

MOTIVATING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH SIMULATION IN BUSINESS ENGLISH CLASSROOM - An Action Research

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Abstract

This research proposed one of the approaches in teaching English in Economic Faculty at University of Stikubank. It aimed at using simulation in motivating students' speaking skill in Business English class. It is a qualitative research and employs five data collection methods, namely: class observation, teaching journal, document collection, questionnaire and interview. The results show that the students are highly motivated and they feel that they get enough practice as well as theory. Kinds of simulation that are effective in Business Class are building company (making business plan), conducting meeting, doing negotiation and presentation. In addition, it was suggested that the lecturer should give feedback to the students, create materials in the form of hardcopy and slideshow and provide games and or other activities in the lessons.

Keywords: *motivation, simulation, action research, business English, teaching journal.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Teachers of English may experience the same situation in which the students are unwilling to speak. There are, of course, many factors causing this problem. Students feel that they lack of confidence to speak as the result of not knowing what to say. Some others might state that they are short of words to say in conversation. The rest might tell the teacher that the topic of the conversation is not interesting.

Zhao (1998) in his article also explained that students in class also experienced the poorest condition of speaking. This result from lack of speaking practice, but students, especially Asian students tend to be reluctant to speaking English in class as well as after class. It is important for teachers to encourage and motivate them to speak English, especially in class.

Researchers (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, & Küpper, 1989, as cited in Chamot, 1993) have studied the results of language learning strategies that were taught to English as a second language (ESL) learners in numerous different tasks,

including vocabulary, listening, and speaking tasks. The outcomes of the studies reveal that language learning strategies are primarily of benefit for the speaking task (Chamot, 1993). It is patently attainable for learners to accomplish the goal of communicative competence in the target L2 by language learning strategies. Additionally, Bialystock (1978) recognizes that when learners communicate in the target L2, they can consciously apply language learning strategies in order to deal with the difficulties they encounter.

There are probably hundred ways to solve the above problems. Planning the lessons, preparing the material, adding some interesting media are some steps the teachers take to make the lesson more interesting and interactive.

English Training Centre of UNISBANK Semarang has been making various efforts to encourage students to be more active in the classroom. The teaching and learning process is divided into two phases, namely: English for Specific Purposes and English for Business Communication. The first one is intended mainly to teach the students reading and writing (and some grammar aspects) in Economics context, while the second one is aimed for the students to practice more in speaking.

The teaching and learning process runs well. However, there still remain some problems in the result of English for Business Communication. Students are still unwilling to speak either in the classroom or in the test administered by English Training Centre.

This Action Research is conducted to find an alternate way to motivate the students to be more active in speaking class. In this action research, the action plan that is going to implement is simulation. In Business English Classroom, the students will perform tasks and carry out activities such as socializing, doing meeting, negotiating, and giving presentation

It is expected that the students will be motivated to perform the task and activities as they are rooted from real life events. It is believe that the more authentic the material is the more motivated the students will be.

In this research I put forward questions that are related to one of the approaches in teaching English in Economic Faculty. In this case I want to know how the students can be motivated through one of the techniques in teaching such as using simulation. Those questions are:

1. How does simulation motivate students' speaking skill in Business English Class?
2. What kind of simulation that can be possibly effectively used to motivate the students' speaking skill in Business English Class?

I hope that from those two questions I can find out that the simulation can motivate students' speaking skills in Business English Class. By using simulation method the students can practice a lot in speaking English.

B. REVIEW RELATED LITERATURE

1. Motivation

Richards (1997: 238) defines motivation as the factor that determines a person's desire to do something. In second language and foreign language learning, learning may be affected differently by different type of motivation. Two type of motivation are sometimes distinguished: (1) Instrumental motivation: wanting to learn a language because it will be useful for certain "instrumental" goals, such as getting a job, reading a foreign newspaper, passing an examination. (2) Integrative motivation: wanting to learn a language in order to communicate with people of another culture who speak..

More specific and shorter definition of motivation is used by Ur (1996: 274) explaining that it is easier and more useful to think in terms of the 'motivated' learner: one who is willing or even eager to invest effort in learning activities and to progress.

Different kinds of motivation are also proposed by Ur (1996: 276) as intrinsic motivation (the urge to engage in learning activity for its own sake) and extrinsic motivation (motivation that is derived from external incentive)

Teacher's responsibility in motivating students is crucial. As Gurrard quoted by Ur (1996: 276) emphasizes that it is an important part of the teacher's job to motivate learners. The more motivated the learner the better their learning process will be.

2. Simulation

A simulation in which a person is placed into a scenario or situation and is directly responsible for the changes that occur as a result of their decisions. Simulation in business learners can perform building company, meeting, negotiation, and product presentation with the help of simulated environments. Problem solving skills, cause and effect, and decisions give the user a sense of purpose in their quest to tackle the real

situation they are "playing with". Simulations are in way, a lab experiment where the students themselves are the test subjects. They experience the reality of the scenario and gather meaning from it. It is a strategy that fits well with the principles of constructivism. (<http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/strats/simul/index.html>)

Simulations take a number of forms. They may contains elements of a game, a role-play, or an activity that acts as a metaphor. The chief element is that they have context. Students must make decisions within its context. Success is usually determined by the industry and commitment of the participants. The goal is not to win but to acquire knowledge and understanding. In this research the simulation is in the fom of activities. The students do business activities such as building company; how the compay stucture, doing a meeting, making negotiation, and making product presentation dealing in business communication.

3. Speaking Class

Learning English is often related to learning how to speak the language. As Ur (1996: 120) states of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as 'speaker' of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing; and many if not most foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak.

In practice, however, many learners feel frustrated as they find that speaking in a foreign language is a complex matter. It is because speaking involves many factors. The ability to speak fluently presupposes not only knowledge of language features, but also the ability to process information and language 'on the spot' (Harmer 2001:269).

Nowadays, some different methods, approaches, and techniques are employed in order to encourage students to speak English. Well prepared lesson and clear instruction during the lesson are considered motivating. Some techniques used by the teachers recently are the ones characterized as communicative techniques. This emphasizes on the ability of the students more in negotiating the meaning rather than thinking much on the form of the sentences uttered during a conversation.

Brown (2001:275) proposes some principles for designing speaking techniques as follow:

- (1) Use techniques that cover the spectrum of learner needs, from language based focus on accuracy to message-based focus on interaction, meaning, and fluency.
- (2) Provide intrinsically motivating techniques.
- (3) Encourage the use of authentic language in meaningful contexts.
- (4) Provide appropriate feedback and correction.
- (5) Capitalize on the natural link between speaking and listening.
- (6) Give students opportunities to initiate oral communication.
- (7) Encourage the development of speaking strategies.

The above techniques suggest that English teacher has bigger responsibility not only to teach the structure of sentences (then ask the students to speak with that grammar thing) but also to prepare the lesson well in order to encourage the students to speak and to be more communicative.

Besides, teachers need to create the speaking class environment, adopt many ways and encourage the students to open their mouths to speak.

4. The Importance of Environment

Generally speaking, there are two factors to affect students' speaking English in class. One is they fail to find suitable words to express themselves and the other is they are afraid of making mistakes. Sometimes they make mistakes when they are speaking because they are shy and nervous. So good environment helps the students speak actively and correctly. On the one hand, the teachers should try to ease students and remove their nervousness, fear and anxiety with encouraging words. In this way teachers have tried to build a free and lighted-hearted environment.

- (1) Teachers try to arrange the seats of my classroom in a circle or in groups with the students facing each other not in rows and lines.
- (2) Let the students speak English sitting in their seats not standing. They will not feel uneasy this way.
- (3) At first stage, Teachers allow the students to play their tape recording they have prepared for a certain topic beforehand.

- (4) Try to divide the students into pairs and groups according to the different topics, if you can and also you can let them prepare their "opinion", and then have a group spokesman deliver the opinion.

It is essential to try to build an atmosphere where the students no longer feel shy, where they will voluntarily raise their hands to ask a question and where they will freely voice their own opinions.

5. The Necessity for Encouragement

After students finish their speaking in class, teachers should encourage them and let the students feel they have made some progress with a sense of their fulfillment.

Teachers should try to do these:

- (1) Be firm in a gentle way and give them praise whenever they are doing anything close to a good job.
- (2) Be sincere and look for opportunities to find them doing something right. Never get frustrated, angry and impatient.
- (3) Be a nice, sensitive, and approachable person at all times. Never single students out or put them on the spot.
- (4) Treat them with kindness and respect. Smile a lot and value their opinions. Never embarrass anyone for a laugh.
- (5) Allow the students to be themselves rather than expecting them to conform to your preconceived ideas about how they should behave. Build their trust, take your time, and wait for them to come to you.

Of course teachers should point out some apparent mistakes in their speaking, for example, the incorrect words in pronunciation or some serious mistakes in grammar after they finish their speech.

6. Guidance Required

Teachers play an important role in making the class lively and active by their guide and arrangement. Students' initiatives should be encouraged and respected, but it does not mean there is no guide or assessment on the part of the teacher. After all, the guidance and help of the teacher makes his job inevitable in the classroom and education. Teachers should invent more ways to let students practise. This will arouse their interest to speak and help them more easily to master this skill.

7. Business English

Business English means different things to different people. For some, it focuses on vocabularies and topics used in the worlds of business, trade, finance and international relations. For others it refers to the communication skills used in the workplace, and focuses on the language and skills needed for typical business communications such as presentations, negotiations, meetings, small talk, socializing, correspondence, report writing, and so on. In both of these cases it can be taught to native speakers of English, for example, high school students preparing to enter the job market. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Business_English)

Business English is far more than talking about business or about language. It is about communicating and doing business in English (Frendo 2005: 8). It emphasizes on performing tasks and carrying out activities, not just discussing what students would do (Jones & Alexander 2000: 7). Furthermore, Jones and Alexander (2000:7) explain that students should be encouraged to use their judgment, business or general knowledge as they participate in the activities.

From above definition we can conclude that Business English is about communication. Students will need to be encouraged to use the language features they have been taught to perform tasks and to carry out activities (i.e. doing presentation or participating in a meeting).

8. Action Research

A teacher or a group of teachers who wants to know certain ways that can be effective for the classroom development is aware of the importance of the Action research. He/she conducts action research to implement their ideas for the better classroom. If he/she in the future finds certain patterns after conduction the Action Research, he/ she will not stop. On the contrary, he/ she will reflect the result of the

research and continue any possible acts in the future to develop it. It is the effects of the research that matter for the future development.

Richard (1997) defines Action Research as:

- (1) Research which has the primary goal of finding ways of solving problems, bringing about social change or practical action, in comparison with research which seeks to discover scientific principles or develop general laws and theory.
- (2) (in teacher education) teacher – initiated classroom research which seeks to increase the teacher’s understanding of classroom teaching and learning and to bring about improvements in classroom practices.

Furthermore, Richard (1997) explains that action research involves small scale investigative projects in the teacher’s own classroom. It consists of the following cycle of activities:

The teacher (or group of teachers)

- (1) selects an aspect of classroom behaviour to examine in more detail (e.g. the teacher’s use of questions)
- (2) selects a suitable research technique (e.g. recording classroom lessons)
- (3) collects data and analyzes it.
- (4) develops an action plan to help bring about a change in classroom behaviour (e.g. to reduce the frequency of questions which the teacher answers himself or herself)
- (5) acts to implement the plan
- (6) observes the effects of the action plan on behaviour.

It is clear that action research is conducted by the teacher in his/her own classroom to help them and the students get better development of the class. The research will involve the students, an action to implement, and the effect of the action to the students.

C. METHODS

1. Participants

The research was conducted at English Training Centre (ETC) of the Economic Faculty of UNISBANK. The sample population was taken from one of the English Classes of ETC containing 20 students. The students attended the class twice a week. The time allotment used in each class is 90 (minutes) minutes. They were the students who studied for English I in odd semester year 2008-2009.

2. Methods

This research is a qualitative research. It will employ five data collection methods, namely: class observation, teaching journal, document collection, questionnaire and interview. The use of the five methods is meant to triangulate data that is to collect information using a variety of methods. Maxwell (1996:75-76) points out that triangulation reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific method, and it allows you to gain a better assessment of the validity and generality of the explanations that you develop. The analysis of data will be done throughout the study; once it is gathered it will be analyzed right away. The following paragraphs discuss how the five methods will be used in the research.

3. Class Observation

As the setting was in one of the English class at UNISBANK English Training Centre (ETC), the role of the teacher in charge in the class observation was as a participant observer. The teacher noted of analysis, interpretation, and inference of each class observation.

4. Teaching Journal

The teaching journal mainly consists of lesson plan. The notes were about important classroom details, some students' expressions during the lesson, and research-related thoughts coming during the lesson. Teaching journal, as a matter of fact, is also contain teaching reflection, e.g. why an activity do not work as expected, whether time is sufficient for the whole plans, how students collaborate one another to complete a given task, etc.

5. Document Collection

Document collected included teacher's reports, result of small test 1 and 2 and mid test, students' works during simulation (videotaped), materials used in the simulation, and result of Final Test. For analysis purpose, the students' simulation process was videotaped and reviewed.

6. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered on the last meeting. It consists of some open-ended questions in Bahasa. It was easier for the students to answer the questions honestly.

The questions were based on the basic idea about the effectiveness of the simulation in motivating their speaking skill learning process.

It employed closed-ended response to get richer data and help answer the research problem.

7. Interview

Some students will be interviewed by the teacher in charge to cross check their answer in the questionnaire. The interview will be tape-recorded for the purpose of the analysis. The interview was paraphrased.

D. FINDINGS

Through this research, I found out some initial findings that are important to share. The simulation in Business English class conducted in Stikubank University English Training Centre shows that:

1. students are highly motivated with this approach. It is shown from their work on some assignments and task given with good results.
2. Students are keen on attending the class as they feel that they get enough practice as well as theory.
3. Students state that their English is improved in some ways.
4. Students feel more confidence.
5. Students state that the lecturer give good assistant during the class.
6. Students can achieve their expectation in learning English.
7. Students state that the equipment provided in class is very useful easy to use.
8. Students sate that this simulation approach can be continued with some improvement.

In answering the second questions, that is “what kind of simulation can be possibly effectively used to motivate the students’ speaking skill in business English Class”, I found out that Building company (making business plan), Conducting Meeting, Doing Negotiation and Presentation are the types of simulations the students suggested.

Besides that the students also gave some suggestions that the lecturer should give feedback to the students, should create materials in the form of hardcopy and slideshow and provide games and or other activities in the lessons.

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