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Exploring EFL Students' Efforts in Speaking Skill

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the efforts that students made in developing speaking skill. Descriptive qualitative was used in this study; the subjects were 65 students at year 2015 studying at English Education department, Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh. The instrument used in this study was questionnaire. The questionnaire questions were adapted from the activity scale from Pace & Kuh. The questionnaire revealed that speaking experience such as communicating by using English with friends and family was the highest effort chosen by the students because it was very comfortable to perform speaking among the closest people. Club and organization was the lowest effort chosen by the student. The students took part in organization just to spend their spare time. The students thought that joining in an organization did not have contribution in developing their speaking skill. The implication of this study was to motivate the students to make some efforts to develop their speaking skill. Focusing in certain effort will help the students improve their speaking skill mastery. In addition, for the suggestion, the students should create activities that promote English communication in order to develop their speaking skill.

Keywords: Students' efforts, speaking, motivation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the communication tools to deliver meaning and thought. Mart(2012) says that speaking is defined as being capable of speech, expressing or exchanging thoughts through language. By speaking people are able to share information. For those who have good capability in speaking, they will be better in information exchange process among the others. Febriyanti (2011) also states that speaking is a process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information.

Its form and meaning depend on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes of speaking. It means that people can acquire useful information from speaking activities. Since speaking always produces important information, everyone should make it as the priority skill to be mastered.

According to Nunan (1991) oral communication is seen as a basic skill, so it is much needed. For most people, mastering the art of speaking is the single most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language, and it is measured in term of ability to carry out a conversation in the language.

English Education Department is one of the study programs at Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Faculty (FKIP) in Syiah Kuala University. This study program puts speaking as one of the compulsory subject matters that has to be learnt by the students. There are some materials that is taught in Speaking for Everyday Communication such as expressing, retelling story, works interpretation, interview, presentation, etc. The writer collected the speaking score of 65 students at year 2015 for Speaking for Everyday Communication. The data reveals that the students' speaking score is 84 on average. It means that students accomplished all speaking aspects such as pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary mastery, and accuracy. Since the students' achievement in speaking subject is good, the writer believe that it was important to find out the efforts that made by the students in developing their speaking skill.

Motivation has a big role in students' effort in developing their speaking skill. Gardner (1985) states that the motivation constructed the primary factor to influence students on English learning. Motivation for language learning can not only include goal orientation but also the combination of effort, desire to achieve the goal of learning the language and attitudes toward learning the language. In the other words, effort is influenced by motivation. Students who intensively motivate themselves in making efforts in speaking tend to be better in speaking skill.

There are a number of studies undertaken on students' efforts in speaking skill have been conducted; Nurhanifah & Widayati (2012) found in their study that students made some efforts to improve their speaking skill such as trying to speak English with the teacher or relatives, using dictionary to check new word and pronunciation and taking chance to speak English in the classroom. This is supported by a study conducted by Gani, et al. (2015) also found that students made four points as efforts to develop their speaking skill such as starting ideas and opinion, asking the question, responding the members' opinion, and sustaining the arguments. The writers hope that the finding of this study can be a guide for students to find the ways to develop their speaking skill.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Speaking

Speaking is the process of conveying expression, idea, and opinion by talking. According to Florez (1999) speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes

for speaking. In addition, speaking is one of the productive skills. Nunan (2003, as cited in Mart 2012) says that speaking is a productive oral skill which consists of constructing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning. It is performed directly by using verbal communication.

2.2 Motivation

In general, Dorney (2001) interprets the concept of motivation as an absolute umbrella that hosts a wide range concept that do not have much in common (cited in Zareian & Jodaei, 2015). It means that there is no exact meaning of motivation in general. In the era of behavioristic framework, the term motivation is understood as what moved a resting organism into a dynamic state. Waseem & Jibeen (2013) define motivation as desire, need, and urge to learn, do, achieve or acquire something. It means that motivation is the trigger of doing something. It can measures whether students become successful or not. Students with high motivation tend to do more activities that influence their performance to be better (Rizqa, Suhartono, & Rosnija, 2013). Thus, it is undeniable that motivation influences the learning process directly.

2.3 Effort

Harvey & Martinko (2009) say that effort is also known as part of causal attribution. When peoples' poor performance such as low intelligence is not going to change in the future because of insufficient effort, in the same time, people could improve their performance by working harder and make more effort. Effort does not stand alone, yet it is corporate with individuals' willingness and attitudes toward their goal. According to Lucas et.al (2010) they simply define motivation as the individual's attitudes, desires, and efforts (cited in Utami, Regina, & Wardah (2015). In addition, the effort is the part of motivation. Fata, et al. (2016) defines motivation as a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes towards learning the language.

In this study the writer referring college activities scales from College Students Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ) from Pace & Kuh (1998) in determining the students' efforts in developing speaking skill. CSEQ asks about how college students spend their time in campus environment such as course activities, social and cultural activities, extracurricular activities, and the use of campus facilities to support their academic activities. College activities consist of 11 scales, but, this study adapted only seven scales and all the activities here related to the speaking activities. Library scale refers to the students' activities related to the use of library. However, library is not only a campus facility that allow the students to read some books or scientific.

Course learning scale refers to the activities in the classroom to develop students' speaking skill. Students do some course learning activities related to the performance of speaking such as, taking detail notes, summarizing the course points or doing the assignment given by the lecturer. In addition, students may apply what they got from course learning to the other activities like writing paper or course journal to relate their idea into written form.

Art, music and theatre are the activities that allow the students to show their ability in art. These activities can also be the media to practice students' ability in speaking.

There are a lot of activities to do such as, join in drama class, make discussion about art, join or watch the art competition, etc.

Campus facilities scale refers to how the students use the faculties in their campus effectively. There are many facilities provided around the campus. Students may use library, American corner or mosque to open an English discussion. Go to language center to practice English is also a good way in using campus facilities.

Club and organization refer to the media that useful to improve speaking skill. Students may find many kinds of club or organization that actively involved in English communication inside or outside campus and join in some activities that improve the language skill. For example, join in debate or speech club in campus, work in campus publication, or involve in campus internal organization.

Personal experience related to the self-attempt in improving speaking skill. The experience starts from self-consideration to do useful activities by asking some helps from the people around. Personal experience could be like asking the family to communicate by using English, asking some friend to be the speaking corrector and sharing with friends about speaking performances.

Speaking experience refer to the preparation before performing English communication or certain activity related to the use of English. Students usually have some preparation before talking with their friend by using English. The preparation could be like using dictionary to find new words, making mind mapping to find the idea, asking people's opinion, and thinking about grammar and sentence structure before saying something.

3. METHODS

The method applied in this study was qualitative method. The writer took the data from 65 second semester students at year 2015 of English Education Department, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh. The subjects were selected by using purposive sampling. The subject taken in this study is all the students who passed the Speaking for Everyday Communication subject.

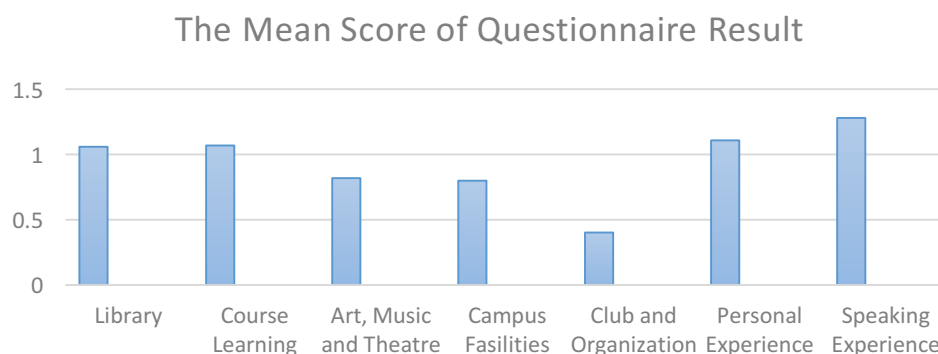
The instruments used in this study was questionnaire. The questionnaire were adapted from the College Students Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ) developed by Pace and Kuh (1998). There were seven activities scale in the questionnaire (1) library, (2) course and learning, (3) art, music and theatre, (4) campus facilities, (5) club and organization, (6) personal experience, and (7) speaking experience. The writer calculated the scores by using Arikunto (2010). The highest mean scores of each activities scale taken as the students efforts.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Result of Questionnaire from Students.

From the questionnaire, the writer analyzed 35 items which are divided into seven sections of college activities scales related to the students' efforts in developing speaking skill. In the following table presented the results of questionnaire given to 65 students.

Table 1. The Result of Questionnaire.



The result of questionnaire above reflects on the activities that mostly students made in order to develop their speaking skill. The data showed that “Speaking experience” had the highest frequency ($M=1.28$) among the other activities scales, followed by “Personal experience” ($M=1.1$), “Course learning” (1.07), “Library” ($M=1.06$), “Art, music and theatre” ($M=0.82$), “Campus facilities” (0.80), and “Club and organization” ($M=0.40$). For the further, the writer explained activities scale respectively. Each activity scale was completed with table which showed the mean score of each questionnaire statements.

In library activities, the students responded five statements related to the library activities. Most students showed five activities in library environment that was claimed by them as their effort in speaking. The questionnaire item number 3 “I develop my vocabulary mastery by reading many resources” was slightly high ($M=1.8$). The students consider it as the most supportive effort in library activities to develop their speaking skill.

In course and learning activities, the students responded five statements related to the course and learning activities. The questionnaire item number 1 “I take detailed notes during class” had the highest mean score ($M=2$) which means that most of the students agree that taking detailed notes is the useful effort to be done during the course and learning activities.

In art, music and theatre activities, the students responded five statements related to the art, music and theatre activities. The questionnaire item number 3 “I watch movie or drama performance inside or outside the campus” had the highest mean score ($M=1.8$) which means that most of the students made effort in improving their speaking skill by watching movie or drama performance inside or outside the campus.

In campus facilities activities, the students responded five statements related to activities in campus facilities. The questionnaire item number 1 “I meet other students at some campus location for discussion (american corner, library, mosque, etc.)” had the highest mean score ($M=1.5$) which means that most of the students made effort in improving their speaking skill by meeting other students at some campus location for discussion. In club and organization activities, the students responded five statements related to the club and organization activities. The questionnaire item number 2 “I work on a campus committee, students’ organization (ESA, BEM, etc.)” had the highest

mean score ($M=1.3$) which means that most of the students made effort in improving their speaking skill by working on a campus committee or students' organization.

In personal experience activities, the students responded five statements related to the personal experience. The questionnaire item number 1 "I ask my friends or family to communicate by using English" had the highest mean score ($M=1.9$) which means that most of the students made effort in improving their speaking skill by asking their family to communicate by using English.

In speaking experience activities, the students responded five statements related to speaking experience. The questionnaire item number 1 "I use a dictionary to look up the meaning of new words." had the highest mean score ($M=2.5$) which means that most of the students made effort in improving their speaking skill by using a dictionary in finding some new words.

4.2 Discussion

Based on the result of the questionnaire, the writer found that the students did some activities to improve their weaknesses in mastering speaking skill. The activities were done in order to achieve a better speaking performance. The students' efforts were created from their motivation to develop their speaking skill. Lucas, et al. (2010) simply defined motivation as the individual's attitudes, desires, and efforts. It means that the students who have desire to be a better English speaker must have efforts as part of motivation.

The students' most chosen effort was the speaking experience. In speaking experience the students ask their friends and family to communicate by using English. The reason why the students chose speaking experience because they do not need formal time and place to speak English. The students do not need to feel shy or uncomfortable to speak English because their interlocutor are their close friend and family.

The students' lowest effort was the club and organization. There were just a little number of students chose this effort. The students assumed that join into a club or organization was really complicated. They had to set a certain time to take part in club and organization activities. The students felt uncomfortable for being a part of organization and made them shy to present their idea or opinion in front of the public.

In short, the implication of effort to language learning is very significant. The students who have weaknesses in mastering some skill in language learning should make efforts to cover their weaknesses. It is undeniable that effort in language learning will contribute to the students' ability in language. The students need to motivate themselves to optimize their effort, so that their language learning skill will develop.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The second semester students year 2015 at English Education Study Program of Syiah Kuala University have several efforts to develop their speaking skills such as reading English material, taking detailed notes in class, watching English movie, and performing English communication with friends. Making effort in speaking is the best way to develop their speaking skill because without making any effort the student their ability in speaking would not be improved. Regarding to the students' efforts in developing speaking skill, the writer suggested to the all English Education students

should be active in doing activities that promote English speaking such as group discussion, speech or debate club. Trying to optimize the efforts would help the students to develop their speaking skill.

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