

ANALYSIS OF THE CONSTRAINTS OF CLASSROOM-BASED SPEAKING INSTRUCTION: A LITERATURE STUDY

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Abstract:

EFL learners desire to speak ably both socially and professionally, but few have achieved it. Hesitation, idea loss, mother tongue interference, word-recalling problems, and low fluency are noticeable stains in their speaking. Low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes and reluctant to speak have caused those problems. Speaking practices mostly done in classroom-based speaking instruction (CBSI) cannot solve those problems. This article aiming to reveal the constraints of CBSI through literature analysis showed results that CBSI: (1) unable to increase students' speaking frequency: so many students but so little time, and the teacher takes the biggest portion of the talk; (2) asymmetrical teacher-student interaction: the teacher is more authoritative for his knowledge or status superiority; (3) lack of meaningful communication: the students do not have opportunities to express and negotiate meaning spontaneously; (4) lack of authentic communication: the teacher not the students decided what to talk; (5) not promoting autonomous learning. To address the CBSI constraints, ICT role must be considered such as zoom, Skype, Google meet, podcast, etc., which offer multiple ways to engage in communicative activities. ICT utilization should be purposed to creating optimal conditions of language learning environment: opportunities to interact and negotiate meaning; interacting with authentic audience and tasks; exposure and encouragement to produce varied and creative language; enough time and feedback; guidance to attend mindfully to the learning process; work in an atmosphere with an ideal anxiety level; and supporting autonomy

Keywords: classroom-based Speaking instruction, constraints, ICT, optimal conditions of language learning environment

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Abstrak

Pelajar Bahasa Inggris ingin trampil berbicara baik dalam kehidupan sosial maupun profesional, akan tetapi sedikit yang berhasil menguasainya. Keengganan, kehilangan ide, pengaruh bahasa ibu, permasalahan mengingat kosa kata, dan ketidاكلancaran selalu menodai kinerja berbicara mereka. Percaya diri yang rendah, takut membuat kesalahan, dan keengganan untuk berbicara adalah penyebab kemampuan berbicara yang rendah. Latihan berbicara yang hampir sepenuhnya dilakukan dalam pembelajaran berbasis ruang kelas tidak mampu mengatasi permasalahannya di atas. Artikel ini bertujuan mengungkapkan keterbatasan-keterbatasan latihan berbicara berbasis ruang kelas melalui studi analisis literature, dan menunjukkan hasil bahwa latihan berbicara berbasis ruang kelas: (1) tidak mampu meningkatkan frekuensi berbicara siswa: jumlah siswa banyak tetapi waktu terbatas, dan guru mengambil porsi berbicara terbesar; (2) interaksi guru-siswa yang asimetris: guru lebih mendominasi dalam berbicara karena lebih superior wawasan dan statusnya; (3) komunikasi yang kurang bermakna: siswa kurang memiliki kesempatan menyampaikan dan menegosiasi makna secara spontan; (4) komunikasi yang kurang otentik: gurulah, bukan siswa yang menentukan topik pembicaraan; (5) kurang mempromosikan pembelajaran mandiri. Untuk menanggulangi keterbatasan latihan berbicara berbasis ruang kelas, peran ICT sangat potensial untuk digunakan seperti Zoom, Skype, Google meet, podcast, dan lainnya, yang menawarkan berbagai cara untuk melibatkan siswa dalam aktifitas komunikasi. Pemanfaatan ICT harus dimaksudkan untuk menciptakan kondisi lingkungan pembelajaran bahasa yang optimal, yakni kesempatan untuk berinteraksi dan menegosiasi makna, kesempatan berinteraksi dengan audiens dan tugas komunikasi yang otentik, keterpaparan dan dorongan untuk menghasilkan bahasa yang bervariasi dan kreatif, waktu dan masukan yang cukup, pembimbingan dalam menjalankan proses pembelajaran dengan penuh kesadaran, bekerja dalam atmosfer dengan tingkat stres dan kecemasan yang ideal, dan mendukung belajar mandiri.

Kata kunci: pembelajaran berbicara berbasis ruang kelas; keterbatasan; ICT; kondisi pembelajaran bahasa yang optimal

INTRODUCTION

Among the language skills, speaking is taken for granted as a sure indicator of mastery of a foreign language. As evidenced in newspapers' job opening ads, job recruitments in high-profile institutions, moreover such as in the broadcasting and journalism industry, multinational companies, and the English teaching profession, require the applicants to show good speaking performance in the relevant language during the job interview. Recent standard international English proficiency testing like IELTS and IBT TOEFL also measures the speaking performance of the test takers. Learners too sometimes evaluate their success in language learning based on how well they have improved in their spoken language ability (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Therefore, speaking ability is one of the areas of concern

for any educational institution providing English teaching service.

English service institutions in Indonesia like the English teacher training and English language and literature schools/faculties prepare their students to become active English users to enable them to use the language orally for a variety of communication purposes such as for delivering English lessons and for presentational oral discourse in professional gatherings or events. Hence, classroom-based English speaking practices are provided in, as it is assumed, an ample amount of speaking practice for students. Students are even made to use English communicatively during other non-speaking classes. Furthermore, to guarantee the graduates' English communication ability, universities such as in Malaysia require their students to take an English oral communication interview

assessment before they can have the final examination for their graduation, because the ability to communicate well in English has now become a standard criterion for Malaysian graduates seeking employment (Kashinathan & Abdul Aziz, 2021).

However, expecting high performance speaking ability of students is not so much fruitful as expected. Very few adult EFL learners achieve adequate proficiency in oral communication. Adult EFL learners in general are relatively poor at spoken English, especially regarding fluency, control of idiomatic expressions, and understanding of cultural pragmatic problems (Cahyono & Widiati, 2015; Shumin, 2002). English speaking proficiency inadequacy is apparent even in graduates with English majors, as well. Hesitation, idea loss, mother tongue interference, low self-confidence, and word recalling problems are common flaws ever marking the students' speaking performance (Syamsurizal, 2009; Fauzan, 2014).

METHOD

This study was not purposed to obtain primary data, but to investigate the literature about problems of and solutions to classroom based speaking practices. Therefore, it used method of literature review in order to review, analyze, and synthesize the literature in the relevant field, without collecting or analyzing any primary data (Green et al., 2006). The review objective of this study was to understand the problems of classroom based speaking practices and to find solutions that could address these problems. Through this review was, adequate answers to the following questions could be sought: (1) What are the constraints of classroom based speaking practices? (2) What are the ways out to solve these constraints? The study search various types of relevant information from sources of journal articles, books, book chapters and reports needed to guide the subsequent analysis. The materials coverage analyzed in this study might not have been exhaustive, but they were representative of

materials in the specific field of classroom based speaking instruction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students Problems in Speaking

There are several problems causing EFL learners' underperformance of English speaking skills. Five principal factors can be identified responsible for the reluctance of students to speak up (Tsui, 2001): (1) students' perceived low proficiency in English: their lack of confidence, unwillingness to take risks, and perception that their English was poor resulted in their reluctance to respond (2) students' fear of mistakes and derision: afraid of making fools of themselves in front of their peers and the teacher, (3) teacher's intolerance of silence: teachers gave students little or no wait time, (4) uneven allocation of turns: teachers favored better students when soliciting responses, and (5) incomprehensible input: the overly difficult teachers' language input: what teachers thought were simple and clear questions were in fact quite difficult to understand, confusing and not specific enough.

These factors contribute individually or in combination to the feeling of extreme shyness or anxiety on the part of some students when it comes to speaking up their minds, despite their fairly advanced ability in listening, reading and writing (Gebhard, 2000). Their anxiety is due to insufficient opportunity to speak or because of their teachers' being critical of their English in the past. Poor exposure, insufficient opportunity to speak, infrequent use of English in social interactions, and rare contact with other English speakers or native speakers may become the root source of the students' lagging behind in speaking skills compared with other language skills. Rich exposure and frequent use of English in social interactions play an important role in the learning process for developing effective communication ability (Shumin, 2002; Lier, 2001). As the opportunity to speak in the

language-promoting interaction is a key factor in second language (L2) or foreign language development, English speaking instruction must arouse in the learners a willingness and need or reason to speak (Shumin, 2002).

It is quite a challenge in the language teaching profession to get the students to talk in a non-natural setting of English learning. In such a setting, such as in Indonesia, institutional attempts to engage students in English communication have mostly been made available through classroom practice. However, speaking pedagogy in a formal speaking class has very limited power to develop students' communication ability to a satisfactory expectation.

In classroom-based speaking instruction, oral English communications by learners merely take place in and are greatly dependent on class activities. Spoken language skill is too often assumed to be developed simply by assigning students general topics to discuss or by getting them to talk on certain subjects (Afia, 2006). Evidently, it is a flawed assumption leading to insensitive attention to what factors that inhibit or facilitate the production of spoken language by the students. There are many things needed for language production to occur that classroom-based speaking practice cannot adequately accommodate.

The Constraints of Classroom-Based Speaking Instruction

Limited frequency of language use

The first constraint of classroom-based speaking activity to be highlighted as background of the present study is related to the frequency of language use. Frequency of language use has a very significant relation with English speaking skills improvement (Gebhard, 2000). Like the popular saying frequently heard on TV advertisements, "the more you speak the more powerful you become." Another related old adage that has stood the test of time is "dialogue is the food for thought." In relation to the learning of speaking, we can confidently believe that the more frequent a learner speaks English the

more fluent he/she can speak the language. Speaking skills acquisitional sequences are directly linked to the quality and consistency of interactive opportunities (Moyer, 2014).

Classroom-based speaking practice, unfortunately, is too constrained in terms of its ability to increase significantly frequency of language use by the students. Normally, there are too many students and too short an instructional time in one speaking class. Consequently, there is too little time and opportunity for English speaking practices that the students are provided with. Worse, the instructional time available is still corrupted by teachers who usually take a bigger role in the teacher-centered speaking activities. The result is students' opportunity to hypothesizing and experiencing English use in the classroom is made minimal to the level of insufficiency.

Asymmetrical student-teacher interaction

The nature of student-teacher interaction constitutes the second constraint of classroom-based speaking activity. It is a common practice that classroom interaction is filled in greater part with teacher-student interaction. Such interaction is asymmetrical in nature. In a typical asymmetrical interaction, one of the speakers, which is the teacher in a classroom case, holds authoritative role for his knowledge or status superiority to the others. Teacher-student interaction, characterized with initiation-response-feedback pattern, curtails the learners' side of communication, control, initiative, meaning creation and negotiation, message elaboration, and a number of other features characteristic of social interaction (Lier, 2001). This being so may cause imbalance in the interaction and downplay the role of interaction and thus harm effective interaction which can hinder the learning process and outcome.

Lack of meaningful communication

Classroom-based speaking activity is also challenged in engaging the students in meaningful communication, which adds to the

constraint list of classroom-based speaking instruction. Language instructors should provide learners with opportunities for meaningful communication. Meaningful language use or communication is very important and should exist at all stages in the acquisition of second language communicative skills; it is what constitutes real communication (Savignon, 1983). The development of the learners' communicative abilities is seen to depend not so much on the time they spend rehearsing grammatical patterns as on the opportunities they are given to interpret, to express, and to negotiate meaning in real-life situations. Therefore, language learners should be involved in experiencing speaking in meaningful activities facilitative to spontaneous oral expression (not the drill-like pseudocommunication) about relevant topics through more symmetrical interaction between learners. Learner-learner interaction is the key to teaching language for communication because communication derives essentially from interaction and symmetrical interaction is desirable in communication class than asymmetrical (Lier, 2001).

Inauthentic speaking activities

Corollary to the lack of meaningful communication, classroom speaking, particularly teacher-learner interaction, is notoriously manipulative and lacking in authenticity of communication, which is still another constraint of classroom-based speaking activities. It has been remotely linked or connected with the students' real purpose of oral language use. Most of the teachers do not facilitate situations for real practice in speaking, and learners' interest and needs are not taken into account (Derakhshan et al., 2016).

To link with community of other English speakers is necessary for creating and facilitating real purpose of language use. To allow the students to have hands-on interaction experience in the out-of-class real community is a real need. An African proverb

goes: "It takes the whole village to raise a child." Thus, the environment plays a part, if not bigger, in shaping the learners' capacity. Experiences beyond the classroom can make substantial contributions to student learning and personal development. More than 70% of what students learn during college results from out-of-class experiences. Out-of-class activities and experience have given benefits which include, among other things, gains in confidence, self-esteem, and altruistic values (Kuh et al., 2006). Out-of-class experiences that contribute to the above and other aspects of students' learning and personal development include conversations with faculty after class and collaboration in research and teaching projects, living in a residence hall, working on or off campus, participating in institutional governance, involvement in clubs and organizations, and voluntarism, etc. (Kuh et al., 2006). Therefore, teachers and teaching institution should enrich the surrounding out-of-class resources in the community for the benefits of their teaching and the students' learning and development.

It is very important to utilize the various communities as much as possible as resources for improving the classroom practice. People involved in TEFL profession should stay connected with each other and with the local community in the endeavor of educating students, regardless of where you are and what type of class or curriculum you have, who your students are, or how limited your budget might be. A language program should be developed based on the learners' social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development and the relevant students' context (Afia, 2006). The need to use English in social interaction indeed cannot be neglected if real oral communication mastery is a desired objective.

In fact, learning a language is never an individual endeavor, and neither is teaching, and they should not be limited only to their classroom. Language should not be looked at as individual behavior but as one of many symbolic systems that members of a society

use for communication among themselves (Savignon, 1983). People and the languages they use are viewed not in isolation but in their social contexts or settings. Therefore, openness, collaboration, and sharing through communities of English speaking are the keys to enrich English-teaching practices (Afia, 2006).

Lack of autonomous language learning

The next constraint of classroom-based speaking pedagogy is related to the extent to which autonomous language skill learning can be practiced. There is a growing awareness of the importance of fostering autonomous language learning. Students can be more autonomous when learning reading, listening and writing skill is concerned since they can practice to increase the skills almost in any place at any time. Unlike the three language skills which can be done in solitary, however, when speaking skill practice is concerned, students cannot be that autonomous and done alone. Oral communication activity requires at least two immediate interlocutors interacting with a real purpose of communication in a real social context or setting. With the absence of such requirements, speaking practice will be those of self-repetition and guided classroom English speaking practice which yields only very minimal results for English speaking ability (Lier, 2001).

Ways for Overcoming CBSI Constraints

The best way to learn to interact is through interaction

As read previously throughout, the words “communication, language use, conversation, dialogue, negotiation of meaning, and interaction are the dominant terminologies which bear a common meaning in the current study. It is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other (Savignon, 1983). Interaction in fact is the heart of communication, and that the best way to learn to interact is through interaction itself.

Through interaction, students can increase their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic material, or even the output of their fellow students in discussions, skits, joint problem-solving tasks, or dialog journals (Rivers, 1994). In interaction students can use all they possess of the language—all they have learned or casually absorbed—in real-life exchanges. Even at the elementary stage, students should learn in an interactive way to exploit the elasticity of language.

Principles of interaction for language learning

There are seven principles that form foundation stones for the potent of interaction for language learning (Brown, 2000) : (1) Automaticity: True human interaction is best accomplished when focal attention is on meanings and messages and not on grammar and other linguistic forms. Learners are thus freed from keeping language in a controlled mode and can more easily proceed to automatic modes of processing. (2) Intrinsic motivation: As students become engaged with each other in speech acts of fulfillment and self-actualization, their deepest drives are satisfied. And as they more fully appreciate their own competence to use language, they can develop a system of self-reward. (3) Strategic investment: Interaction requires the use of strategic language competence both to make certain decisions on how to say or write, or interpret language, and to make repairs when communication pathways are blocked. The spontaneity of interactive discourse requires judicious use of numerous strategies for production and comprehension. (4) Risk-taking: Interaction requires the risk of failing to produce intended meaning, or failing to interpret intended meaning (on the part of someone else), of being laughed at, of being shunned or rejected. The rewards of course are great and worth the risks. (5) The language-culture connection: The cultural loading of interactive speech as well as writing requires that interlocutors be thoroughly versed in the cultural nuances of language. (6) Interlanguage: The complexity

of interaction entails a long developmental process of acquisition. Numerous errors of production and comprehension will be a part of this development. And the role of feedbacks is crucial to the developmental process. (7) Communicative competence: All of the elements of communicative competence (grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and strategic) are involved in human interaction. All of these aspects must work together for successful communication to take place.

In conclusion, communication or interaction, which is getting our message across through a continuous process of expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meanings between or amongst interlocutors, is the tool English learners should be equipped with, the process they go through and are nurtured in, and the destination they are headed to as the objective of language learning. Insufficiency or infrequency of interaction opportunity in English is admitted as the cause to low achievement in speaking proficiency of the learners.

Classroom-based speaking practice alone, with its aforementioned constraints, has very limited power in providing the students with more frequent language use. It also has a limited role in providing the students with more authentic or real purpose communication. Besides, classroom-based speaking cannot give opportunity for students to practice using English in the real community and get them connected with other larger English speaking communities. A speaking community for fostering more autonomous learning of speaking is not facilitated. An attempt to make students speak more frequently, with more authentic and real purpose of communication should be sought. An attempt must also be created in order to link students with a wider community of English learners and allow them to use or speak English in a real social setting or context in a more autonomous way.

Potential role of ICT

One attempt to facilitate and enhance educational practice is through technology deployment. Technology now is a trend in educational enterprise and has been a household word for educational purposes. Today the internet offers a multitude of ways for foreign language learners to engage in communicative activities. Not only can this electronic medium be used to enhance students' reading and writing skills, but new technological advances now offer ESL/EFL students and teachers increased opportunities to include online speaking and listening as well (Chinnery, 2014). The impressive developments in audio, video, and computer-mediated communication programs offer many possibilities for teachers to activities around listening to news programs, watching related videos, and holding conversations in real-time.

Although there are benefits of computer and internet mediated communication, there are limitations in the use of it for classroom language learning purposes. Audio and video technologies on the internet also have some limitations. In order to successfully utilize these media, an Internet connection must be stable and constant. While these features can be used with dial-up connections, they flow more smoothly on high-speed broadband connections (Chinnery, 2014). Extensive download times of audio and video, or any other technical difficulties such as downed servers, may discourage both students and teachers (Lafford & Lafford, 2013). These factors, individually or collectively, have the potential to exclude students and schools with insufficient budgets. However, although ICT was limited in supporting speaking activities in the past, at present it is better, because more sophisticated technology can facilitate audio-visual and real time communication for learners using video conferencing, or online conversation (Muttaqin, 2010).

The use of technology in language education can take many forms, from portable tape recorders, the radio, to the computers and the internet. The acquisition and adoption of new technologies in education should be

guided by sound educational principles, not by the apparent sophistication of the hardware or software. The decision to acquire technology should always be made on a rationally considered basis. Be reminded that it is not reasonable to assume that new equals better (Jones & Sato, 1998). The worth of any device, notwithstanding cost, is measured in its capacity to accomplish the task it is intended for. This means that the most appropriate technology available is the best technology available, not the other way around. Thus, they conclude that a good technology should (1) fit well into the existing curricular and institutional contexts, (2) help teachers make more effective use of their instructional time, and (3) enable teachers to better meet students' learning needs.

Optimal conditions of language learning environment

In addition, the efforts of adopting and utilizing technologies must be made on the basis of achieving optimal language learning environments. There are eight conditions to consider for an optimal language learning environment (Egbert et al., 1999; Bojović, 2018)

1. Learners have opportunities to interact and negotiate meaning considering and shaping language learning environment
2. Learners interact in the target language with an authentic audience
3. Learners are involved in authentic tasks
4. Learners are exposed to and encouraged to produce varied and creative language
5. Learners have enough time and feedback
6. Learners are guided to attend mindfully to the learning process
7. Learners work in an atmosphere with an ideal stress/anxiety level
8. Learner autonomy is supported

When foreign language teachers are cognizant of these conditions and apply them in their technology-based speaking and listening communication activities, the technologies will become optimal tools for enhancing students' second language learning and acquisition (Chinnery, 2014).

CONCLUSION

EFL students expect to become active English users both for social and professional purposes, but not many have achieved their expectations. Their speaking performances are marked with hesitation, idea loss, mother tongue interference, word-recalling problems, and low fluency. The problems occur because students perceive that their speaking ability is low--thus they have low confidence; fear of making mistakes and afraid to make fool of themselves in front of their friends and teachers.

The best way to learn to interact is through interaction or dialogue where exchanges of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people can be done. However, speaking practices in classroom have limited power to develop students' interactive activities maximally, because they are constrained. Firstly, classroom speaking practices are unable to provide adequate frequency of oral language use by the students because there are so many students but so little time available. The talk activity is dominated by the teacher by taking the biggest portion of the talk, minimizing significantly the students' portion. Secondly, teacher-student interaction in classroom talk is asymmetrical in nature, where the teacher is more authoritative for his knowledge or status superiority compared to the students. Thus, the interaction is typically characterized with initiation-response-feedback pattern, curtailing the students' side of communication, control, initiative, meaning creation and negotiation, message elaboration, which may cause imbalance in the interaction. Thirdly, classroom-based speaking activity lacks meaningful communication, namely immersing the students to situations and opportunities to interpret, express, and negotiate meaning in spontaneous oral expression about various relevant topics more symmetrically in real life situations, not just spending time to rehearse grammatical patterns and drill-like pseudocommunication. Learner-learner symmetrical interaction is desirable in communication class than

asymmetrical. Fourthly, classroom speaking is manipulative and lacking in authenticity of communication, in which it has been remotely linked with the students' real purpose of oral language use. The teaching of English needs to encourage students to engage with the environment and community activities, and have hands-on interaction experience in the out-of-class real community. Out-of-class activities and experiences which might include conversations with faculty after class and collaboration in research and teaching projects, living in a residence hall, working on or off campus, participating in institutional governance, involvement in clubs and organizations, and voluntarism, might benefit the students to gain in confidence, self-esteem, and altruistic values. Fifthly, classroom-based speaking pedagogy is not facilitative enough to promote autonomous learning. Speaking practices cannot be done alone in solitary, but requires at least two immediate interlocutors. Students need to be given projects where they can work independently and in collaboration with others in real social setting.

ICT with the internet-based communication tools such as zoom, Skype, Google meet, podcast and others offer a multitude of ways for foreign language learners to engage in communicative activities. This electronic medium can be used to enhance students' communication activities. However, be reminded that it is not reasonable to assume that new equals better, thus the most appropriate technology available is the best technology available, not the other way around. The adoption and utilization of ICT should be purposed to creating eight optimal conditions of language learning environment, i.e. (1) Learners have opportunities to interact and negotiate meaning considering and shaping language learning environment; (2) Learners interact in the target language with an authentic audience; (3) Learners are involved in authentic tasks; (4) Learners are exposed and encouraged to produce varied and creative language; (5) Learners have enough

time and feedback; (6) Learners are guided to attend mindfully to the learning process; (7) Learners work in an atmosphere with an ideal stress/anxiety level; (8) Learner autonomy is supported.

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