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BREAKING THE SILENCE: UTILIZING *PECHA KUCHA* TO PROMOTE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract
This study aims to report the utility of *Pecha Kucha* in promoting students' speaking skills in the general English course. As English known as the international language for communication, Indonesians expect to master English in order to broaden their future career opportunities. Most of them seek for English courses providing various communicative activities with the hope that they can improve and sharpen their speaking skills. Although the course has been designed for communication purpose, some students still are not be able to express their ideas freely during the speaking activities. They may feel afraid of making grammatical errors resulting to their low speaking performance. To facilitate students' learning and encourage them to practice their speaking skills, *Pecha Kucha* has been utilized during the course. The study was conducted in the Language Institute of Sanata Dharma University in 2017. Recorded learning activities utilizing *Pecha Kucha* and field notes were collected through the classroom teaching-learning practices. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted to explore the findings and the analysis. The findings shows that the students actively engage with the utilization of *Pecha Kucha* by being able to explore their ideas and practice their speaking skills, and enjoy the learning process eventually.

Keywords: *Pecha Kucha*, speaking skills, general English course

Introduction

English, as the international language, has a significant influence worldwide. Its influence as a language for communication has spread in various fields such as in transportation, commerce, tourism, banking, technology, and diplomacy among non-native speakers recently (Brown, 2007). This situation triggers Indonesians to learn English in order to cope with the globalization. Since English is important for traveling, studying, banking, and even applying for jobs, the need of learning and mastering English for communicating internationally becomes an influential force for Indonesians nowadays. The people expect that learning English can help them to be able to communicate with others.

Regarding to the necessity of learning English, many Indonesians look for and take English courses to sharpen their English use, focusing on communication. All of them expect to be able to speak English after finishing the course. Freeman (2000) stated that knowledge got by the students from learning a

language through listening, reading, and writing is insufficient because the students have to be able to speak as the implementation of the knowledge. Freeman's (2000) statement supports Richards and Rodgers (1986) who perceive that language learning is learning to communicate to convey meaning. These two thoughts strengthen the belief of language and language learning and reflect what students need in learning the language.

Although the course has been designed for promoting students' communicative skills, learning problems may appear during the process. There is a tendency that the students will find difficulty to develop their speaking skills due to the anxiety of making grammatical errors. In fact, communication is more flexible in conveying meaning (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Moreover, Freeman (2000) agrees that activities designed suing communicative approach put emphasis on students' speaking fluency over the accuracy. The aim is to create language use often through students' trial and error (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983; Freeman, 2000). Thus, because of the flexibility of language learned for communication, students are expected to be able to convey what they actually want to say.

Considering students' learning problem, instructors have essential roles to help students enhancing their learning. The Instructors help the students in any way that motivates them to work with the language (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). Any media which helps the students is accepted, varying according to their age, interest, etc. (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Therefore, facilitating students' learning is the responsibility for the instructors to make meaningful learning that is possible to overcome students' difficulty and correspond to students' needs.

In this paper, *Pecha Kucha* is introduced as one of the learning media used to promote students' speaking skills. Through the utilization of *Pecha Kucha*, students are more independent to express their ideas, while the instructors play as facilitators of students' learning (Freeman, 2000). Thus, this study aims to explore how the utilization of *Pecha Kucha* promotes students' speaking skills in the general English course aimed for communicative purposes.

Speaking Skills

Language is now generally seen as a dynamic resource for the creation of meaning (Nunan, 1989; Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983 & cf Sari, 2017). It is a way for ideas expressions as well as for knowing others' ideas. For many students, the ability to produce speeches is important in the language use. When students speak, they use speech to express meaning to the others (Spratt, 2005) Freeman (2000) states that knowledge obtained from learning a language through listening, reading, and writing is insufficient because students have to be able to speak as the implementation of the knowledge. Therefore, unlike the other skills, speaking always happens in a real situation around the students where the person that the students are talking to is waiting for them to speak right then in the actual communication (Bygate, 2001).

In the speaking practice, fluency and acceptable language is the primary goal, while accuracy is judged not in the abstract but in context (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Freeman, 2000). Making grammatical errors during speaking practices is considered acceptable, since language is created by students often

through trial and error (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). Regarding to students' errors, instructors help students in any way that motivates them to work with the language. Providing students with assistance may result to their better performance since the instructor is able to know what students' difficulty is and how to overcome them. In this study, the researcher acknowledged that the utilization of *Pecha Kucha* would focus on promoting students speaking skills in term of fluency and content development, leading to meaning production. Acceptable language was also essentially considered since negotiation of meaning might occur during speaking practices (Freeman, 2000).

Pecha Kucha

The name of *Pecha Kucha* is taken from the Japanese words, meaning 'chit chat'. It was first introduced by two Japanese architects in 2003, in the form presentation. The presentation is designed in a simple format where images are displayed within time constraints. The images advance automatically and the speakers will talk along to the images.

Pecha Kucha requires the use of less word and more images which are relevant to the topic (Zharkynbekova et al., 2017). Liker (2004) supports that visual approach is more efficient since an image is worth a thousand words. Moreover, the integration of technology in *Pecha Kucha* has changed the nature of instruction and learning. Technology promotes socially active language in multiple authentic contexts due to its accessibility, flexibility, connectivity speed and independence of methodological approach (Gonzalez, 2009). It inspires students' positive thinking and communicative skills in social practice to enhance their communication capacity as well (Shyamlee & Phil, 2012). Instructors are exploring *Pecha Kucha*, as digital learning media, to make learning more effective and engage students actively. In this study, *Pecha Kucha* is proposed to assist students and to promote their speaking skills. The researcher focused on how students' develop their speaking fluency and content without being anxious to make grammatical errors.

Method

The study was conducted in Language Institute of Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, within the Center of English for International Communication (CEIC). The course focuses on English learning for international communication. The course levels are designed by referring to Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). In addition, the study involved two participants representing two different levels. The participants were invited by the researcher and given inform consents. The participants' name were pseudonym. Furthermore, it should be noted that the researcher was the participants' course instructor. Having multiple relationship with the participants allowed the researcher to explore participants' point of view and experiences towards a certain situation (Kenyon, 2017).

Interview is well recognized as a method to gain subjective opinions, beliefs, and feelings towards a certain issue or topic that individuals experience (Ary et al., 2010; Atkinson, 2001). In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interview. This type of interview permits a greater flexibility and

responsiveness to expose issues for the participants (Ary et al., 2010). The interview took about 40 minutes for each participant and it was aimed to obtain information about participants' perception after the utilization of *Pecha Kucha* as one of the learning media. In order to gain rich answers from the participants, the interviews were conducted using participants' second language, which is Indonesian. Therefore, all the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. In addition, the researcher also recorded the learning activities utilizing *Pecha Kucha* and took some notes focusing on students' engagement to the utilization of *Pecha Kucha* and their speaking performance.

The data obtained through interviews were analyzed by using data analysis technique in qualitative approach (Straus & Corbin, 1998). This was because the data gathered were in form of written texts, which were interview transcripts and notes. In qualitative research, data analysis means "a systematic process in searching and arranging the data to come up with findings" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 147). "It involves working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 147). In this study, the researcher coded the result of the interviews and the notes taken during the classroom practices. "Coding is a process of marking a segment of data (usually text data) with descriptive words, or category names" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 534). Moreover, the researcher generated two categories to make the analysis easier by sorting the collected data so that the material bearing on a given topic can be physically separated from other data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The categories were 'my mind is free' and 'act it out.' The researcher explored each categories on the findings.

Findings and Discussion

The finding consisted of a short description of the utilization of *Pecha Kucha* in the classroom and the participants' stories about their' needs of taking the English course, their' problems in learning English, and how the utilization of *Pecha Kucha* could help them to promote their speaking skills. The stories were described in two categories, namely 'my mind is free' and 'act it out.'

During the general English course, the researcher as well as the instructor often used *Pecha Kucha* in some levels to facilitate students to learn a certain topic. For instance, the topics were describing people, places, feeling, or things, telling interests, stating opinion, agreeing or disagreeing, and even presenting a certain issue. The instructor often designed *Pecha Kucha* in PowerPoint or video format. The design could be 20X60, meaning that there were 20 images and each image would be displayed in 60 seconds. The students would talk about what was being displayed on the screen in 60 seconds. However, the instructor often modified *Pecha Kucha* to be more communicative learning media. In this way, the instructor would assign the students to work in pairs to practice using *Pecha Kucha*. While one student talked about a certain image, the other would listen and ask some questions or give comments to his/her partner so that they would have time for chit-chat by responding to the questions or opinions. Of course, the instructor took control of *Pecha Kucha* to give pause to the displayed image and

let the students have chit-chat. The class would be lively because the students enjoyed the learning process.

Toni shared his learning experiences when he joined the English course. He came with a goal in his mind and expectations towards the course. He expected:

> "I hope I can learn and improve my English so that I can speak as fluent as a Hollywood actor in a movie. Like peaking in Indonesian, my parents want me to be able to speak English as if I speak in Bahasa in a daily conversation."

Toni's goal and expectations reflected his need of learning English. For him, speaking was the primary skills that he needed to master. As he was an economics department student, Toni believed that being able to speak English would be the power to support his career in the future. To respond to this notion, he told:

> "I have a plan to work in a big company or institution whether it is a governmental institution or an international company. To achieve that, I must be able to master several languages and the most influential language for international communication is English."

Regarding to his need of learning English, Toni found that the English course had provided various communicative activities focusing on the practice of speaking skills. He agreed that the best way to learn a language was learning how to use it in a context (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). This belief affected his engagement towards speaking activities implemented by the instructor. He described:

> "I like speaking group activities or language games during the course. They are interactive activities to exercise my speaking skills. We can engage and enjoy the learning process if we can use the language directly through such activities in the classroom."

Although the course and the activities had been designed to promote students' speaking skills, however, in some cases there was still difficulty experienced by the students during their learning, Toni emphasized that the major difficulty he faced was being afraid of making grammatical errors while speaking. In the interview, Toni shared:

> "I think that grammar sometimes makes me crazy. Usually when I speak with people who have better English than me, they correct my sentence structures while I speak to them and make errors. It seems that the communication is not flexible because there is such a wall limit my mind to think what I want to say."

Toni's problem appeared to be a common problem faced by Indonesians when learning English. This situation encouraged the instructor to help the students to overcome their problem as well as to promote their speaking skills. Then, assisting students with learning media could be helpful for their practice (Smaldino, Lowther, & Russell, 2008). During his learning in the course, Toni

found *Pecha Kucha* as one of the learning media prepared by the instructor to exercise his speaking skills. Towards the use of leaning media, including *Pecha Kucha*, Toni explained:

> "There are some media used by the instructor to assist the learning process such as videos, images, songs, and even the printed media like cards and board games. They are unique and represent their own usefulness depending on how the instructors can use the media effectively … So far, I am excited to a media called *Pecha Kucha*. There are some pictures displayed on the screen and I must speak about the pictures in a limited time."

Toni told that *Pecha Kucha* was a simple media to design. However, beyond its simplicity, he believed that *Pecha Kucha* had a power to promote his speaking skills. He could explore his ideas about what he knew and what he had experienced to demonstrate the images since one images might represent a hundred or even a thousand words to tell (Liker, 2004). Moreover, the utilization of *Pecha Kucha* affected Toni's speaking performance in the classroom. He felt free to construct his ideas and speak along the images since the language and the meaning he conveyed was acceptable. Toni found his speaking skills were accommodated and he could minimize his speaking difficulty through the utilization of *Pecha Kucha*.

> "My major problem in speaking is being afraid of making grammatical errors. When I speak normally, sometimes I think whether my grammar has been correct or not. This makes me uncomfortable and unfree to speak. However, … when I used *Pecha Kucha*, I feel that I am free to express my ideas without being afraid to make errors. When the instructor display the image, I need a few seconds to see it. Then, the only thing I need to do is speaking and speaking because I only have one minute to talk."

Toni's engagement with *Pecha Kucha* illustrated the flow of his ideas to give meaning to the images displayed. The choice of the images that was relevant to the topic of the lesson strengthened the utilization of *Pecha Kucha* as the learning media promoting students' speaking skills. Furthermore, Toni shared his positive feeling towards the modification of *Pecha Kucha* into a more communicative media for learning. During the interview, he demonstrated:

> "When I speak about the image in one minute, my friend will listen to me and he is allowed to ask questions related to what I have told to him. I do the same thing when my friend has the chance to speak. This is fun since we can practice our listening and speaking skills as well."

Overall, Toni's experience reflected his engagement with the utilization of *Pecha Kucha* in classroom learning practices. Utilizing *Pecha Kucha* for learning media gave spaces for Toni to master English in accordance to his goal in joining the course. As Toni had strong belief about what language was and how to learn it, he prioritized his learning on speaking practices. This was in line with the activities designed by the course which emphasized on the students' speaking

skills. Although Toni had experienced a speaking anxiety due to making grammatical errors, *Pecha Kucha* was able to facilitate his performance. Toni found his mind is free to explore his ideas as well as to improve his speaking skills.

Dina was a Physics Education student. She joined the English course to improve her speaking skills in order to prepare for English proficiency test held by the university. The test required non-English department students to be able to communicate in English. Fortunately, Dina could pass the test. This situation triggered Dina to explore herself more in her future career. As she oriented herself as a teacher in the future, she shared:

> "Seeing the phenomenon that English is also important for classroom instruction, I believe that learning English will support my career as a teacher in the future. Since the demands of ASEAN Economic Community also require people to have good skills, being able to speak English, as the international language, makes me feel more confident to compete with others."

Regarding to her goal, Dina found that the English course and its learning activities were useful for promoting her speaking skills. She focused on self-confidence improvement while undergoing speaking activities. This was because she found a problem on how to deal with nervousness when she spoke using English. Once, she stated that her nervousness came due to the anxiety of making errors, specifically in using correct structures.

> "My major problem in learning English is maintaining self-confident while speaking. During my internship, sometimes my friends interrupt me while I am speaking and give correction to what I say. I think that is good for my improvement; however, their interruption often makes me nervous and feel doubtful to continue my talk since I have lost my words. This makes me uncomfortable and I prefer to be silent then."

Like Toni, Dina shared the same difficulty during speaking practices, affecting to her confidence. However, Dina demonstrated positive feeling towards the way she learned English in the course. She was interested in the instructors' teaching methods and the media used in the classroom. As she wanted to become a teacher, she learned English by engaging herself with classroom activities to experience the use of a certain method and media implemented by the instructors and building her self-confidence to speak in English as well.

Once Dina talked about the learning media, she mentioned about *Pecha Kucha*. She told that she had practiced using this media for several times during the course. During the interview, Dina shared more about her positive perception towards *Pecha Kucha*. She believed:

> "*Pecha Kucha* is a good media to assist my speaking performance. This provides me the opportunity to speak throughout the moving images for several seconds. I do not even think what the best structures used to talk along the images are. For me, the content that I can deliver to is more essential."

As Dina practiced her speaking skills through *Pecha Kucha*, she reflected her performance. In the interview, she told that she could minimize her problem in speaking, which was being not confident due to the anxiety of making errors. This was because she had broaden her point of view about learning English in which negotiation of meaning existed (Freeman, 2000).

"Sometimes I feel pessimistic and nervous when I speak with somebody who has good English. However, I can minimize those feelings when my instructor utilize *Pecha Kucha* and I get the turn to speak. Although it is not easy to construct ideas and deliver them in a limited time, I feel more confident because I do not afraid of making mistakes. I can confirm whether my friend understands my talk, and I will try repeat in another way that is easier to understand."

Furthermore, Dina expressed her opinion about the speaking practice and her plan after she experienced using *Pecha Kucha*. She tried to focus on the content delivery and fluency over the accuracy while speaking. Developing those two aspects of speaking might result to her self-confidence during her speaking practice. In this way, she shared:

"I think *Pecha Kucha* can facilitate my need of speaking. In my opinion, speaking is not only deal with fluency, but does the content of speaking also. In this way, I emphasize on the content delivery. Since *Pecha Kucha* requires me to speak only for several seconds, I should make my speaking content concise. This is essential for me as internship teacher in delivering learning materials. Maybe I will use *Pecha Kucha* also in the classroom to present a certain physics topic."

Dina's experience demonstrated the utility of *Pecha Kucha* in promoting her speaking skills. Once she shared about her problem in learning English, Dina found that *Pecha Kucha* could minimize her anxiety of making grammatical errors and perform well in the speaking activity. She had her confidence to explore herself by conveying her ideas towards the images. Moreover, Dina found that the utilization of *Pecha Kucha* would be useful to be implemented when she explained a certain topic to her students in the school. She would be able to create concise presentation and act confidently to explain the materials using *Pecha Kucha*.

Conclusion

Utilizing *Pecha Kucha* as a learning media gives some benefits towards students' speaking performance. The two participants involved in this study shared their experiences in learning English through the utilization of *Pecha Kucha*. Toni revealed that *Pecha Kucha* helped him to explore his ideas freely and overcome his anxiety of making grammatical errors. This impacts on Toni's speaking content development in which the focus is on conveying meaningful sentences within the time constrains. On the other hand, Dina shared that she felt more confident when she practiced her speaking skills through *Pecha Kucha*. The utilization of *Pecha Kucha* in the learning activity reduces her nervousness due to

the possibilities of making errors, especially in term of grammar. Dina's self-confidence gives positive influence to her performance as she is be able to say what she intends to say. Moreover, the utilization of *Pecha Kucha* can meet Toni's and Dina's expectation of learning English during the course. As they need to improve their speaking skills, they engage with the learning process and practice their English through *Pecha Kucha*.

In addition, this study gives a framework for future researchers to conduct further investigations towards the utilization of *Pecha Kucha* in more formal occasions of speaking activities such as presentation, short talk, and public speaking. The future researchers are possible to explore students' autonomy learning since the students design their own *Pecha Kucha* presentation format and they are the speakers of their talk.

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