

Implementing A Problem Based Learning/PBL Method to Improve Students' Speaking Skill in In-Flight English Class

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Abstract

This study purposes to find out the development of learners' speaking skill after implementing Problem-Based Learning for the INITIAL flight attendant learners in Garuda Indonesia Training Center, Cengkareng Jakarta Barat. Whereas speaking skill is the most needed skill in In-flight English, therefore it is challenging to find out the most effective technique to improve it. PBL proposed by Barrow (1996) becomes the preference to be implemented. Barrow's seven steps are then used as steps in implementing the PBL: defining problems, working in a small group, analyzing the problems, doing the brain storming, learning independently and practicing the dialogue regularly. Problems which are consider as the trigger of learning are gathered by interviewing the senior Garuda Indonesia flight attendants. The sample was selected by using simple random sampling and 24 initial flight attendant learners were chosen as the sample. The data were collected from the interviews and observations then analyzed using qualitative data analysis. The result shows that learners' speaking skills related to conceptual, lexical, syntactical, phonological, politeness and body language, had improved significantly, especially in the term of syntactical. Therefore, it can be concluded that learners' speaking skills improve significantly after implementing the PBL or we may says that PBL might support the existing theory on teaching speaking for English for in-flight context.

Keywords: In-flight English, Problem-based Learning, Initial Flight Attendant Students

INTRODUCTION

A flight attendant should have many qualifications; some of them are having strong communication and problem solving skills, especially in English. However, in reality communication problems often arise between the flight attendant and the passenger when synchronizing their ideas. In addition, inability to understand others' needs and misinterpret others' ideas or questions may lead to a conflict. For example: when the flight attendant fails to convince the elderly passenger who sitting next to the emergency window to move or when the flight attendant fails to provide a clear and short safety briefing to the blind passenger.

After completing the recruitment process, the candidates of flight attendants are transferred to the Garuda Indonesia Training Center (GITC) for further training processes. The training generally lasts approximately 3 months and it is divided into two major parts, namely safety and service training. The major emphasis of the overall training is the safety training which becomes the main concern of all airlines. The safety training required to be completed first in order to obtain the flight crew license, then, to continue to service training. Regarding the service training, there are many subjects that have to be trained during it, and English is one of the important subjects taught for 40 hours which emphasizes on pronunciation and speaking skill related to in-flight service and how to solve the problems.

However, as proposed by Chuanchaisit & Prappal, cited in Nguyet (2012) that after learning English for many years, students cannot communicate confidently or succeed to meet the demand to use English for their carrier,. This problem also becomes some of the common problems for flight attendant students in Garuda Indonesia training center. After being trained, their speaking skill is still under expectation. Further, She explained that some possible reasons for learners' inefficiency in communication are, the low levels of language proficiency, lack of vocabulary to express their ideas, shyness or lack of confidence, lack of environment for practicing and using English or simply lack of some necessary strategies to maintain a conversation.

In answering the problems mentioned above and dealing with time constrain therefore an innovative and accurate technique to prepare students for

spontaneous communication is one of the biggest challenges for English instructors in Garuda training center. Unfortunately, for many years this training center has occupied the teachers-centered and subject-focused with less giving the students the real conversation practice in performing their duties. The English instructor do not give the opportunity either to develop the course and practice parts to face their problems as most of the models were taken from the books that were given by the English instructors. This condition leads to the situations where the students only passively read dialogues, drilled the expressions and performed them in role plays or simulations. Moreover, the teaching-learning becomes less challenging due to the use text book only.

Based on this reason, this research has developed a technique in teaching that can be used in developing the initial flight attendant students' speaking skills in Garuda Indonesia Training Center. Therefore the researcher introduced problems-based learning technique (PBL) to apply in the classroom.

PBL focuses the learning to student-center which is supported by Bighell (2010): "Problems-based learning shift the focus of learning from the tutor to the student with the student in control of his/her own learning under the guidance of the tutor". By controlling their own learning the students can actively practice the conservation without any hesitation to create their own models but still under the tutor control. The learning process in PBL class starts with problems as Fogarty (2010) explains that "Problems as the basis for depth learning where collected from real-life problems that ill-structured which are sometimes complex and with a number of interrelated concerns. Problems and how to handle them are very crucial matters in PBL. The problems chose have to be related to the area of learning, in this case in-flight problems, how to handle the passengers before taking-off, during flight and after landing.

Learning process in PBL class will start with exposing the students with problems which are collected by interviewing the senior flight attendants to get the real-life problems. Then, in a small group consists of four students, the problems analyzed, after the brainstorming and reviewing other related knowledge, the students start to create the dialogue models and practice regularly.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

To avoid misunderstanding, the following terms used throughout this thesis are reviewed. ESP is a tailor-made to the students' needs where Hutchinson and Waters (1995) define as an approach to English teaching and learning which are specially designed to meet learners' needs to improve their skills in order to be succeed either in education or job carrier. The aim of ESP is to meet the needs of particular learners, so ESP course should be based on an analysis of students' needs. Any ESP course may differ from another in its selection of skills, topic, situations, functions, and language including the expressions.

ESP is an umbrella term that can be subdivided into English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) as shown below:

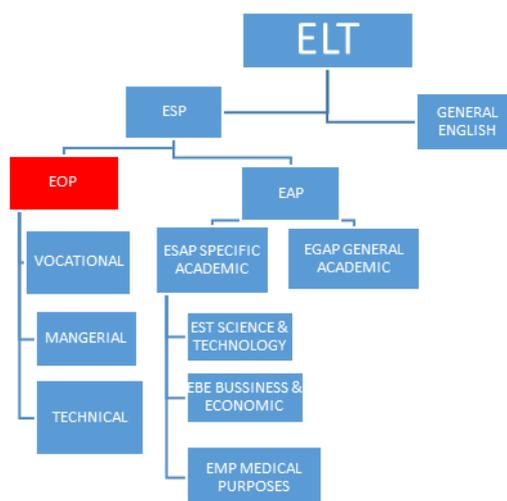


Figure 1. Classification of ESP based on its purposes

Source: Swales, cited in Buriro&Soomo(2013)

English for Occupational Purposes is concerned with determining the language needs for success in particular workplace and applying ESL techniques to meet those needs. In line with the idea above, Kennedy and Bolitho (1984) purpose that EOP is English taught in the situation in which learners need to use English as a part of their work or profession and aim to prepare the learners to be skillful workers who have good language proficiency. It is clear that the essential goal of such a program is to reduce the time required for student to actually be

functioning in a workplace of his/her choice.

In addition, time becomes an important thing to take as a consideration which is supported by Master (2000) "Time constrained becomes a need to be considered in EOP program. The planning and implementation of a course in EOP involve determining the needs, language requirements, and content areas of a particular occupation". That a suitable and effective technique should be applied to meet with the students' needs of English.

The language requirements in EOP concern on vocabulary, speaking skills, situation, function, structures, and expression. In relation with vocabulary needs by the flight attendant, they have to know about specific terms regarding flight safety, such as: life vest, emergency equipments, fire extinguishers, and life raft. Moreover in workplace, a variety of situation may happen, such as how to take order, how to make request, and how to apologize. Therefore the instructor will be more concentrated on giving students a variety description about the real-life working condition.

The content areas in EOP includes, such as: service, equipments, safety, procedure and process. In the context of English for flight attendant, service is taught in relation to give customer's satisfaction; how to greet; how to make requests; how to take orders; how to apologize; etc. Equipments taught in relation with tools; emergency equipments; things in the galley, things in lavatory; etc.

Further Robinson (1991) divided EOP into three sub-divisions, pre-experience, simultaneous and post-experience. Pre-experience is in which English is taught before learners take on the job (zero experience), simultaneous means English learned while in doing the job training and the post-experience means English used in the real working environment. In this research the focus will be on EOP, pre-experience, which is English taught before the flight attendant students enter the real working experience or known as the Initial Training.

By reviewing the characters and definitions above, it can be clearly seen that EOP is important to be taught especially to the zero experience learners to meet their needs of English and support them to be able to carry out some specific tasks and also prepare to be ready to use English in their job.

English for flight attendant or in-flight English is the language and expression used in-flight, where English is needed to communicate not only with the foreign passengers but also with the members of airline staff. In line with, Ellis and Lansford (2010) said that English for flight attendant has been developed specifically for flight attendants who need to use English every day at working place and for people who are trained to become flight attendant. While Gerigty (2010) described that English for flight attendant is for people working in the aviation industry who focus on improving their communication skills, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical accuracy.

Based on those two opinions, English for flight attendant is defined as English needed by flight attendant who follow the real time working routines of a flight attendant from pre-flight briefing to disembarkation, such as facing the challenges of boarding; performing safety demonstration; serving meals; handling complaints and difficult passengers; handling medical incident and emergency situation. In addition it is the special English language used in all situations in performing the flight attendants duties confidently using the right English at every stage of the job.

Recent trend in education point to a shift from a traditional teaching paradigm of teacher-directed and tradition lecture format to learning paradigm of self-directed, interactive learning, Jeffries (2000). In line with, Mc Daniel, et.al (2002) purposed that Problem-based learning can be used to develop the medical education students' problem solving skills by moving from a subject and lecture-based to interdisciplinary one guided by real-life problems. That is why there are many educators in academia have long supported to notion of self-directed problem-based learning, further mention by PBL.

There are many of literature to support the implementation of PBL in medical, nursing and other education. However, there is a little evidence to support the usage of PBL in English for Aviation, especially English for flight attendant which the researcher involved in her research.

The founder of Problem-based learning, Barrow (1996) described that PBL begins with the assumption that learning is an active, integrated, and constructive process influenced by social and contextual factors. Further he explains that PBL

can develop the self-directed model to improve education in the school of medicine. "It was developed to improve medical education by moving from a subject and lecture-based to interdisciplinary one guided by real-life problems" McDaniel, et.al (2002). Further Celia and Gordon (2001) explained that problem-based learning has 4 primary components: problems, student-centered, small group and facilitator.

The key to success of English acquisition through PBL is to utilize selected constructive problems purposefully designed to address the desired learning outcomes. That is why problems become the most important part in PBL. This idea is supported by Barrows, cited in Barrett (2010) who explained that PBL is a learning technique that results from the process of working toward the understanding of a resolution of a problem where it is encountered first in the learning process. An ill-structured challenging problems are presented to students at the start of the learning process which is become the key and distinguishing characteristic of PBL. Furthermore the problems which serve as stimulus for the need to know are typically in the form of cases, narratives of complex, real-world challenges common to the discipline being studied. There is no right or wrong answer; rather, there are reasonable solutions based on application of knowledge and skills which is necessary to address the issue.

There are seven steps of how to implement the PBL, adapted from Barrow and Schmict, cited in Barret and Cashman (2010), find the problems, analyze the problem, do brainstorming, discuss and syntheses in a small group, formulate learning issues, study independently and practice and debate which further the writer will implement the steps after being modified based on the needs.

METHOD

This research was conducted at the initial flight attendant students' English class, in Garuda Indonesia Training Center, Duri Kosambi, Cengkareng, west Jakarta. The participants are the initial flight attendant students with age around 19 to 25 years. They have a wider range of live experiences and knowledge to drawn on. Most of them have been exposed to English more than for six years in the formal

education where the emphasis is not on communication. All of them are high-motivated, discipline and have clear understanding of why they have to learn and are able to sustain their motivation.

Class Action Research (CAR) was conducted for three cycles which implemented Barrow's seven steps, as follows: In this first step the researcher did the interview part I by interviewing 10 senior flight attendants to get the most common communication problems when interacting with the passengers in the real working condition; while the other instructor, Mr.Uton was teaching, the researcher did the class observation to assess the students speaking skills as the initial assessment to get the starting data of the students' speaking skill; then, the researcher as the tutor implemented the Barrow's steps in three cycles, each cycle took ninety minutes.

The Barrow's steps (1996), applied are as following: defining the problems; then dividing the class in small groups consisting of four; analyzing the problem; brain storming and discussing; learning and practicing independently; and the last step was one group had to simulate the dialogue in front of the class and the other students were listening and giving suggestion or making correction if necessary; the next steps while conducting the PBL class in cycle one, two and three, the researcher did the observations when the students were performing the dialogue with partners. Recording and video-tapping was conducted to get the data. Then, transcribed, analyzed and categorized based on the students' errors in conceptual, lexical, syntactical and phonological point of views. Further, the students' errors in cycle one, two and three were compared to see the development; the last steps, after doing the cycle three of the PBL class has been done, the researcher did the interview part II to investigate how PBL can be used to develop their speaking skills.

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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

What are the common communication problems encountered by the flight attendant when interacting with passengers in the real working situation?

This first research question was answered by conducting interview part I which was done before the training schedule begun. The participants of this first interview were 10 senior flight attendants who had 5 years working experiences to get various descriptions of the common communication problems when interacting with the passengers. The data obtain divided in three categories, namely, common communication problems occurring before taking-off, during flight and after landing, which are described as follows:

1. The most common communication problems occurred before taking-off are double sitting problem, seat changing, mobile phone using and large baggage managing
2. The most communication problems occurred during flight are problems during sales on board and meal serving
3. The most common communication problems occurred after landing are mobile phone using and asking and giving information.

How problem-based learning can be used to develop the learners' speaking ability?

This second research question was answered by conducting the interview part II that was proved by documentation. The result of the interviewed was that problem-based learning (PBL) can be used to develop students' speaking skills because of the opportunity to do many practices that make them to be more confidence in speaking; learning in a small group consists of four students makes them to be more active in speaking, avoid shyness and also motivate them to practice dialogue more often; learning in enjoyable class environment can help them to be more relax and comfortable that will make them to be more active and brave to speak; having spontaneous reaction in facing the real problem make them

more fluent in speaking; exposing by real-life problems can describe the real working situation to prepare their readiness in interacting with the passengers; having critical thinking and problem solving skills can help them to solve the problem in a quick way; relating with other knowledge can help them to prepare themselves to be able to speak confidently; and the tutor existing to direct and guide them and also to choose the challenging problems, divide the class in a small group, is very important in order to make the teaching learning process runs actively and smoothly.

How does the development of the students' speaking skills to overcome the communication problems when interacting with the passenger?

This research question was answered by conducting four class observations. The data obtained from the four class observations were in the form of short duration of video clips and audio recording. The data then, transcribed and analyzed based on the students' speaking errors in some point of views, namely: conceptual error involves an unclear idea or message stated by the speaker; lexical error involves inappropriate choosing words, syntactical error involves inappropriate grammatical rules, such as word order, subject verb agreement; and the phonological error involves inappropriate in pronouncing words.

However, in the second, third and fourth observation the researcher also observed the politeness errors because politeness became one of the important things in a formal dialogue when interacting with the passengers. Thus, in the third and fourth observation, the body language errors also observed as the teaching and learning conducted in the cabin mock-up or like-real situation where body language needed to be applied when interacting with the passengers.

First Observation

This observation was conducted on the first day of the training to identify the students' general level of English proficiency; high, medium and low level. The data also used as basis of grouping process. The result showed that there were six conceptual errors, four lexical errors, twenty five syntactical errors and four phonological errors.

Second Observation (Cycle one of PBL class)

This second observation was conducted as the cycle one of PBL class. The result showed that there were two conceptual errors, two lexical errors, nineteen grammatical errors and zero phonological errors and nine politeness errors.

Third Observation (Cycle two of PBL class)

This third observation was conducted in the cabin mock-up to expose the students to the real working condition. The result showed that there were three conceptual errors, two lexical errors, thirteen grammatical errors and zero phonological errors and zero politeness errors and zero body language error.

Fourth Observation

In accordance with the third observation, this observation was conducted in the cabin mock-up to present like-real working condition. The result showed that there were two conceptual errors, one lexical error, one grammatical error and zero phonological error and zero politeness error and one body language error.

Based on the four observations data above, the development of the students' speaking ability to solve the common problems when interacting with the passengers decreased, from six to two errors. Therefore it can be said that the initial flight attendant students' speaking skills in the term conceptual point of view has developed.

Students errors in lexical point of view decreased, from four to one. This indicated that the students' speaking skills in the term of lexical point of view has developed. In line with the second research question this development might be caused by many factors, such as intensive exposure of the real situation and students motivation to practice as often as possible and tutor guidance in correcting the lexical errors.

Students' syntactical errors are sharply decreased. Starting with twenty-five errors in the initial observation to only one error in the last observation. It indicated that the

students' speaking skills in the term of syntactical point of view has developed. The development might be caused by the students' self awareness of grammar increased sharply.

Students' phonological errors decreased. This situation indicated that the students' speaking skills in term of phonological point of view has developed. It can be seen that from the three cycles the phonological errors remained in zero point.

Students' politeness errors decreased. This situation indicated that the students made progress in the term of politeness.

Students' errors in term of body language applied increased. This situation indicated that one students made error in body language.

DISCUSSION

It was found that there were some communicating problems that commonly occurred in the situation of before take-off, in-flight and after take-off, that should be faced by the flight attendant in the real working situation

PBL can be used not only to develop their speaking skills but also problem solving skills, critical thinking and self-confidence. Further, PBL can be used to develop the students' speaking skill because of the opportunity to do many practices that make them to be more confidence in speaking; learning in a small group consists of four students makes them to be more active in speaking, avoid shyness and also motivate them to practice dialogue more often; learning in enjoyable class environment can help them to be more relax and comfortable that will make them to be more active and brave to speak; having spontaneous reaction in facing the real problem make them more fluent in speaking; exposing by real-life problems can describe the real working situation to prepare their readiness in interacting with the passengers; having critical thinking and problem solving skills can help them to solve the problem in a quick way; relating with other knowledge can help them to prepare their selves to be able to speak confidently; and the tutor existing to direct and guide them and also to choose the challenging problems, divide the class in a small group, is very important in order to make the teaching learning process runs actively and smoothly.

The four observations conducted in this research are aimed to observe the day by day students' progress in speaking.

The first observation started on the first day of the training where the focus was on the students' speaking errors in the term of conceptual, lexical, syntactical and phonological. The finding showed that syntactical or grammars errors occupied the highest point. This might be caused by lack of exposure of English as the facts showed that all of the students exposed by English only on their formal school where most of the participants graduated from the Senior High School. Besides they thought that accuracy is not in their priority or they unaware of the grammar.

In the second observation, grammar errors still occupied the highest point although it decreased slightly. Politeness became one of the consideration in this and the following observations because to build an in-flight dialogue, between flight attendant and passenger, polite language is needed.

The third observation conducted in the cabin mock-up where the situation is like-real condition. Body language, such as performing eye contact, kneeling position and charming face, added in this third observation because the situation on the cabin mock-up was like-real condition where body language needed to perform when interacting with the passengers. The findings showed that although decreased, grammar errors still occupied the highest point, 13 errors. It meant that the students' speaking skills in the term of grammar developed slightly. In term of body language, students made zero errors.

The findings of the fourth observations showed a highly decreased in grammar errors. This conditions indicated that the students' speaking skills in the term of syntactical had developed. Not only the syntactical term but also lexical, phonological, conceptual and politeness terms increased slightly. In the other hand the body language errors had increased one point. It found that one student did not apply eye contact, kneeling position or charming face, when interacting with the passengers. After being examined deeply, it was found that this student was a slow-learner and she was not active in the class.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with the research findings of the data analysis the students' speaking skills in the term of contactual, lexical, syntactical, phonological, politeness and body language point of views have showed a good progress or development. Thus, it can be said that problem-based learning technique can be applied to develop the initial flight attendants students' speaking skills.

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