

Self-Reflection of EFL Teachers in Improving the Quality of Teaching Speaking Skills

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ABSTRACT

For many English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners, speaking could be the most challenging skill to learn. Therefore, it is one of the skills that must be mastered by EFL learners. This article examined three different issues such as the ways of the EFL teachers teaching integrated speaking skills; the ways they assess learners' learning progress in speaking; and the solutions and motivations required to improve learners' speaking skills. This article employed a case study design while considering interpretive paradigm. To gain in-depth analysis, the research used face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The results of the research showed that self-reflections of the EFL teachers played a great role in helping high school EFL learners improve their speaking skills. In addition, the research also revealed that the improvement of the speaking skills of the EFL learners were strongly supported by varieties of teaching strategies, assessment modes, and motivations of the EFL teachers. The implication of the research is to inform teachers and learners about the importance of promoting various teaching and assessment modes while maintaining motivations of EFL learners in learning EFL.

Keywords: Self-reflection, EFL learning, speaking skill, teaching quality

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INTRODUCTION

For many English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners, speaking could be the most challenging skill to learn. Therefore, it is one of the skills that must be mastered by learners in EFL learning. Basically, speaking is used as a tool to communicate with others. It is a process to convey and share ideas or information and feeling orally. The act of speaking involved some skills such as accuracy, fluency, vocabulary and pronunciation (Derakhshan et al, 2016; Saito, 2017 and Levis, 2006). All of those elements need to be mastered by learners. In an EFL teaching and learning process, teachers must provide more time allotments, attention, and courage for learners to exercise their speaking skills (Anyaegbu et al, 2012; Nehe et al, 2018; Wiraningsih and Santosa, 2020). This is in line with the results of the interviews of EFL teachers conducted at SMA1 S where teaching speaking skills to high school learners need creative ways of teachers which in turn help learners learn effectively. The awareness of EFL teachers regarding the learning needs of learners shows the state of their self-reflections.

In the 21st century, many learning innovations have been introduced as tools for learning to speak, one of which is modern technology (Parveen, 2016; Chau, 2021). Parveen (2016) further explained that in learning, many types of modern technology are introduced to help learners learn how to speak, such as language laboratories, videos, satellites, internet, blogs, digital dictionaries, and others. These modern technological devices aim to improve learners' English speaking skills. However, the EFL learning and teaching with technologies in many high schools in Central Sulawesi are hardly identified. Our EFL



learners are native to technology such as smartphones and social media but they have not yet developed the awareness of using technology wisely for learning (Mindog, 2016; Sad et al, 2020; and Ta'amneh, 2021). It is a fact that many learners are prone to get trapped with lots of accessible applications in their smartphones which in the end distract their concentration to learn (Sad et al, 2020).

In the context of the current study, three important issues were covered to better understand how self-reflections of EFL teachers contribute to the quality of high school learners in learning speaking skills. These issues are the ways of the EFL teachers in teaching integrated speaking skills; the ways they assess learners' learning progress in speaking; and the solutions and motivations required to improve learners' speaking skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesian High School

In the Era of Society 5.0, learning EFL is becoming an essential need for anyone. It is no doubt, the advancement of information and communication technology has transformed the ways and approaches of societies to interact one another. In the past, EFL learners had to attend real classrooms to learn English. Likewise, in many ways, EFL learners had to come to the library to pick the books they needed and took them home. Today, learning English becomes far easier. EFL learners simply switch their smartphones on to search for knowledge and information needed (Mindog, 2016; Klimova, 2018; Kirovska-Simjanoska, 2018; Rao, 2018, 2019; Sad et al, 2020; and Ta'amneh, 2021).

Speaking English as a foreign language (FL) is a long process (Aguilar, 2008 and Valmori and Costa, 2016). Student must carefully repeat mode and imitate teacher in pronouncing the word, try to practice and the active participant in classroom activity, and drill their fluency in speaking (see Hussain, 2017). In many language classes, speaking activity is not only a source for communication and pleasurable activity, but also means of consolidating and extending student knowledge of language (Aritonang et al, 2019). Learning how to speak English needs different methods, approaches, and strategies of teaching. The best method is the most effective and efficient one. The old method of storytelling could be one choice. However, as students now live in a time where modern and advanced technologies are pervasive in all aspects of today's life, many accessible applications (see Mindog, 2016; Klimova, 2018; Sad et al, 2020) could be one of the best choices both for teachers and learners.

Self-reflection of EFL Teachers

Learning difficulties are very common experienced by learners due to various factors, both internal and external (Brady and Woolfson, 2008; Rajitha and Alamelu, 2020). Internal factors include the ability to perceive, remember, cognitive processes and attention (Malim, 1994; Spurr and Stopa, 2002). External factors include situations outside and before school as well as situations at school (Aro and Mikkila-Erdmann, 2015). Learning difficulties in learning English are related to four aspects of skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Learners who experience difficulties in these four aspects, such as dyslexia and dysgraphia, are most likely to have difficulties in learning (Mundia, 2012). For this reason, it is necessary to diagnose learners' learning difficulties, by conducting prerequisite tests, diagnostic tests, interviews and observations. After that, the results of the diagnosis are analyzed and identified as the basis for developing an appropriate improvement program (Wijaya et al, 2019).

Reflecting on learners' difficulties in learning how to speak English, it is important for EFL teachers to identify what they need to do to ensure that their students are able to speak good English. David Schon



(1987) explained that reflection-in-action refers to an active evaluation of thoughts, actions and practices during action. It also refers to '*thinking on feet*' during the process of teaching (Schon, 1987). Reflection-in-action also means the exploration of professional beliefs, practices and experiences during teaching (Schon, 1987). In the context of this research, self-reflection of EFL teachers are needed to ensure that teaching students how to speak English effectively undertakes improvement. Schon (1987) highlights three aspects in the inner self of EFL teachers that should be explored: professional beliefs, practices and experiences. Reflecting on these aspects would help EFL teachers to better perform their EFL teaching. Practices of EFL teaching especially the teaching of speaking should be re-explored by EFL teachers as their long teaching practices were prone to dry teaching styles, lack of proper curricula, overly focusing on grammatical contexts, inappropriate texts and assessment (Khamkhien , 2010: 185). To sum up, reflection-in-action allows you to deal with surprising incidents that may happen in a learning environment. It allows you to be responsible and resourceful, drawing on your own knowledge and allowing you to apply it to new experiences (Schon, 1987).

METHOD

This research employed a case study approach within the interpretive paradigm. The data was mainly obtained through semi-structured interviews with four EFL teachers at a senior high school (SMA1B).

In qualitative research, interview is defines as an interaction between two people in one occasion (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003). Unlike a causal conversation an interview involves a set of assumptions and understandings about the situation (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003: 43). In Kvale's view (1996: 14), interview is deemed to be an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, to understand the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasize the social situatedness of research data (cited in Cohen et al, 2011: 409). In the context of this research, semi-structured interview was used because it allowed for modifications while pre-defined themes were carefully considered. Moreover, this mode of interview enabled the research participants to express themselves in a relatively open interview situation (Flick, 2007; Kvale, 1996; Cohen et al., 2011; and Drever, 2003). For example, it allows the interviewer to address relevant probes and prompts when further information is needed (Ruslin et al, 2022).

In terms of analysis, the data derived from the interviews were analysed in those specific contexts by exploring the accounts of EFL teachers regarding their actual teaching experiences. In this analysis, it was important to look at what and how teachers look at their experiences in teaching integrated speaking in their EFL classes. This was to provide evidence that would possibly confirm or contrast their professional beliefs, practices and experiences. The analysis was carried out to provide answers to the questions raised in the issues of ways of teaching and assessing EFL learners' speaking progress, solutions and motivations needed to improve their speaking skills. The data was organized accordingly by categorizing the interviews on the basis of interview questions. The data was further reduced when necessary and they were organized in such a way to identify key patterns and issues. The final part of the analysis was to develop a summary from which a good conclusion was derived.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Interviews were conducted on Wednesday, June 15, 2022, around 09:50 AM at SMA1B Sigi, Central Sulawesi Indonesia. The day before the researchers received permission from the principal and they were allowed to come for the interviews. The researchers met a few EFL English teachers at school. One of the EFL teachers had the longest-serving teachers of the SMA 1B. Mrs. S (initial to keep it confidential) was



very friendly, kind and intelligent in answering every question asked. Thus, the interview ran smoothly and well.

First part of the interview was aimed to cover the experience of the EFL teachers. Mrs. S is a senior teacher at SMA1 B who is now 53 years old. She was graduated from English Education Study Program at Tadulako University, Palu Indonesia in 1993. After graduating, Mrs. S started teaching as an honorary teacher at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Khairat B from 1994 until she finally decided to move out the school in 1998. She then joined a program held by the government called the teacher contract program from which she was placed at a junior high school, SMP 1 B from 1998 to 2003. She further joined the government's national auxiliary teacher program in which she was placed at the current SMA 1B. For about 24-25 years teaching tenure in this current school, she taught many different students, family backgrounds, attitudes and characters and all these long experiences has given her strength and passions to do better in teaching EFL. For her, she explained that a lot more to do to make the teaching of English in this school far better than that they had today. This is in particular how students speak good English and to do so, all the EFL teachers need to work hand in hand to achieve the expectation. This argument was agreed upon by the other four EFL teachers in the SMA1B. The four EFL teachers were all graduated from English Language Education at Tadulako University. Although they have different teaching experiences, they agreed upon in many cases about professional beliefs, practices, and experiences dealing with lots of different students throughout their teaching careers.

Second part covered approaches of the EFL teachers in teaching. In terms of learning and teaching, the EFL teachers were in need of the awareness about the importance of greeting learners. Equally important, it was the job of EFL teachers to adjust the learning materials according to curricula as Khamkin (2010) suggests. Apart from the suitability of the learning materials to curricula, the EFL teachers were responsible to provide learning materials that were easily understood by learners. Here, the EFL teachers at the SMA1B argued that using a fun method to deliver English speaking materials was one of the best ways. With fun teaching, EFL learners would be more motivated in learning process. It was also revealed that lecturing approach was needed so that EFL learners could understand what the purpose of learning English was all about. To do so, the EFL teachers were in need of teaching students English expressions such as offering help where they could easily find the goal of learning would be used in everyday life.

Reflecting on the EFL teachers' experiences, several methods or approaches such as speech, role play and storytelling were some of effective strategies in learning English. The other approach the EFL teachers at SMA1B used in teaching integrated speaking was the discussion method. This was identified to be helpful as EFL learners were given time to express their opinions in English. Meanwhile, the interviews showed that the assessment of learning in the integrated speaking session was based on how the EFL learners performed in terms of pronunciation, accuracy, fluency in speaking and creativity of EFL learners when it comes to doing task given during the class sessions.



CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it was concluded that dealing with lots of different EFL learners throughout teaching careers of the EFL teachers contribute to their professional beliefs, practices, and experiences. The research also suggests that the EFL teachers were in need of the awareness about the importance of greeting learners. Equally important, it was the job of EFL teachers to adjust the learning materials according to curricula. Furthermore, the EFL teachers were responsible to provide learning materials that were easily understood by learners which could only be achieved with fun type of teaching deliveries. Reflecting on the EFL teachers' experiences, several methods or approaches such as speech, role play and storytelling were some of effective strategies in learning English. The other approach the EFL teachers at SMA1B used in teaching integrated speaking was the discussion method. In addition, the assessment of learning in the integrated speaking session was based on how the EFL learners performed in terms of pronunciation, accuracy, fluency in speaking and creativity of EFL learners

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