Hands-on Projects: a Technique for Improving Students' Involvement of Speaking Class

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Abstract: Demotivated and insecure students in speaking class were found at second grade students of Galuh University, Ciamis, West Java. The observed problems came from the students' involvement was poor in whole classroom activities especially speaking class. Hence, this study would like to improve it through hands-on project during a semester. This study employed descriptive qualitative with some included steps planning, acting, reflecting, and observing. Observation and questionnaire were administered to collect information from students. From the result of observation and questionnaire, they were found that applying hands-on project for speaking class got positive result. Moreover, students' involvement grew significantly during classroom activities. In line with findings, it can be said that this technique has got significant effects toward students' involvement in speaking class. So, educators need to apply it as their choices in future planning lesson.

Keywords: hands-on projects, students' involvement, descriptive qualitative.

1 INTRODUCTION

Experiential learning agreed with the motion of true learning (Kolb, 1984). One of the crucial ways of adult learning is the idea that adults learn best through experience (Bannerman, 2012). During this application, process of gaining knowledge or information based on real condition through cooperative education in which students are instructed to do off-campus activities which support and apply whole materials have been learnt (Lewis & William, 1994). So, students here integrate theories and facts themselves. It includes activities that engage both left and right brain processing in which language contextualization, skills integration, authentic, and real world purposes happen here (Brown, 2001). Furthermore, project method is the transformation from this strategy (Fragoulis, 2009). It means that students are demanded to do a project related to theories have been learned. Also, they gain knowledge and information from their experience which is built by teacher (Moon, 2005). Moreover, Lewis and Williams (1994, p.5) also denoted the experiential learning:

> "In its simplest form, experiential learning means learning from experience or learning by doing. Experiential education first immerses learners in an experience and then encourages reflection about the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking".

It means that students in learning have to be active learners because they have to apply their knowledge into real life action, then they also reflect the experience from real life action to transform new ideas, information and concepts for enduring their future life or problems.

Motivation is very important during teaching and learning process. Students' motivation commonly indicates students' involvement in whole claass activities. Also, it influences students' behavior and attitude in acting up activities during learning process (Ames, 1990). Moreover, this also as certains students in deciding or doing actions during class activities (Brophy, 2004). To grow it, educators should use proper assignments and treatments (Ames, 1992). In language classroom, recently it is a central issue (Ames, 1990). Skinner and Belmont (1993) found that students' intrinsic motivation getting poor across preschool to higher education. Therefore, active learning is suggested to be applied in classroom activites for improving students' motivation (Tlq project, 2012). It is

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not only merely listening to the lecture, but also it emerges learning by doing from the learnt concept (Knapper, 2007). During class activities, they involve, active, and motivate. They then go the class away with the full of pleasure and encouragement because they simultaneously applied skills and the concept that have learnt into real life (Cooperstain & Weidinger, 2004). Through active learning, students will be best listeners because they are demanded to execute the concept into real life tasks or activities (Columbia University, 2013). So, Prince (2004) argued that it is becoming great alternative way of teaching to traditional teaching methods.

Hands-on project is one of techniques offered in experiential learning (Brown, 2001). It deals with the voice of active learning (Cuzzo, 2014). He argued that hands-on activities deliberately engage and activate students in recepting and implementing information. Students will also investigate, and interpret through the project so that they can transform their background knowledge or input to build new ideas or concept. In realizing it, tecahers should decide the activities based on learning objectives, outcomes, and needs. Drawing from aforementioned situations, this study would like to improve students' motivation through applying hands-on projects for speaking class.

2 METHOD

Descriptive case study, especially classroom action research was employed in this study. Mills (2000, p. 21) states that action research is systematic inquiry that is done by teachers (or other individuals in the teaching or learning environment) to gather information and subsequently improve the ways of teachers' teachings and how well their students learn. Actually, a classroom action research is conducted by cycle. From this assumption, it can be said that it was applied by researchers for gaining information under research and have struggle to improve concerned problem that was investigated. The preliminary observation was done before applying hands-on project to students. Students perceived speaking is very difficult for them because they had to think hard of grammar, vocabulary, and content when they were speaking. From this condition, they

demotivated in engaging and taking part actively the whole activities during learning process.

Starting from this point, doing changes is the bracing action for saving teaching and learning setting. Two cycles dealt with this study: the first and the second cycle. Both cycles consist of four stages which are planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

Firstly, planning lesson is the beginning stage. These activities were syllabus and lesson planning, material and media preparing, and tools for getting data from students. The materials here were not merely speaking in the classroom, but they were changed by using experiential learning which is they not only speaking inside the classroom, but also implementing their concept of speaking into real life or communication. Then, realizing all the planning was so called acting.

Applying hands on project for students during speaking class was considered as the further activity. Students were divided in pair. Around eight specific topics which are needed by students in Indonesia were randomly delivered. From those topics, they prepared the chosen topic and presented the materials and discussed together about the material before they visited into real world communication. After gaining all concepts, they transform them into real life communication.

The third one dealt with observing. In this stage, the researcher observed gained data from students to get much information about students' condition during teaching and learning process. Reflecting was the last point of the first cycle. These activities were including preparing further step in growing students' motivation based on the gained information from previous step. Teaching and learning process has been accomplished; questionnaires gave to students for each cycle. It was to do so, to understand students' perspective and opinion of applying hands-on projects on speaking class. Through these questionnaires, researcher knew about the further step for doing next cycle.

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
First Cycle

It was described from previous part about cycle in this study. Beginning from planning stage in which teacher prepared all the

teaching stuff such as; syllabus, lesson plan, media, materials, speaking assessment rubric, and observation sheet, also questionnaires to gather needed data from students. Next activity was acting; it was found that teaching and learning process run well as written at the lesson plan. The slide presentation, the first media of teaching could be applied successfully in delivering material to them. Researcher, in this stage, explained and drilled them some expressions how to pronounce correctly. The presentation of expression based on the specific purpose which we dealt with.

After drilling accomplished, they are demanded to practice expression following the model from the video or audio. Then, further practice was closing by situation card and do role-play for each meeting. Moreover, the further activity was observing; in this step, she dealt with checking and analyzing gained information from classroom activities in this case questionnaire data and classroom observation data.

The result of classroom observation showed that students got bored with situation card and role-play during speaking class. Card game was actually interesting one for them in several beginning minutes of playing. Based on collected data, it was indicated that after beginning minutes, they tended to get bored because they did similar pattern of turning. Furthermore, they felt unhappy when the role - play activity came because they thought that they had to memorize many expressions explained in the slide presentation. In fact, they had got much anxiety if they did not memorize all the expressions. In addition, self-confidence was also influential factor that discourage students in acting up in front of the class. This self- confidence such as nervousness affected students' motivation and involvement in speaking class.

Beside classroom observation, data from questionnaires indicates that students actually followed classroom activities well, but they seemly did not involve greatly in the whole activities because of nervousness, self-confidence, boredom, and disadvantage situation in speaking class. So, it can be said that experiential learning which took place inside classroom need to be evaluated so that students dug their competence and motivation

in speaking class. The reflection point of this cycle, she thought that speaking is not merely inside classroom, but also it happened outside of classroom. From this consideration, she applied hands-on project concerning on outside classroom.

Second Cycle

The second cycle is as definitely precise as previous one. Starting from planning, this activity focused on making new lesson planning of applying hands-on project focusing outside activities. The needed stuff was project guidelines and manuals instructions of doing it. The second point referred to implement plans which is explaining students how to work together in team and outcome of the project that should be existed.

In this activity, the researcher explained deeply and emphasized that they had to work together to realizing real communication with prior concept that have been learnt in real life. In this step, they seemed to involve completely because they had to prepare, practice, and contextualize their result of preparation and practice into real world communication. Third point was observing of acting step in which she collect data from classroom observation and questionnaires. It demonstrated that though they felt so exhausted in fulfilling the project, but they leaved pleasure and huge solidarity and tolerance to others. It can be inferred from application of hands-on project that they involved completely in doing the project because they wanted the great and successful result for their project. In addition, the difficulties of speaking such as pronunciation, fluency, and grammar significantly decreased because they tended to prepare the project well in team.

Finally, the reflection of this study assured that hands-on project is feasible and applicable in speaking class for second language classroom. Drawing from detail description about findings and discussion, it is said that applying hands-on projects grew students' involvement in speaking class

4 CONCLUSION

Many ways emerged to involve students during language classroom activities especially speaking class. This paper focused on relaizing hands-on project for improving students'

involvement during speaking class. The result of the students' involvement grew significantly after applying hands-on project in team in real world communication. Based on the result of questionnaire, it also expressed that students' interest, comfortable, and pleasure develop apparently. It can be said that hands-on projects is crucial for teachers or researcher in their classroom setting. For doing so, it is also recommended for further study in similar investigating of the problem of students' motivation.

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