Improving High School Student's Speaking Skills through Speech: A Project-Based Learning Case Study

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Background: Why is speaking skill important?

- One of the basic problems in foreign language teaching is to prepare learners to be able to use the language (Bygate, 1987).

- Productive skill such as speaking is an observable evidence of language acquisition (Torky, 2006)

- Speaking is an important mode of communication for EFL learners.

Background: Why is speaking challenging?

- Speaking skill is regarded one of the most difficult aspects of language learning (Zhang, 2009; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

- Four main factors that cause difficulty in speaking (Ur, 1996):
  1. Inhibition
  2. Nothing to say.
  3. Low or uneven participation.
  4. Mother-tongue use.

Background: How to overcome the problem?

- Project-based Learning (PBL) which allows students to learn by doing in an extended project that requires authentic language use (Fragoulis, 2009) is a potential method for speaking.

- Studies show that PBL can improve English speaking skill (Gaer, 1998; Maulany, 2013; Poonpon, 2017)

- Some speaking activities such as drilling and storytelling, picture-cued, question and answer, discussion and games, and role play have proved successful to improve speaking skill (Maulany, 2013)

Background: Why is speech important?

- Speech as a form of public speaking that helps convey ideas effectively to others.

- Students can participate in English speech contests at a high school level.

Research Purpose

- To explore the ways in which speech project improve high school student's speaking skill and attitudes toward English learning?

Research Methods

- Research Design: Mixed method (quantitative and qualitative)

- Data Source: Class X students of a private Islamic high school in Yogyakarta (3-month project)

Research Methods

	Fluency	Pronunciation and accent	Vocabulary	Grammar	Details
5	Smooth and fluid speech; few to no hesitations; no attempts to search for words; volume is excellent.	Pronunciation is excellent; good effort at accent	Excellent control of language features; a wide range of well-chosen vocabulary	Accuracy & variety of grammatical structures	Excellent level of description; additional details beyond the required
4	Smooth and fluid speech; few hesitations; a slight search for words; inaudible word or two.	Pronunciation is good; good effort at accent	Good language control; good range of relatively well-chosen vocabulary	Some errors in grammatical structures possibly caused by attempt to include a variety.	Good level of description; all required information included
3	Speech is relatively smooth; some hesitation and unevenness caused by rephrasing and searching for words; volume wavers.	Pronunciation is good; Some effort at accent, but is definitely non-native	Adequate language control; vocabulary range is lacking	Frequent grammatical errors that do not obscure meaning; little variety in structures	Adequate description; some additional details should be provided
2	Speech is frequently hesitant with some sentences left uncompleted; volume very soft.	Pronunciation is okay; No effort towards a native accent	Weak language control; basic vocabulary choice with some words clearly lacking	Frequent grammatical errors even in simple structures that at times obscure meaning.	Description lacks some critical details that make it difficult for the listener to understand
1	Speech is slow, hesitant & strained except for short memorized phrases; difficult to perceive continuity in speech; inaudible.	Pronunciation is lacking and hard to understand; No effort towards a native accent	Weak language control; vocabulary that is used does not match the task	Frequent grammatical errors even in simple structures; meaning is obscured.	Description is so lacking that the listener cannot understand

Speaking Rubric K-12

PBL Timeline
- Assessment
- Observation on classroom activities: Present, Practice & Produce (PPP) Framework
- Interview & documentation

Research Methods

- Research Variables: PBL method (free variable) and student's English speaking competence and attitude change (bound variable)

- Data Collection Technique: Observation, interview, and documentation

- Data Analysis Method: Interactive analysis model (Miles & Huberman, 2014) to analyze the qualitative data.
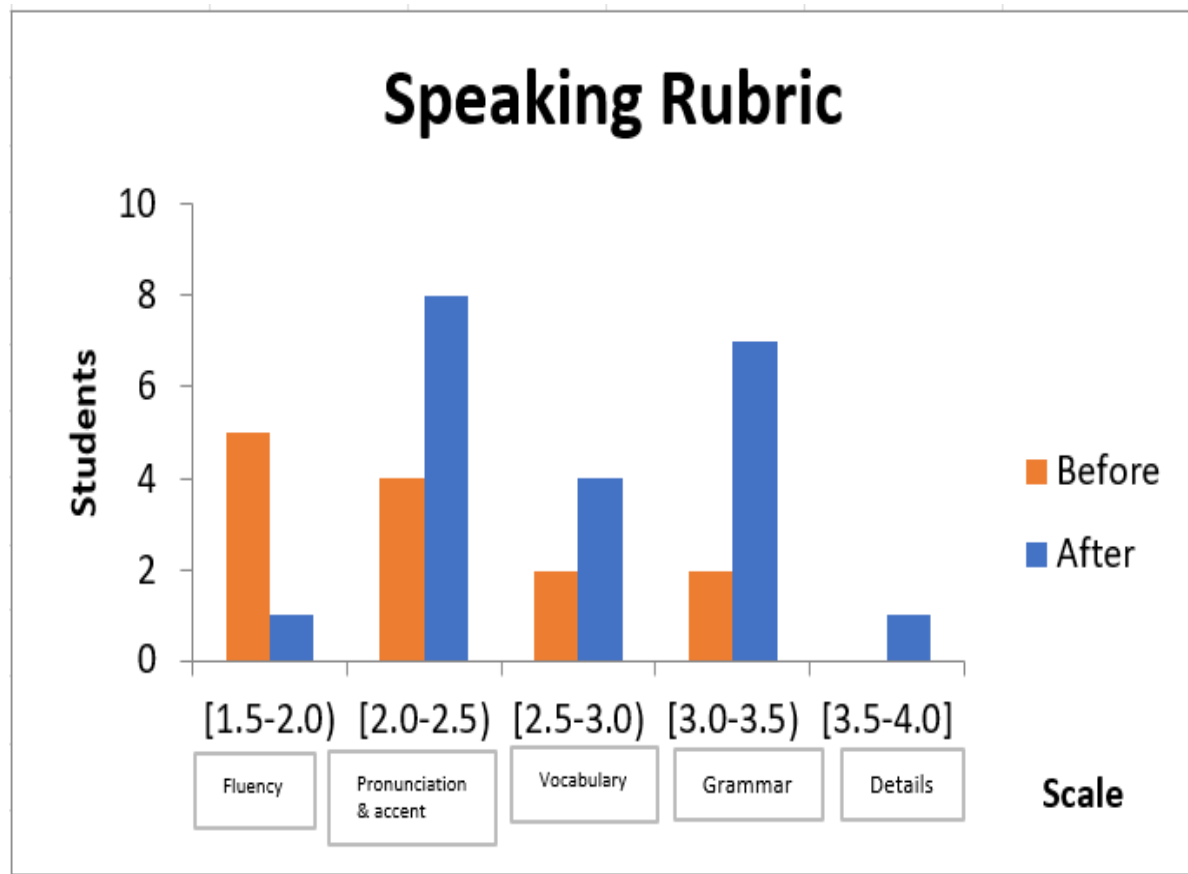
Findings & Discussion

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Findings & Discussion: Speaking skill

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	1,769565	2,573913
Variance	0,443123	0,55747
Observations	23	23
Pearson Correlation	0,918361	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	22	
t Stat	-13,0254	
P(T<=t) one-tail	4,05E-12	
t Critical one-tail	1,717144	
P(T<=t) two-tail	8,11E-12	
t Critical two-tail	2,073873	

Findings & Discussion: Attitude toward English learning

- Based on the interview with the students at the end of program, this research found that there was a significant increase in student's attitude toward English learning:

  - More confidence when speaking in English

  - More active participation during the class

  - More comfortable to work in a team

Conclusion

- Project-based learning through speech project at high school could help improve not only the student's speaking skill but also their attitude toward English learning.

- Speech project allows students to practice developing and organizing their ideas, about a particular topic of their interest.

- Speech project done with a partner is beneficial for first year students, as well as for students with basic level of English as they feel less burdened.

Conclusion

- Project-based learning with a real speech contest makes students more motivated to try their best as it gives them a context of using the language.

- PBL within a three-month period for a speech project might be insufficient. An extended duration is needed.

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THANK YOU!