



Outdoor Class Project: The Potential Benefits to Foster EFL Students' Language Proficiency

Indah Fajaria

Higher School of Foreign Language (STBA) Teknokrat Lampung, Indonesia

E-mail: qy_lopez@yahoo.com

Doi: 10.7575/aiac.all.v.4n.1p.140

Received: 03/12/2012

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v.4n.1p.140>

Accepted: 03/01/2013

Abstract

There are such myriad ideas upon English teaching-learning process. Everybody can share each fabulous idea through various media. One of fun English learnings that can motivate EFL students' eagerness to practice English easily is an outdoor class activity. This project could sometimes deals with an outbound activities which provide the numerous contextualized values to shape more students' character and their language proficiency as well. Moreover, nowadays the development of technology can be also integrated into the EFL classrooms. Therefore, the outdoor class project is potentially implemented through the technology-enhanced teaching. The most crucial materials that is urgently to be prepared are the tutorial models & methods, and the thermalized subject based on the objective itself.

Keywords: outdoor class, EFL Students' language proficiency, technology-enhanced teaching

1. Introduction

English is a tool for global communication implies that people from various countries must be ready to maximize their understanding about English through its cross-cultural bases. It means that when people learn English, at the same time they will learn also about its culture. It sometimes invited some significant reactions that simply weakening people's understanding and their motivation to continue learning English. But, others would have different respond because the teacher plays the role better and take a proper position to control the class well. Teachers have to develop students' skill in thinking and problem solving. Moreover, teachers should also enrich the students' experience by motivating them to practice English continuously in their daily activities.

There might be some ways in giving students' particular English learning, but teacher needs to be more creative in engaging the advance course with the potential self-directing learner. The researcher chooses the outdoor class project in preparing multiples language learning through some new concepts. These new concepts would mix their critical thinking, creative and practical thinking, as well as developing skills, and making knowledge useful. This media will allow students to not only learning English joyfully but also enabling them to function and interact more with others. The outdoor class project also provides some soft skills for them in having good ability for managing complex project. The most important thing that becomes the main goal of this method is to teach them more about the values of life. They will practice about the individual lives, how to communicate many things in a good way, and preparing them in facing global work and challenges through some representatives actions.

The focus of english lesson can be categorized into two; developing the four basic skills and scrutinizing the sensitivity toward the moral values inside the language itself. English Skills must be integrated from reading, speaking, listening, and writing. Along the outdoor class project, students work altogether in pairs to transfer and negotiate the meaning. They might play a role based on the inquiry, reading the order correctly, speak out all their feeling through the instructions, listen to the people's suggestion and opinion or even when they questioning about the reason that has been chosen by, can be sometimes writing the goals they want to reach. Therefore, the role of teacher is primarily to facilitate communication and only secondarily to correct the errors they make. At the same time can also ask the students to become the words detector to train their sensitively toward those errors.

Meanwhile, the outdoor class project can arises also the awareness in the using of such outbound activity. It invited teachers to pay more attention on the process of learning than the final score gained by students. This classroom design would enable them to practice English as well as other skills. Beside, doing outdoor-classroom design can broaden their insight about their environment both nature and social life joyfully.

2. Methods of the research

This is a case study research with a single case design. It aims to investigate the effectiveness of a teaching program, namely the implementation of the outdoor class-project in enhancing EFL's language proficiency. This study involved 20 students and the role of the investigator was a teacher-researcher. To avoid the subjectivity, the teacher-researcher asked the other critical-teacher to make a review toward all result.

The data are taken from conversation class of S12AB (The Freshman) of Higher School of Foreign Language (STBA) Teknokrat Lampung, Indonesia in academic year 2012/2013 odd semester. The writer would analyze conversation II (conversation/speaking class for the second level). Data of the this research were collected through multiple sources of information including observation, interview through questionnaires, and review of those documents.

The data collected in this study were analyzed by qualitative and quantitative methods. The involvement of qualitative and quantitative analyses is aimed to construct a better result. To elaborate the idea; descriptive qualitative method is employed to get more focus in the analysis. Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experience and the world in which they live (Stake, 2010:3).

The conversation II class is designed to discuss hotel and tourism world such as handling guest, hotel services and facilities, places, traveling, cuisine, tourism object or world wonders etc. Here, the researcher would take some materials from those objectives of the subject as the major discussion along the observations. The outdoor-class project is done through the materials about places, traveling, tourism object or world wonders. The place that is used for outdoor classroom is Teknokrat. There are some objects that is available to be the representatives of some ideas which deal with the material discussed such as the rectorate building, the stadium, and dinosaur park, the angel garden. The study is simply to show the possible benefits resulted from this classroom design.

3. Discussion

Before the teaching learning process, the teacher must prepare the learning contract which covers the learning objective, learning resource, the final product-evidence and the assessment criteria. Medgyes (2001:434) explains that non-native-English-speaking teacher (Non-NEST) are usually preoccupied with accuracy, the formal features of English, the nuts and bolts of grammar, the printed words, and formal registers.

The primary goal of this research was to identify the benefits resulted by the outdoor-class project. This research is conducted through speaking class. The speaking fluency of EFL students can be measured if they produce the language smoothly. The language can be clearly deliberated and communicated without any single restriction. Ellis (2012:488) adds that the smooth speech will be fulfilled if there is no such variables relating to the linguistic features that disturb it.

Hottho & Reimann (1998) stated that when contact with the target language community is not possible, students are inclined to develop instrumental orientation and this contention is supported by the present study. Therefore, outdoor-class project becomes one of the best ways to develop EFL students' language proficiency. Through this classroom design, the EFL students may also conduct a group discussion. The discussion is based on the thematic materials provided by the teacher. A group discussion encourage students to have a good team work and positively build a debate nuance to shape their English ability fluently. Here, they need also to scrutinize more their critical thinking therefore their ideas would go along their thought as well as their experiences.

When students has a lecture at class, they might learn more about some specific vocabularies acquisition, grammar practice, listening toward certain English topic and others. At outdoor-class project, students also learn more about character educations. Character education is intended to enhance the ethical values. Character education enforces students to think critically, act responsibly and respectfully. Vessel and Huitt (2005) stated that there are four ethical values as followed:

- The ethical sensitivity is the perception of moral and social situations, including the ability to consider possible actions and their repercussions in terms of the people involved.
- The ethical judgment is understood as the consideration of possible alternative actions and the rationale for selecting one or more as the best.
- The ethical motivation is explained as the selection of moral values most relevant in the situation and the commitment to act on that selection.
- The ethical action is elaborated as the ego strength combined with the psychological and social skills necessary to carry out the selective alternative.
-

Another important value that students grab along the outdoor-class project is morality. It is an evaluative orientation that distinguishes good and bad, a sense of obligation toward standards of social collective, a sense of responsibility for acting out of concern for others, a concern for the rights of others, a commitment to honesty in interpersonal relationship, and a state of mind that causes of negative emotional reactions to immoral acts (Vessel and Huitt, 2005:2). Therefore, the character building means to treat the students in understanding the good, desiring to do the good, and doing the good. Here, teacher can display some good examples as a model that play a role as the great motivation to develop students ability in english. What should prepare:

3.1 Outdoor classroom design for discussing about places:

Things should be prepared are as followed:

1. Find out a very comfortable field where all students can sit down calmly and nicely
2. Provide some pieces of paper and pen for each student
3. Get ready with some famous places written in the small paper then spread it out randomly

4. Make sure that the students has been known the topic to be discussed

How to play the game:

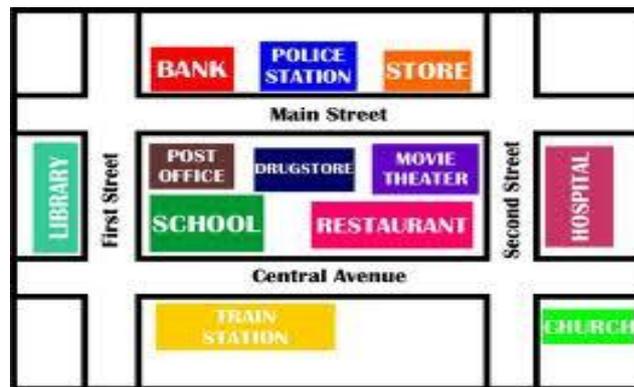
1. When the EFL students got the scramble word related to famous places that has been shared before, in 15 minutes ask them to explain about the word briefly and clearly
2. If one of EFL students got serious problem regarding to their vocabularies, then the teacher may ask the other students to try to help their friends first, if there is no one could answer, teacher would answer the difficulty
3. The one who can deliver the explanation smoothly and correctly would get the best score

3.2 Outdoor classroom design for discussing about Traveling:

Things should be prepared are as followed:

1. Ask the students to be ready in the field
2. Prepare the field with some notions about some famous objects to be travelled by students; it is in a form of simple map

The example of the map



3. Explain the EFL students that the game is related to the discussion of giving direction, therefore they have to explain all the things correctly and clearly, if not they would get lost
4. Because the number of students is 20 so divide them into 10 (ten) couple of groups
5. Each couple then be ready to set up their direction

How to play the game:

1. Each couple will be asked one by one to perform the game in 10 minutes
2. When they have already asked to perform, then they will be separated, one of them would be stay at certain object or place while another one would be ready to visit the couple and of course far staying from the couple
3. Therefore, the next one is, one student would chases his/her own couple who stays far from him/her and vice versa
4. In the "chasing" time, each of student must speak up loudly about the direction his/her arises so the others and the lecturer might listen to the explanation clearly
5. For couple, if one of them is getting the difficulties, then they might help each other so that the couple would gather immediately
6. The couple that can explain and give the direction correctly and clearly without any hesitation and punctual is the best one

3.3 Outdoor classroom design for discussing about Cuisine

Talking about tourism means at the same time students would talk also about the traditional foods that become one of the uniqueness of certain places or object. Therefore, in learning about cuisine, EFL students must broaden their knowledge about the traditional foods that have been mentioned by lecturer at the previous meeting.

Things should be prepared are as followed:

1. The field where all students can sit down comfortably
2. The blank paper and the glue
3. The teacher prepare the picture of some traditional foods from around of Indonesia completed by some scramble descriptions of the foods itself; the ingredients and the way to cook or to make it. Make all these scramble description in the form of small cutting paper
4. The traditional song lyrics from some provinces in Indonesia where the traditional food from
5. Make sure that the students has been known the topic to be discussed

How to play the game:

1. Determine the students into five groups (four students per group)
2. Ask each group to choose one of the scramble explanations of certain traditional food at the table
3. Ask them to unscramble the description of traditional food by put it at the blank paper; remember! The description is all about the ingredients and the way to cook or to make the food

4. After finishing the arrangement, students are asked to find out the suitable picture of the food so that they might know the name of the food
5. At last, students should choose one of traditional song lyrics after all the completion (the arrangement and also the pictures)
6. The best one is the group with the correct answer

3.4 Outdoor classroom design for discussing about Tourism object or world wonder:

Things should be prepared are as followed:

1. All the building and the best spots in Teknokrat would be the best example for several tourism objects or some world wonders
2. Students are ready with the explanation of the chosen famous tourism object or world wonder written in the small paper
3. Make sure that the students has been known the topic to be discussed

How to play the game:

1. Lead the students to have a role play as a tour guide in turn
2. Each of students must choose one of the buildings to represent his/her chosen tourism object or world wonder, then explain that object clearly and briefly for about 10 (ten minutes)

The example of the building is:



This building is usually used to represent the *Taj Mahal* from India

3. The one who can deliver the explanation smoothly and correctly would get the best score

Even this classroom design is served joyfully but the assessment is still the priority. Assessment is considered to play a critical role in education for both policymakers and practitioners as assessment practices inform accountability (how well students have learned) and instruction (how to improve) in educational context (Danielson, 2008). Classroom assessment is conducted continuously with three basic functions: to monitor the process of learning, to monitor students' progress and to improve learning.

After finishing the meeting of outdoor class project, the teacher gives the EFL students a questionnaire to fulfilled as the evaluation and controlling toward the usage of it. The grand expressions resulted from students along the outdoor-class project are as follow:

Statements of Agreement	Percentages of Agreement (%)
1. I can develop my English better	75%
2. I feel easy to express everything with my English	90%
3. I found many ideas deal with nature	85%
4. I feel more confident in speaking English	80%
5. I feel t is so much fun learning English through new things	95%
6. I can understand how to improve English joyfully	70%
7. I understand more about tenses	50%
8. I know team work would strengthen people ability	100%
9. I know how to use articles	70%
10. I have more vocabularies	90%
11. I know how to spell and pronounce words correctly	85%
12. I notice my punctuation	75%
13. I can improve my English proficiency in general	90%

Those statements as the representations of the possible benefits gained by the outdoor-class projects. EFL students raised some skills that develop more their communicative skills, their team-work as well as their critical thinking through group discussion and problem-solving. Students grasped also the character building through several English fun learning and activities. The values that can build their character are honest, responsible, creative, discipline, sociable, communicative, courageous, adaptable, and independent.

In Indonesia, to support the realization of the ideals of character development as mandated in Pancasila 1945 constitution, the Government enclose it as one of the priority programs of national development. The spirit of character

development is implicitly affirmed in the National Long Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2005-2015. It stated that character education is placed as a foundation for realizing the vision of national development, namely "The Public realize the noble, moral ethical, cultured and civilized based on the philosophy of Pancasila". Ministry of National Education Program, as outlined in the National Action Plan for Character Education (2010): character education is mentioned as values education.

Character building works:

1. Develop the basic potentials for good-hearted, good minded and well behaved (see point number 1-2)
2. Strengthen and build a multicultural nation of behavior (see point number 3-6)
3. Improving the students motivation to get an excellent skills for English itself (see point number 7-13)

Besides, the language acquisition as the most influential point through the outdoor-class project. There are two approaches of language acquisition, nurture and nature approach. Nurture approach was firstly introduced by Skinner. In brief, Skinner believes that children learned language as responses to verbal stimuli presented by those around them. he published a famous book "Verbal Behavior" presenting his theory in the 1950s. Skinner said that language is behavior, and, just like any other behavior, it is learned. This learning occurs through "reinforcement of successive approximations".

Noam Chomsky wrote a famous review of this book showing that language could not be learned as Skinner claimed because words can be strung into an infinite number of sentences, which the child can understand although (s)he cannot possibly have heard them before. Chomsky therefore proposed that the child must have innate linguistic structures which developed to enable him or her to comprehend language. This one we call as the nature approach. This model assumes that "language is built up constantly from a continuous interaction with a well-structured environment". The outdoor-classroom design makes this thing possible to be raised by enabling EFL students practice english well. They can explore their critical thinking and broaden their knowledge widely about the nation, the culture and so forth.

4. Conclusion

Talking about language is at the same time talking about its culture and the morality formula because of the meaning carried through it. Along the outdoor-classroom design, there are some values such as team-work, courageous, self-confidence, speaking briefly, clearly, fluently, and correctly that are gained by students. it will develop their character building better because they extend their morality values as well. Since EFL students are expected to have good proficiency in English so they can gain some vocabularies and having a significant improvement in speaking English fluently. The outdoor class project can be such a medium to explore more the EFL student's proficiency through such an outbond activities or other enjoyable learning. The EFL students learn english joyfully through smart concepts.

References

- Chomsky, N. 1968. *Language and Mind*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.
- Danielson, C. 2008. Assessment for Learning: For Teachers as well as students. in C.A.Dawyer (Ed.), *The Future of Assessment: Shaping teaching and learning* (p.191-213). New York: Taylor and Francis.
- Ellis, Rod. 2012. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. 2nd Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hamp-Lyons, Liz. 2006. Feedback in portfolio-based writing courses. In Ken Hyland & Fiona Hyland, *Feedback in Second Language Writing: Context and Issues*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kohonen, Viljo et al. 2000. *Experiential Learning in Foreign Language Education*. Tampere: University of Tampere.
- Medgyes, P. 2001. When the Teacher is a Non-Native Speaker. In Marianne Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English a Second or Foreign Language-Third Edition* (p.434). Massachusetts: Heinle and Heinle.
- Nunes, Alexandra. 2004. "Portfolios in the EFL Classroom: Disclosing An Informed Practice". *ELT Journal* 58 (4): 327-335.
- Stake, Robert. 2010. *Qualitative Research: Studying How Things Work*. NY: The Guilford Press.
- Vessel, Gordon and William Huitt. 2005. *Moral Character Development*. Paper presented at the National Youth at Risk Conference, Savannah, GA, March 8-10. Retrieved from <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/papers/chardev.pdf>
- <http://golum.riv.csu.edu.au/~srelf/SOTE/EML504/Skinner.htm>