

INCORPORATING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING (PBL) INTO A UNIVERSITY SPEAKING CLASSROOM: WHY AND HOW?

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Abstract

Learning a language means learning the language knowledge (vocabulary and grammar) and the language skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing). Of all the four skills, speaking skill is considered to be the most favourite and challenging one. It contains a complex process of constructing meaning and requires the language learners to produce linguistically and pragmatically correct utterances. To achieve such goals, a teacher who teaches speaking skills especially at a university level classroom should use a meaningful, appropriate and a challenging teaching method or technique. One of the methods that attract many language teachers' interests currently is project-based learning. Project-based learning is a teaching method in which the students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to a complex question, problem, or challenge. It empowers learners to pursue content knowledge on their own and demonstrate their new understandings through a variety of presentation modes. In this paper, the writer will discuss about speaking skill, teaching speaking skill, project-based learning definitions, characteristics and its steps, the reasons why English teachers especially at universities should incorporate project-based learning into a speaking classroom and an example on how to incorporate the project-based learning into a university speaking classroom.

Keywords: *project-based learning, speaking skill, a university classroom.*

INTRODUCTION

In the process of learning an English language, there are four skills that need to be mastered by the language learners. The language skills are reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Those four skills are interwoven and supported by the knowledge of the language; grammar and vocabulary. Of the four skills, speaking skill attracts many people to learn it since it is considered as the proof showing people that they have the competence of using English language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking Skill

Speaking skill is the skill that proved someone is able to communicate in a language. This skill is considered as a very important skill to be learnt among the four skills by many especially in the context of learning English as second or foreign language. It is generally perceived as the major indicator to the judgement of a learner's success or lack of success in learning English. Nunan (2003: 81) states that speaking skill is the productive oral skill

consisting of producing systematic verbal utterance to convey meaning. In addition, Chaney (1998: 13) defines speaking as the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of context. Based on those opinions, it can be concluded that speaking is the skill that uses verbal and non-verbal symbol to convey meaning in a various context.

In the process of learning the speaking skill, similar to those other three language skills, it can't be separated from the communicative competence. The goal of learning English especially speaking is to achieve the competency in using the language for communication. One who can use English language well in spoken and written is one who has had the communicative competence. Communicative competence is the competence of using a language well in a speech community. Hymes in Richards and Rodgers (1986:70) argues that a person who acquires communicative competence acquires both knowledge and the ability for language use with respect to

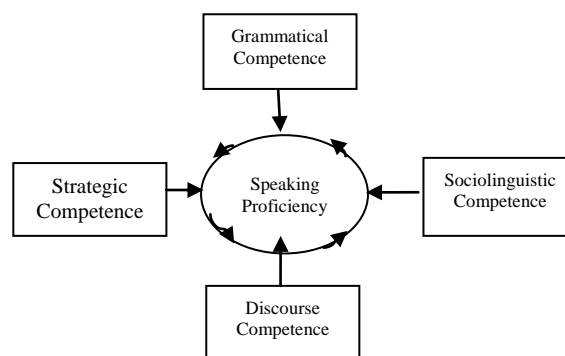
1. whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible;
2. whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available;
3. Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used or evaluated;
4. Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what it's doing entails.

(Hymes in Richards and Rodgers, 1986:70)

In addition, Canale and Swain (1980) state that there are four dimensions of communicative competence; (1) grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. *Grammatical competence* is

similar to linguistic competence and the domain of grammatical and lexical capacity. *Sociolinguistic competence* refers to an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, including role relationships, the shared information of the participants, and the communicative purpose for their interaction. *Discourse competence* refers to the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and of how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse text. *Strategic competence* refers to the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair and redirect communication.

Canale and Swain interpretation of communicative competence in relation to the speaking skill/proficiency is graphically shown by Shumin(2002) as follow:



Communicative Competence and Speaking Proficiency by Shumin (2002)

Based on the opinions above, it is clear that communicative competence is related to the linguistic elements of a language, the context of it uses, the people, and ways of using the language in an appropriate way to build a good communication between the speakers and the hearers. A good and successful language learner should have those competences.

Teaching Speaking Skill

Speaking is defined by Chaney (1998:

13) as "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts". Then, it can be inferred that teaching speaking skill means teaching the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts. Nunan (2003) mentions that teaching speaking skill means teaching students to; produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns, use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language, select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter, organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence, use language as a means of expressing values and judgments, and use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called as fluency.

Teaching speaking skill is not an easy matter. In the context of teaching a new language, either as a second or foreign language, the teacher should know the component involves in a language teaching such as the approach, the material, the media, the students, the teacher's role, and the teaching activities. One of them, the teaching approach influences the activities happened in a classroom especially in a speaking classroom. Richards (2005) mentions that in the current approaches to the teaching speaking, teacher should reflect the following principles; a) the basis of learning is speaking and oral interaction, b) non-native usage as well as native usage both serve as models, c) the primary goal is English for cross-cultural communication, d) the corpus analysis informs models in classroom material, e) other types of communicative syllabus predominate, f) both accuracy and fluency are a primary goal with a greater tolerance of errors, g) oral proficiency is seen as dependent upon mastery of lexical phrases and conversational routines, h) the most addressed is cultural awareness, and i) the power in the classroom is pair and group activities. A good

teacher should consider the principles in teaching speaking above.

In addition, Ur (2012:118) also propose the following practical principle in designing speaking activities; 1) use group work or pair work in order to increase the learners talks in a limited period of time and lower the students' inhibitions, 2) base the activities on easy language, 3) make a careful choice of topic and task to stimulate interest since an interesting topic and a clear purpose of interaction will motivate the learners better, 4) make the students aware of the purpose of the activity and condition for its success. Students should aware that they need to talk a lot, give everyone chances to speak and keep trying to use English all the time.

In the teaching of speaking skill, a teacher should be creative when he or she teaches the students in the classroom. Teachers must able to create a fun activity that can engage students to speak. For example, a teacher can show a video to students as stimulus in pre-teaching. Then, teachers ask students to give comment on the video by proposing questions such as "what is the video about?" As a result, students will tell what the video is about.

Other activities for teaching speaking skill that can be applied by teachers in a classroom are using presentation and talk, story, joke, anecdote, drama, discussion and debate, drama, simulation, conversation and chat, and out-side class speaking (Thornburry, 2005). Besides, a teacher can also ask student to take roles as a reporter and a news anchor, interview someone, complete a story, and explain a picture.

Similarly, Kayi (2006) proposes some activities that can be used in the process of teaching speaking skill such as; discussion, role play, simulation, information gap, brainstorming, storytelling, reporting, interviews, story completion, reporting, playing cards, picture describing, and find the difference.

In further, Kayi (2006) provides some suggestions for English language teachers while teaching speaking or oral language as follows:

1. provide maximum opportunity to students to speak the target language by providing a rich environment that contains collaborative work, authentic materials and tasks, and shared knowledge.
2. try to involve each student in every speaking activity; for this aim, practice different ways of student participation.
3. reduce teacher speaking time in class while increasing student speaking time. Step back and observe students.
4. indicate positive signs when commenting on a student's response.
5. ask eliciting questions such as "What do you mean? How did you reach that conclusion?" in order to prompt students to speak more.
6. provide written feedback like "Your presentation was really great. It was a good job. I really appreciated your efforts in preparing the materials and efficient use of your voice..."
7. do not correct students' pronunciation mistakes very often while they are speaking. Correction should not distract student from his or her speech.
8. involve speaking activities not only in class but also out of class; contact parents and other people who can help.
9. circulate around classroom to ensure that students are on the right track and see whether they need your help while they work in groups or pairs.
10. provide the vocabulary beforehand that students need in speaking activities.
11. diagnose problems faced by students who have difficulty in expressing themselves in the target language and

provide more opportunities to practice the spoken language.

Deciding an activity to do in a classroom is not an easy task. It needs knowledge on the best techniques to be used, the appropriate materials and clear targets to be achieved so that the target of teaching speaking skill can be achieved well. One of the techniques that can be used is project-based learning.

Project-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning is a learning method in which the core is a project given to students to be solved. In this process of teaching and learning, the students are actively engaged in solving the given projects individually or in groups. This opinion supported by Blumenfeld, et al (1991) who state that project-based learning is a comprehensive approach to classroom teaching and learning that is designed to engage students in investigation of complex, authentic problems and carefully design products and tasks.

In addition, Duffy and Cunningham (1996) define project-based learning as an instructional model that is based in the constructivist approach to learning, which entails the construction of knowledge with multiple perspectives within a social, and allow for self-awareness of learning and knowing while context dependent.

Similarly, Moss & Van Duzer (1998:1) define project-based learning as an instructional approach that contextualizes learning by presenting learners with problems to solve or products to develop.

In line to the experts above, Thomas (2000:1) in short mentions that project-based learning is a model that organized learning around projects.

In further, Solomon (2003:10) explains that PBL is "a process of learning that students are responsible for in their own education. Students work collaboratively to solve problems that are "authentic, curriculum-based, and often interdisciplinary". Learners learn how to design their own learning process and decide

what and where information can be collected. They analyze and synthesize the information then apply and present their new knowledge at the end. Throughout the process of learning, teachers act as managers and advisors.

Learning become fruitful for learners because they can exhibit their abilities to plan,manage, and accomplish projects through their content knowledge and language skills (Kloppenborg and Baucus: 2004) When teachers successfully implement project-based learning, students can be highly motivated, feel actively involved in their own learning, and produce complex, high quality work (Blumenfeld, et al:1991).

In short, it can be inferred that project-based learning is a method of teaching a new language to students by giving them projects to be done and it gives students great opportunity to be independent and responsible for their own learning.

Characteristics of Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning as a method of teaching a new language has several criterias. These criterias specify by some experts as follow;

First, Thomas (2000:4) lists five major criteria of a learning to be called project-basedlearning:

1. project-based learning is central, not peripheral to the curriculum,
2. project-based learning is focused on questions or problems that ‘drive’ students to encounter the central concept and principles of a discipline,
3. projects involve students I a constructive investigation,
4. projects are student-driven to some significant degree and,
5. projects are realistic, not school-like.

Second, Simpson (2011; 43-44) summarizes the features of Project-based learning as follows;

1. complex explorations over a period of

time;

2. a student-centred learning activity whereby students plan, complete and present the task;
3. challenging questions, problems or topics of student interest which become the centre of the project and the learning process;
4. the de-emphasis of teacher-directed activities;
5. frequent feedback from peers and facilitators, and an opportunity to share resources, ideas and expertise through the whole process in the classroom;
6. hands-on activities and the use of authentic resources and technologies;
7. a collaborative learning environment rather than a competitive one;
8. the use of a variety of skills such as social skills and management skills;
9. the use of effort in connecting ideas and acquiring new skills during different stages of projects;
- 10.the production of meaningful artifacts that can be shared with peers, teachers, and experts in a public presentation; and
- 11.assessment in both the process of working from the first stage to the last stage and the finished project.

Third, Fried-Booth, Simpson, and Stollerin Ponpon (2011) state that the criteria of Project-Based Learning:

1. focuses on content learning rather than on specific language patterns,
2. is student-centered so the teacher become a facilitator or coach,
3. encourage collaboration among students,
4. leads to the authentic integration of language skills and processing information from multiple sources,
5. allows learners to demonstrate their understanding of content knowledge through an end product (e.g., an oral presentation, a poster session, a

- bulletin board display, or a stage performance), and
6. bridges using English in class and using English in real life contexts.
 7. both process and product-oriented

From the opinions of the experts above, it can be summed up that project-based learning is a learning method that driven students to be more active, being critical, independent, and sociable. The project based learning is oriented to process as well as the product, more to student- centered and realistic task.

Reasons of Using Project-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning can be categorizes as a current method of teaching English. It is a good method for teaching the skill of speaking. By using this method the students will have a better motivation in learning English, will be more active and have more initiative in learning English language. In addition, in Singaporean Ministry of Education document in Holst (2003:7), it is written that:

“Project work allows students to practise creative and critical thinking skills and self –directed inquiry. It also helps our students see the interconnectedness of the knowledge they acquire from different subjects and cultivate communication and interpersonal skills”

Moreover, Hernandez-Ramos and Pas in Tamin and Grant (2013, p.73) argue that “the Project-Based Learning did not limit the students to reporting the facts but attempted to interpret the information, were more motivated about working collaboratively on their presentations, and expressed a more positive attitude towards learning history”.

In further, Klein et al (2009) mention that the use of Project-Based learning can make

students becomes experts in some researches which called “exportable knowledge”, give opportunity for students to do authentic investigation and presentations, make students more sociable because Project-based learning invites students to learn cooperatively and collaboratively, and encourages students to be more active and no longer become passive students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Steps in Project-Based Learning

Ways of Incorporating Project-Based Learning in a classroom proposed by several experts.

The first is by Kriwas in Fragoulis (2009) who divided it into several stages;

- **Stage 1:** Speculation: in this step involves the choice of topic for the project and sensitisation about it. The purpose is to build up students’ interest and conducive climate for learning and doing the project.
- **Stage 2:** Designing the project activities: this step is to make groups, assign roles, choosing methodology, the source of references, the location of activities, and the location that will be visited.
- **Stage 3:** Conducting the project activities: this step is about implementing the design activities in the previous stage.
- **Stage 4: Evaluation:** this step is about doing assessment on the activities have been done by students in their own group. In addition, the evaluation is also about assessing students’ experiences individually and in group, identification of errors and problems.

The second one is proposed by Klein et al (2009) and the steps are;

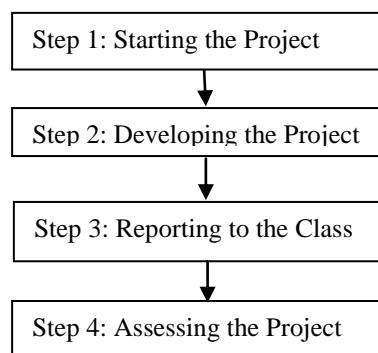
- a. **Step 1: Establish the content and skill goals.** The first step consists of three points;
 - Big idea and theme: it provides all goals for a project-based unit and

offer possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration.

- Essential questions: it is used to get students to think about the completeness of the issues, scientific principles, and events.
 - Learning skill: it is important to be done because students need to learn, practice, apply, and expand the skills.
- b. Step 2: Develop formats and Final Products.** In the second step, there are two points that should become the concern;
- Authentic products and Presentations/Performance Formats: the product must have real-life context, engage thinking and learning, and be perfect.
 - Fort polios: it is used to make documentation on the students 'learning
- c. Step 3: Plan the Scope of the Project**
- Developing the timeline and Scope for the Project; it aims to support students to create the product for completing the projects.
- d. Step 4: Design the Instructional Activities**
- Instructional strategies: it aims to manage the strategies,
 - Possible mini-lessons: it is critical for successful of the project.
 - Decide how to launch the Project: as an overview at the beginning of the project.
 - Planned assessment: assessment is as feedback on projects' progress.
 - Rubrics for Project-based Learning: creating the rubrics for the project.
- e. Step 5: Assess the Project Design.** In this step, a checklist will be used to prompt the reflections. The checklist

consists of the following points; goals, collaboration, instruction, resources and technology, environment, final presentation and celebration.

The third one, it is proposed by Simpson (2011: 69) is shown in the diagram below;



Based on the diagram above, it can be seen that there are four steps. The first step is *Starting the project*; this step is a process of selecting relevance and interesting topic for a project that will be done by students. The project should be challenging and motivating the students. The second step is *developing the project*; this is a good process to improve the project. In this step, the things that should be engaged first by all group members (individually, in pairs, and a group) is research. Students look for some information to help them to find the answers for the question that they have, write down the things that they have achieved, and find out the solution to solve the problems that they faced. Then, the third step is *reporting the class*; in this session the project is being presented. In presentation, student will get some feedback on the progress of and improvement of the project from their friends or classmates. The last step is *assessing the project*; in this step, the project that is done by an individual student is being evaluated by students as a group, a teacher or external audience. In addition, in this step the students are also allowed to practice the lesson or knowledge that they have got.

Incorporating Project-Based Learning (Pbl) into a University Speaking Classroom

The project-based learning method has ever been used by the writer in teaching speaking skill especially in Speaking II course which has 18 students. She assigned projects to students to be done in group of two. The project was making a video on tourism objects in Bengkulu province. This project was addressed for the third semester students of Diploma III English Department of FKIP of University of Bengkulu. The result of using this technique shows that it could improve the students' speaking skills

In addition, using this project also made the students happier in the process of learning English speaking, improved their confidence in speaking English, and made the students get much knowledge on tourism spots in Bengkulu province. In doing this project, the writer used the steps proposed by Simpson (2011). The steps of doing the project of making the *video on tourism* are as follows;

- 1. Starting the project:** Before doing the project, in the first meeting, the teacher showed a video on tourism object taken from YouTube to the students. Explaining to them what was good and not good about the video for example the angle of taking the object, tools needed for the project and the language use. Then, the teacher and students selected the topic for the project. As mentioned by Simpson (2011), the topic must be challenging and motivating for the students, therefore the teacher and students decided to choose a topic about tourism in Bengkulu province. It is chosen because there are many tourism spots in Bengkulu province. This project of making video on tourism made the students excited and well-motivated to do the project. The tourism spots that they need to explore were Pantai Panjang beach, Fort of Malborough, Dendam Tak Sudah Lake, Bung Karno

House, Traditional Food of Bengkulu (the process of making Bay Tat Cake and Bagai Hiu), and Bengkulu handicrafts (Batik Basurek). The students did the project in a group of two students for a project.

- 2. Developing the project:** In this step, the students did the project. They seek for information about the tourism spot, made draft/ script for the project and did the shooting. Since there are only two students in a group, they were helped by other group members in taking and editing the video. In this step, the collaborative, supportive and cooperation among the students were developed by itself. The students really enjoy doing the project and become close one to another. It was reflected in the classroom in the following meeting.
- 3. Reporting to the class:** In this step, a group presented their videos in front of the classroom by using a speaker and LCD projector. Then, the other students watched the videos, and prepared comments on the video that has been watched by them in which focusing on the techniques of taking the video and the content, and the language used in the video. As a result, students got feedback directly from their friends and also their teacher.
- 4. Assessing the project.** Assessing the project was done during step 3 in which students gave their comments in English toward the video. Their comments were shown on the screen based on the language use even if the grammar and the word choice was incorrect. All comments are written by the teacher. After that, the teacher also gave comments on the video and the language used in the video and then corrected the grammar and the word choice, the pronunciation and the content of the students' comments. All of these points

were corrected directly by teacher while observed the students' speaking skill development.

Using the project-based learning in which the project was making a video on tourism in speaking class was a great experience for the students and also the teacher. The students were become more confident in speaking, and full of excitement and happiness in doing the project. They become closed one to another as classroom members. Cooperation and solidarity among the students were grown by itself along the project and the students valued fairness, and politeness in giving comments on the other group projects.

CONCLUSION

Teaching speaking skill is not an easy way to be done in a classroom. It needs teacher's knowledge and creativity in designing, implementing, managing and assessing the teaching and learning process. Choosing the appropriate teaching techniques and appropriate materials need broad knowledge on language teaching and learning process which a good teacher should possessed. One of the current method of teaching speaking skills is project based learning. Project-based learning is a learning method that driven students to be more active, being critical, independent, and sociable. It is oriented to process and the product, more to student- centered and realistic task that is proven to be beneficial in the process of teaching and learning speaking skill.

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