

Improving the English skills of dance students through English learning with a cooperative learning approach

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Improving the English skills of dance students through English learning with a cooperative learning approach

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Abstract: *This study was aimed at improving the habits and courage of dance students in communicating in English. This study was classroom action research with a cooperative learning approach performed through English learning in the Curriculum Review and Development Course. The research subjects were 44 students of the Dance Education Department, Language and Art Faculty, Yogyakarta State University. The learning activity was Numbered head Together. Action implementation was performed in 2 cycles, which were: (1) improvement the habits to ask and read texts, and (2) improving courage to do presentation and write. Research results showed that the Numbered Heads Together strategy could motivate dance students to be active in the classroom and improve courage to communicate in English (48% to 75% in the first and 98% in the second cycle).*

Keywords: English speaking skills, cooperative learning, classroom technique

1. Introduction

The influences of globalization on various to continuously improving human resource qualities. In regard to the issue, skills in communicating in English should be improved so that we can enter and compete on the international level. Being recognized internationally, whether as an individual or as an institution, it is important to show that Yogyakarta State University (YSU) graduates have excellent qualities. Therefore, through a number of World Class University (WCU) programs, YSU continues to improve itself, its academic community to be skilled at communicating internationally.

As we all know, English has been taught at elementary school, junior

high school, high school, and university and in the past few years it has been taught at kindergarten levels. But the result its not satisfying, only a hadful of students are skillful in communicating in English. There are several things that cause this. There is a big possibility that this is caused by incorrect learning methods, so that it reduces students' motivation in learning (Soemanto, 2003). Besides, as a skill, communicating in English should be practiced continuously and used in daily life to become a habit.

Related to the problem above, a learning model in English should be developed to train English communication skills so that students and lecturers may have a habit to communicate in English. This is also

for preparation purposes if YSU works together with foreign universities and invites foreign students to continue their studies in YSU, lecturers and students should be ready with international level teaching activities.

Study group activities often times increase individuals' motivation to learning something, and cooperative learning can be used to train English skills through curriculum review and development course teaching activities (Shlomo, 2009). Therefore, the formulation of the problem is as follows: Can English skills of dance students be improved through English Development" course with a cooperative learning approach?

Cooperative Learning method refers to various teaching method in which students work in small groups to help each other in studying learning material (Slavin, 2008:4). In a cooperative learning class students are expected to help each other, discuss and argue, to improve their current knowledge and bridge the gap their understanding. In cooperative learning, students sit together in groups of four or five to master materials taught by the teachers.

Cooperative learning is not new to teachers and lecturers. Teacher and lecturers have used it for years in laboratory groups, assignment groups, discussion groups, etc. However, cooperative learning is different from a normal study group (Suprijono, 2007). In cooperative learning, there are five elements which can help educators to manage

classes more effectively, which are: (1) positive interdependence, (2) individual responsibility, (3) face-to-face, (4) communication among members, and (5) evaluation of group process.

There are several cooperative learning models which have been developed intensively and effectively and applied on learning process (Nasution, 2003). The models are (1) Student Team Learning (*Pembelajaran Tim Siswa or PTS*), (2) Student Team Achievement Division (STAD), (3) Team Game Tournament (TGT) (Slavin, 2008:13), (4) Jigsaw (I and II), (5) Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC), (6) Team Accelerated Instruction (TAI), (7) Numbered Head Together, (8) Group Investigation, etc.

This study uses Numbered Heads Together learning activity, which is a learning strategy in which its implementation is started by developing the class into small groups, and giving numbers to all group members according to the number of the members. After groups are formed, the teacher gives several questions which must be answered by each group. Each group will be given a chance to find the answer by putting their head together, discussing to think of an answer to the teacher's question. The next step is to call students with the same number from each group to answer the teacher's questions. This is done continuously until every student with the same number from each group has their turn in answering the teacher's question. Based on the answers, the teacher can develop

more in-depth discussion, so that students can find the answers as a whole knowledge.

Study result optimization can be done through trainings and practices, whether individually or in groups. Therefore, the effort to improve student's English skills can be done by increasing interaction trainings and practices in learning activities classroom. The numbered Heads Together learning method with cooperative learning approach which emphasizes on group work to help improve individuals' skill will increase students' learning motivation, because they can study together with friends in a comfortable and fun situation.

2. Method

This study was performed in eight meetings in a classroom in two months, starting from May to June 2010. The subjects of this study were 44 students of Dance Education Department, Language and Art Faculty, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta who were in their 4th semester and taking "Curriculum Review and Development" course (Kurikulum 2009 Pendidikan Seni Tari, 2012).

This study used a Classroom Action research method. The procedure of this study was divided into several stages: (1) Initial observation (introduction) which was meant to discover the initial skill and characteristics of students, (2) Planning which was designing purposes, materials, strategies, implementation, and research location in details, (3)

implementation and observation to implement the design made and recording the observation performed continuously during the process, (4) evaluation and reflection to evaluate the successes and modification.

Based on initial observation, several things that should be improved on the research subject students were the habit to communicate in the classroom in English, as questions in English. While regarding confidence, nearly 75% students were confident in introducing themselves in English, although the grammar it was also discovered that there were six students who were fluent and confident in communicating or making statements/questions in English with good grammar.

Habit and courage to communicate in English are related to each other, therefore they became the main purposes of this study, which are descriptively formulated to increase class participation and increase habit as well as courage to communicate in English.

The research was designed by prioritizing fun learning situation, by choosing materials with medium level of difficulty, and variation of learning strategies. The design of the first cycle is as follows:

- a. Purpose: (1) accustoming students to interact in English through study group method, and (2) Increasing class participation by increasing students' courage to ask questions in English.

- b. Action : (1) Self introduction and taking questions from lecturers and other students, (2) Optimizing the role of the group to get used to interacting in English, and (3) Learning materials in English in groups, then answering questions from the lecturer.
- c. Activity stages consisting of: (1) Self introduction in one meeting, (2) Answering questions from lecturer verbally in 3 meetings. Note : Before the second stage, every group had discussed the material outside of the meeting, (3) Students expressing themselves in English, and
- d. Students interacting in English in the classroom more often. The action results in the first cycle would be perfected in the second cycle by increasing students' motivation to express opinion in English.

The results of evaluation and reflection on the first cycle were used as a basis to design the action in the second cycle. Because the result of the first cycle was not optimum, there were several things which should be repeated by optimizing group role and modifying the learning method used. So that students were more accustomed to interacting in English, the second cycle would be performed in 4 meetings. The details of the second cycle were as follows:

- a. Purpose: (1) Encouraging students and lecturers'

habit to interact in English in and out of the classroom, and (2) increasing students' courage to ask or making a statement in English.

- b. Action: (1) Distributing a discussion topic to every group, then the groups will make a short writing in English on the topic, (2) Each group appoints a representative to present the topic, (3) Other groups are asked to prepare questions or comments for the presenting group, and (4) at the end of the meeting, one of the students is asked to make a brief conclusion of the material.
- c. Activity stages consisting of: (1) Students were given 1 week to prepare material according to the topic/subject given, (2) Two of the first meetings in the second cycle repeated the action from the first cycle, which was answering questions from the lecturer verbally, (3) each group presented topic/subject in English, with some Bahasa Indonesia, in 4 meetings, and (4) Two of the last meetings in the second cycle involved competent observer, in this case a lecturer from English Department.

Success indicators are identified as follows:

- a. The increase of habit of speaking in English, marked by the high frequency of students responding to the lecture in English.
- b. The increase of class participation, marked by more students' activeness in interacting and responding in English.
- c. Improvement of learning quality, marked by students' courage to do presentation and write assignments in English.

3. Findings and Discussions

According to the plan, the first cycle was performed in four meetings. The implementator was Wenti Nuryani as the lecturer of "Curriculum Review and Development" course. The collaborators/observers were Sutyono, Puspitorini, and Titik Putraningsih.

There were two stages of main activities performed in this cycle, which were (a) self introduction on May 11th 2010, (b) answering questions from the lecturer in quiz/verbal questions as well as reading answers of questions or subjects. It was performed on May 18th 2010, June 10th 2010, and June 15th 2010. There was a rather big gap between the second and third meetings because the students asked for time to concentrate on production management handling for III Choreography exam performed on the first week of June.

The purpose of this activity was to raise the courage to express opinion in English, practice confidence, train the habit to interact (albeit simply) in English. The implementation of this action was a fun activity for the students because they were free to express themselves so that many funny things happened. The relaxed atmosphere in this action increased courage to ask questions to the individuals who were introducing themselves. Similarly, questions from lecturers and friends were answered confidently, although most students (75%) still used two languages in answering questions.

From the aspect of grammatical correctness, many were incorrect, but from courage and confidence aspect, nearly everyone showed high courage.

This activity aimed to train the habit of reading and understanding English text as well as training the habit and courage to interact in English. Included in it was answering lecturer's questions on the topic discussed. The method used in this action was learning with Numbered Heads Together method. First the lecturer divided the class into 6 groups, each consisted of 7-8 people. Everyone was given a number according to how many personnel were of the group, which was 1-7/8. The each group was given a topic which must be studied together. They must bring the group together, discussing to find answers to the questions from the lecturer.

Next, the lecturer called members of each group with the same number to answer questions.

This was done repeatedly until every member of the groups had their chance to answer questions. To make it more exciting, answers which couldn't be answered by group members who were called were given to members of other groups. This was also to maintain focus on the material discussed, although some weren't answering questions.

Recording of the increase of students' responses was done by the observers, who were Sutyono, Puspitorini, and Titik Putraningsih. The instruments used were observations sheets of the increase of individual' participation. Because the purposes of this study were 'accustoming' and 'encouraging' interaction in English, there was no test.

The results of first cycle reflection were:

- a. Students' courage to answer questions increased, especially in the third and fourth meetings. 22 students even responded more than once in answering lecturer's questions/able to answer a few questions.
- b. 6 students were able to answer questions in fluent English and full of confidence. There were Dessy, Ratih, Wahyu, Farah, Arum, and Danang.
- c. Students diligently joined the course during the first cycle. But there were 4 students not present during the end of the first cycle; three of them were in an art performance while the other one was sick.

- d. Students often greeted the lecturer in English outside of the classroom.

The results of reflection and evaluation in the first cycle were used as a basis to make a design of the second cycle. Because the first cycle showed good increase of courage, learning method during the second cycle was increased by giving assignments to each group to make brief paper in English on definitions, foundations, components, and principles of KTSP and Arts and Culture. Then each group must teach the material to the classmates in turn. In other words, every group was asked to present their paper and answer questions from other groups.

The second cycle was performed in four meetings, by involving an observer, a lecturer of English Education Department, G. Suharto. At first, MR. G Suharto was going to be involved as an observer during the four meetings of the second cycle, but the students weren't confident and a little scared and so asked for time to prepare themselves mentally during the first and second meeting, and invited G. Suharto for the third and fourth meetings. Meanwhile, Puspitorini was ill, therefore unable to continue her work as an observer, and was replaced by Wenti Nuryani.

There were three stages of main activities performed in this cycle, which were: (a) making a short paper in English, (b) present the paper and answer questions asked, (c) prepare questions for the other groups who were presenting their papers. Division of

implementation time in the second cycle was as follows: June 24th and 25th 2010, giving presentation and answering questions from lecturer and classmates. June 28th and 29th 2010, giving presentation and answering questions from other groups, while the lecturer didn't give any question. Specifically, the actions in the second cycle are as follows:

The purpose was to train students to understand and get used to reading texts in English. Text sources could be the internet or other sources, rearranged according to the need of the group. However, a group tried to make its own paper in English, which was group 1. It should be noted that there were 6 groups, with 7 or 8 members each. All groups finished their assignments on time.

The purpose of this activity was to increase courage to express opinion, as well as responding in English. During the first and second meetings (June 24th, 25th 2010), after presenting group assignments, they answered questions from lecturer who will give the questions to the other students to keep the class active. During this action, nearly all students responded to questions or comments from lecturers and other friends, although their responses in English were occasionally mixed with words in Bahasa Indonesia. During the third and fourth meetings (June 28th and 29th 2010) the atmosphere was tense because there was an observer from English department. Even those who had given presentation were not present on the next day. So, nine people were

absent in the last meeting. Students responded only once on the average (asking or answering), only six responded more than once.

The purpose of this activity was still the same as above, which was to increase courage and habit to respond in English by asking questions or giving comments. For those who were less fluent in communicating in English, they were allowed to read questions made. Similarly, those who answered questions were allowed to read texts. This way they also practiced their skill in reading English texts.

Recording of increase of individual's participation was performed by Nuryani, Sutiyono, Titik Putraningsih by using observation sheets on the increase of individual's participation. Meanwhile, G. Suharto focused on observation on students' skill in making opinions, asking, or answering questions by using class participation observation sheets.

The results of the final reflection of the second cycle were: (a) While in cycle 1, courage increased drastically, it's stable in cycle 2, (b) students seemed more accustomed to courses in two languages, so they were more relaxed, (c) there were 5 students who had better skills than other students as shown by fluency in speaking in English and higher confidence, (d) discipline in going to courses lowered in the second cycle, because in the third meeting 5 people were absent without notice. During the last meeting, 10 students were absent without notice, either.

Observers and other students guessed that these 10 people were absent to prepare for semester exam which would be held in the next class hour.

The classroom action research was performed in a room usually used for theoretical course for most study programs in Language and Art Education Faculty, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. Some rooms were initially not designed for classes, therefore actually did not meet the requirements of holding a class. The room was too small for more than 40 students, so that they could not sit freely and this affected their concentration. There were attempts to move to other rooms, but failed to get a proper room because of the tight schedule, so we returned to the previous room.

Time of research was designed to fit the schedule of "Curriculum Review and Development" course, which was on Tuesday and Thursday, from 13.00-14.30. However, some of the schedule was changed and adjusted according to the deal with the students, including time and duration of meetings. This was because the research subjects were students with many activities.

Besides, the characteristics of students who were made research subjects were loud and rather undisciplined class. During this study, they also had to take "Production Management" course which required them to handle Choreography show exam. Several students often asked permission to be late because they had to prepare for

Choreography show exam, starting from making fundraising proposals for sponsors to preparing the stage for Choreography show exam.

However, the research purpose which focused on accustoming and increasing the courage to interact or communicate in English was quite successful. Research subjects seemed confident in speaking in English, including getting used to reading English texts, although in easy level (not texts which were difficult to understand).

However, the actions of the second cycle involved an observer (lecturer from English Education Department, G. Suharto. When observed by G. Suharto, the students lost confidence and were a little scared. They were worried about speaking in English with wrong grammar. Actually, this study was meant to instill that speaking in English should be driven by courage and they were expected to not be scared about making mistakes. In other words, practicing speaking in English at early level and especially to increase courage shouldn't involve an observer who was an expert in English.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

¹² Based on the results of the analysis of the action implementation, several things can be concluded:

- a. The main factor in communicating in English is courage and trying not to be scared of making mistakes.
- b. To be more skillful and fluent in English, one should get

used to using the language in many opportunities, although limited to simple sentences.

- c. To motivate students, class atmosphere should be designed in such a way to be fun, not tense, but still disciplined. The use of cooperative learning approach with numbered heads together method can encourage the habit to respond.
- d. Generally, class participation increased, 75% students still joined the class to the end of the cycles.

Generally, this research was successful in accustoming students of Dance Education Department, Language and Art Faculty, Yogyakarta State University to increase courage in speaking in English, especially in classroom interaction. Therefore, the actions implemented in this study should be continued by the students so that they can continue to practice English, not only in the classroom but also outside. Besides, lecturers should set an example so that students are motivated to speak English.

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