

IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH OPTIMIZING SKYPE

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Abstract

The aim of this paper focuses on the implementation of Skype to improve the students speaking ability. It is aimed at 1) identifying whether and to what extent Skype improves speaking skill; 2) describing the situation of class when the Skype is implemented in English language teaching classes. Based on the review of related literature definition of speaking is the productive skill. It could not be separated from listening. When we speak we produce a sentence and it should be meaningful. In the nature of communication, we can find the speaker, the listener, the message and the feedback. Skype is a free communication software that allows users to make calls, send instant messages and do video conferencing online. The purpose of this paper is to describe the situation of class when the Skype is implemented to the students of senior high school and explain how Skype influence their speaking ability. The procedure of improving speaking skill through optimizing Skype consists of pre-teaching activities, whilst-teaching activities, and post-teaching activities. Pre-teaching activities the activity done at the beginning of the study, in whilst-teaching activities the teacher instructs and asks them to do some activities, and post teaching activities is necessary as the follow up on what students have studied.

Key words: Speaking, Video Conference Online, Optimizing Skype

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, English is something important to learn. When we think of English skills, the four skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing readily come to mind. Of course other skills such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling all play a role in effective English communication.

The amount of attention is given to each skill area will depend on both the level of learners as well as their situational needs. Generally beginners, especially those who are illiterate, benefit most from listening and speaking instruction with relatively little work on reading and writing. As fluency

increases, the amount of reading and writing the lessons may also increase.

Speaking is one of the important skills in English as a Foreign Language. It shows the best influence when seeing goal of speaking learning process, especially in English as a Foreign Language. The goal of English teaching is to make students able to communicate well.

As we know everyone especially teenagers almost knows and be familiar with the internet and social networking. There are some emerging social network applications today include: Skype, Yahoo messenger, Facebook, Twitter and others. People install the application into their computer making it easier to communicate with many people,

known and unknown ones. Due to the phenomena, everyone especially teenagers has known about online chatting and video call. With that, they can communicate with other people by using video call, audio call, and sending messages.

Skype works through computer-to-computer, not necessarily person-to-person. In this way, Skype may be used to teach groups of people. For teaching, it is a key to know that Skype may be used to connect individuals, one individual to a group, or one group to another group, and is a natural fit for language educators interested in having cross-cultural exchanges with students.

The purpose of this paper is how to encourage students to speak in English simply as much as possible in class and students can communicate with people in different parts of the world, especially native speakers.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Speaking Skill

Speaking is the productive skill. It could not be separated from listening. When we speak we produce a sentence and it should be meaningful. In the nature of communication, we can find the speaker, the listener, the message and the feedback. Speaking could not be separated from pronunciation as it encourages learners to learn the English sounds

2.1.1 The Definition of Speaking Skill

Speaking ability is a mean of communication to express human being thought as well as form of social behavior. It is an active productive skill involving complex mental and physical action of speaker when they produce language (Brown and Yule, 1999).

Harmer (1990) writes that when teaching speaking or producing skill, we can apply three major stages, those are:

- 1) Introducing new language
- 2) Practice

3) Communicative activity.

Speaking has been regarded as merely implementation and variation, outside the domain of language and linguistic proper. Linguistic theory has mostly developed in abstraction from context of use and source of diversity. Therefore, Clark and Clark (Nunan, 1991) says that speaking is fundamentally an instrument act.

Speakers talk in order to have some effect on their listener. It is the result of teaching learning process. Students' skill in conversation is core aspect in teaching speaking, it becomes vitally aspect in language teaching learning success if language function as a system for expression meaning, as Nunan (1991) states that the successful in speaking is measured through someone ability to carry out a conversation in the language. We confess that there are many proponent factors that influence teaching speaking success and there are many obstacle factors why it is not running well.

According to Ladouse (Nunan : 1991) says that speaking is described as the activity as the ability to express oneself in the situation, or the activity to report acts, or situation in precise words or the ability to converse or to express a sequence of ideas fluently.

There are several definition of speaking stated by the experts. Based on The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2007), speaking is defined as to talk or conversation to somebody about something. While in The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary (1994) states that speaking means to utter words with the ordinary voice.

According to Chaney (1998) speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non verbal symbols, in a variety of context. While another expert, Theodore

(1960) says that language is essentially speech, and speech is basically communication sounds. Speaking is a skill used by someone in daily life communication whether at school or outside.

Based on the explanation above, the writer concludes that speaking is human intelligence to produce and deliver the voice of opinion or ability to express thoughts in communication.

2.1.2 The Component of Speaking Skill

According to Syakur (1987), speaking is a complex skill because at least it is concerned with components of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency.

1. Grammar

It is needed for students to arrange a correct sentence in conversation. Heaton (1978) says that student's ability to manipulate structure and to distinguish appropriate grammatical form in appropriate one. The utility of grammar is also to learn the correct way to gain expertise in a language in oral and written form.

2. Vocabulary

Vocabulary means the appropriate diction which is used in communication. Without having a sufficient vocabulary, one cannot communicate effectively or express their ideas in both oral and written form. Having limited vocabulary is also a barrier that precludes learners from learning a language. Language teachers, therefore should possess considerable knowledge on how to manage an interesting classroom so that the learners can gain a great success in their vocabulary learning.

3. Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the way for students' to produce clearer language when they speak. It deals with the phonological process that refers to the components of a grammar made up of the elements and

principles that determine how sounds vary and pattern in a language. There are two features of pronunciation; phonemes and supra segmental features. Gerard (2000) says that a speaker who constantly mispronounces a range of phonemes can be extremely difficult for a speaker from another language community to understand.

4. Fluency

Fluency can be defined as the ability to speak fluently and accurately. Fluency in speaking is the aim of many language learners. Signs of fluency include a reasonably fast speed of speaking and only a small number of pauses and "ums" or "ers". Brown (1997) says that these signs indicate that the speaker does not have to spend a lot of time searching for the language items needed to express the message.

Speakers must be able to anticipate and then produce the expected patterns of specific discourse situations. Burns & Joyce (1997) says that they must also manage discrete elements such as turn-taking, rephrasing, providing feedback, or redirecting. For example, a learner involved in the exchange with the salesperson described previously must know the usual pattern that such an interaction follows and access that knowledge as the exchange progresses. The learner must also choose the correct vocabulary to describe the item sought, rephrase or emphasize words to clarify the description if the clerk does not understand, and use appropriate facial expressions to indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the service.

2.2 Skype

2.2.1 Definition of Skype

According to Wikipedia, Skype is a free communication software that allows users to make calls, send instant messages and do video conferencing online. It is one of the best voice-over-internet services online and was created in 2003 by Niklas

Zennstrom and Janus Friis but later on was owned by Microsoft particularly in the year 2011.

The explosion of the internet across the globe has resulted in the rise of social media and new ways for people to communicate. It can also allow researchers to interview research participants anywhere in the world as long as the participant has access to the telephone or computer with a headset or webcam. This eliminates the need for travel and to find a private meeting location.

2.2.2 Skype in Classroom

Skype is a software application that uses voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) technology “which converts voice signals into data streams that are sent over the Internet and converted back to audio by the recipient’s computer” (Educause, 2007).

Nowadays almost all messenger services have audio functions and technological equipments such as laptop computers, also have cameras on them. So students can talk with their instructors and peers far away. “Skype is a relatively newly emerging technology and the potential application of it to language and literature learning and teaching needs to be further explored” (Wu, 2005, p.13). Students can speak with native speakers of language and compare their pronunciation for example with a native speaker. In addition to improving their literary knowledge by discussing intended literary works with native or native-like speakers of English, especially university professors, students can improve their speaking too. Speaking skills can be developed by using this application.

Skype provides both synchronous and asynchronous communication services. With a webcam and a headset, Skype users can have person-to-person or person-to-group online chats or conferences, which enables communication without the

limitations of time and space. It is this feature that makes Skype a potential tool for language teaching and learning.

According to Elia (2006), Skype facilitates language tandem exchange in which “two people of different mother tongues collaborate in the learning of each other’s language”. Skype in the classroom, launched in March 2011, is a website especially designed for educational purposes. It is a platform where teachers and students can disseminate information about their classes, share educational resources, and find partners to start classroom projects. A number of businesses and organizations (e.g. River & Rowing Museum, NASA Digital Learning Network, and Penguin Books) have partnered with Skype in the classroom to provide provocative and meaningful Skype lessons. Anyone who has a Skype account can use their Skype name and password to sign in to Skype in the classroom and decide to be a lesson participant or creator.

According to Cindy Phthisic (2010) in her article “the basic technical requirements for getting started with Skype, a web-based video conferencing tool”, there are some way to exploring possibilities by using Skype in classroom:

1. Reading to another class.

Classes ask volunteers to sign up and read to students. It can be students acting out a story as it is read or simply reading a book. Older students can share a story with younger students or vice versa. This is a great activity for “Read Across America Day,” and they will likely have many other classes eager to collaborate with another for a Skype call.

2. Connecting with reading buddies.

This option provides an opportunity for one-to-one interaction. A student in another class Skypes in to read to or with another student similar to a virtual tutoring session. Becoming a virtual reading buddy is

a great way for pre-service teachers to practice both teaching reading and working with technology.

3. Sharing projects.

Students have worked all semester long on a project and teacher would love to have them make a formal presentation to another group of students. Students can virtually present projects to another class and have the other class critique their work. To take this one step further, teacher could pair students from each class to work on the project virtually and then work together to present the projects via Skype.

4. Polishing language skills.

Foreign-language teachers have embraced Skype as a powerful tool to reinforce second-language acquisition. By partnering with a class in another country, both classes can refine their conversational skills. It also serves as a way for students to gain firsthand knowledge of another culture. Be aware, however, that time-zone differences can sometimes make these collaborations prohibitive.

According to McLauchlan and Suveica (2012) in their journal "Creating a Global Classroom: Providing Collaborative Research Opportunities for U.S and Moldova Students", this collaborative work with students abroad gives students in Moldova and in the U.S. an opportunities, such as work virtually, outside homes, outside the country, through an on-line cooperation, develop oral and written communication skills by working with a counterpart in another country, across cultures and beyond borders, overcome stereotypes about a "privileged" American student in terms of research opportunities, non-academic cooperation, individual and group work, etc.

They brainstormed possible research topics and courses that could be linked together, applied for a Faculty Course in United States and Moldova.

Ultimately, they decided that the human trafficking issue would provide a rewarding topic for collaboration among students in both universities. The implementation of Skype as following :

1. The instructors selected common readings that were discussed in an introductory joint seminar.
2. Joint class meetings were held 6 times over a 10-week period while the project was underway.
3. Guest speakers from the U.S. and from Moldova addressed the joint classroom. Students worked with representatives from NGOs in Moldova and in Florida outside of class as well.
4. The project culminated with each group presenting its research findings at a joint video conference. Throughout the project, all students were expected to gain a well-rounded and comprehensive understanding of issues related to human trafficking through the reading assignments, class discussions, guest speakers, and individual and group research. Students were given the opportunity to think critically about an issue that affects the global community. Class discussions following reading assignments centered around questions about the root causes of trafficking.
5. Each group of students, composed of three to four United States students and one to two Moldova students were assigned an area of focus which allowed them to develop a deeper understanding of a single issue which they would then be able to present to their classmates at the joint video conference.
6. Given the knowledge and tools to gain a real understanding of the impact of human trafficking on communities in both Moldova and the United States, students developed their findings within

their assigned topic in a group research paper and, subsequently, presented the findings to their classmates.

The instructors administered pre-test and post-test surveys to the students to measure the extent to which this project affected students' perceptions of "global citizenship."

In the pre-test and post-test surveys they used a 5-point scale (with 5 being strongly agreed and 1 being strongly disagreed) to ask students how much they agree with the following statements :

1. I consider myself informed about global politics.
2. Global politics plays only a small part in my everyday life.
3. Democracy requires citizens to regularly participate in government.

They also asked students open-ended questions, such as, "What does it mean to be a global citizen?" and, "What was the most valuable aspect of working on an assignment with a colleague from another country?". Two key components of the work in the joint project between Moldova and United States students was their work together outside of class and the papers they drafted. The students utilized social networking and online programs such as Skype, Facebook, and Dropbox in order to facilitate communication with group members in Moldova and United States. Students at United States were asked to record their experiences of working closely with their United States University and Moldova University colleagues throughout this project. Their classes met together jointly several times during the semester, and students worked together outside of class as well. The instructors edited a book of the student research papers and Powerpoint presentations from the conference. Videos of the students' presentations were posted on YouTube. As a result of the joint

collaboration, students learned about a wide range of issues related to human trafficking.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF SKYPE IN TEACHING SPEAKING

In this chapter, writer will discuss about implementation of Skype in teaching speaking. This chapter includes steps of using Skype tools and discussion Skype improve the student speaking ability.

Finally, before starting the Skype conference, teachers take 2 classes to do collaboration, the first class named A the others named B, each class led by one teacher and guest, both are cooperating. Teacher also should make sure about the class have computer facilities (computer laboratory), connecting Wifi and Skype tools already installed.

3.1 Pre – Teaching Activities

Introduction of learning activities are often referred to as pre – teaching activities. The main function of these activities is to create an effective learning that allows students to follow the learning process well. Activities and procedures in pre-teaching activities are as follows:

1. Creating Student Readiness

There are several alternatives that can be done in creating readiness of teachers and students' enthusiasm in learning, such as : assist or guide students in preparing facilities

2. Creating a perception and implementing pre test to measure and determine the extent to which the subject matter or materials to be studied have been mastered by the student. There are several ways that can be used in a perception activities include:

3. The teachers explain about implementation of Skype in classroom and decided the first class named A and second class named B as conference collaboration via Skype.

4. The teachers administer pre-questions to surveys the students to measure the

extent to which this project affected students' perceptions of "high school students should wear uniforms" In the pre-questions surveys we used a 5-point scale (with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree) to ask students how much they agree with the following statements:

1. I consider myself disagreed about students uniform
2. Students uniform just break my freedom
3. Democracy requires students to regularly participate in school

Teachers also ask students open-ended questions, such as ; "What does it mean students democracy?" and, "What was the most valuable aspect of working on an assignment with a students from another country?"

3.2 Whilst – Teaching Activities

In Whilst teaching activities, teacher gives students material and procedure that are relevant to the topic. This stage is compose of several steps as follows :

1. The teachers brainstorm possible topic and course that could be linked together. Then they decided the topic "High school students should wear uniforms" for collaboration among students in both classes A and B.
2. The teachers from both classes select common readings relate to the topic to be discuss in their own class.
3. The classes met jointly via Skype video conference for 60 minutes to discuss the topics, to present their issues findings, and to enjoy a coloboration event at which each student record the video conference also note a resume/conclusion of the issues topic in the course. Each of classes is inviting a guest speaker to lead a conference, when the guest speaker from class A or B present, students from class A or B listen and pay attention.
4. Throughout the conference, all students

were expect to gain a well-round and comprehensive understanding of issues relate to the topic, besides having class discussions, guest speakers, and new experience.

3.3 Post – Teaching Activities

In post – teaching activities, teachers have to check how far their students understanding of the topics by using Skype video conference. The procedure in this stage as follows:

1. The teachers administer post-questions to surveys the students to measure the extent to which this project affect students' perceptions of "high school students should wear uniforms" In the post-questions surveys we use a 5-point scale (with 5 being strongly agree and 1 being strongly disagree) to ask students how much they agreed with the following statements:

- I consider myself disagreed about students uniform!
- Students uniform just break my freedom !
- Democracy requires students to regularly participate in school!

Teachers also ask students open-ended questions, such as ; "How was video conference by Skype?", "Did you feel comfort and enjoy studying by Skype video conference?" and, "What your opinion about the Guest speaker from class A?"

2. The teachers collect edit a resume / conclusion note of the students issues topic and record of the video conference. Videos of the students collaboration between two classes A and B will post on Youtube
3. As a result of the joint collaboration both two classes got a experience and opportunity for students and teachers

4. CONCLUSIONS

Skype is a free software program that allows you to make free voice and video

calls to any other computer in the world via a high-speed internet connection. Tools like Skype allow students in even the most rural areas to connect with other students, educators or interesting people from around the world, creating myriad educational opportunities. Skype tools open doors and break down a barriers that were once held in place by sheer distance. Skype is one of many tools that allows students to gain firsthand knowledge of people and places all over the globe.

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