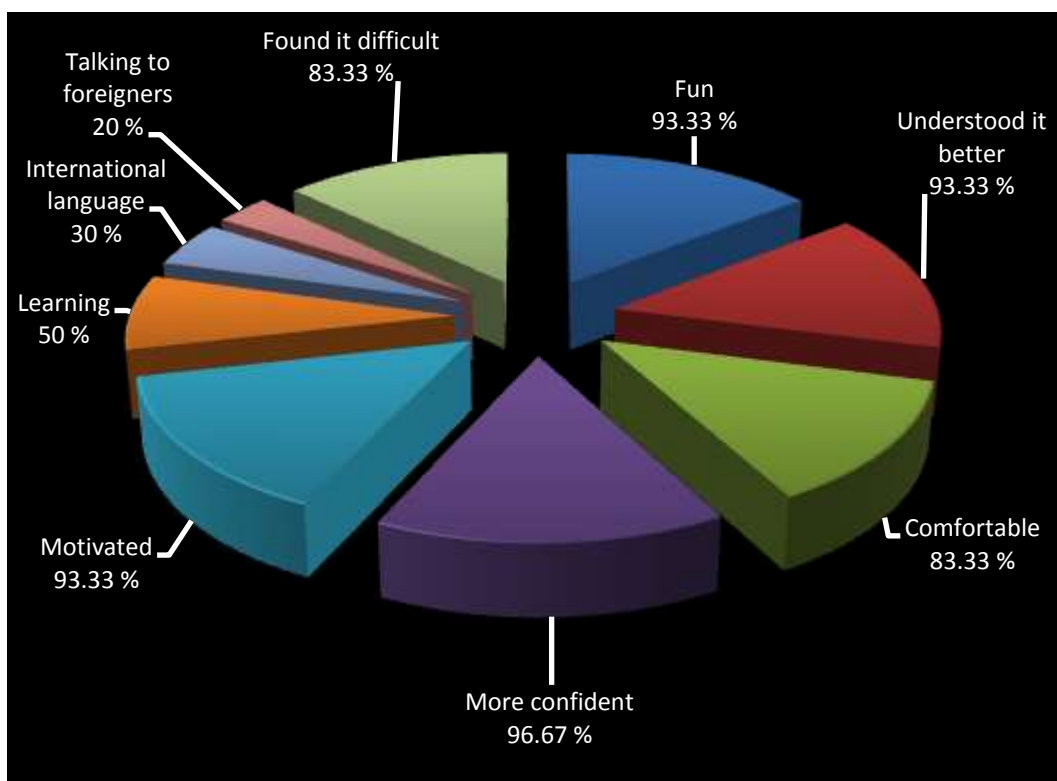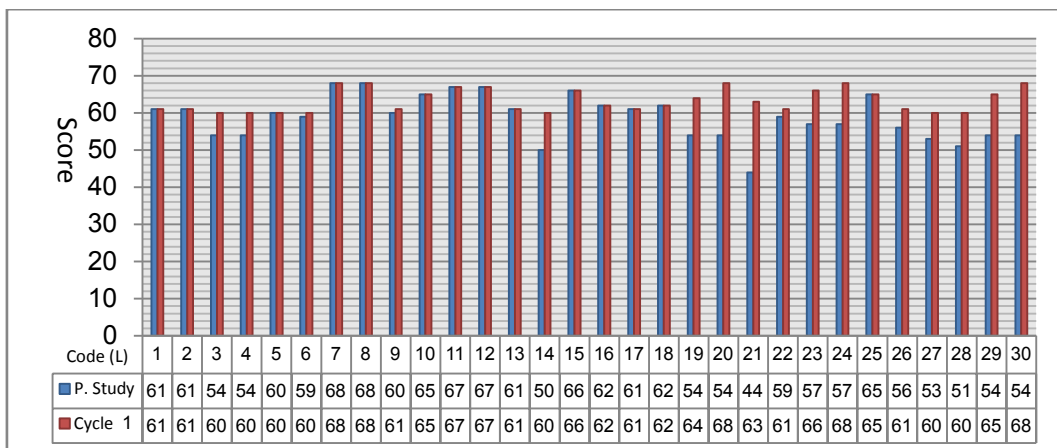
Figure 4.2. Responses in Percentage

The pie shows the students' responses towards language functions and pair work that have been implemented to them in the teaching and learning process. The figure shows that the students' comprehension, confidence and motivation improved after being taught using pair work and functional language.
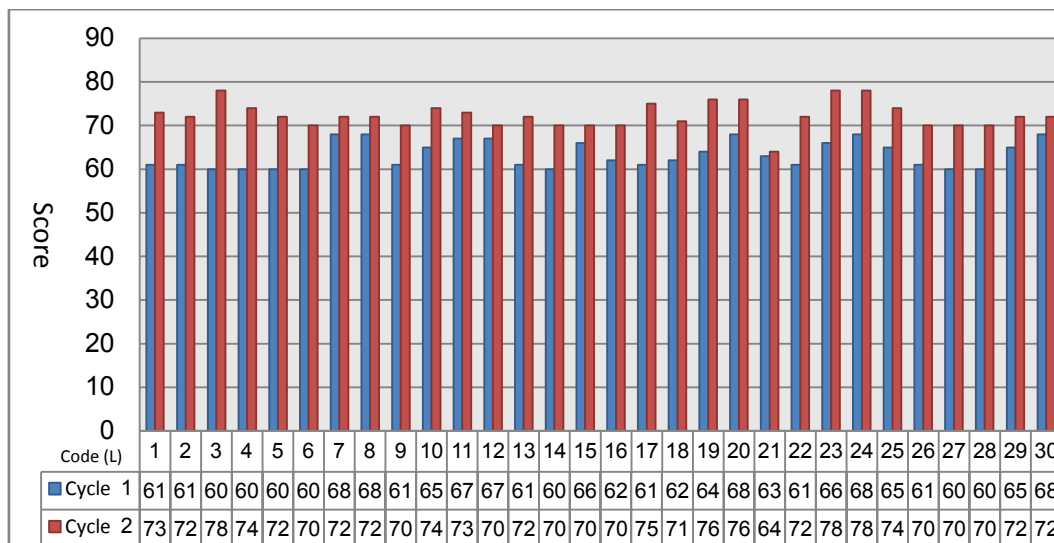
Code (L)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Cycle 1	61	61	60	60	60	60	68	68	61	65	67	67	61	60	66	62	61	62	64	68	63	61	66	68	65	61	60	60	65	68
Cycle 2	73	72	78	74	72	70	72	72	70	74	73	70	72	70	70	70	75	71	76	76	64	72	78	78	74	70	70	70	72	72

Figure 4.3 Achievements from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2

The histogram shows the individual student's improvement from cycle 1 up to cycle 2. Scores gained in cycle 1 are represented by the pink blocks, while those gained in cycle 2 are represented by the light blue ones. It is explicitly visible that the light blue blocks showing individual scores in cycle 2 look taller than the pink ones indicating the improvement achieved in cycle 2.

E. DISCUSSION

Results of this study shows how important the role of pair-work is in teaching speaking to any levels of students. Pair work is tightly connected to discourse competence development, which according to Shumin in Richards and Renandya (2002: 207) is competence in addition to grammatical competence that EFL learners must develop formally or informally due to the aid in holding the communication together in a meaningful way.

By working in group of two (pair work), students will be able to develop their speaking competence by interacting with their own partners using the functional language examples given or presented by their teacher. In pair practice, students will gain benefits from trying to use the language, which develops their linguistic competence and from interacting with others, which develops their communicative competence.

These findings meant that the implementation of pair-work by using functional language examples helped students practicing their

language production with their partners. Besides, it developed the students' self-confidence in communicating with their teacher and classmates by using English, particularly in speaking.

In cycle 1 the students were not used to being taught using the pair practice and functional language examples. So far they had been taught by listening to the teacher's explanation all the time followed by doing exercises in their books, normally the work book (LKS). Little attention was focused on using English as a medium of communication. The difficulties the students had in cycle 1 were concerned with how they should interact to their partners using similar language functions in their own mother tongue. At their age 13-14 in the first year of SMP, they are still in transition from children to teenagers that they found it rather unusual to interact using teenagers and adults' typical interaction in communication.

F. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Conclusions

Based the findings of this study and the discussion of this study, some conclusion may be put forward, as follows:

1) Pair-work using functional language examples can be implemented to improve the students' speaking skill of SMP Negeri 21 Samarinda. The two collaborators found that pair-work by using functional language examples could be implemented effectively in teaching speaking. It was proven by the data that the students in cycle 1 were found that they did not have good interaction with teacher and their classmates. Besides, they were afraid of delivering questions and got some difficulties in practicing pair-work by using functional examples. In fact, they were not accustomed in using this technique. In contrast, after the cycle 2 conducted, the students were not afraid of practicing dialogues by using functional language examples as well as delivering questions to their teachers. These findings meant that the implementation of pair-work by using functional language examples helped students practicing their language production with their partners. Besides, it developed the students' self-confidence in communicating with their teacher and classmates by using English, particularly in speaking

2) There is improvement in the students' speaking skill with the implementation of pair-work using functional language examples at SMP Negeri 21 Samarinda. The improvement of students' achievement in speaking test of every single test conducted. See, the students' average score of speaking test 58.80, after cycle 1 was conducted, the students' average score of speaking

test was improved on 63.30, meanwhile on cycle 2, the students' average of speaking test was also improved 72.33. However, the improvement from the preliminary study to cycle 1 was 4.50 points, while that from cycle 1 to cycle 2 was 9.03 points. The improvement in cycle 2 was higher than that gained in cycle 1 because the students paid more attention and learnt with intention in cycle.

2. Suggestions

1) English teachers should try to use pair-work by using functional language example in their teaching and learning speaking lesson in formal education or non-formal education. It is because using functional language example in pair work is one types of speaking experience that is interesting and can improve the student's speaking competence considerably.

2) Nowadays, the use of pair-work by using functional language example in the teaching of language is likely to increase not diminish, so the writer believes that it is the time for teachers and students to learn and using this technique of teaching speaking.

3) English teachers also should be smart and creative in using pair-work by using functional language example in pair in the classroom because successful language learning depends on the teacher's technique use the functional language example, since the teacher is the fundamental classroom aid to language learning.

a. Implication and recommendation

a) A lot of teaching approaches in Indonesia are still structurally-based instead of functionally-based, where language is viewed as a group of structures. This goes back to the Chomsky's Universal grammar. Chomsky found out that structurally L1 is formed in the native speaker's mind in form of structural strings. This idea is true on the basis of language formation established in the mind of L1 speakers irrespective the use of language in sociable situations through which communication is normally established. Over the years, however, linguists started to realize that the way the idea works is totally different when L1 speakers are compared with L2 ones. Therefore, communicative approaches adopts language function as something that has to be added in L2 teaching.

b) Meanwhile, recommendation is given for English teachers of junior high school that teaching speaking by using functional language example is profitable both for teachers and students. The primary target of teaching and learning English may easily be obtained, it is due to the functional language

examples is to equip the students communicating in English based on their purpose of learning English. For the school of SMPN 21 Samarinda may promote this technique of teaching English for other English teachers, even from other schools. Meanwhile for the students of English of Master Program is still possible to investigate the study on this topics, particularly on other skill, writing for example.

c) Finally for English teachers who are interested in investigating the same topic that is pair-work using functional language examples, it is recommended to extend the meetings of teaching and learning process so that the students may have more opportunities to practice the models.

d) In addition, the use of authentic materials is recommended. Taking for example, when the topic is about phone calls, real calls may be implemented.

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