

Integrating Speaking Class Activities and Service Learning: Arousing Students Awareness Towards Their Environment

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Abstract. This paper explores not only the attempt of integrating Speaking class activities and service learning but also its effects to the students. Under the topic of survey and interview with its environmental issues the students of third semester of English Department, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta were asked to see closely the problems in their surroundings. By conducting a survey they examined the problems in their surroundings. Next, the result of the survey was shown to the experts and local officers by interviewing them in English. The students then were asked to find some solutions toward the problems. The last step was making a report by presenting their activities. Focus Group Discussion in reflection section was conducted to see whether or not the students were affected by the service learning activities. It shows that the activities contributed to the speaking skills ability and at the same time gave the awareness toward the problems found in their surroundings.

Keywords: Environment, interview, service learning, speaking activities, speaking skills, survey.

1 Introduction

Service learning is a program which mixes service projects for communities and academic curriculum. Different from community service, service learning gives an opportunity for a reflection and can easily be added to the school curricula [1]. It was first sparked by John Dewey. Dewey in El-Adaway, Pierrakos, and Truax [2] believed that the students should experience and practice their own learning and apply it to receive certain goals and learn about sustainability. According to Strange [3], the interest in the pedagogy of service learning has been increased during the past decade. Vogelgesang and Astin [4], add that it serves the pedagogy with the connection between the academic and the practical. Kaye [5] also argues that service learning as a form of a research-based teaching method in which the teachers should guide the learning process by guiding the students to apply their skills and knowledge, can be used to help the society to solve their issues or problems. They are able to contribute and give meaning to the society and community they live in by applying their skills and knowledge. In addition, the students then are also asked to have a reflection toward their service learning experience. Vogelgesang and Astin [4] add that by knowing

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those responsibilities the students should contribute to the society's urgent needs. Sternberg [6] who calls service learning as real-world learning says that service learning gives new perspective to the teaching method. By having service learning, the students apply their "analytical thinking, creative thinking, and practical thinking" which leads them to the "successful intelligence". Meanwhile, Rashotte [7] argues that service learning is the latest teaching method which integrates both traditional learning method and community service. Therefore, it shapes the students to follow the structured service activities which help them to be an active learner by applying the knowledge learned in the classroom by improving their social skills. Furthermore, on Sun and Yang's research [8], they found that service learning based on projects also gives many benefits in both student's speaking skills and confidence. By having a project-based on service learning, students practice to find a solution of a particular problem, brave enough to face the reality, receive feedback and plan to the next journey [9]. As the latest teaching method, Billig [10] finds that service learning also gives impact to the teachers or educators. By engaging in service learning, it opens the discussion among the teachers or educators of how to get the best ways for the students to learn and transfer the information. Thus, it increases a better teachers-students relation. In short, it can be concluded that service learning which forces the students to get involved in the society makes them become more active students. By triggering their critical thinking skills and their creativity they are exposed to the issues in the society to think about and solved. Finally, they then can become useful in the society.

English Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia has two activities which are similar with service learning. The first one is done outside the class activities conducted by students' organization. They conduct a study club for children coming from low income families. They help them with their home works and teach them some school subjects. Some activities are also held such as storytelling, singing, dancing, and playing games. However, the activities do not become a part of curriculum. They are based on the students' initiatives and volunteerism which is closer to community service. Another activity is called as internship program. The students work for 100 h in some institutions or companies. They, with their knowledge gotten in classes, try to solve problems occur in the companies they have the intern program in. Even though they apply the knowledge and get involved with the society, intern program is different from service learning. Therefore, we can see that service learning still is not applied in English Department. With all the benefits offered by service learning, trying to apply it in the English Department is worth to experience. This paper explores how service learning is integrated in Speaking Class III in the third semester and the impacts received by the students.

2 Speaking III and service learning

This part explains the application of service learning in the Speaking III Class activities. The general information of activities carried out in the Speaking III is informed and followed by the explanation of how service learning activity in the course was conducted. The result of the Focus Group Discussion upon the students' opinion toward service learning activities in Reflection stage then discussed.

Speaking III is given for the students at the third semester. Academic speaking becomes the main focus of this course. The topics among others are Interview, Survey, Panel Discussion, Seminar, and Debate. As we can see that the topics explore their critical

thinking skills. For the topics of Interview and Survey, previously they were asked to make a survey upon an issue/topic that they could choose themselves and presented the result in the form of role playing in a talk show or a news report. In the talk show or news report, they were asked to have roles as a host or a news anchor having some guests to be interviewed discussing a topic and the result of the survey. Thus, the goals of learning the topics could be achieved in which the students would be able to conduct a survey and interview (in English). However, the experience of conducting a real interview with real informants had not been achieved. Therefore, we looked for an activity that could make the students experience the first hand of a real situation. We then chose an environmental issue as the topic and asked them to interview some experts to talk about the issue. The environmental issue was chosen because it could trigger their critical thinking by doing observation and investigation upon issues in their surroundings.

Kaye [5] mentions that there are five steps of successful service learning: investigation, preparation and planning, action, reflection, and demonstration. Investigation stage consists of personal inventory and community need. In personal inventory students try to identify their skills, talents, and interests. The community needs are sought by conducting an observation and investigation through surveys, interviews, or news in media, both printed and on-line. After finding out both the personal inventory and community needs, the students discuss them further by also gathering information from books or internet. The preparation and planning stage force them to be active learners which also train their critical thinking skills as they try to understand the main problems found. They also plan and decide what they should do in action stage. Action stage comes next where the students take some real actions of what they have planned previously. In this stage they apply the knowledge and skills they get in the classes. Reflection takes its part after the action. In this stage the students not only share the experiences they acquire but also try to grasp the impact of what they have done on themselves, others, and larger community. The final stage of service learning is demonstration in which they present all the activities of the service learning from the first stage of investigation until the reflection stage. It may come in many forms, such as presentation, displays, or photo displays [5].

Based on the stages of service learning above, the activities in Speaking III on the topic of Interview and Survey are explained. Under the topic of Interview and Survey the students are introduced of how to conduct a good interview and read the diagram resulted in the survey in English. In conducting a good interview the students learn and practice how to make good questions, confirmation, and response during the interview. Whereas in Survey, the students do not only make questionnaire and conduct direct interview to the informants, but they also learn how to read the result of the survey in the form of diagram or chart.

The class that we taught, Speaking III class B, was consisted of 18 students of the third semester of September 2016 to January 2017 academic year. As it was mentioned previously that we attempted to integrate service learning in Interview and Survey activities. The students were asked to conduct a project based assignment of finding an environmental issue in their surrounding that the people concerned the most and needed to be paid attention more. The final product of the project based assignment was a talk show or a news report video program. The class then divided into 6 groups, each was consisted of three students. By using five steps of service learning activities explained above, here is the detail explanation of the Interview and Survey activities of Speaking III.

2.1 Investigation

In the investigation stage, the groups were asked to observe their surroundings and find a problem dealing with the environmental issue that they concerned the most and needed to

have a solution and attention from the officials or local government. They might choose the environmental issues surrounding campus area, their living environment, or even their local area/city. The result of the observation then discussed within the group and they chose one issue as their topic to be explored more. Finally, they came out with one topic of environmental issue. The six topics were *The Effectiveness of Paid Plastic Bag Policy*; *Why Burning the Leaves Trashes in Campus?*; *Solo City's Waste Problem: Will Trash Separation Help?*; *The Cleanliness of Toilet at Faculty of Cultural Sciences*; *How Hygienic and Clean are the Canteens in Our University?*; *Smoking and Green Campus*. It can be seen that the topics are varied and not only within the campus area but also even within the city area.

2.2 Preparation and planning

After they chose one topic, they dug more information about it and collected people opinion toward the topic by distributing a survey about it. They asked the people around by handing out the questionnaire and choosing some of the informants filling out the questionnaire to be interviewed to gain more explanation of what they had answered in the questionnaire. Some of the questions in the questionnaire under the topic *Solo City's Waste Problem: Will Trash Separation Help?* with its objective to find a solution to Solo City's waste problem while trying to see if people think separating their waste can help solve the problem are: *What do you think about the cleanliness in Solo?*; *Do you think separating trash (e.g. into organic and inorganic) will improve the city's cleanliness?*; *Do you separate your trash at home/work/school/or anywhere in general?* The result of the survey then was made into diagram or chart to make them easier to read and analyze it.

Next, the students also searched for the right experts or officials to be interviewed and shown the result of the survey to get their opinion upon. A group which talked about canteens' hygiene in campus had a student of department of medicine to give their knowledge of cleanliness and hygiene. The one which discussed the paid plastic bag policy contacted two environment activities coming from communities which concern about decreasing the plastic consumption. Another group which focused on Solo city's waste problem interviewed a local governmental staff who is in charge in dealing with the city's waste management. Meanwhile, the one which concerned with the cleanliness of toilet at the Faculty of Cultural Studies interviewed some janitors and one of the faculty's officials. The last two groups which discussed the green campus issue reached the head of green campus program to be interviewed.

From what the students did in this stage, it shows how active learning, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills are enhanced. The active learning is shown from their having discussion which forced each of the member in the group to participate. The critical thinking can be seen from their making the suitable questionnaire that can help them finding out the problem and topic discussed. Meanwhile, the interpersonal skills can be seen from the interaction happened in the discussion, how to cooperate with the others, how to share thought and ideas with the agreement and disagreement on it.

2.3 Action

In the action stage, the students began to contact the experts, officials, or local government staff to be interviewed. In the interview section, they also showed the result of the survey to

the experts, officials, or local government staffs. It was hoped that by showing them the result of the survey, there would be some attentions and steps taken in order to solve the problems or issues. Meanwhile, the experts could give their insights based on their expertise to inform or educate the interviewer and others. In addition, the interview was done in English if possible. If the interviewees could not speak English, the students needed to explain the interview conducted in one part of their talk shows or news reports video later. Here it shows how the English skill of conducting the interview was implemented in this stage. Besides, they also experienced the soft skills of how to interact with new people. Therefore, the students had a chance in practicing their English speaking skills and experienced it first hand by conducting the interview to the real interviewees such as the experts, officials, or local governmental staffs. It was different from the previous activity in which the students only had a role playing as the interviewers and interviewees. Further, at the same time, the students could gain the information and knowledge from the interviewees that could make them aware of the issue more and they could share and spread it to the others. Absorbing the useful knowledge and information from the experts, officials, or local governmental staffs and then sharing and spreading the information here play roles as how the students take part in contributing and giving meaning to the society and community.

2.4 Reflection

A video as the final product of the activity in the form of a talk show or a news report in English containing all the activities they had done, such as conducting the survey and also the interview was made. Later, they should show the video and presented it in front of the class in demonstration stage. While they were finishing their video, the reflection section was conducted. In this section they shared their experiences on carrying out the topic and conducting survey and interview. All of them said that they had not done such activities in which they had to find a topic that became the issue and concern of society. In addition, they had to discuss the issue with the experts, officials, or local government staffs. It means that they had to face new people. It was a new experience for them.

However, some of them mentioned that they had similar activities before when they were in High School. A student said that they had to conduct a story telling activity to children in orphanages to increase the children's reading habit. However, the activity was more like a community service rather than a service learning one. Next, the students were asked to share their experiences in doing the project. Most of them mentioned that contacting the experts, officials, or local government staffs was quite challenging. Matching the schedule for interview was not really that easy either. Some admitted that making the right questions to the interviewees was another challenge they should face. Some technical problems dealing with the video productions were also shared by the students. Nevertheless, all of them agreed that the activities were challenging yet fun and enjoyable. When they were asked what they learned from the activities, most of them mentioned that the activities gave them new things and experiences. Here are some answers given by the students:

It was challenging, tiring, but fun. We got to meet new people that we've never met before. The expert that we interviewed gave us insight on how importance the hygiene is. Now, we become more aware of the cleanliness of any restaurants or food stalls that we visit for meals, since if the places and all the equipments there are not clean enough it may affect our health too. I think we also need to "educate" not only

the guests but also the restaurants' owners about the importance of hygiene. (Fatimah)

We discussed the trash problem in Solo, whether separating trash could become the answer for the problem. As we did the survey interviewing some Solonese and also a local government staff who deals with the issue we realized that the trash problem should not only become the concern of the local government but also need support from the Solonese themselves who should look after their environment. If it wasn't because of this task we wouldn't have known about the issue. It's truly an eye opening one. (Khansa)

We interviewed one of campus sweepers and also the head of UNS green campus program. They come from different educational background and social status but we know we should respect them and treat them the same. We learned how to interact with people from different background and it was nice. (Kenanga)

Conducting the interview was fun. Our interviewee can speak English so we conducted it in English. We could practice the interview skills we learned in the class in that interview. We tried to use the expressions of asking questions, making confirmation, and also note taking. (Mira)

This kind of assignment should be done often so that we do not only sit down in the classrooms and listen to the lectures but to actually go out and practice what we have in the class is also important. Therefore, the students can have a first-hand experience and improve their (English) skills. The students also become aware of the problems in their surroundings. (Eni)

From the students' explanation of things they learned from service learning, can be seen that it gives them benefits of among others i) making them more aware of their environment and surroundings. Eni mentions that by having the activity outside the classroom they can apply their knowledge and at the same time also grasp the issues/problems in the society. Khansa calls the (service learning) activity as an eye opening for it makes them realize the Solo trash issue. As for Fatimah, she even wants to spread the importance of hygiene to the society; ii) increasing their interpersonal skills and soft skills. Kenanga says that she learns how to interact with different people in which she should treat them the same regardless of what their background is; iii) practicing their knowledge and improving their (English) skills. Mira explains how she uses all knowledge she gets in the classroom to interview the interviewee. Eni also agrees that practicing the theories gotten in the classrooms to the real experience outside (the classrooms) can increase their English skills.

Next, they were asked what they would do after they finished the activity of (video) project. All of them agreed that they should share what they had done to the others. The video that they made would be shared through their social media so that their friends or followers would also notice the issues or problems being arisen. They said that by sharing the video they could give the information and educate the viewers the importance of the issues discussed. Some of them even said that at the end of the video they would provide some information about communities that concern with the environmental issues that can be joined in. A simple step of starting the awareness from their own selves first then telling their friends to also do the same such as throwing the trash into the dust bin, bringing their

own shopping bag to decrease the use of plastic bag, keeping their environment clean would also be done.

The students were also given a chance to give some suggestions or evaluations toward the service learning activity. Some students suggested that the activities should be related more with English matters and should force the students to use their English skills more. Some of the experts, officials, and local governmental staff could not speak English so that the students used Bahasa Indonesia instead in the interview. They should then explain it in English. It would have been better if the interviewees could also speak English so that their English skills could be applied. The students gave a positive value toward the service learning activity. They would prefer to have such activity that combines the classroom activities and their application outside the classrooms which involve the interaction with other people. They would like to do it again if they were given other chances.

2.5 Demonstration

In this stage the students were asked to present their activities they had done in front of the class. Each group gave a presentation by showing their videos, explaining it, and answering some questions given by other students. By this activity the students can learn from other experiences and also can give some suggestions to the other groups. The works then were scored based on the video showing the usage of English in the interview and the graph or charts presentation, the reflection stage, and also the presentation.

3 Conclusion

Service learning with its benefits is worth to be applied in English Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta since there has not been any attempt in having it. Speaking III course then tried to integrate the course with service learning. By taking the Interview and Survey topic, the students were asked to identify environmental issues in their surroundings and to find the experts, the officials, or local government staff to be interviewed and to discuss the issues. Hopefully there would be any further action from them and also the information gained could be spread out to society. The students were asked to record their activities by making a video project of talk show or news report. The video became the final product of their service learning activity.

The service learning activity was done in five stages, namely investigation, preparation and planning, action, reflection, and demonstration. In the reflection stage they shared their experiences and things they learned from the service learning activity. They mentioned some benefits among others are the awareness to their surroundings was increased, the interpersonal skills and soft skills were improved, the English skills were enhanced also. They agreed that service learning gave them more experiences and enriched their English skills. However, there were some matters that should be improved from the service learning activity. One of them was the exposure of English skills that should be more increased since there were some experts, officials, or local government staffs who could not speak English. Therefore, the students used Bahasa Indonesia instead in interviewing them. The attempt in integrating in this case Speaking III with service learning in English Department was indeed still far from perfect. There are still many things should be fixed and improved. Nevertheless, having a simple step of implementing it could be a great achievement in itself.

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