Applying Vlog Assignment to Develop Students' Speaking Ability

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Abstract
Being exposed to English since childhood, many college students, in fact, are still less competent in that language. It is assumed that the unavailability of facilities that allow them to practice English out of the classroom is one of the factors that makes students unable to speak in English. To overcome this problem, the researchers tried to apply Vlog Assignment in General English (MKU Bahasa Inggris) class. Vlog Assignment, or assigning students to create vlogs is believed to help students practice English by expressing their ideas, thoughts, and feelings intensively and pleasantly. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of Vlog Assignment in developing students' speaking ability. This research is categorized as quasi experimental research using pretest-posttest control group design. The results show that the implementation of Vlog Assignment is effective to help the students in developing their speaking ability
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Keywords: Vlog Assignment, speaking ability, meaningful learning, enjoyable learning

Introduction

Teaching General English (GE) commonly called English for General Purposes, especially in tertiary institutions is frequently confronted with classical problems related to class size and students' lack of competence in basic English. As one of compulsory subjects at university level, GE class is attended by many students coming from various study programs of different faculties. Each class of GE consists of 50 students that certainly share different background knowledge and language intelligence. According to O'Sulivan (2006), classes with more than 35 students can be classified as large classes.

Heterogeneous classes with a fairly large distribution of students for each class have caused problems for both lecturers and students. The average problems faced by lecturers are related to class discipline, individuals with different characteristics and abilities, teaching materials that must be adapted to varying abilities and needs of students, seating arrangements, and noisy sounds (Saricoban: 2010). Apart from that, lecturers have difficulty in controlling activities carried out by students in the classroom, as well as having limited time to check all the tasks they are doing. It is difficult for the lecturers to check students' progress and understanding on the materials taught. On the other hand, students are also not free to ask questions and provide opinions related to the materials they are studying. Due to limited time, students also do not have opportunity to perform and practice their English in front of the class.

Furthermore, those coming to GE class, in general, are less competent in English. They rarely show interest or willingness to answer questions or provide responses toward statements addressed to. According to Hamouda (2013) and Savaşçı (2014), the students' reluctance to use English is resulted from their less courage and confidence to speak in front of others, fear of being scolded by teachers, unpreparedness, and anxiety of being wrong.

The hindering factors for students to speak English above has actually become the subject of discussions among teachers and researchers in English teaching. Putri (2019), for example, conducted research in GE classes of Universitas Negeri Padang and found that stuffing students with a variety of teaching materials believed to be interesting and challenging had not yet yielded satisfactory results. Most students failed to give appropriate responses during speaking exam. Even though they were able to mention a variety of words in English fluently, they looked confused when some questions were addressed to them. Putri reveals that the failure of students to understand and use English in sentence form was caused by the lack of opportunity enabling and or forcing them to practice what they already have learned.

The lecturer has actually made various efforts to encourage students to use English inside and outside the classroom. Assigning them to make dialogue in English and then perform it in front of the class is the most common activity. In another time, the lecturer also assigns them to interview their classmates. Such kinds of assignments are found ineffective to make students active in the class. They help students to memorize words but not to understand the sentences they are saying.

Learning to speak in GE class at UNP so far has been somewhat marginalized because the learning objectives are more focused on reading comprehension demanding students to understand various types of texts from various disciplines. But this does not mean that speaking activities are completely eliminated in learning. Talking activity is still carried out but in very little portion. In the learning process, students tend to memorize the materials that they will present, and that is usually in the form of dialogues or short texts that have been previously written. According to Burns and Joyce (1997), in learning to speak humans do not memorize words or sentences but they construct meaning, receive and process information.

Based on Joyce's opinion above, learning process of speaking that occurs in GE class ignores the main elements that are very instrumental in helping students to successfully communicate in English. They only memorize words or sentences but they do not understand what they are conveying. Other students attending the class also do not feel compelled to listen to what is being conveyed by the speaker in front. In this case the process of constructing meaning, receiving and processing information is not found.

Problems found in speaking session of GE class, especially those related to students (lack of opportunities to practice English) and lecturer (lack of time to assess students'' ability) are assumed to be overcome by utilizing online vlog media. Vlogs (video blogs) are blogs that allow someone to share experiences, thoughts and opinions in a video form using a computer, web-cam or cellphone (Wikipedia: 2018; Parker and Pfeiffer: 2005; and Karmakar: 2015). As a relatively new ICT product, vlogs are much loved by younger generation. They use it to record and share moments or activities that they consider special. Some even take vlogging as future career.

The youth or students' big interest in vlogs can be used to improve their speaking skills in English. According to Hung (2011), speaking is the first skill needed in making a vlog. In this case, students who usually create vlogs using their native language are encouraged to do so in English. The content of the vlogs they create must be adjusted to the topics they have studied in GE class.

The use of vlogs in learning English will increase students' interest and enthusiasm for learning (Shih: 2010 and Hung 2011). The tasks in the form of making vlog (vlog assignment) will unconsciously make them more often in contact with the target language which will certainly have an impact on the development of their speaking skills. With a little preparation beforehand, the vlog will provide space or opportunities for students to practice the language they have learned without worrying space and time that keeps them "in" the learning process (Harrison and Thomas, 2009).

Before students are assigned to create vlogs, they must attend the GE class for 1-2 meetings. The lecture runs like a regular regular class where the lecturer gives and or discusses a teaching material listed in the syllabus. It's just to prepare their mental and mind, the lecturer has told that at the end of the learning topic / chapter they will be asked to make a vlog. The vlog created must contain content related to the topics they have studied. Vlog Assignment in accordance with its objectives, actually will be more dominated by activities carried out outside the classroom, but the follow-up of the task can be used as the main activity in the class at the next meeting.

Assuming that Vlog Assignment could help students to develop their speaking skill, the researchers conducted this research to prove the assumption.

Method

This research is categorized into quasi experimental research employing pretest-posttest control group design. There was one class consisting of 50 students involved in this study. They were assigned to make vlogs related to teaching material that they have already learned. After learning each 2 chapters of the handout, the students had to make one vlog. Their ability before and after Vlog Assignment is applied is measured using pre-test and post-test. The researchers then compared the students' speaking ability in pre-test and post-test using t-pair test. The test is intended to see whether Vlog Assignment is effective in improving students' speaking ability.

The population of the research was all students taking GE class in Universitas Negeri Padang in the second semester of 2018/2019. The sample was taken through purposive sampling, which was to choose one class as a sample for a specific reason (Sugiyono: 2013). To obtain the data, pretest and posttest were administered to the students. The tests carried out were in the form of speaking test. The data gathered then were analyzed using quantitative statistical techniques (t-test).

Results and Discussion

There are two types of tests conducted in this study, namely pre-test and post-test. Pretest aims to find out the speaking ability of GE students before Vlog Assignment is applied, while the posttest is intended to see the achievement of their speaking ability after treatment is given. The results of the two tests will be compared to determine the effectiveness of Vlog Assigment in improving students' English speaking ability.

Before applying Vlog Assignment to the sample class, the researcher test the normality of the data. The result of the test is presented in the following figure:
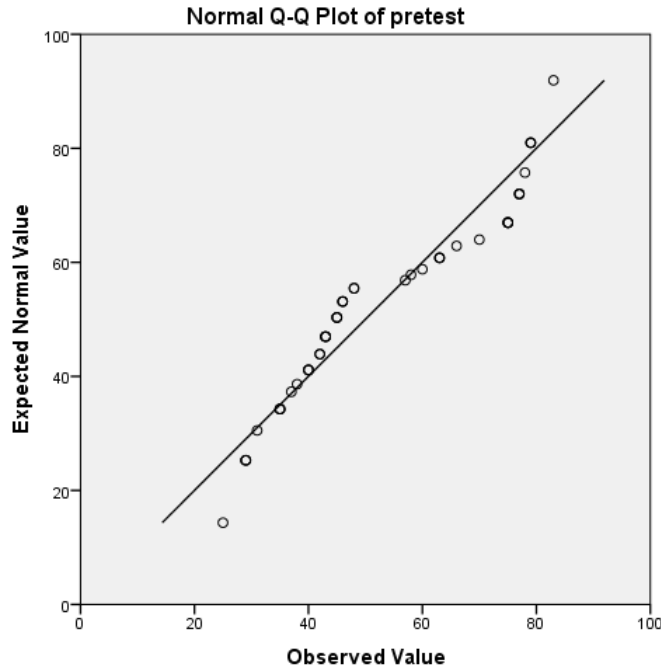

Figure 1: Result of Normality Test

From the normal Q-Q plot, it can be seen that the plots follow the linear line (around a linear line), and there are no plots located far from the line. This result suggests that the data is normally distributed, and the all of the students in the chosen class can be taken as the sample.

Having the data normally distributed, the researcher then analyzed the result of the pretest. The scores achieved by the students in either prestest or posttest are gotten from two raters. The students' average score in the prestest is 53 in which the highest score is 83 and the lowest score is 25. Of 47 students involved in this research, more than 50% get scores below 50. This result indicates that the students' speaking competent is still low.

Vlog Assigments are assigned to the students after they have learned two chapters of the handout. The vlogs are made out of the classrooms and some of which are displayed and discussed in the next meeting. By means of vlogs, the students are expected to have willingness to speak in English as they could practice the language learned in any places or situations that they feel comfortable in.

After eight meetings held or 4 vlogs completed, speaking posttest then was given to the students. The results of the test shows that the students' average score is 79,86 in which the highest score is 93 and the lowest score in 65.

In order to see whether the use of Vlog Assignment could significantly helps students to develop their speaking ability, the students' average score in the pretest and that in the posttest were compared using T-Paired Test. The results of the test are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. The Results of T-Paired Test

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Std. Error					
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	pretest - posttest	-27,08511	11,46039	1,67167	-30,45000	-23,72021	-16,202	46	,000

The above figure shows that the value of Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05. This result indicates that there is a sigficant dofference between the students average score in pretest and that in posttest. It also signifies that the use of Vlog Assignment is effective in helping the students to develop their English speaking ability.

The improvement of the students' speaking ability by means of vlogs is possibly derived from the students' fairly big interest in video making. As digital natives, most of them enjoy making vlogs in their everyday life. Hence, completing assignment in the form of vlogs is like channeling their hobby but the language used is English. Vlogs also help students to start thinking in English as they have to spontaneously produce language to describe objects or activities they are observing. The words, phrases, or sentneces uttered certainly more meaningful and already understood.

In addition, Vlog Assigment is also beneficial for activating the students' vocabulary and improve their fluency. Learning English since primary school, the students do not seem to have limited stock of vocabulary due to their lack of exposure to English. They have surely acquired a lot of English words, but lack of chances to practice what they have already learned lead them to lose the words soon they get out of the classroom. By means of vlogs, the lecturers could help the students to keep engangeed to English when they are beyond the class. To make the vlogs, the students would automatically recall a number of vocabulary related to the topics they have learned, and the would be accustomed to pronounce the words.

Furthermore, Vlog Assignment could reduce the students' anxiety, and improve their confidence. Through vlogs, the students do not need to stand and speak in front of others. Making mistakes in making the vlogs, the students could rerecord their activities or make any improvement needed.

To avoid misunderstanding, it is clarified that Vlog Assignment is not mainly intended to enable students to do mutual intreaction in English, rather it helps students to develop their speaking ability by activating the acquired vocabulary, phrases, or sentences.

Conclusions

Based on the research findings and discussions, it is concluded that the use of Vlog Assignment could effectively develop the students' speaking ability in GE class. Vlog Assignment helps students to keep practicing English beyond the classroom, activate their vocabulary, improve their fluency, and reduce their anxiety.

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