

The Implementation of Project-Based Learning to Improve Students' Speaking Skill

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Abstract

This study addresses specific teaching methods, which are believed to achieve a beneficial outcome to students' learning ability. Project Based Learning is a modern teaching method. The core idea of Project Based Learning is to connect student's experiences with school life and to provoke students to acquire new knowledge. This study aims at (1) describing to what extent the use of Project-based Learning can improve the students' speaking skill and (2) describing the teaching and learning process when Project-Based Learning is implemented in the class. The subject of the study is the seventh-grade students of one of Junior High Schools in Surakarta. The method of the study was classroom action research with two cycles. Furthermore, the data were collected through speaking assessment. The finding showed that there was improvement in the students' speaking skill. Some aspects which are improved including students' fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension. To conclude, PBL (Project-based learning) help student in improving their speaking skill.

Subject Areas

Language Teaching

Keywords

Project-Based Learning, Speaking Skill

INTRODUCTION

English as an international language plays important role in many parts of our life nowadays (Naved 2015, para. 4). Mastering English, especially speaking skill, is importantly needed for the students to allow them to communicate with other people globally (Linse 2005).

In Indonesia, English is used as a foreign language. It is infrequently used as medium language to communicate daily (Broughton, 2003). Further, English is only used in the classroom and some particular requirements in a proficiency test. As the compulsory subject in every level of education, English is thought to the students for

at least six years (in junior and senior high school level). Due to the limit of time for English lesson, one of highly reputed junior high school in Surakarta initiates themselves to have extra speaking class besides English regular class. The students in this class are expected to be able to communicate in English. In the end the students should be able to communicate with their friends, teachers, and people around them in accurate, fluent and appropriate way.

Based on the preliminary study, students have problems in speaking English. The researcher found that the students' speaking ability is still low, unsatisfying,

and far from the expectations. The students put less attention to the class. They also have low learning motivation and interest. They feel shy, nervous, and lack of confidence when answering questions from teacher or presentation. Furthermore, they cannot express their ideas using appropriate vocabulary and correct grammatical forms during presentation; the students can speak in two or three sentences in English and switch to their mother tongue (Javanese) and second language (Indonesian); moreover, they often feel hesitate to pronounce the words, and most of them mispronounce the words. Besides, the atmosphere of the class did not support any speaking activities. The teacher used a monotonous method that makes the students bored and loses interest in the subjects. The teacher also do not try to create some instructional media to facilitate students to speak. As a consequence, the students were reluctant and unmotivated to speak.

The situation of the class described above becomes problems that should be solved by the teacher as they involved directly in the teaching-learning process, and they are key players controlling the students' to get success for their students' learning. The teacher is required to make a good learning environment that can encourage and motivate the students to study. It is important to make students feel comfort, have interest and motivation to learn English. To actively engage the students in the learning process and enhance their motivation, it is highly recommended for the teacher to create a good media, make a conducive situation and creative activities. It is in line with Nunan (1999) who stated that teachers should help their students by establishing strategies to manage all forms of communication to ensure that all students have fair and equitable opportunities to develop their interpersonal speaking and listening skills through large and small group discussions.

Project-based Learning (PBL) is one of the methods recommended to be applied. PBL refers to a method allowing "students to design, plan, and carry out an extended project that produces a publicly exhibited output such as a product, publication, or presentation"

(Patton 2012). Through PBL, the learners are engaged in determined communication to complete authentic activities (project-work), so that they have the chance to practice and use authentic language in a natural context (Fragoulis, 2009). Also, Fauziati (2014) mentioned that PBL allows the student to work on the project that gives the students chances not only to learn and practice English but also to develop varied important skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, and presentation.

The objectives of the study are (1) to describe to what extent the use of Project-Based Learning can improve the students' speaking skill and (2) to describe the teaching and learning process when Project-Based Learning is implemented in the class.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fauziati (2014, p. 166) stated that Project-Based Approach (PBL) is one of the methods that has already existed for many years ago. Thomas (2000) said that project is defined as compound tasks based on problems faced by students, conducted in certain periods of time and culminated in realistic products that might be in the form of presentation, exhibition, publication, etc. Patton (2012) mentioned, in PBL students are the ones who design the project and plan what need to do to carry. Another opinion comes from Markham et. al (2003), he said that PBL is a systematic teaching method occupying students through an extended inquiry process. In short, PBL is a method that allow students to learn through a project which is decided by themselves associated by help from teachers. It allow them actively involved in the learning process.

There are some stages of PBL implementation according to Fauziati (2014), namely Starting the project, developing the project, reporting to the class, and assessing the project. In addition, Kriwas (1999, as cited in Bell, 2010.) also mention four stages in implementing PBL, namely speculation, designing the project, conducting the project, and evaluation. However, both Fauziati (2014) and Kriwas (1999) have the same stages in applying the PBL.

The first stage in PBL is speculation in which

teachers provide the choice of project topics initially based on curriculum and discuss them with the students. In this stage, teachers and students speculate possibilities that will lead to the projects smoothly (Bell, 2010). The second stage is designing the project activities, referring to organizing the structure of a project activity that includes group formation, role assigning, concerning methodology decision, information source, etc.

The third stage is conducting the project. In this stage, the students are working on the project they planned and designed in the earlier stage. The students are asked to collect and discuss the problems with their friends before they consult it the teacher. Afterward, they need to present their final products that could be in the form of presentation, performance, publication, etc. in front of the class, other classes, teachers, or the other media allowed by the teacher. The last stage is the evaluation. This stage refers to "the assessment of activities of the participants and discussion about whether the initial aims and goals have been achieved, implementation of the process, and final products" (Brinia, 2006, as cited in Fragoulis, 2009).

Fragoulis (2009) and Bell (2010) state that there are many benefits of implementing PBL in teaching English as Foreign Language. 1) PBL gives contextual and meaningful learning for students. 2) PBL can create an optimal environment to practice speaking English. 3) PBL can also make students actively engage in project learning. 4) PBL enhances the students' interest, motivation, engagement, and enjoyment. 5). PBL promotes social learning that can enhance collaborative skills. 6) PBL can give an optimal opportunity to improve students' language skill.

In addition, several advantages of incorporating project work in second and foreign language settings have also been recommended by the other experts. Fried-Booth (2002) mentioned that the process leading to the end-product of project-work offers chances for learners to improve their confidence and independence. Stoller (2006) said that students exhibit increased self-esteem, and positive attitudes concerning with learning. Students' independence is improved especially

when they are actively involved in project planning, for instance when they choose the topics of their project. A further commonly mentioned advantage relates to students' better social, cooperative skills, and group cohesiveness (Papagiannopoulos et al., 2000)

METHOD

To investigate the use of PBL in teaching and learning, a qualitative approach using an Action Research (AR) method was employed in this study. According to Kemmis, et al. (2014) Classroom action research typically involves the use of qualitative, interpretive modes of inquiry and data collection by teachers (often with help from academic partners) with a view to teachers making judgments about how to improve their practices. The aim of investigating this study was to solve the problems happened in the classroom that is faced by the students. It is in line with Latief (2008) who argued that Classroom Action Research is the research design that is constructed for improving the quality of learning in the classroom. In addition, McNiff and Whitehead (2011) said that action research is an inquiry form enabling practitioners everywhere to investigate and evaluate their work. This study was conducted in one of the junior high schools in Surakarta.

Kemmis et al. (2014) mention some steps in each cycle of action research. They e described the spiral of self-reflection regarding a spiral of self-reflective cycles of:

- planning *a change*,
- acting and observing the process and consequences of the change,
- reflecting on these processes and consequences, and then
- re-planning,
- acting and observing,
- reflecting, and so on...

To collect the data, the researcher used some instruments such as observation checklist, field notes, performance tests, questionnaire, and interview. Observation checklist was used to obtain the data about

students' activities in teaching speaking by using PBL in the classroom. The observation checklist is focused on how the students involved in the pre-task based phase, the task cycle, and language focus phase. Field notes were used to jot down any data that were not covered in the observation checklist. Thus, the field notes might utilize to identify some aspects reflected in teaching and learning process, such as appropriate teaching instruction, things to be improved, and students' interaction with the peers that are beyond the coverage of the observation checklist. Speaking test was in the form of the result of the speaking test which was used for describing the students' speaking ability; the students' mean score, and the individual score after implementing the strategy. This test was administered at the end of the cycle. The test was in the form of performance test, in which the students were asked to perform the conversation in a group. The students, in a group, chose the topic by themselves.

To confirm the validity of the data, therefore, the triangulation method is used. At the end of the cycle, the questionnaire is administered to the students. This is used to confirm the data of the students' performance test and their feeling. In addition, some students also are selected to be interviewed. In this case, the researcher only chose three students to be interviewed.

The site for this study is one of Junior High Schools in Surakarta. The participants were IX grade students which consist of 28 students. For speaking assessments, they are conducted three times (Pre-test, Post-test in cycle 1, and Post-test in cycle 2). The speaking assessment sheet used contains five aspects of speaking skill, namely comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation. Each aspect has its criteria scaled from 1-20. Thus, the total score of all aspects is 100. The criteria of speaking is adopted from Harries, 1984, and Brown, 2004 which is cited from Maulany (2013)

Table 1: Criteria of Speaking Aspects

Categories	Score				
	1-4	5-8	9-12	13-16	17-20
Comprehension	Unable to comprehend the material so that unable to express/respond the questions correctly.	Has great difficulty understanding what is said, often misunderstands the Qs	Understands most of what is said at slower-than-normal speed with many repetitions.	Understands nearly everything at normal speed, although occasional repetition may be necessary.	Appears to understand everything without difficulty
Vocabulary	Vocabulary limitations so extreme as to make conversation in L2 virtually impossible so that the student speaks in L1 all the time.	Produces 1-3 English words (brands or place names such as KFC, Kraton, etc. do not count as English word/vocabulary) due to very limited vocabulary	Produces 4-6 English words.	Speaks mostly in L2 with few L1 words	Speaks in L2 with accurate English words
Grammar	Unidentified because of speaking in L1 all the time.	Answers mostly in L1, with 1-3 English words/phrases (Madsen, 1983).	Produces inconsistent and incorrect sentences/ phrases (E.g. I can walking around, buy food, some The game, etc.).	Produces some phrases instead of complete sentences with consistent and accurate word order (E.g. 1. Gasibu. 2. Seeing many people.	Produces complete and accurate sentences (E.g. 1. This is Gasibu, 2. I can see many people there.
Fluency	Unidentified because of speaking in L1 all the time.	Speaks mostly in L1 tries to speak in L2 but so halting with so many pauses and "er.."	Speaks mostly in L2 with some long pauses and hesitancy.	Speaks in L2 less fluently due to few problems of vocabulary/selection of the word.	Speaks in L2 very fluently and effortlessly.
Pronunciation	Unidentified because of speaking in L1 all the time.	Speaks mostly in L1, but produces 1-3 English words. Needs some repetition in pronouncing the words to understand them.	Speaks mostly in L1, but produces 1-3 English words and pronounce them in intelligible mother tongue accent.	Speaks mostly in L2 Intelligible with mother tongue accent	Speaks in L2 Intelligibly and has few traces of a foreign accent.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Cycle 1

Cycle one had been done for three meetings. The data findings were based on the result of data analysis from observation sheets, field notes, test, and questionnaire. There are four stages in this teaching and learning

activities as what mentioned by Fauziati (2014) and Kriwas (1999). However, in this cycle, the writer used the term proposed by Fauziati (2014) namely starting the project, developing the project, reporting to the class, and assessing the project.

The first stage is starting the project. The activities in the class were started by greeting, checking the

students' attendance list, and telling the learning objectives and the tasks assigned. This activity consist of brainstorming and activating background knowledge and context of the students before having speaking practice. To start the projects, the teacher showed some picture and video related to the project. In this case, the teacher used video from TED. It was about a presentation from high school students from Bali who presented their movement "Bye-Bye Plastic bag" to the audience. The students watched the video comprehensively. After watching the video, the students were asked to sit in a group of four to five. The teacher gave them the instruction to plan one movement they concern, and they had to create this movement.

After discussing the movement, they were asked to develop the movement and create a concept of the movement. This discussion session required student to interact with other students about the project. The second stage is developing a project. This stage is not finished in one day; the students had to continue this stage out of the class as homework. They need to work together as a team out of the class. While developing the project, they can ask the teacher and friends about the obstacle they face.

The third stage, held in the third meeting, is presentation time. They present the movement they had in front of the class in a group. It was a group presentation. While presentation, the students were allowed to bring any aid such as a poster, PPT, picture, etc. In this stage, students had a chance to explore their ability to speak English either in a group or personally. The presentation time also becomes the assessment from

the teacher on this cycle.

The last stage is assessing the project. In this phase, not only the teacher can give the assessment but also their classmate. All the students gave the comment or suggestion about their friends' performance. After the comment and suggestion given by both the students and the teacher, it was time for the teacher to had some evaluation of the teaching and learning. The teacher asked the students about the lesson and activity of the day. Reflection was taken into account. Afterward, the class was closed.

The result was obtained through observation, speaking test, questionnaire, and interview. Firstly, based on the teachers' observation on students' group discussion, students involve actively in the discussion. It was found that 80% - 95% of the students gave contribution in the group discussion and project. This finding showed that there was an improvement regarding students' motivation and interest in this speaking class. However, some students are passive. It may be caused by the lack of vocabulary that the students have or the willingness to be involved.

From the performance test conducted at the end of the cycle or in the third meeting, the result of the students speaking test was improved even though it was not significant. In the preliminary study, the average score of the students' speaking test was 65.1 from 28 students, while the maximum score was 71. However, the average score of speaking in Cycle 1 was 71.7 from 28 students while the maximum score is 75. The score is shown in the following table:

	Average Score of Each Indicator of Speaking					Total
	Fluency (1 - 20)	Vocabul ary (1 - 20)	Pronunc iation (1 - 20)	Grammar (1 - 20)	Compre hension (1 - 20)	
Preliminary	13.1	12.8	13.5	12.2	13.5	65.1
Cycle one	15.0	14.0	14.3	14.5	13.9	71.7

This is also supported by the result of the questionnaire administered to the students, 89% of the students said that they like the class, 93% said that working in a group is helpful for them, and 93% of the students were motivated to learn English in a group. Afterward, the teacher interviewed three students. All of them said that working in a group is so helpful and interesting.

Cycle two

Cycle 1 had been done efficaciously. It shows that the activity of the learning and teaching using PBL is succeeded. However, it is still found that the students' speaking improvement was not so significant. Therefore, there were still some points that need to be improved by the teacher. First, the students in cycle two were set up in group 5 – 6. Second, the teacher asked students to bring one laptop per group. The students then had chances to find out information about their project from several online sources. Third, the students will not present the project in front of the class instead of presenting it in the form of video.

In short, the project in the second cycle continues the project in the first cycle (video is the addition for the final project). In the second cycle, the teacher also gave guidance on what students need to do. They now not only create a concept of their movement but also make it as like the real movement. They need to create the attribute of their movement such as name, logo, motto,

etc.

In addition, the revision in Cycle 2 also focused on helping students to enrich their vocabulary, improve their pronunciation and improve the students' idea by developing material, teaching instruction. This is based on the result of students' speaking score in the cycle one which showed low score in all aspects of vocabulary, pronunciation, and content. In this cycle, the students had more time to discuss and work with their friends.

The result of the cycle two is obtained through the observation, test, questionnaire, and the interview. First, based on the teachers' observation when they had a discussion with their group, most of the students involve actively. It was found that 95% - 100% of the students contribute and give the idea to the group project. The situation of the class was more conducive since all of the students follow the class seriously. This finding showed that there was a significant improvement regarding students' motivation and interest in this speaking class in comparison with the preliminary study and cycle one.

Based on the result of the speaking test, which is in the form of video recording, there was a significant improvement of the students' achievement. The average score of students' speaking test was 80.1; the highest score was 85 out of 25 students. The score is shown in the following table:

Average Score of Each Indicator of Speaking						Total
	Fluency (1 - 20)	Vocabulary (1 - 20)	Pronunciation (1 - 20)	Grammar (1 - 20)	Comprehension (1 - 20)	
Preliminary	13.1	12.8	13.5	12.2	13.5	65.1
Cycle one	15.0	14.0	14.3	14.5	13.9	71.7
Cycle two	17.1	15.5	16.1	15.0	16.4	80.1

This is also supported by the result of a questionnaire administered to the students, 100% of the students said that they like the class, 100% said that working in the group help them, and 100% of the students were

motivated to learn English when they are in a group. Afterward, the teacher also had an interview with three students. All of them said that working in a group is helpful and interesting.

The use of PBL in teaching speaking was designed to make the students motivated and enjoy the class. Allowing students to work in groups support students to involve actively in the class (Fauziati 2014). In addition, working in a group also helps the student learn about speaking concerning on the way of speaking (fluency), vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and content of what to speak. Discuss with the group allow student to have an opportunity to give and share information orally to the group's members. At this point, intensive and extensive speaking performances unconsciously done by the students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings conducted in this study, it could be concluded that the implementation of PBL in teaching speaking can improve the students' speaking skills and motivation. This improvement is proven by the students' speaking achievement, and the score gained. The score of the speaking test has fulfilled the criteria of success. In addition, the students actively involved in learning activities and had high motivation when they work in a group in the speaking class.

Sharing an idea using English in a group can help the students train their pronunciation, enrich their vocabulary, and make them easier to find an idea in producing sentences while speaking. The students can get information faster and feel more confident in dealing with the lesson as they not only depend on their speaking skills but also on their comprehension.

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