An Investigation of Using Out Classroom Experiences to Enhance Indonesian EFL Learners' Speaking Performance

Ezis Japar Sidik[1], Dhafid Wahyu Utom[,2], Yudi Juniard[3]

[1,2,3]Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtatasa
Email: dhafid.wu@untirta.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The need for additional speaking activities outside of the classroom is critical in order to help students explore and gain new experiences as well as also providing ample opportunities for them to express themselves in English. However, there has not been many research which look in to the use of out class room activities in enhancing students' speaking ability. Therefore, this study tries to shed light on the use of Out classroom experience in enhancing Indonesian EFL learners' ability in speaking English. By conducting a case study approach, the research used triangulation data collection techniques consisting of classroom observation, interview, and speaking performance test. The study involved 40 undergraduate students from one of the public universities in Banten province as its subjects. The result showed that the use of Out classroom experience positively contributes to the development of students' speaking development. Out classroom activities can facilitate the learners to access or even create language exposures by themselves. This study provided some implication about using Out classroom experiences for language teachers and educational practitioners as well as the educational policy makers. Further research in the same area is still required to determine, quantitatively, the effectiveness of the use of Out class room experiences in enhancing students' speaking ability with a large number of participants.

Keywords: *Out-Classroom experiences, speaking, college students, EFL context*

Introduction

The role of English in Indonesia can also be said quite special. It is special because English is the only compulsory foreign language included in secondary curriculums, and even tested in the national exam. However, the special status of English in national education is not accompanied by satisfactory results. To mention, English students who are learning English or graduating from senior high schools are assumed to spend no less than six years in the classroom, but those who are able to speak English in real-world communication are still countable (Mukminin, Masbirorotni, Noprival, Sutarno, Arif, & Maimunah, 2015; Adila & Refnaldi, 2019). It is even found many high school graduates are unable to use English in simple functions such as doing self-introduction.

Sometimes, this problem still continues and cannot be resolved although they have studied in undergraduate English program. The increase of (English) learning hours to more than double seems not to give much impact on their communicative ability. Their ability sometimes remains stagnant even after they have spent for 2 to 4 years in English program. Many students still lack confidence in their ability to communicate in English (Gan, 2012; Fauzan, 2014; Christie & Listyani, 2018; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). Having inadequate English-speaking ability will make the learners in difficulties when they want to have English-related careers such as becoming English teachers and the like.

If this stagnancy remains unresolved, they cannot be part of community who really celebrate the inexorable rise of English as Harmer (2007: 4) has stated. In fact, they are the one who still struggle to be, or they even do not expect to be within. However, it is believed if people in this country want to be a part of global

English community. In so doing, there should be innovative efforts to improve the learners' ability in English communication including the enhancement of English teaching process at schools and colleges. In this regard, Carroll (in Raths, 2002: 233) assumes if the results of students' learning activity will rely on two aspects of time: the amount of time a student spends learning a task and the amount of time a student needs to spend on the task in order to learn and master it. It is undeniable fact that, in many Indonesian classroom setting, most time is spent to learn a task or material, but less time is spent to provide opportunities for students to practice the task or material they have learnt. This unbalanced time share can be said as an obvious obstacle on English language acquisition among Indonesian pupils.

Improvement to current teaching practices can be made by addressing this unbalance. The teachers can provide the students the equal time both to learn and to practice the materials or can be said to provide a balance between time and work. Astin, Pascarella and Terenzini (in Krause, 2007) propose if the balance of time and energy provided in purposeful learning activities is regarded as an important predictor of successful learning. It is even advisable if the teachers can provide more time allotment for students to apply the materials rather than the time to learn the materials. Providing equal time for learning and practicing the materials can be carried out during classroom instruction by, for example, applying learner-cantered approach, or by assigning tasks outside the classroom if it is not possible to be provided during classroom time. In addition, many teachers play dominant roles in the teaching learning process and the teachers were only sole source of learning (Kosim & Muqoddam, 2021). Teachers should provide more time and opportunities for students to practice in the classroom as well as out of the classroom to train them to be active and creative learners as the goal of teaching speaking is enable students to become communicative in using the language (Hughes & Reed, 2017).

In fact, providing extra-tasks for the learners' out-classroom time has provided more benefits for their language acquisition process across language skills or education in general (Krause, 2007; Arnaiz and Huntley, 2011; Anderson 2013). Its particular application in speaking skill has also been held with another successful story (Anderson, 2013). Unfortunately, research on this issue is still scarce especially the one carried out in Asian context such as Indonesia. As the result, its efficacy in EFL context is still unable to confirm. Considering these facts, researching the use of out-classroom approach is necessary to carry on in order to find out its relevant benefits in dealing with Indonesian students' difficulties in acquiring English ability. Therefore, the present study addresses the following questions:

1) Does the use of Out classroom experiences enhance speaking performance of college students?

2) What are the college students' responses against the use of Out classroom experiences in enhancing their speaking performance?

Currently, many Indonesian students graduating from high schools cannot confidently use their English in communication. One of the causes could be that many teachers are more concerned on material delivery in teaching and learning process. What the teachers do is quite understandable because they are required to cover all English skills in certain period of time. In this case, they more emphasize on the learner's knowledge or comprehension rather than the learner's ability to apply their knowledge. Besides, most learning particularly speaking activities are carried out in the formal classroom time, while not much tailoring the learners' out-classroom time. Indeed, English learning activity concentrated in the classroom will not be sufficient to help students acquire good language skill in particular speaking. The limited face-to-face interaction between teachers and students as well as among students themselves would be a case in point. In addition, good speaking skill would be difficult for the students to obtain unless they could practice the language in social interaction (Shumin, 2002).

In the EFL context, obstacles in acquiring effective oral communication can be even more complex. EFL students do not possess many opportunities as those in ESL context. While ESL students can still take benefits from their surroundings to practice their language, EFL students cannot until they are facilitated particularly by the teachers. Of the ways to facilitate EFL students to practice their language is to assign them using the language outside formal classroom throughout

classroom experience. Out classroom experiences has been used successfully to deal with classroom limitation (Hee and Woodrow, 2008). By means of Out classroom experiences, the learners can practice their English outside their classroom time by conducting oral communication in their social life. Out classroom experience refers to any forms of communication carried out by the students outside their classroom time. This communication can be carried out between students and teachers/ staff, among students' themselves, or between students and other relevant communities.

It is argued that students can acquire good language ability if they can provide adequate time for both learning and practicing the language (Carroll in Raths, 2002). In further, Ericsson, Charness, Feltovich, & Hoffman (in Taylor, at. al., 2012) assume the students need up to approximately 10,000 hours both for learning and practice in order to be expert in any skill. In English as a foreign language context such as Indonesia, appropriate share of time in those two areas is indispensable because the students' opportunity to practice their English is only in classroom.

Language skills that requires more attention from students and teachers is speaking skill. Speaking is considered as the most important skill since the majority of people learning the language is to enable them to use English for communication which is mostly done in speaking (Richards and Renandya, 2002: 201). More than that, obtaining good speaking skill is a very difficult task because it does not only require good understanding on grammatical and semantic rules but also require to understand the ways native speakers use the language (Shumin, 2002).

As a matter of fact, fluent speaking might be more difficult to achieve than three other skills –writing, reading, and listening. Speaking and writing belong to productive skills requiring the students to produce language specimens by their own. Therefore, it is imperative that the students could combine the knowledge of English as the target language with skills and strategies that will make them possible to use the language effectively and appropriately in their communication (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2006).

Acquiring speaking skill would be very different from other skills including writing. While the other skills can be obtained without any necessities to have direct assistance from others, speaking skill would be really dependent on other participants in order to make social interaction to occur. Teachers, peers, and communities would much contribute to the students' speaking ability. Another obvious difference is proposed by Cook (in Celce-Murcia & Olshtein, 2006) that:

"Spoken language happens in time, and must therefore be produced and processed. There is no going back and changing or restructuring our words as there is in writing; there is often no time to pause and think, and while we are talking or listening, we cannot stand back and view the discourse in spatial or diagrammatic terms..."

As the consequences of these differences, there should be different treatment in teaching speaking particularly in EFL setting such as Indonesia. Treating speaking as equally as other three skills would contribute to stagnancy in students' speaking ability, and therefore, they cannot use the language effectively and appropriately in social interaction. Using the target language outside the classroom is believed to overcome the limitation of classroom efficacy in teaching speaking (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2006). This can be applied by providing tasks or homework to facilitate them using the language outside formal classroom would provide in social interaction. Other similar ideas have emerged as the responses for this emergency such the application of Out Classroom Interaction (Anderson, 2013; Alderman, 2008), Out classroom Communication, and Out classroom Experiences (Kraus, 2007).

Once properly applied, Out-classroom experiences can provide double benefits for the learners. On the one hand, Out-classroom experiences can boost students' speaking ability because they are encouraged to practice the language continuously both in- and out-classroom environments. On the other hands, it can foster students' autonomy in learning which is believed as a more effective approach to learning compared with other approaches (Naiman et.al. in Palfreyman, 2003: 1). As it is well acknowledged, Indonesian students lack these two skills, and therefore, this approach can be a potential solution to these problems. The efficacy of this approach can be manifolds because it does not only promote students' academic attainment, but also promote students' engagement and integration in their

education as well as enhance satisfaction and retention (Light, 2001 & Tinto, 2003 in Krause, 2007). Similar study by Taylor at.al. (20012) also shown positive impacts on students' behavior and independence in their study.

Unfortunately, as much as it concerns, out classroom experiences has not yet attracted much attention from local teachers and researchers. The obvious obstacle would be that teachers' main concern in their profession is more on material delivery, and therefore, monitoring what the students do outside the classroom would be voluntary in nature. Therefore, this study is expected to be a trigger for other teachers as well as the researchers to take benefits from Out classroom experiences. This study is also expected to find confirmation whether or not Out classroom experiences in EFL context can bring about benefits as those carried out in other contexts as many researchers have addressed.

Methodology

A qualitative case-study approach was employed in this study as the focus is to describe and understand a certain phenomenon in details. Case study was chosen because study is a type of ethnographic research study that focuses on a single unit, such as one individual, one group, one organization, or one program Ari, et. Al., (2010: 29). That is this study would highlight the use of out-classroom experience in one speaking class involving 40 undergraduate students from one of the public universities in Banten province as its subjects. As data gathering techniques, therefore, this study applied a triangulation approach consisting of observation, speaking performance tasks, and interview. The goal of conducting observation is to monitor if there are some changes in students' speaking behaviors when the out-classroom experiences are embedded as English learning tasks. In the same vein, speaking performance tasks is carried out in form of group presentation discussing their activities and/or tasks that they have done outside the classroom. This task is carried out weekly outside the classroom by completing certain projects or tasks. Lastly, interview is necessary to have in-depth information about students' opinions, feelings, reactions, beliefs and preference about the teaching approach they have experienced.

Finding and Discussion

This section discusses the findings of using out-classroom experiences to support students' speaking skill in English program. Out classroom experiences refer to speaking activities that the students have to carry out in groups outside their formal classroom. To ensure the speaking activities are conducted outside formal classroom lessons, each group is required to submit the projects in video-tape form recording whole main activities of the projects.

Students' Speaking Skill Prior Out Classroom Experiences

To identify if the Out-classroom experiences can develop students' speaking skill in English program, the students are firstly required to speak in from of the class lasting for two to five minutes. This short-talk is intended to know the students' speaking skill before the Out-classroom experiences is carried out. The result of this talk is used to identify whether or not their speaking skill can improve after the application of Out classroom experiences. From this short-talk assessment, it can be identified that most students are still in 'satisfactory level' of their speaking performance in all areas of vocabulary, presentation, accuracy, and fluency.

Apart from that, a small proportion of the students can reach 'good level' and few other students are still in the lowest level 'Need Improvement.' The result of students' speaking performance can be seen from the following graph.

Figure 1
Speaking Performance During Short-Talk Assessment
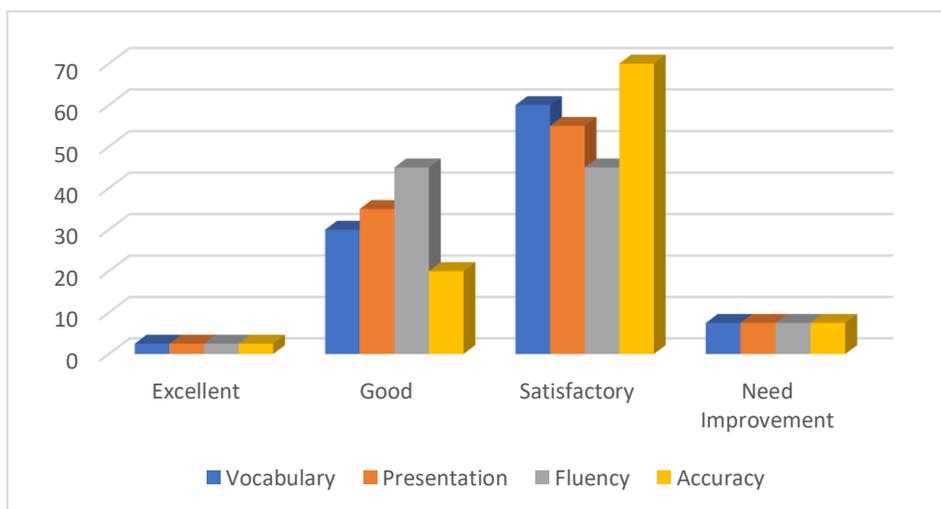
The graph depicts that the accuracy is the most frequent problem that most students experience reaching up to 70% in the satisfactory level, followed by vocabulary and presentation with 60% and 55% respectively.

Speaking Activities During Formal Classroom

Speaking activities which are carried out in formal classroom time encompass the discussion of materials and preparation for out classroom activities. By means of observation, all activities in formal classroom are monitored to know the attitudes and enthusiasm of the students especially in preparing the activities for outside the classroom. From the observation, it is found out that all groups are actively involved during the preparation starting from choosing the topic for out classroom activities to dividing roles for each member in groups. The discussion during preparation activities is quite engaging for the students because they are really familiar with the activities, they do every week throughout the semester.

In addition, although the class is quite big consisting of 40 students, the discussion is more effective to run because the students work in smaller groups providing more opportunities for each student to take part in the discussion. A small group discussion is one of the effective ways in teaching speaking as the students do not have much pressure in talking because they do not talk to the whole class but simply to their groups consisting of four to five students. It also motivates and boosts the students' interest to actively participate during the class as based on the study conducted by (Karuniasih, Evenddy,

Utomo, & Sampurna, 2019) revealed that the percentage of Indonesian EFL learners' participation during teaching and learning process is still low. In the same vein, it actively engages them as well as encourages them to be autonomous learners who can portray themselves to classroom process and discussion (Antoni, 2014; Fauzi, 2017; Muslem, Mustafa, Usman, & Rahman, 2017).

The discussion in small groups is also easier to manage. The teacher can only focus on groups instead of individual students in the class which are more difficult to do. Besides, the problems can be easily detected in small groups rather than the whole class. For example, when groups lack activities, the teacher can visit the groups to provide assistance; and therefore, the solutions can be immediately given to deal with problems in groups. All in all, the students show positive attitudes and enthusiasm during discussion in their groups. Each member in groups should focus on the project they are going to do outside classroom time, and therefore not doing appropriately during preparation can risk failure in their weekly project. These positive attitudes and enthusiasm can also be seen from the absence of significant obstruction from the students doing unnecessary talks and sounds.

Speaking Activities Outside Formal Classroom

The activities conducted outside the classroom are aimed at strengthening the materials the students have received during formal classroom. These activities are based on the preparation the students have made in the

formal classroom. The students have to finish week, and submit it in video-recording format. The necessity to video-tape their project is to ensure that the students really spend their time outside the formal classroom to practice their speaking, and not just an artificial work. In other words, video-tape is authentic evidence of students' out classroom activities in addition to their formal classroom lesson.

Out classroom speaking projects receive the learners' attention and interest. The learners' attention and interest can be seen from the rate of task completion, weekly classroom feedback, and focus interview. First, the rate of task completion is very high every week; every group could submit the video-form task on time, and every learner in groups could take part in the project as shown from their videos. The students do not also find any serious problems in completing the projects as identified from the learners' weekly classroom feedbacks. This feedback is intended to accommodate the students' problems in completing the projects. Some minor complaints are sometimes called out such as

one out classroom-speaking project every poor quality of recording, and the difficulties to manage commitment between in-group members. The video projects are also very challenging for groups.

The focus interview has identified that the projects are placing them in slightly competitive atmospheres because some groups prepare their videos for the best such as by editing the videos prior to submitting them. The quality of film is not the priority of the task, but many students are very concerned with both contents and quality. Most importantly, the use of out-classroom activities provides positive contribution to students' speaking improvement. In completing the tasks, the students are drilled to control their speaking performance by considering important aspects such as vocabulary, presentation, fluency, and particularly accuracy. There is important improvement in students' speaking performance after the Out-classroom experiences is used in speaking class. The result of students' speaking performance can be seen from the following graph.

Figure 2
Speaking Performance After the Out-Classroom Experiences
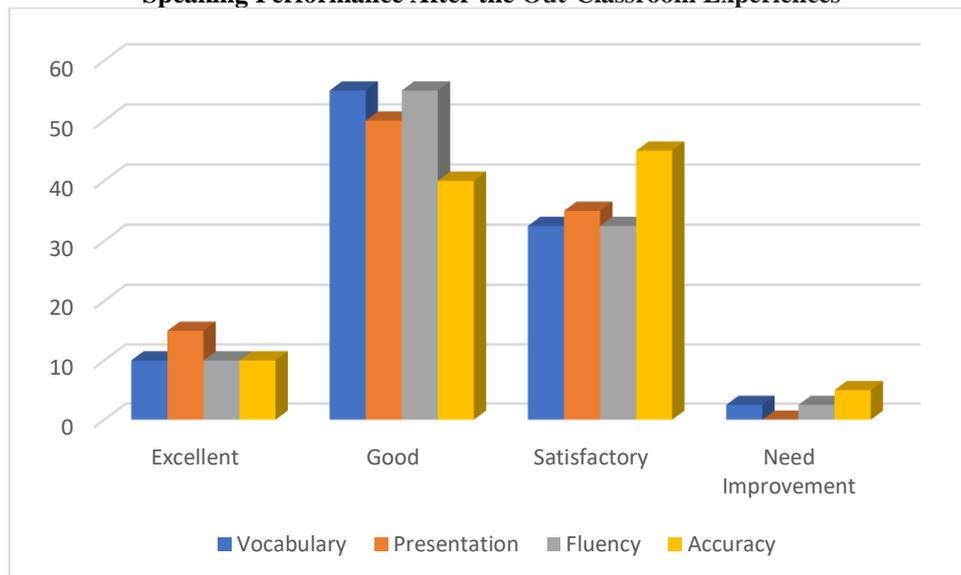
It is clear from the graph of students' speaking performance after the Out-classroom experiences that student learning outcomes have increased. In comparison to the outcome of speaking performance during the short talk, which is dominated by students who are still in the "satisfactory" level, the majority of students in this speaking performance after Out classroom experiences are in the "good" level.

For example, the quality of their speaking presentation and vocabulary improves compared with their performance in entry-speaking assessment. As a result, there is a huge improvement from "satisfactory level" to "good level". In the same vein, there are also the increasing number of students who achieved the "excellent level" despite the fact that the increase is not as significant as it is among

students in the "good level".

Discussion

There are more challenges to acquire English for the students in EFL environment such as Indonesia. One of these challenges is that the students in EFL classroom receive insufficient exposures to the languages (Lasagabaster, 2011). This often leads the students to failure in mastering good English skills including speaking. Apart from that, teaching and learning process is not accordingly conducted. On one hand, the teachers are very concerned with delivering predetermined materials and sometimes the accomplishment of students' tasks (products/ results) without considering the process. On the other hands, the learners are very dependent on materials their teachers provide in the classroom, and lack of initiatives to develop their skills outside classroom as well as there are many students still have low motivation in learning English, especially in speaking skill (Liu, 2010; Rakhmanina & Kusumaningrum, 2017).

Therefore, mastering good English in EFL environment can possibly be achieved when teachers and students can take into accounts the prior problems. The teachers and students should be capable of accessing and creating as many English exposures as possible so that the learners can acquire good English more effectively (Nazara, 2011; Bozorgian & Fallahpour, 2015; Al-Zahrani & Al-Bargi, 2017; Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019). Through Out classroom experiences, the problems relating to English exposures can be overcome because the students can create these exposures by practicing their English. In this regard, the use of Out classroom experiences has contributed to students' speaking development especially in vocabulary, presentation, fluency, and accuracy. Each student has shown improvement in using the language in the video task compared with their speaking performance in early assessment. Therefore, it is clear that the first major advantage of using Out classroom experiences is a reduction of students' anxiety when they are speaking English (Barker, 2004). In other words, it can build the students' confidence when they are given ample opportunities to practice their English.

Likewise, their response to the use of Out classroom experiences is also positive. One student responded in the interview "I enjoy this activity because it allows me to express myself freely, and I am eager to complete the task with my friends". Another student also responded that he enjoys the activities not only in completing the task but also in doing the video editing. The students are very enthusiastic to complete the tasks and therefore they can submit them on time. Besides, they are also very concerned with the quality of video although it is not the most important ones. Some groups spend their time to edit the videos prior to their submission.

Conclusion

Acquiring good English especially speaking skill requires more hard-working for the learners in EFL environment. This is due to the fact that English is not used in social activity, and therefore, adequate English exposures are difficult to obtain. However, the use of Out classroom experiences positively contributes to the development of students' speaking development. Out classroom activities can facilitate the learners to access or even create language exposures by themselves. The Out-classroom experiences provide benefits for English students especially in EFL context where most of the classrooms are quite big consisting more than 30 students. Such big classes are not really ideal especially for speaking class which has to provide more opportunities to practice their language. The opportunities to practice English in formal classroom become less because they only have up to two hours per week in average. By means of Out classroom experiences, however, each student would have ample opportunities to use their English because they only work in small groups.

Another recommendation can be derived from this research is that the policy maker (head of English department and head master or principle) can encourage the lecturers or the teachers to use this technique when they are doing teaching and learning process especially in teaching speaking.

The researchers, however, concede that the present preliminary findings are limited in scope and the numbers of participant included in the research. For instance, further research in the same area is still required to determine quantitatively the effectiveness of the use of Out class room experiences in enhancing students' speaking ability with a large number of participants.

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