

GROUP PRESENTATION AS ONE WAY OF INCREASING STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN THE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English (TOEFL) to a class of 50 students or more is a difficult task for a lecturer. Some problems will occur, for example, the improbability for all students to get equal teacher's attention and equal chance for learning and studying in class. To overcome these problems, the writer conducts a quasi-experimental research involving 100 students in her two classes in Bina Nusantara University. In this research, the writer applies the group presentation method for teaching TOEFL for one semester. The research shows that group scores are slightly higher than individual students' scores.

Keywords: *student participation, group presentation method, class room, grade, TOEFL*

ABSTRAK

Mengajar TOEFL Bahasa Inggris dalam kelas besar yang terdiri dari lima puluh orang siswa bukanlah hal yang mudah. Biasanya akan timbul masalah seperti, tidak meratanya perhatian pengajar juga kesempatan belajar bagi para siswa. Mengatasi hal ini, penulis melakukan percobaan kecil yang melibatkan seratus orang siswa dari dua kelas yang diajarnya di Universitas Bina Nusantara. Penulis menggunakan metode belajar kelompok untuk mengajarkan TOEFL selama satu semester. Berdasarkan penelitian terlihat menunjukkan nilai kelompok sedikit lebih tinggi dari pada nilai individu mahasiswa.

Kata kunci: *partisipasi mahasiswa, metode pengajaran kelompok, kelas, nilai, TOEFL*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching large classes (with 45 to 100 students in one class) could be an overwhelming task for a teacher. It is even worse for a language class in which the subject (i.e. English) should not only be learnt but practiced. This situation is usually found in big universities which have a big number of students but lack of teachers or classrooms. For this research, I use my two classes which consist of 60 students each in Bina Nusantara University.

The classrooms in this University are quite big with a capacity of 80 individual chairs for students. But since it is too overcrowded, it is often difficult for the teachers to move around among the chairs. The result is, they remain 'tied' to their traditional place at the front of the class. The classrooms are mainly teacher-fronted. In her study on secondary schools in Pakistan, Shamim (1996:124) gives three reasons for this, there are:

1. The teachers' lack of awareness and/or feelings of insecurity in using other types of classroom organization.
2. The effect of culture, whereby the teacher is traditionally seen as an authority figure and is given proper respect for his or her age and superior knowledge.
3. The view of teaching/learning that is prevalent in the community where teaching is viewed as transmission of knowledge.

The teacher-fronted or the teacher-centered lessons can give several advantages for the students. The distance from the teacher and the whiteboard to the students' seat also assumes the status of a privilege learning area. The place that the students choose to sit will give rise to a different classroom dynamics. Shamim (1996:129) approaches this under three terms: opportunity, attitude and aspiration. The students seated in the front row will have more opportunity for their work to be checked more easily by the teacher and they have to pay more attention because they are under the teacher's eye. Moreover, they are better able to hear the teachers and to see what the teachers write. Teachers also expect more from students in the front rows. Teachers usually ask more difficult question to the front row students with the assumption that they are more able to answer them. On the other hand, the students in the back row more often have the role of maintenance or discipline. The students who are already highly motivated choose to sit at the front so as the result their performance is better than that of students who are seated in the back and their level of motivation is higher.

In Bina Nusantara University, English is given in three semesters, each consisting of two (2) credits. The textbooks that we are using are *Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL test* and *Market Leader*. *Longman* is a good course book for TOEFL test. It is divided into 4 sections: Reading, Listening, Structure and Writing. Each section is further divided into several skills, each of which discusses a specific language chunk, followed by a set of exercises. For example in Structure section, there are Adjectives, Noun, Pronouns, etc. The problem is that both students and teachers use the same textbooks which have answer keys inserted. Students, who have got the answers to the exercises do not feel necessary to listen to the teachers' explanation. They will let the teachers speak to the front row students and keep busy by themselves, either talking or chatting with SMS. The teachers, on the other hand, will only explain to those who want to hear. They are actually teaching to ten students in the front row rather than sixty students.

In summary, there are three problems that need to be addressed, as follows:

1. Learning should be student-centered not teacher-centered
2. All students must have an equal opportunity to learn in the classroom (not based on seating arrangement)
3. All students should actively participate in the teaching learning activity.

Literature Review

In recent times, the role of the lecturer has changed with the gradual swing from teacher-centered instruction to a student-centered approach where individuals are more responsible for their own learning. The role of lecturer as a learning facilitator is vital as the learning situation becomes a highly participatory between learner and trainer. The facilitator becomes the learner's partner in the learning process and provides a learning environment where the learner is able to achieve the specified learning outcomes in the most effective and helpful way. The facilitator will assist learners to become self directing in their learning and provide support and encouragement as needed.

This change is in accordance with the notion of learner's autonomy in language learning. Benson (2001) says that learner autonomy is 'the capacity to take control of one's own language. It is not a method of learning but a learner's approach to the learning process.'

According to Field (2007) there are two goals for learner autonomy.

1. The first is to train learners to function better during their period of study. Students, in this case, do not only act as a passive receiver but take an active part in teaching learning activity. Secondly, to ensure that learners continued acquiring L2 after their period of study was over. Students are expected to acquire the language not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. In other word, the process of learning does not only exist in their period of study in school or university but also in the society.
2. Field (2007) proposes a two-stage solution to the issue of how to ensure ongoing learning. The first stage is ensuring the learner's ability to extract meaning from connected stretches of L2; the second is equipping them to find linguistic data in the language they encounter.

One way to foster learner autonomy in the classroom is by group dynamics (Tudor, 2002). This is particularly suitable for a big classroom. It is almost impossible to require an active participation of let say 60 students in a classroom. Grouping students and giving them tasks is a better way to ensure that everyone has the equal opportunity to learn the language.

One example of small-group multitasking has been done by Baurain (2007) in Dalat University in Vietnam. He concludes that, "Small group multitasking can be a valuable way of teaching in particular for a large, multilevel class. It engaged students as full partners in the learning process. It thus promoted student autonomy and facilitate a wide variety of learning styles and strategy."

The writer carries out an action research on this topic because according to Benson (2001), "the best research on autonomy is often not research concerned with 'grand theory' but action research conducted by practicing teachers on the specific conditions of teaching and learning within which, they work and on the effects of changes to these conditions."

Research Methodology

Participants

This research involves one hundred students (100) from two classes: 01 PAG and 01 PTT. The students of PAG class are majoring in Computer Accountancy and the students of PTT class are majoring in Information Technology. Even though the number of students in each class is not the same, for certain reason and for the ease of calculation, I took 50 students from each class.

Materials

The materials for English I subject consist of Reading and Structure Skills. There are 7 meetings for structure. The materials covered for this semester are: *Comparatives, Problems with Nouns, Pronouns, Articles, Forms of Verb, Use of Verb and Adjectives*. The textbook used for this subject is: *Longman Complete Course for the TOEFL Test* by Deborah Phillip. In this book, one problem is divided further into several skills. For example, Problems with Nouns consist of four skills: *Use the correct singular or plural noun, Distinguish countable and uncountable nouns, Recognize irregular plural of nouns, and Distinguish the person from the thing*. For each skill, there is a short explanation and an exercise consisting of 10 Correct-Incorrect questions.

Students Assignments

At the beginning of the semester, students are assigned to form a group of 5 persons which will last until the end of the semester. Each of these groups is assigned to prepare a presentation of one structure skill of a particular topic. Since each topic usually consists of 4 or 5 skills, for each week, 5 groups will give presentations. The presentations are done subsequently by every group, so the same group will have another opportunity to present other topic.

For each skill, every group should prepare a power point presentation consisting of explanation of the particular grammar skill, answers and explanation of the exercises. Then, they should present that particular skill in front of the class.

Classroom Procedure

For each meeting, the following procedures are done:

1. Introduction
The teacher begins the class session by giving the outline of the materials to be discussed for that day.
2. Students' presentation
The assigned group gives their presentation and explanation of the materials.
3. Class discussion
After the presentation, the teacher reviews the materials, correcting 'misguided' explanations and invite other students to discuss the exercises with the whole class. This step is repeated after each group's presentation.
4. Evaluation
After all groups have presented and all the materials are discussed, the teacher gives a test that cover all the materials given that day. The test is given to ensure that all students understand the materials.

Data Collection and Analysis

For this research, the writer as the teacher collects data in the form of observation notes, group presentation scores and individual post test scores. The notes from observation are used to show the benefits and problems of using this method. On the other hand, group presentation scores and post test scores will be compared to find out whether the particular method gives a better result or not. The comparison will use a statistical method called independent sample t-test.

DISCUSSION

This part consists of three parts: the benefits, problems, and statistical results. The first and second parts are based on the teacher's notes during the implementation of the method, while the third part discusses the findings based on the students' scores.

Benefits

Assigning groups of students to present the materials in class showed obvious benefits for the students. Students had a bigger responsibility for their learning process because they had to execute the learning activity by themselves. Grouping students also provided an equal opportunity for individual student to learn the language. Each of them could participate, either by doing the exercise, preparing the presentation material or explaining to other students. Moreover, the opportunity to present the material in the classroom also boosted students' self confidence and self pride. On the other hand, the other students who watched their friends presenting the material also showed positive reaction. They were fully involved by asking questions, protesting for the wrong answer or explanation and by giving applause after the presentation. In short, all students, either the presenters or the audiences, actively participate in the teaching learning activities.

Teachers also got some benefits from this method. First of all, this method had decreased the tension of preparing the materials since it was the students who had to do this. Teachers only had to monitor students' presentation, review the materials and make correction if necessary. In this way, teachers were able to better monitor students' improvement in learning the language.

Problems Encountered

It was occasionally the case that materials or task could not be done within the time frame. There was not enough time for us to cover all the materials for that day, i.e. for all groups to present the materials and for the teacher to review and give evaluation. I usually compensated for this by cutting some materials or by altering task requirement on the spot.

Some groups reported that several members of their group do not want to participate in the preparation of materials. It also happened when presenting the materials, only one or two students dare to speak in front of the class, while the other members kept silent in their place.

Another problem occurred with the audiences. Some students seemed do not care of what was happening in the classroom. They were busy by themselves. They neither listened to the presentation nor gave response. They were totally indifferent. On the contrary, some other students were over reactive. When the presenting groups made a mistake these students yelled and made fun of them. At the end of the presentations, they not only applauded but also yelled. Sometimes it became too noisy.

The last problem is the seating arrangement. The class is so crowded so that the teacher could not move freely around the chairs and give personal assistance to the students. The classic issue occurred: only the front rows students got the privilege for learning.

Students' Scores

The scores of the students were divided into two parts: the group presentation scores and the individual scores. For group score, I took from the presentation score. It was calculated from the number of correct answers explained by the group. For example, For each skill, there are 10 questions. If a group answered 10 questions correctly with 10 correct explanations they will get a score of 100.

But, if they answered 10 correctly with only 6 correct explanations, they only got 80. Each group did 3 or 4 presentations, so the presentations score was the average score of those 3 or 4 scores.

Here is the presentation scores of each group from 2 classes:

Table 1 Group Presentation Scores

Class	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
PGA	75	65	80	0	90	90	90	85	85	0	50		
	8.	65	85	0	60	40	50	50	50	67	75		
	75	62	50	0	65	60	90	85	85	65	80		
	90	62	85	0	70	90	80	50	75	0	80		
Mean	80	64	75	0	71	70	78	68	74	66	71		
PTT	95	85	90	95	100	100	75	70	65	40	75	75	90
	75	70	75	80	82	75	62	93	40	75	100	90	100
	80	85	75	95	92	75	85	85	70	65	80	90	90
Mean	83	80	80	90	91	83	74	83	58	60	85	85	93

The following table shows the means of group scores for each class.

Table 2 Group Presentation Scores

Class	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
PGA	71.18	50	5.228
PTT	79.80	50	10.785
Total	75.49	100	9.480

The above tables show that students from both classes can achieve good scores if they work together as a team. PGA class get 71.18 score, which means that they can answer 14 out of 20 questions correctly, while PTT class get 79.80 score, which means that they can answer 16 out of 20 questions correctly. Even though according to Binus grading system, PGA class only gets C and PTT class only gets B, these two scores are relatively high.

The individual scores were taken from the accumulation of post test scores after each session. In the test, students were also given 20 questions that cover the materials of the day and if a student can answer all the questions correctly, he gets 100, but if he can only answer 10 he only gets 50 score. For the ease of reference, the following table only shows the mean of each class individual scores.

Table 3 Individual Post Test Scores

Class	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
PGA	62.16	50	11.402
PTT	69.30	50	7.898
Total	65.73	100	10.397

The above table shows that PGA students only get 62.16 and PTT students get 69.73 if they are tested individually. These scores indicate that they are still having problem in doing the test if they are not supported by their friends. These might also indicate that they do not fully understand the explanation of materials given by their friends.

Table 4 Correlation between individual and group scores

	PGA	PTT
Group Scores	71.18	79.80
Individual Scores	62.16	69.30

The above table shows that there is a difference of scores between individual and group scores in both classes. Group scores are around 15 % higher than individual scores. Even though the difference seems a small number, this result can be a considerable factor for the use of group presentation method in teaching English (especially TOEFL) to big classes.

Moreover, the t-test statistical calculation (using the formula $t = \frac{M_g - M_i}{\sqrt{\frac{S_g^2}{N_g} + \frac{S_i^2}{N_i}}}$; where

M= mean, S= standard deviation and N= the number of students) for the above scores yields the result of **6.94** . This value is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. It is concluded that, in this research, group presentation gives significantly better scores than individual test.

CONCLUSION

Assigning groups of students to prepare and present the materials in the classroom has become one of the solutions for teaching big classes. This method is taken primarily to promote a student-centered teaching and learning activities, to increase students' awareness of their own learning and to give an equal opportunity for every student to learn.

To some extent, these goals are achieved in this research. Students have shown positive attitude towards the teaching learning process in the classroom. They want to participate during the class session either by giving presentation, listening to the presentation and doing the assignment given by the lecture. Preparing and presenting the materials give them a chance to study, work together as a team, and express their communicative ability.

Yet, there are still some problems to be solved, namely insufficient time, indifferent students and over-reactive students. These problems need to be addressed so that the application of the method will produce a better result in the future.

In terms of scores, group scores reach 75.49 while individual scores reach 65.73. These scores indicate that students tend to get better result if they work together in group rather than individually.

Finally, I can conclude that group presentation method can be a valuable way of teaching English (especially TOEFL) to a large class. It promotes students' autonomy and accommodate for students' learning needs. It also gives students better scores in English, which in turn boost their confidence in using English outside academic environment.

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