

Exploring Students' Experience in Project-Based Drama Learning and Their Perception on Their Speaking Anxiety

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Abstract— Previous studies showed that drama is quite effective in improving English language skills. Thus, it is considered as a method that has been widely practiced by teachers. The use of drama can be a motivation for learners in learning process. Project-based drama learning is a learning model designed for both language learning and language teaching. In this case, Project-based drama learning gives positive contribution to students' language engagement and development. It provides natural context for learning English. In the case of language learning, it has been observed that many people fail to learn the language, even though they are successful in other learning experiences. It is known that some people have an anxiety reaction against learning the language. This study aimed at gaining depth information on students' experiences in project-based drama learning classroom and their perspectives on their speaking anxiety. This study is qualitative. It involved two drama course classes in which 20 students were randomly selected as interviewees. The results revealed that most students admitted that their skills and confidence in speaking English improved. The project-based drama learning approach had given them valuable lessons particularly in building their characters and interpersonal skills (responsibility, team work, communication).

Keywords: *project-based drama learning, speaking anxiety*

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the goals in learning foreign language is to be able to communicate using the language effectively. In the process of communication, speakers are expected to have speaking skills in order to maintain the communication. Speaking skill refers to the ability to function in the language which is generally characterized in terms of being able to speak the language [1]. In other words, students who learn foreign language need speaking skills in order to express their ideas and communicate effectively and successfully. Speaking is considered as a difficult skill to master. Many learners contend that despite spending many years studying English language, they still cannot speak it appropriately and understandably [2]. Previous studies on factors affecting speaking skills showed that anxiety [3], low English proficiency [4] and lack of vocabulary [5] have been the factors impeding students' ability to speak. Referring to this problem, various communicative teaching activities were designed and applied in foreign language classes.

Studies showed that drama is considered effective in improving English language skills [6]. Drama becomes one of the methods that have been widely practiced by teachers as it motivates learners in the learning process. Learning through drama can boost students' interest in learning as [7] underline how drama brings the real world into the classroom, since the aim is more than linguistic. It can be a cross-curricular experience, as students can use topics from other subjects and also discover the culture of a foreign language

Project based learning (PBL) is described as an approach that "promotes comprehensible input and output with emphasis on practicing listening and speaking skills and as a content-based approach with emphasis on teaching language and content" [8]. In addition, PBL builds students' creative thinking skills as they acquire a deeper level of learning and understanding of the subject-matter [9].

Previous studies have shown that the combination of Project Based Learning and Drama have contributed in reducing the issues faced by students while using English in communication. According to [10] Project-based learning and drama provide benefits for learners while learning language. Both of them rely on a learner-centered approach which focuses on learner independence and learner autonomy. In addition, they respond to the objectives of communicative language teaching which helps learners to use language for communicative purposes.

Referring to the benefit of project-based drama learning (PDBL) in promoting students' foreign language learning particularly speaking, therefore the researchers intend to find out the EFL students of English Department, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Mulawarman University experiences in PDBL classroom and their perception on their speaking anxiety.

II. METHOD

A. Research Design

Being qualitative in nature, this study uses interview as the main tool to obtain the data for its analysis and conclusion. The interviewees in this research were 20 university students who have just completed their process of

Project-based drama learning. The project itself was the implementation of Project-based drama learning program, a program in which the students take part in a set of learning activities including planning, preparation and production, and performance of a drama show.

B. Project-Based Drama Learning

The project-based drama learning implemented in this study was a learning model adopted from the previous study conducted by Fiffinova (2018). In current study, it can be summarized into three main phases, which are: planning, preparation and production, and performance.

Planning is a phase where the students select the drama text they want to perform. The teacher offers several drama texts to each of the classes, taking into consideration some factors such as the complexity of the texts, the numbers of the students of the class, as well as the estimated time to perform each of the texts. The students then analyze the texts, have a discussion, and make a decision on which text to perform.

The next phase is the preparation and production. This phase begins with the students' taking all the roles required for the drama performance. The positions to be filled are production manager, director, actors and actresses, stage manager and the staff, as well as administration manager and the staff. After each of the positions is filled, the production manager makes a list of things they need to prepare and sets the schedule arranging every detail of their production process. In the following weeks, while stage and administration members are doing their tasks, the actors and actresses have their scheduled practices. Each of the practices includes the process of analyzing the drama text, memorizing the dialogues in it, and also performing the characters they are assigned to be. It is in this lengthy process that the students deeply engaged with not only language, but also the meaningful contexts where the language is used. This process also gives more opportunity to the students to explore their creativity in the use of language, such as expressions, gestures and as well as body language.

The final phase of this drama project is the performance. This is the phase where the students have to perform the drama in front of the audience. The announcements are made public and the faculty's top figures are invited to watch the show. The performances take place on April 26, 2019 (Class C) and May 2, 2019 (Class A).

C. The Interview

The interview was conducted shortly after the students show their public theatrical performance; it was done privately and recorded on the students' consent. The interview was aimed mainly at obtaining the data of how the students perceive their experience in the Project Based Drama Learning in its relation with their English performance and especially with their anxiety toward speaking in English. The interview was semi-structured interview with open-ended questions. The questions were divided into three major parts asking about general reasons why students chose a particular position for drama position, stage review and the last part was self-assessment.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Improvement in the Use of English

Referring to the questions "Do you think your English now has any improvement?" Most students said that they felt their English had been improved, particularly in speaking, with some students said they had also had their listening improved.

"I've learned a lot of new words" is a common answer with majority of the students admitted.

"Now I pronounce words better than before" is another answer that almost all of the students told during the interview.

"Now I speak clearer and more relaxed" and "To me speaking English now feels easier", were typical answers that circulate among the students during the interview.

In addition, some students told the researcher that the drama practices had also improved a bit different effect on their skill. "Now I can understand better what somebody is saying", they reported.

B. Students' feeling in the use of English

With regards to the question "How do you feel now when you are speaking in English?". Most students said that they now had more confidence and less nervousness when they are speaking in English or have to speak in English

"Now I really feel that I can speak more fluently and clearly", said many of them.

And "I feel my English's (speaking) has got better now. People understand me better (what I'm saying)".

"I feel less nervous now when I'm speaking English", others told.

The result of the interview shows that the drama project gives positive impact on the students' English skill, especially speaking skill. This is not surprising actually because speaking is a crucial skill which is required to perform a drama. Together with expressions and gestures, speaking skill often plays the most important role in the dialogues in a drama text.

In their process of learning, those students had pushed themselves to always practice to speak. They trained themselves to memorize dialogues, to speak as fluently and natural as possible and even to pronounce every word correctly. It is those practices that had gradually improved those students' speaking skill. In addition to speaking skill, some students also perceived that the practices had improved their listening skill. This happened naturally because of the fact that, in real communication, speaking skill is always used together with listening skill. Practicing the dialogues in the drama text means that the students had not only to speak, but also to listen carefully to what other roles are saying.

These findings confirm what Rochmawati's research [10] concludes, that project based learning has significant effect towards learners' speaking ability. Similarly, project based language learning using drama has also been proven to improve learners' language awareness [11], and particularly learners' speaking ability [12].

The project in current study had also given other advantages to the students, which were organizational and

interpersonal skills. During their lengthy process of preparing and producing the performance, every student was given tasks to be done and responsibility on them. The collective dependency, trust, and even demand given to each individual to complete their tasks has finally improved their responsibility, discipline, leadership as well as teamwork skill.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study investigates students' improvement in their English skill only through the students' individual perception and self-assessment. Other similar studies in the future could come to a more precise and convincing conclusion if English proficiency test is also conducted. It would be able to show to what degree the improvement is, and what skills or aspects of English that can be improved by practicing the Project-based drama learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Authors wish to acknowledge Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Mulawarman University for supporting and funding this study.

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