

INCREASING LANGUAGE LEARNER'S CONFIDENCE IN SPEAKING ENGLISH THROUGH A ROLE PLAY ACTIVITY, "CELEBRITY CHEF"

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ABSTRACT

Confidence is crucial in language learning as language learners are able to communicate confidently despite having restricted number of L2 resources. Using an open-ended question, an action research was conducted to discover the opinion of 30 Culinary first semester students of UiTM Penang branch regarding the activity, "Celebrity Chef" in terms of increasing their confidence in speaking English through an interview after the activity. It was found that the students admitted that such activity was helpful in improving their confidence in using English as the they in majority revealed being confident to speak in this language after being involved in the activity.

Keywords: *Speaking English, Role Play, confidence*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement

The majority of Malay learners in Universiti Teknologi MARA Malaysia learn English as a second language. Although English is made the medium of teaching instruction, most of the students preferred to use Malay, similar to the findings in a study by David and Lim (2011) where it was found that in most of the interactions instances that the Malay adolescents have with their Malay friends, Malay was their preferred language. It was also mentioned these students preferred Malay because they were accommodating to their friends' lower proficiency level. The students also admitted that the English they learnt in classes which they have attended has not been used much when communicating with the other Malay students.

Having lower proficiency level is the reason why students, as mentioned by Nurdan (2011), often seen as unwilling and lack of confidence during classroom spoken activities. The students in Nurdan's study were having better receptive skills as compared to their productive skills since they were exposed to language structures more than putting the structures into practice. Unsupportive second-language classroom of this kind is probably one of the major contributors to students' low proficiency in spoken English (Loh, 2011). Nurdan (2011) suggests that students should be given more chances to practise, listening to their own speech while focusing on delivering the intended message rather than scrutinizing the form. This, he adds, should be done in a meaningful, creative and joyful manner. The learning environment should provide the platform for the learners to speak in the target language.

1.2 Objective of the Study

A research is incomplete without any purpose or objective for it to be conducted. As for the present study, it was executed for the following objective:

1. To discover the opinion of Culinary part 1 students of UiTM Penang regarding the activity, "Celebrity Chef" in terms of increasing their confidence in speaking English in future.

1.3 Research Question of the Study

A research question was built based on the objective of the present research. The study intended to seek answer to the following question:

1. What is the opinion of Culinary part 1 students of UiTM Penang regarding the activity, "Celebrity Chef" in terms of increasing their confidence in speaking English in future?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The present study can perhaps benefit other fellow researchers as another source of information concerning the issues highlight in the research. Besides, the study can perhaps serve as evidence if the activity studied, "Celebrity Chef" is favoured by learners in learning English or not considering their backgrounds and so on.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Communicative Activities in the Classrooms in Learning English

Richards (2006) defines Communicative Language Learning as a "set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom". He adds that classroom communicative language activities should develop students' interaction and meaning making as the content is applicable to the students' lives and interests. Nurdan (2011) explains that improving learners' oral communication skills and fluency is a challenge in a confined language classroom as the students are not naturally exposed to language. Richard and Renandya (2002) believe that tasks should be authentic from genuine resources that should be used meaningfully in an intended context. Genuine resources they add, can expose learners to the natural use of language. Fateme (2011) studied the use of authentic and unauthentic materials and suggested that authentic tasks in language classroom proven to help learners in improving their spoken English.

According to Stern (1992), classroom tasks include problem solving, exchange information, follow instruction, giving talk and role-playing. Harmer (2001) suggests few speaking activities that can be conducted in language classes which include role-playing like talks or dialogue. Ur (1996) thinks that role-playing is among the most effective oral tasks.

2.2 Self-Confidence in Language Learning

According to Oxford (1990), appropriate language learning strategies result in improved proficiency and greater self-confidence. Dörnyei (2014) claims that "learning a new language is to a large extent a 'confidence game'" (p. 526). Dörnyei (2014) also elaborates how confidence is important in language learning as confident language learners are able to communicate despite having restricted number of L2 resources. However, no amount of

vocabulary and grammar competence can help someone to speak if they have lack of confidence (Dörnyei, 2014). According to Brown (2000), without a certain amount of self-esteem, self-confidence, knowledge of yourself as well as belief in your own capabilities for a cognitive or affective activity, it cannot be conducted successfully. MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément and Noels (1998, cited in Brown, 2000) propose a model of “willingness to communicate” in a foreign language and the importance of self-confidence in this. MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément and Noels (1998, cited in Brown, 2000) argue that a number of cognitive and affective factors namely, motivation, personality, intergroup climate, and two levels of self-confidence (1. “situational self-esteem”/ “state communicative self-confidence”, 2. “L2 self-confidence”), can influence willingness to communicate.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Practical action research under qualitative research design is adopted in this study where it assumes to a certain degree that the teacher has the autonomy to decide on the nature of the study in terms of the focused area, data collection techniques, data analysis and interpretation and action plans development (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2011).

3.2 Participants/Respondents

A class of 30 Malay students aged between 19-20 years old from UiTM Penang participated in the research as the respondents who contributed to the data of the study. The respondents were the students who newly enrolled in the first semester of their diploma program at the university during the period of the implementation of this study. This batch of students was in their interim semester where they had 4 classes per week, each for 2 hours in the duration of 7 weeks.

3.3 Instrument

The instruments involved in this study was one open-ended question which was “What do you think of the activity, ‘Celebrity Chef’ in terms of increasing your confidence in speaking English in future?” in order to collect their perceptions toward their involvement in the activity, “Celebrity Chef” in relation to practicing their English.

3.4 Data Collection

The data was collected by first executing the studied activity, “Celebrity Chef” with 30 students in the class. It was conducted in the third week of the interim semester. The activity was a communicative one where the students had to do a demonstration of their choice of meal that they wanted to prepare and explain about its ingredients, ways of cooking, serving, decoration, and many other things. Their meal choices were limited to sandwiches or salads which were easier and doable within two class sessions of 4hours. The activities conducted with the students during week 3 were:

Table 1: The class activities during week 3

1st class - 2 hours	Reading and watching recipes and preparation method
2nd class - 2 hours	Preparing ingredients and practice
3rd class - 2 hours	Demonstration of meal preparation

As summarised in the Table 1 above, the first class of the third week started with the students reading real sandwich recipes and preparation method where they learnt the necessary verbs such as cut, slice and grate. They also watched a video on sandwich making. In the second and third classes that week, they had to prepare and demonstrate their own choice of meal. These two classes were conducted back-to-back so that the students can enjoy each of the demonstration conducted. Each group had 20 minutes for the demonstration and they are encouraged to be interactive with their audience during the demonstration just like the real cooking show that they have watched on television.

After the demonstration activity was finished, the respondents were interviewed non-verbally through a written open-ended question where the students had to provide their answer of unlimited number of words. Due to packed class schedule and limited time, the email interview (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2011) deemed to be the most effective method of data gathering as students are given time to answer and email their feedback. It also helps the researcher, as transcription has been done by the participants. As the response was done on voluntary basis, only 24 students submitted their answers.

The similar keywords provided by the students in their answer were then analysed and taken as the main issues highlighted. The question asked was limited to a specific topic namely, their confidence in speaking English. The interview question asked was, "What do you think of the activity, 'Celebrity Chef' in terms of increasing your confidence in speaking English in future?"

3.5 Data Analysis

The answer sheets submitted by the respondents were first labelled according to the gender and the number of participant, for example male 1st respondent (M1) and female 1st responded (F1). Then they were analysed manually without using any academic software. Patterns and themes identification which emerged during the data analysis become the basis for the researcher to construct the meaning (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2011). The researcher first extracted the similar words or terms repeatedly mentioned in the answer sheets. Related words in the same family and synonyms were also taken as similar words used in describing their experience in doing the activity in relation to the question asked.

4.0 FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

4.1 Similar Terms Used

Table 2: Words frequency for similar key terms used

Word	Confident	Confidence	Confidently
Frequency	11	11	3

After the answer sheets were analysed in terms of similar answers in the form of similar terms or words used, it was discovered that the respondents mostly provided the responses of being confident to speak English after doing the activity. The answers can be seen in the table 3 below:

Table 3: The term “confident” used in the students’ answers

1. “I’m very shy at the beginning but after I’m starting my demonstration, I got my strength and I’m not shy anymore and my friends support me, this activity made me more confident.” (F1)
2. “One activity was preparing meal, it helped me to be more confident in front of people. Then, it also helps me to speak more clearly and fluently in English. At first, I was extremely afraid to talk in front of the class because of my less confident. But after the session I’ve become used to speak in front.” (F2)
3. “There are many activities conducted in ELC classes like celebrity chef. That activity can make me more confident because I have to speak in front of my classmates.” (M1)
4. “This activity makes the students to be more confident because they need to talk in front of the whole class, even talking in broken English the students still enjoyed it and the teacher helps us to express ourselves during practice especially when we don’t know some words.” (F3)
5. “I felt more confident because when I learn ELC I didn’t know many words that I see and now I know more words about cooking. I can improve myself and be more confident as they are related to my field and my interest.” (M2)
6. “I think this activity is good and can be continued to next class because we can be confident and learn to speak in public. I join all the activities and I feel more confident to talk in the class. Practicing in class will help me become better chef in the future.” (F4)
7. “It makes me more confident with myself and to talk in front of everybody without feeling shy.” (M3)
8. “To be honest, I don’t like to talk much. I did the communication activity held and realized that I am being more comfortable in English class and I also didn’t took serious what others think about me as long as I feel more confident when presenting.” (F5)
9. “I do have contributed a little bit like stand and offer myself to talk and ask question during the activity. I feel a bit more confident to start speaking in English.” (M4)

For example, Respondent 1 (F1) reflects on her experience of being shy at the initial stage but later became more confident after the activity. Similarly, other respondents (F2, M1, F3, M2, F4, M3, F5, M4) shared that their confidence level has increased after the demonstration activity. Respondent F4 saw herself benefitting from the activity for her future when she said that it can help her becomes a better chef one day. In terms of the word “confidence”, it occurred 11 times in the students’ answers and the occurrences are as reflected in the table 4 below:

Table 4: The term ‘confidence’ used in the students’ answers

1. “In my opinion, the cooking demo was good, and it helps us to build up some confidence as we must represent our group and present in front of the class about preparing food.” (F6)
2. “When speaking in front of others regularly in many practices like this demonstration, students like me can increase their confidence.” (F7)
3. “Well for me, I think practice communicating is important as learning grammar alone is not enough to build confidence in student. Practice is what makes us perfect, we need to practice until we are good at it. Activities like Celebrity Chef build our confidence and it is the key to wash away our fear.” (F8)
4. “In terms of the demonstration, it can build self-confidence in the students when they practise explaining cooking procedure and they can also start showing out their talents.” (F9)
5. “This type of learning is good for the students as they are exposed to different types of practice rather than learning rules only in class. This will also make the students who are shy or have low self-confidence to build it up as there will be a lot of presentations required in the coming semesters.” (F10)
6. “It’s a new thing for me to learn practice these activities but it was so good for me to improve my English. I can build up my confidence to speak in English in front of others.” (F11)

7. "For me, it is quite interesting. Because all the activities conducted by the teacher, they can improve my confidence to speak in English in front of others. This communication practice is extremely beneficial." (F12)
8. "By engaging in this activity, I can mingle with many people and add to my self-confidence because I am a shy person to mingle with new people and I am also scared to speak to others." (F13)
9. "A student like me will be able to increase his self-confidence because we are taught to present in front of others. This is good practice as we can use the skills during study and after we get out and work one day." (M5)
10. "Students can build confidence when they are forced to improve their speaking skills through demo activity like Celebrity Chef." (M6)
11. "My self-confidence can be higher when I am able to practice talking in front of others just like a real chef on tv." (F13)

Most of the respondents felt that their confidence was uplifted after the demonstration activity. This is reflected in the answers provided by the eleven respondents above. The tenth female respondent (F10) acknowledged that such a communicative activity is a practice that could benefit the students in their preparation for the presentations they will face throughout their studies. When identifying the adverb "confidently", it was repeated four times in the following instances which can be seen in Table 5:

Table 5: The term 'confidently' used in the students' answers

1. "The scary thing is, 1 girl from my group and me are chosen to demonstrate the food preparation as chefs. I was so nervous, and I don't know what to say in front of the class. I try to push my shyness away and managed to talk in front of the class and I think that I have started to do that confidently." (F14)
2. "This type of activity can help students like me who are always nervous and cannot speak English fluently can force myself to practice speaking in front of class so that I can improve my speaking skills and speak confidently." (F15)
3. "Through these activities, it can help me to be more courageous and can polish my English skills. This activity really helps me train myself not to be ashamed to speak in public. I use all the knowledge taught by the lecturer to present confidently in the class." (F16)
4. "I think I am speaking confidently when I learnt and watch the demonstration done by professional chef and then apply it to my own presentation." (F17)

All the four respondents above have expressed their anxiety in doing presentations and speaking in front of the class. The activity has made them braver in the attempt of improving themselves in speaking English more confidently.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the findings obtained, it can be concluded that the respondents mostly have a positive view towards the activity, "Celebrity Chef" and they seem to believe that the activity can generate their confidence in speaking English. The respondents favour such English practice perhaps due to their field, Culinary Art and the talking about the food that they had to prepare for the demonstration was probably interesting to them, thus making them passionate to talk about it.

It can also be concluded that an English learning activity should be field-related so that the learners can enjoy it better due to the activity being something more familiar to them. This type of language learning can be related to the concept of participatory approach as described by Larsen-Freeman (2000):

"In some ways the participatory approach is similar to the content-based approach in that it begins with the content that is meaningful to the students and any forms that are worked upon emerge from that content. What is strikingly different though is the nature of the content. It is not the content of subject matter texts, but rather content that is based on issues of concern to students." (p. 150).

Clearly, the activity, "Celebrity Chef" can generate learners' participation in practising English language as they probably will be more comfortable to talk about things that concern themselves and therefore, hopefully in future this type of classroom activity can be improved with more meaningful techniques in future.

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