



ASSIGNING HUMOROUS RECOUNT TO PROMOTE SPEAKING FLUENCY IN INDONESIAN EFL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the effect of assigning students to orally present their humorous recounts on their speaking skills. The results of this study reveal that the participant students at English Education Study Program of Teachers Training and Educational Sciences, Pattimura University experienced an impressive gain in speaking performance. This quasi-experimental study shows that this approach is effective in encouraging students to use target language more frequently in an unthreatening and enjoyable situation. Thus, provide psychological support for students when they have to use the target English language in real communication. This method provides ways to activate many language elements such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation the students have previously learned. The mean score of experiment group's posttest is 73.89 higher than the control group which is 70.71. Students in the experimental group have reported that they were able to alleviate many psychological inhibitors to speaking in public and improved their speaking skill considerably. The observation indicated that the class dynamic was increased. The implication for teaching speaking is further discussed in this article.

Keywords: Humor, Speaking, Fluency, EFL, Storytelling.

INTRODUCTION

Lack of opportunity to use target the English language in a meaningful way has been a problematic issue in many Indonesian EFL classes. Confined EFL teaching has left many dilemmatic situations in EFL learning due to the unnatural setting. Additionally, method and material for nurturing speaking skill lack the attention of EFL teachers. Alternatives to overcome the gap in target English language learning, especially speaking skill have been proposed with varying degree of results. As a common thought, the ability to use target the English language in real-life communication is the ultimate objective in all EFL learners' journey which to a great extent, filled up with many ups and downs. Teachers of English as a foreign language, therefore, occupy a very responsible position in lifting the motivation and further contributing to the success of their students in learning this particular target foreign language. Research shows that unthreatening speaking activities are pivotal to promote broader communicative skills and to enhance self-confidence and motivational aspects in students' part (Mokhtar, Halim, & Kamarulzaman, 2011; Samantaray, 2014). With regards to confidence in using the target English language, studies have shown that many EFL learners are hindered by some mental blocks. Too often that they are too timid or shy to talk in English. They can barely talk to their counterpart EFL learners even using only basic daily conversation. These students rarely able to find their way to form a habitual act of using

English on daily bases. As a consequent, it is a common view in many Indonesian EFL classes that many students are frequently hesitated when speaking and even unable to speak whatsoever in English. Learning a foreign language is a matter of habit, thus if speaking English is not part of EFL learners daily routine, we cannot expect them to master English speaking skill. Rafada and Madini, (2017) proposed some alternatives to reduce EFL learners psychological barriers by providing teaching and learning activities which can boost self-confidence and improve students' speaking skill.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learners of English in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context often lack the opportunity to use and explore the language in a meaningful and natural way. As opposed to their English as a second language (ESL) learner counterparts, EFL learners are predominantly inhibited in target-language exposure. If second language context can contribute significantly to accelerating learners' language development, nothing much can be expected in a foreign language context. In the ESL context, most of the communicative activities were only limited to a confined unnatural classroom setting. There is little chance that EFL learners will find others who will talk to them using English outside school hours. To tackle this issue, teachers role in honing their students skill, lifting their motivation and nurturing their psychological resilient in learning speaking is paramount. A motivational issue in language learning is not a new thing and it has been a common agreement that motivation is the key to success in language learning (Alrabai, 2014; Alhmadi N, 2014). Notably, teachers should be competent in managing their teaching-learning activities and enjoyably deliver the lesson while also capable to make any intervention as necessary in the classroom. Teacher's tasks are to create a supportive learning classroom atmosphere that all the students will feel safe when learning. This supportive atmosphere will help anxious students to fully participate in classroom activities and they will further perceive it as uncompetitive agenda in their routines. Feeling overwhelmed towards English speaking tasks might end up in a demotivated situation. As Alrabai (2016) points out, in many cases, various external factors prevent language learners to excel in their journey of language learning, leaving the extra task for teachers to work on. Strategies and methods in language teaching should be addressed properly which fosters a non-threateningly classroom atmosphere and gives a chance to anxious students to participate in the speaking tasks (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009).

As one of the objectives of teaching English is to enable its learners to speak the language, high school students and graduates are expected to pose this skill after they graduated. All high school graduates in Indonesia have been taught English for a certain period of times. However, many of these students are far from being able to speak the target language as satisfactorily as many had hoped. Students and high school graduates who can manage to speak English considerably well can gain huge benefits while others are still suffered in silence for they cannot speak the target language, even for a basic daily conversation. The reason for this problem is rooted in various complicated factors. Causes of this situation are varied and still being the subject of investigation, yet with the inconclusive results. The way teachers teach on one side, and the students internal being on the other side, have been part of the causes. Too many times we may notice that teachers' lack of pedagogic competence could contribute to the issue in which the way teachers teach is similar to what they had been taught. No changes are made, in terms of teaching method and approach. Teachers tend to be conservative to the old fashioned teaching as to avoid the complicated administrative task and they seemed to enjoy their comfort zone (Miao Yee Clare, Renandya, & Qiu Rong, 2019). That is the reason why teachers' pedagogical and psychological need to be enhanced continuously (Voss, Kunter, & Baumert, 2011). Lack of learning community is also one of the main determinant found to be influential in foreign language learning (Husniyah, 2019). It is quite challenging for EFL learners to find peers

who are willing to establish their learning community to support each other in the effort to achieve sufficient English speaking skill.

To compensate for the absence of many essential elements that support target English language learning, teachers could make the best use of storytelling as one alternative to train or to teach speaking skill. By assigning students to tell stories, these EFL learners will not only be given the chance to orchestrate their understanding of how English works but also opportunities to activate their previously learned linguistic elements. Mokhtar, Halim and Kamarulzaman (2011), assert that storytelling can be an effective tool to enhance students communicative skill while for the teacher, it is considered as an alternative to assess students competence in an authentic way. EFL learners communicative skill can be improved and assessment can be administered objectively and proportionally as Jellick (2015) has shown in his study that aside from teaching, students' actual language proficiency, particularly speaking skill, can be assessed in a more meaningful and effective way, thus will provide exact language deficiency treatment to the class either entirely or individually. By and large, storytelling is an effective way to encourage talk regardless of students difference in personality and language learning style.

Bring joy and happiness through humour in learning a foreign language may be one important aspect that frequently overlooked by many teachers and language educators for various reasons. Humorous recount, as argued by Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk, and Smith (2006), was proven as one of many effective approaches that can be used to promote EFL learners speaking skill development. Furthermore, it is believed that if humour is used appropriately in the classroom we can harvest beautiful fruit of learning. Humour can vary in definition but it must be amusing to listeners and speakers alike (Banas, Dunbar, Rodriguez, & Liu, 2011). When involving humorous aspect in teaching, problems in classrooms may be diminished and minimized. Filling the classroom atmosphere with joy and happiness has proven to be effective in raising students' motivation to learn, thus leave bigger room for language acquisition. Although humorous aspect may have different implication when applied in a different context, such as in Arabic world (Sahar Ali, 2018), this particular genre has a lot more to benefit English language learners (Abdulmajeed & Hameed, 2017). Thus, the tendency to utilize humorous recounts is pertinent in many EFL classrooms.

METHOD

The current study employs a quasi-experimental research design for applied linguistics (Dornyei, 2007). Pre-test-posttest control group design was used. The experiment group is treated with humorous storytelling while the control group is treated with an oral presentation on non-humorous stories. A *t*-test statistical analysis was used to determine the effect of both oral tasks. The present study tries to answer this hypothesis, "Students treated with humorous storytelling have better ability in speaking skill than the students who were treated with another kind of oral presentation with non-humorous elements in it."

Participant in the study

Seventy-one (71) students of English Education Study Program at Pattimura University participated in this study. They were in the second year of their study in 2018/2019 academic year. These students were distributed almost evenly in two parallel class. Their average age was 17.8. Class A (control group) consists of 4 male students and 31 females. The other class, class B (experiment group) consists of 6 males and 30 female students with an average length of study English 6.2 and 6.1 respectively.

Procedure for the experimental class:

The followings were general steps taken in speaking class where humorous storytelling was being implemented in the experiment class of the present project. There were six meetings for this particular activity.

1. The lecturer humorously told a sample story (the story was one of many funny personal recounts the lecturer has experienced).

2. At the initial stage, the lecturer asked the students whether they (or someone they know) have funny (or embarrassing) experiences they can share with the class. Normally, at this stage students were reluctant to tell their own stories (reasons are varied but don't worry). Things are getting better as the class move along in the learning process.
3. In the present study, there were a couple of students who brave enough to volunteer to tell their own funny experiences.
4. Next, the lecturer asked the students to sit in groups of five. In groups, they discussed and shared their stories. One of the group's representative presented one story selected from their collective stories. Other students listen and enjoy the story. Interruption could occur as well as minor disturbance from the audience (noise, mocking, teasing). Laughter was ignited. The class became lively. Lecturer provided comments and feedback while clarifying and correcting students' language use (just to give a sense of attention; do not correct too much, let them flow). New vocabulary may emerge and explained as necessary.
5. At the end of the first lesson (day 1), lecturer assigned the students to prepare their own funny stories (experiences). They have a couple of days to prepare.
6. Lecturer asked if they can prepare anecdotal pictures to accompany their presentation in later days.

For the subsequent meetings (day 2 to day 6) students were given greater opportunities to arrange the schedule of presenters. Each student was given 5-10 minutes to tell their funny personal recounts.

Instrumentation

Data collection instrument used in this study was speaking tests. The test follows the modified IELTS system to adjust to the research subject condition. The students' scores on the pre-tests and posttests would constitute a measurement of their overall speaking ability before and after the treatment.

The technique of Data Collection

At the initial stage, a pre-test was administered to both groups of the students. The test result of this test is intended for comparing students speaking skill in both groups for research purpose. After the treatment, both groups were given the post-test to see the progress and end-result of the treatment.

Techniques of Data Analysis

The data were submitted to an SPSS data processor. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and *t*-test were used to make inferences about the data that had been collected. The dependent variables used to assess students' speaking skill were scores of speaking tests.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Three steps of data analysis were taken following three steps:
In the first step, the pre-test data from experiment group were compared to the scores of the control group's pre-test. The following table shows descriptive statistics of the pre-test scores from both groups.

Table 1: Descriptive statistic of pre-test of Experiment and Control Group

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre_experiment	36	20.00	90.00	48.6111	15.14742
Pre_control	35	20.00	70.00	54.0000	12.64911
Valid N (listwise)	35				

From table 1, we can see that the mean score of pre-test of the experiment group is 48.61, while the control group is 54. However, the maximum pre-test scores are higher in experiment group than the ones in the control group. Regarding this complicated occurrence, the author decided to use the statistical test (*t*-test) to compare the pre-tests of both groups. Before conducting the *t*-test analysis, the assumption of the *t*-test is analysed to ensure that the data conforms to the normal distribution criteria. To meet this requirement, the researcher employed the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Table 2 reveals the results.

Table 2: One Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

		Pre_experiment	Pre_control
N		36	35
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	48.6111	54.0000
	Std. Deviation	15.14742	12.64911
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.186	.197
	Positive	.186	.152
	Negative	-.118	-.197
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.114	1.163
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.167	.133

a. Test distribution is Normal.
b. Calculated from data.

Table 3 shows the result of the *t*-test analysis of the pre-tests scores from both experiment and control group.

Table 3: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pre_test	Equal variances assumed	.169	.682	-1.625	69	.109	-5.38889	3.31675	-12.00561	1.22784
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.629	67.478	.108	-5.38889	3.30831	-11.99143	1.21366

From the result of the *t*-test analysis above, it is seen that the Sig (*2-tailed*) are 0.109 and 0.108 for both groups, which are higher than 0.5. That tells that there are no significant differences in the listening comprehension competence of the students from both groups. This result, however, prompted the researcher to make further analysis to find out points of differences. In the second step of the analysis, the posttest data from both groups were compared. The following description reveals the results of the analysis.

Table 4: Descriptive statistic of Post-tests of Experiment and Control Group

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Post_experiment	36	55.00	100.00	73.8889	11.83887
Post_control	35	55.00	85.00	70.7143	6.65791
Valid N (listwise)	35				

From table 4, it is noticed that the mean score of posttest of the experiment group is 73.89 which is slightly higher than the mean score of the control group, that is 70.71.

However, to validate the assumption that the experiment group is said to outperform the control group, a *t*-test analysis is once again required. This was done to determine whether or not both groups are significantly different through a statistical measurement. In the third step of the analysis, the learning progress of both experiment and control group was compared. The mean difference of experiment group is 65.00, which is greater than 40 of the control group. To see whether or not this result statistically shows the significant differences, the *t*-test is then implemented. From the result of this analysis, the Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.004 which is far below 0.05 which indicates a statistically significant difference in the learning progress between the experiment group and control group. Thus it can be concluded that "students who were assigned to tell humorous recounts have better speaking skill than those who only perform a sole oral presentation on the non-humorous subject. This result at the same time answers the research question of this study.

Discussion

Pre-test scores of both Experiment and Control group in the present study shows no significant difference, in which the level of speaking competence of the students is said to be equal. After the treatment using a different method, the students in the experiment group obviously outperformed students in the control group regarding speaking performance. There are some interesting things happened around the study. Assigning students to tell humorous recounts has a psychological benefit for all the students. While providing a venue for real speaking, this strategy had 'forced' the students to break the mental block which always hindered them to be involved in speech acts. Feeling shy, afraid of being judged on their speaking competence, afraid of making mistakes and many other psychological inhibitors to speaking efforts have been minimized. Students in the experiment group felt happy for they can gain knowledge in a relax and fun situation. They can share stories while laughing at each other 'silliness.' naturally introverted Students were encouraged to actively participate in the process. The class dynamic has been wonderful with many discussions, feedback from teachers and peers.

This approach of teaching speaking proves to conform to many related studies which suggest that in foreign language classrooms, a good indicator of an effective speaking class is when students talk more and teachers talk less. The students were encouraged to be responsible for their learning. The findings in this present study show that students' many previously learned language elements have been activated such as grammar points, vocabulary or syntax. Learning new English words have been done in an almost natural way, thus very beneficial for retention in learners' memory. Finally, this approach gives way for teachers to conduct an authentic assessment of students' actual speaking competence. Correction to errors was given, in a proportionally acceptable way in the process without risking students lose their face or being humiliated.

CONCLUSION

This study offers useful insights into the usefulness and feasibility of assigning students to tell humorous recounts. It poses and refines some questions that can be addressed in future studies and points out implications for other questions. Descriptive statistics hint that younger students who were less proficient in the foreign language benefited most from this particular type of oral support. Findings from this present project suggest that using authentic oral tasks effectively, such as this one, provides opportunities for EFL learners to hone their speaking skill enjoyably. The issue of time-consuming nature to conduct such activity may be one aspect that should carefully be considered. Teachers would be better able to select material that is appealing and engaging for the students of their particular context and extend its applications. Due to the strength of this approach, it can also be implemented on a wider scale, making it especially useful for learning with different types and levels of students. This method of instruction is likely to be useful since it accommodates the needs of EFL learners to have much 'real' talk in English. It allows the

students from all range of level to interact with teachers and their peers sufficiently in a meaningful and fun way. The results of this study have clear implications for classroom teachers. No one teaching method fits every classroom situation but teachers should be creative and tactfully addressed the lack of exposure to listening as well as speaking the target language. It is very important that teachers know their students and considers teaching aims, classroom situations, and speaking materials and methods that promote English speaking fluency and accuracy.

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