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PAIR-WORK FOR SPEAKING CLASS FOR FORMAL INTERACTION IN UNIVERSITY

Kerja Berpasangan untuk Kelas Berbicara pada Interaksi Formal di Universitas

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Abstract: This article explores how students interact in pairs to enhance their speaking skills during speaking classes. Pairing students for their speaking practice is usually more effective than grouping the students. However, in this study, the effectiveness of pair-work interaction was not consistently observed. There are specific requirements to ensure the effectiveness of pair-work interaction. Therefore, the author collected the data by observing a speaking class at one of the universities in Surabaya, with the consent of the faculty and the lecturer. The collected data was analysed using interactive analysis techniques and presented in a descriptive form. There were two classes that were observed with 26 students in the first class and 27 students in the second class. When the students present are an odd number, the lecturer will make it one group with three people. The lecturer lets the students have the freedom to choose their own partner. The topic that was given to the students was "Welcoming Visitor." The second class performed the task more successfully than the first class, according to the observation. Pairs in the first class are less active than the second class. This becomes evident when they deliberate on their approach to the speaking class assignment. Based on the current study's experience, it is recommended to observe pair-work activities within smaller student groups, as observing large-scale pairs can be overwhelming for the observer. When observing large-scale pairs, it is advisable to employ more than two observers. Thus, the results would yield richer information and enhanced result consistency when monitoring a class engaged in pair-work.

Keywords: Pair-work, speaking class, English proficiency, effectivity

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Abstrak: Artikel ini membahas interaksi kerja berpasangan siswa dalam mengembangkan keterampilan berbicara mereka di kelas berbicara. Memasangkan siswa untuk latihan berbicara biasanya lebih efektif dibandingkan mengelompokkan siswa. Namun dalam penelitian ini tidak selalu demikian. Terdapat beberapa persyaratan untuk melengkapi efektivitas interaksi berpasangan. Oleh karena itu, untuk mengumpulkan data, penulis mengamati kelas berbicara di salah satu universitas di Surabaya dengan persetujuan fakultas dan dosen. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis dengan menggunakan teknik analisis interaktif dan disajikan dalam bentuk deskriptif. Terdapat dua kelas yang diobservasi dengan 26 siswa pada kelas pertama dan 27 siswa pada kelas kedua. Apabila mahasiswa yang hadir berjumlah ganjil maka dosen menjadikannya satu kelompok yang beranggotakan tiga orang. Dosen memberikan kebebasan kepada mahasiswa untuk memilih pasangannya sendiri. Topik yang diberikan kepada siswa adalah "Menyambut Pengunjung." Dari hasil observasi, tugas lebih berhasil dilaksanakan oleh kelas kedua dibandingkan kelas pertama. Pasangan di kelas pertama kurang aktif dibandingkan kelas kedua. Hal ini terlihat dari saat mereka berdiskusi untuk melaksanakan tugasnya dalam kelas berbicara. Berdasarkan pengalaman penelitian ini, disarankan untuk mengamati kerja berpasangan dalam kelompok siswa yang lebih kecil dibandingkan dengan penelitian ini, karena mengamati jumlah pasangan dalam skala besar dapat membebani pengamat. Saat mengamati kerja berpasangan dalam skala besar, disarankan untuk melibatkan lebih dari dua pengamat. Dengan demikian, hasilnya akan menunjukkan informasi yang lebih kaya dan meningkatkan konsistensi hasil ketika memantau kelas yang menerapkan kerja berpasangan.

Kata kerja: Kerja berpasangan, kelas berbicara, kecakapan berbahasa Inggris, efektivitas

INTRODUCTION

Some skills are needed when learning a language, such as writing, reading, listening, and speaking. Language learners should master these skills, which also have various methods to master these. For instance, a language learner who wants to master listening could learn from interviews of their favourite artists, celebrities, or even models.

One of the most challenging abilities for language learners during the process of language acquisition is mastering the skill of speaking. Speaking is widely considered the most crucial among the four language skills. A considerable number of learners express frustration over dedicating numerous years to learning the English language yet struggle to converse effectively and comprehensibly (Bueno, Madrid, & Mclaren, 2006). When referring to speaking, it is not merely about vocalising words; it encompasses effectively conveying a message through spoken words. Unfortunately, some teachers tend to overlook this skill in their classrooms. Learners encounter a lack of opportunities, both within class and beyond, to engage in English conversations. Another factor contributing to this issue is students' tendency to memorise only a limited number of English words. Additionally, pronunciation difficulties arise as they primarily listen and practice within

the classroom setting, leading to students forgetting when they are not in school or the academic environment. It is not solely the students who are impacted; instructors, lecturers, or teachers sometimes opt for using Indonesian to explain content instead of exclusively communicating in English.

During speaking lessons, instructors should encourage students to utilise the full extent of their linguistic abilities to accomplish oral assignments. There exist three methods for encouraging students, namely rehearsal, feedback, and engagement (Harmer, 2001:87-88). Therefore, educators require suitable strategies that enable students to attain their educational goals. Implementing efficient methods not only facilitates classroom management for teachers but also enhances student performance. Pair-work stands as one of the interaction models utilised in advanced language classrooms, including English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL). As indicated by Phipps (1999, p. 1), pair-work refers to "any form of student-to-student interaction without teacher intervention." Consequently, pair-work interactions encompass students working independently, face-to-face, and communicating with minimal teacher involvement. Numerous studies have confirmed that students are more willing to engage in more intricate interactions with their peers than with their teacher (Tsui, 1995). According to previous research findings, students are more comfortable working collaboratively and making mistakes with their peers than with their teacher, and they perceive corrective feedback from peers as less intimidating than teacher feedback (Westbrook, 2011). As explained by Phipps (1999, p. 1), "collaborating with a partner is less intimidating than being singled out to respond in front of the class and introduces an authentic conversational dynamic into the classroom." Research has demonstrated the motivation and effectiveness of this approach, as students engage and communicate in the target language (Richards, 2006). This affords more significant opportunities for students to communicate and refine their English skills comfortably with their peers, fostering a dynamic classroom atmosphere.

The primary aim of English instruction is to equip students with the capacity to effectively employ the language, be it in verbal communication or in non-verbal communication. As educators, it remains uncertain whether students have truly grasped the language's appropriate application until they put it into practice, either orally or in writing. Through interactions within pair-work activities, it is believed that students will engage more efficiently with their partners compared to situations involving individual work or group work, where some students might dominate the interaction while others remain passive and unresponsive (Jones, 2007). Consequently, instances of dominant/passive pairs are also commonplace in pair-work activities. According to Storch (2002, p. 149), the more dominant member dictates most language choices in this scenario, while the less active participant provides little input. Given this situation, it becomes imperative for teachers to oversee group dynamics. However, we anticipate that pair-work assignments will enhance students' motivation and reduce monotony in the teaching and learning process. Richards (2006) stated that teachers, serving as facilitators and supervisors, are expected to foster an environment that empowers students to engage deeply with the language.

The importance of this research lies in assessing the efficiency of pair-work interactions within a speaking class. This evaluation entails observing, recording, and analysing the activities and conduct of both students and the instructor during the execution of pair-work activities in an English-speaking class, which are designed to enhance students' oral communication skills in formal interactions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Characteristics of a Cooperative Learning Approach

Cooperative learning represents a constructivist-oriented method of education. It involves small groups consisting of several students with diverse skill levels collaborating as part of the learning strategy. Each member of the student team collaborates on group assignments and supports one another in grasping the lesson content. The cooperative learning approach falls within the category of contextual learning models. The instructional framework for cooperative learning is delineated as a structured system of group collaboration and learning. This structure incorporates five key elements as defined by Johnson and Johnson, which include positive interdependence, individual accountability, interpersonal interaction, collaborative abilities, and group competencies. Although Lie underscores that the cooperative learning approach differs from mere group learning, certain fundamental aspects distinguish it from haphazard group formations. This learning model positions students as active learners. By fostering a democratic classroom environment, learning becomes an avenue to unlock students' complete potential. In the realm of cooperative learning, the teacher assumes roles such as facilitator, moderator, organizer, and mediator.

Pair-Work in the Speaking Classroom

Mastery of the English language encompasses the acquisition of four skills: receptive skills, including listening and reading, and productive skills, encompassing speaking and writing. Generally, students who find language structure perplexing often perceive speaking lessons as more engaging since teachers prioritize meaning over form. Within these speaking lessons, educators are tasked with designing communicative and interactive exercises, providing students with ample opportunities to refine their command of the target language. Essentially, the lesson's context becomes studentcentred rather than teacher-centred. Long and Porter (1985, as cited in Tsui, 1995) observed that the lack of substantial time allocated to practising the target language merely thirty seconds within a fifty-minute lesson in a public secondary classroom results in lower achievements for second language learners. Consequently, instructors should devise classroom activities that are focused and most conducive to enhancing speaking skills.

According to Westbrook (2011:3), The benefits of conversing in English within the classroom should be underscored to students, highlighting that "using only the target language in the classroom mirrors the 'real life' application of that language". We expect students to actively foster communicative exchanges when they collaborate in pairs. Jones (2007) characterizes the pair-work environment as follows:

In pairs, the atmosphere tends to be more protective and private than in a larger group. Often, students feel less constrained in a pair setting, enabling them to discuss personal emotions or experiences more openly than even in a small group. Pairs seem to be more conducive to cooperation and collaboration, while groups tend to be more prone to (amicable) disagreements and discussions (p. 7).

As referenced by Mulya (2016:79), Harmer (2001:207) characterizes pair work as a strategy to enhance students' engagement and utilization of language. This approach is applicable across a multitude of activities encompassing speaking, reading, and writing. Pair work serves as a component within Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), necessitating students to collaborate in pairs to address tasks assigned by the teacher.

According to Zohairy (2014:51), Richard and Schmidt (2002:381) assert that Pair Work constitutes a collaborative learning activity where students collaborate in pairs. Mulya (2016:79) references Lightbown and Spada (1999), stating that within an interactive setting, students can advance to a higher level of knowledge and performance compared to when they work individually. Therefore, the utilization of the pair work technique proves fitting for enhancing students' speaking skills, given that this approach necessitates active interaction between partners. Furthermore, its manageability by teachers ensures a higher level of student engagement.

Harmer (2001:122-124) outlines three phases in the application of the Pair Work Technique within the classroom: (1) Before: During this stage, the instructor follows the engage-instruct-initiate sequence, aiming to ensure students comprehend their task and its completion timeframe. (2) During: As students collaborate in groups, the teacher can observe the ongoing activities and determine whether any intervention is necessary. (3) After: After the students conclude their task, the teacher offers feedback on their work.

As minimal teacher intervention is ideal, students are provided with increased opportunities to express their thoughts and emotions regarding the discussed subject. Littlewood (2007) further elaborated that teachers refrain from directly controlling or intervening in learners' communicative activities. Richards (2006) emphasized the importance of granting students the chance to construct meaning together, expand their linguistic capabilities, become conscious of language usage, and engage in substantial interpersonal communication. Andrewes (2003) extended this notion, suggesting that teachers should vigilantly oversee progress and offer guidance, advice, and support as needed by the students. Hence, teachers should avoid hovering over students too closely, instead adopting an approach of attentive observation while moving around the classroom. According to Jones (2007), the optimal moment for delivering feedback to students regarding their performance, by pointing out a few errors overheard by the teacher, is once the task is completed. Engaging the entire class in proposing improvements also serves as an effective method to stimulate students' interest in heightened communicative involvement throughout the lesson.

Pair work is considered among the most efficient techniques for encouraging student interaction. Various writers attest to numerous advantages associated with incorporating pair work within the classroom environment. Such as:

Brown (2007) delineates how pair work primarily fosters a positive emotional learning atmosphere, enabling students to engage in practice and risk-taking. Ur (2007) takes this further, asserting that establishing a suitable emotional environment in the classroom is crucial for educators to facilitate meaningful learning experiences. Likewise, one of the most evident outcomes resulting from pair work exercises is the significant increase in the amount of time students spend participating in verbal communication as compared to teacher-centred classrooms (Scrivener, 2011; Brown, 2007; Ur, 2007). Given that, during a 90-minute lesson, the teacher's speaking time surpasses that of students, pair work affords each student a genuine opportunity to actively utilize the language.

Moreover, Harmer (2016) emphasizes the suitability of pair work activities, particularly for students who are reserved or hesitant about participating in speaking tasks that involve addressing the entire class. Similarly, Scrivener (2011) states that when students collaborate in pairs, their inhibitions diminish, as it feels less intimidating to converse with a partner than to talk in front of the entire classroom (p. 60). Effective engagement in pair work tasks provides students with a real sense of their language capabilities. Tailoring pair work to suit students' language comprehension and abilities, regardless of their proficiency level, can significantly enhance their speaking confidence. To put it differently, students can experience a sense of achievement (Thornbury, 2013).

METHODS

An observation was conducted in English for Formal Interaction class by applying pair-work in the classrooms for an hour and a half for each classroom. Consent was given by the lecturer and students which made the observation run smoothly, by taking notes during the class and taking pictures if needed. Two classes are being observed. In the first class, there were 26 girls present, but 2 students were absent. And second, the class consist of 27 students with 20 girls and 7 boys. This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing an embedded single case study design.

The head of the faculty and the lecturer granted permission for the observation.

The observer got permission through a written (letter) and face-to-face discussion with the faculty's head and lecturer. After receiving permission from the lecturer, the observer seized the opportunity to conduct a direct interview with the lecturer. During the interview, the observer inquired about the lecturer's typical teaching methods in his speaking class. The lecturer explained that he always gave different topics every meeting and made the students get into pairs, and then have a short conversation on the topic which is given that day. Through this interview, the observer gained insight into the effectiveness of conducting research in pairs.

Through this same interview, the observer could see that the lecturer gave the students a pair work activity which was different from the study plan for the semester. We conducted observations during the learning process to uncover authentic occurrences or facts within a speaking class that implemented the pair-work method. Subsequently, the gathered data underwent analysis utilizing interactive analytical techniques and was subsequently presented descriptively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pre-Observation

Before the observation started, the observer asked permission from the lecturer to observe the class.Next, the observer conducted an interview with the lecturer to obtain additional consent to observe and to understand the lecturer's delivery of the day's material. Because the class was in the middle of the day which in a hot city like Surabaya people will have a lower concentration rate, the observer asked if there was a case when students skipped the class because it was hard to concentrate. The lecturer responded that it was not the case because the students who take this subject are from the second semester where they still have high spirit to attend the class and they also do not know how to skip class yet.

The lecturer stated what made him worried about this observation, which is he was worried that how he teaches would be criticized by many people. Therefore, the observer is confident that there won't be any issues. The lecturer also asked if I had my alma mater jacket with me which was forgotten by the observer. The lecturer also mentioned that it's important for us as observers to have a way to identify ourselves when

we observe a classroom. The observer, a novice with much to learn and improve, noted this suggestion.

During Observation

First Class

The lecturer used a pair-work activity in his speaking class. Following the midterm examination, the class underwent observation. The class started with the lecturer giving a task for the final exam and introduced the observer to the class and letting the observer introduced herself in front of the class. When introduced herself the observer did not forget to ensure the students that there was no need to feel pressured or nervous with her presence because her being in their class did not affect their grades, or anything related to their study. Then continued with the lecturer giving one particular topic for that day's speaking class with 10 minutes of practising their speaking and 3 minutes of performing in front of the class. The topic for the speaking class that day is "Welcoming Visitor".

The observer noted that, despite the first class being a speaking class, the students were not actively participating. Most of the students got their dialogue from the internet and their discussion was also about the part where they did not memorize the dialogue. This class apply Jones's (2006) statement differently. The pairs in this class were cooperative in selecting the dialogue provided by the internet they were going to use for their assignment. According to Harmer (2001:207), students collaborated to complete the task, coordinating with other pairs to select their dialogue from the same source. Despite the minimal interaction in this class, Lightbown and Spada's (1999) results indicate that in an interactive setting, students can achieve a higher level of knowledge and performance compared to working individually. The students could learn the correct way to express something from the dialogue they got from Google. But then it depended on the individuals, because even though they got the dialogue from the internet when they performed in front of the class some of them still made minor mistakes because of the difference of structure between their first language and target language.

When other pairs were busy practising and memorizing their dialogue throughout the practice time which is 10 minutes, one pair of students got the observer's attention from their method of memorizing the dialogue they chose from the internet. First, they memorised their part of the dialogue then when the lecturer mentioned that their practice session was 5 minutes more, they practised the dialogue together. This pair of students focused on their part until they memorised it thoroughly without practising it first, then when the time was almost up they began practising their dialogue. Even though they practice it for a short amount of time their group is more fluent than the others from this class. The only unfortunate thing in this class was the lecturer did not give feedback to the students, be it feedback for each pair or the whole class. The observer found that some pairs of students still made mistakes in their pronunciation, broken structure, and small voices when performing their speaking task in front of the class.

Then, when performing in front of the class some students made eye contact with the observer, and from that eye contact some of them were nervous which was because they were conscious of the observer. This made the observer felt sorry, even though at the beginning of the class the observer already said that there was no need to worry about the observer being there it still affected the students.

Second Class

In the second class, they also started with the lecturer giving tasks for the final exam and introducing the observer to the class and letting the observer introduced herself in front of the class. When the observer introduced herself, she also ensured the students that there was no need to feel pressured or nervous with her presence because her being in their class did not affect their grade, or anything related to their study. And continued the lecturer by giving the topic for the day with the same topic as the previous class, Welcoming Guests, with the same rules, practising for 10 minutes and performing for 3 minutes. This second class was more active than the first class. When the lecturer gave the topic most of the student pairs started making their dialogue, so the discussion in this class was lively. As Jones (2007) described pairs seem to be more conducive to (friendly) disagreement and discussion in the atmosphere of pair-work. In this second class with a lively atmosphere, the observer could hear some students give ideas then the partner agreed, also some pairs of students did not agree on the idea and gave another idea as the solution to their discussion.

According to Scrivener (2011); Brown (2007); and Ur (2007) to which stated that the most significant outcome that came from pair work is the significant increase in the

amount of time students spend participating in verbal communication as compared to teacher-centred classrooms. In this class, the observer could see that the implementation of pair work worked well because the students worked together to exchange their ideas and opinions and could solve the problem when discussing their ideas.

The creativity of this class was also good compared to the first class, some of them used equipment such as their phones, and bottles. The observer found that in this class the students have strong basic English because when they performed in front of the class even though some of them had small voices they had clear pronunciation, did not make minor mistakes in the structure and had the creativity to use some tools.



Figure 1. Pair-work students from second class

According to Littlewood (2007) and Richards (2006), teachers are not directly involved in communicative exercise and students must be given the chance to utilize their speaking. In this article, the author observed that the lecturer exhibited minimal

interaction and provided students with opportunities to express their ideas through speaking. But that did not mean the lecturer also did not intervene when students made mistakes or even gave minimum feedback at the end of the class. This, made it a little regrettable because as explained by Jones (2007) the best time to provide students feedback is when the assignment is done. Participating while the entire course is still in progress could cause the students to lose focus.

Post Observation

After the class was over, the observer got a chance to converse with the lecturer. During this conversation, the observer sought to understand the differences between the first and second classes. The lecturer explained that the proficiency of the students was different between the first and second classes. While students in the second class have basic English and did not make minor mistakes, students in the first class made minor mistakes in their basic English. The lecturer also clarified that the students had complete control over class arrangement, allowing them to identify students with high proficiency and decide whether to include them in the class. This explained why the second class had succeeded in the pair work method in their speaking than the first class. This also explains that the students in the second class could be able to improve their spoken language and have more sense of achievement than the first class.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis that has been described in the discussion, the conclusion in this study was pair-work strategy has been successfully implemented in one of the two speaking classes that used this method. The implementation of practising speaking with a pair-work strategy in the learning plan specifically created by the lecturer used different topics in each class they are having that semester. The effectiveness of pair work in the second class was better than in the first class. As stated by Thornbury, the effective engagement in pair work tasks provides students with a real sense of their language capabilities was better in the second class than in the first class. The students in the second class were able to enhance their speaking confidence with their comprehension of the language and their ability. This also implies that the students in the second class could experience a sense of achievement, which aligns with Thornbury's assertion.

As stated, this class arrangement was entirely up to the students. Based on the experience of the observer when she was an undergraduate student, some students were already acquainted with one another and that made them not want to be in different classes when they filled Course Selection Sheet (KRS). This resulted in the difference in their proficiency, language comprehension and improving their ability. This could not be avoided because of the rules of the university, on the second semester students can choose their course.

The two classes have different speaking proficiency and sense of achievement in learning English. The majority of students in the first class demonstrate a lower level of proficiency compared to those in the second class. Thus, made the pair-work in the first class was less effective, than the second class. The students received thorough instruction on this class selection process. The effectivity from pair-work in speaking class can be optimized if the pair does not with similar proficiency in English. One should have more proficiency than the other one to provide the basic necessity of exchanging opinions, and ideas, and correcting grammar and pronunciation.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Given the modest scope of this study involving simple observations of a class's work activity during a lesson, the findings are suggestive and should be interpreted cautiously. The outcomes affirm the efficacy of pair-work in English-speaking classes. Nevertheless, this investigation acknowledges certain limitations associated with the presentation of results. The uncomplicated observation technique poses certain considerations, including the potential omission of behaviours from other task-specific pairs due to the inability to capture all pair interactions at all times. Moreover, it is advisable to observe pair-work activities within smaller student groups than those of the current study, as observing large-scale pairs can be overwhelming for the observer. Given these constraints, we recommend conducting similar research to validate the conclusions from this study. We also propose that employing more observers, perhaps three or four, could provide richer information and improve the consistency of results when monitoring a class involved in pair work. Furthermore, future related studies are encouraged to include in-depth interviews with both teachers and students, particularly those with mixed abilities as identified in this paper, to study deeper into the issues revolving around pairwork.

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