Students' participation on speaking online class
(a case study)

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Abstract. This paper aims to reveal factors that affect the students' participation in a speaking online class. The subjects are the second and fourth semester students of English department, Language and Culture Faculty, UNTAG Semarang. The research was held during the even semester of the academic year 2020/2021. The research method used in this study is a qualitative method. The data was based on the interview and the questionnaires filled by the students. Some technical issues came up in the online class such as internet connection which mostly became the hottest issue and also the device being used which was sometimes not compatible to the program used in the teaching and learning process. Those issues somehow have affected the online teaching and learning process. The other issues affected in online learning are students' contribution and students' condition. For those, it is hoped that the research will give a clearer explanation especially for the teachers who are struggling on teaching the online class and face a similar situation. Therefore, they can cope and handle it better.

Keywords: online learning, participation, speaking class

INTRODUCTION

University students who take English as their major will learn various subjects to support their English skills, such as; speaking, writing, reading, listening and many more. One of the interesting classes for them is speaking class. This class gives the opportunity for them to improve their ability in speaking English and explore their creativity during class activities. However, not all the students have self-confidence to speak English in front of the class or to their classmates. According to (Riasati, 2018), one of the factors that make students not active to speak during teaching and learning processes is that they are shy to speak using English. Other problems on speaking English are mentioned by (Noprival, 2017), those are (1) inadequate vocabulary knowledge, (2) grammar as a stumbling block, (3) fear of negative response from others, (4) low self-esteem to speak in English, and (5) feeling anxious to speak in English. All those problems can be solved by well-designed teaching methods. Therefore, teachers need to improve their teaching techniques to stimulate them to be active in class. This has become complicated after the pandemic, they cannot do their activity of teaching and learning in class anymore.

Pandemic is not over yet and online class still becomes the choice for the learning and teaching process. The online class seems to have the same problem, one of them is the lack of students' participation. Why do the students choose not to contribute in the online class

even when their participation is graded? The goal of this study is to uncover the factors that affect the students' participation in online speaking classes.

Online class during the pandemic created some problems such as anxiety, stress and depression among the university students as stated by Mridul, et al. in their research because the learning processes were done in virtual without physical movement, the mental illnesses such as; depression, anxiety and stress were triggered. The research came out with the results that 16,98% students experienced moderate depression, 16,98% experienced anxiety and 14,46% got stress due to online classes. (Mridul et al., 2021). From that research, we can conclude that those illnesses could be the reason why in some occasions students do not participate as it is expected. As the students' participation determines their speaking ability.

The teacher's expectation on the students' speaking outcome learning is to be able to speak English fluently. As stated by (Byrne HUH, n.d.), speaking fluency is the ability to express oneself intelligibly, reasonably, accurately, and without too much hesitation. However, it is really hard to achieve if students cannot participate actively in speaking during teaching and learning processes. Teaching speaking has been elaborated by Susanto (2021) about using hand puppets as media to improve students 'speaking skill through narrative text: a case of eighth students of SMP N 16 Semarang in academic year of 2016/2017.

According to Ur, there are some problems faced by the learners in speaking activity (Ur, 1996). Those problems can be explained as follows:

1. Inhibition
   Unlike in reading, writing and listening activities, speaking requires some real time exposure to audiences. Commonly, learners are often inhibited from trying to say things in a foreign language such as feeling worried about mistakes, fearful of others' criticism, or ashamed of the attention that their speech attracts.
2. Lack of theme to be spoken
   Some learners get the difficulties in thinking of anything to say, they have less motivation to express themselves beyond the guilty feeling that they should be spoken.
3. Lack of participation
   Mostly, in a large group of people or in a certain situation that includes some people such as in the classroom, at least a person only who speaks while others are just the listeners dominantly. This situation makes for an unlived conversation among them. It means that the skill of speaking is not supported yet sufficiently.
4. The use of mother tongue
   In several classes, the learners usually say something in the mother tongue. They may tend to use it for some reasons. Firstly, it is easier. Secondly, it feels unnatural to speak in a foreign language to one another. Lastly, they feel less "exposed" if they are speaking their mother tongue. When they are talking in small groups, it can be quite difficult to keep using the target language.

In order to solve the problems above, the students should practice as much as possible. Here in this research, the writers will look for some factors that make them not participate in their speaking class and offer some suggestions dealing with these factors.

METHOD

This study was aimed to uncover the factors which affect the students' participation in online class especially in speaking class. By revealing those factors, it is hoped that especially for educators, they will get a better understanding of the situation then can handle it in better ways.

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative method to analyze the research question. This study includes qualitative research because it was relying on the collection of qualitative data. The data was collected from interviews and questionnaires filled by the second and fourth semester students of Language and Culture Faculty of 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang (UNTAG) University.

Click here to enter text. state descriptive research will aim at providing as accurate an account as possible of what current practice is, how learners do learn, how teachers do teach, what classrooms do look like, at a particular moment in a particular place. Therefore, this kind of research method is suitable to describe the related matter which are being discussed in this research. The study was conducted during the even semester of the academic year 2020/2021.

Subject of Study

There were 28 respondents in this study, and they were asked to fulfil a questionnaire containing 10 questions and answer 5 other questions in an interview. The respondents were the students of semester two and four of the Language and Culture Faculty of UNTAG Semarang. The questions on both questionnaires and interviews were about the respondents' contribution during the online speaking class they had in the even semester of academic year 2020/2021.

Instruments

This research collected the data from events, respondents, and documents. The event refers to the process of implementation of teaching speaking online. The respondents refer to the lecturer and the students of semester two and four of the Language and Culture Faculty of UNTAG Semarang. The documents were the speaking materials from the lecturer, the question sheets, and the video of discussions section in speaking class.

Data Analysis

The writers used an interactive model of analysis that includes three main components, namely the reduction of the data, the display of data, and conclusion or verification. In this system, the writers always move among three-analysis components during collecting the data. After collecting the data, the writer moves among the three components of analysis by using the rest of the time (SUTOPO, 2006). The data analysis model is shown in the figure one below.
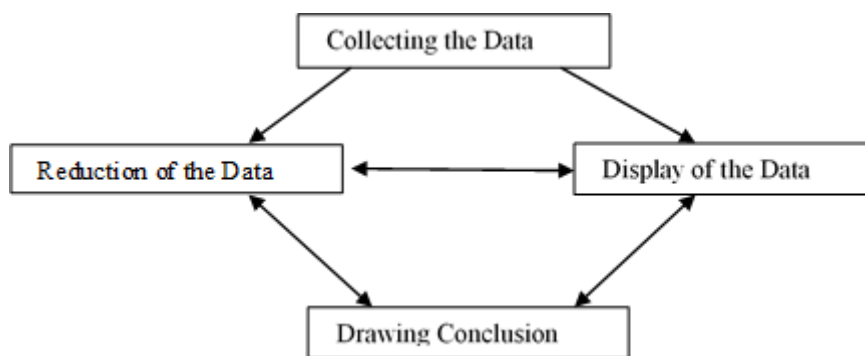
Figure 1 Interactive Model of Analysis

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Online class has been conducted for almost two years since the pandemic. There are some advantages and disadvantages in the process. Some technical issues also came up such as internet connection which mostly became the hottest issue and the device being used which was sometimes not compatible to the program used in the teaching and learning process. Those issues somehow have affected the online teaching and learning process. The other issues affected in online learning are students' contribution and students' condition. They will be explained from the diagrams below.

1. *Students' Contribution*

To know the students' contribution in the class discussion, the researchers provided three questions in the questionnaire. They are question number one, number six, and number seven.
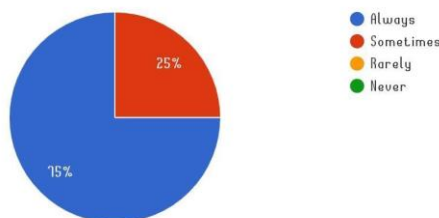

Figure 2 Students' Participation in Class Discussions

In question number one, it has been asked how often the students participate in class discussions. The answer from question number one can be seen from figure two. Surprisingly, 75% of the students always participate in class discussions and only 25% of the students sometimes participate in class discussions. On the other hand, based on the observation data, which was taken from interviewing the lecture, there are less than 75% students who always participate in class discussions voluntarily. The other students want to

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participate, if the lecturer asks them to speak. They do not want to participate although they know that the participation is graded.
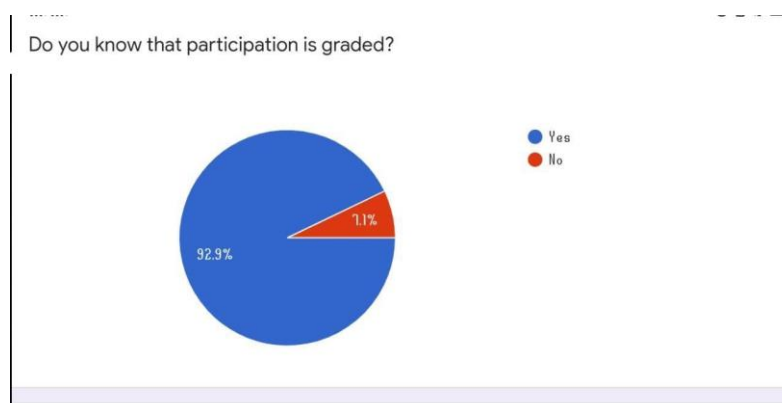

Figure 3 Graded on the Participation

As what has been asked in question number six, whether the students know that participation is graded. In figure two, it can be seen that 92,9% of the students understand that their participation is being graded. Referring to that data, the ideal class situation would be very active with the students' participation in class discussions. However, the data also shows that there are 7,1% respondents who did not aware of this crucial information.
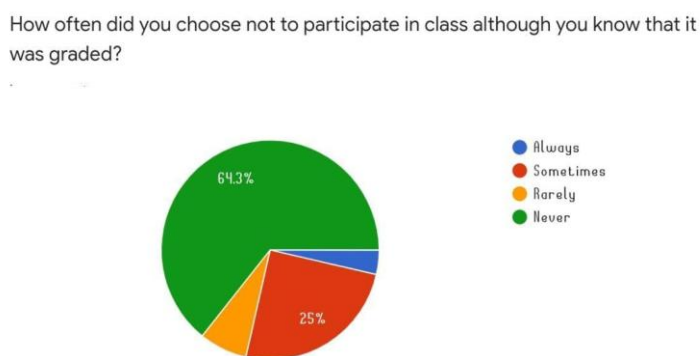

Figure 4 Rejection to Participation

In figure four, we can see that 64,3% of the students never choose not to participate in class discussion because it will be graded. But there are still many students who sometimes choose not to participate in class discussions although they know that it was graded. From the questionnaire asking about the students' condition, it can be seen that most of the students understand that their participation in the class is being graded. But 25% of the students sometimes choose to participate in class discussions, 7,1% of students rarely participate, and 3,6% or 1 student said that he/she never participates. To know the students' reason for not participating in class discussions, it can be seen from the students' condition below.

2. *Students' Condition*

Another issue affected in online learning is the student's condition. To know the students' condition, the researchers provide six questions in the questionnaire. They are question number two, four, five, eight, nine and ten.

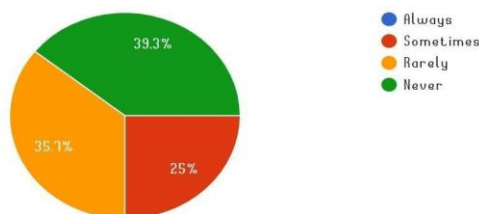How often do you feel reluctant to participate in class?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

39.3%
35.7%
25%

Figure 5 Reluctance

Many factors affected the students' participation in speaking class. Reluctance becomes one of the factors that affect the respondents' participation. 35,7% said that they rarely feel reluctant to participate and 25% said sometimes. However, 39,3% said that they are never reluctant to participate. It means, they are willing to participate in class discussion with their own will and they do it happily as they also enjoy the class activities. Those numbers show that although reluctance is one factors that determines the respondents' participation in speaking class, it does not give too much influence.

What is the main reason why you don't participate in class discussion?

- I don't like the lesson.
- I am too worried about making mistakes.
- I didn't get a chance to say something.
- Never skip to participate.

39.3%
7.1%
50%

Figure 6 The Reason Why the Students Don't Participate

The writers tried to provide some questions to know the things that influence students in the participation. Based on question number nine, it is found out that 50% of the respondents chose not to participate in speaking class because they were worried of making mistakes. The fact that it was being told so many times not to have that thought could not affect the whole class. It is a pity since learning languages needs to be practiced. Moreover, by doing so they missed the opportunity to get better. The other half of the respondents gave their answer under three different reasons as follows; 7,1% said they did not get a chance to participate, 3,6% or 1 respondent said that he/she did not like the lesson, and 39,3% said that they never skip to participate.
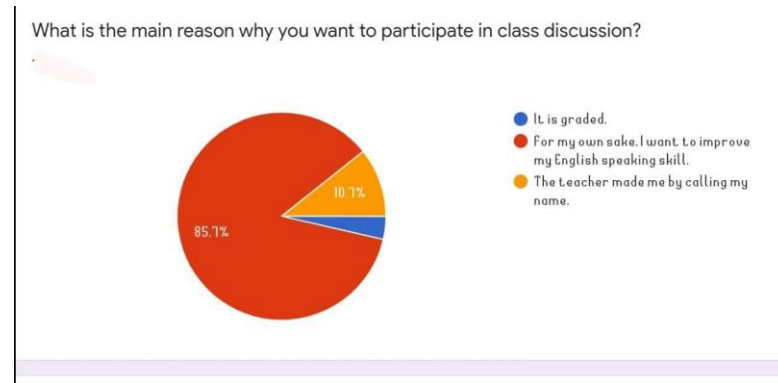
Figure 7 The Reason Why Students Want to Participate in Class Discussion

Based on question number eight, that is about the reason why the students want to participate in class discussion. 85,7% of the respondents stated that they participated in the speaking class because they realized that it was for their own good. It shows that the level of participation should be above average considering that they are aware of how important it is to give contribution during the speaking class. However, based on the data, it can be seen that there are some participants who are willing to contributing to the class discussion only when the teacher makes them do that by calling their name. Otherwise, they would prefer to keep on silent and that would be considered as non-recommend behavior because they will lose their opportunity to improve their English-speaking skill.
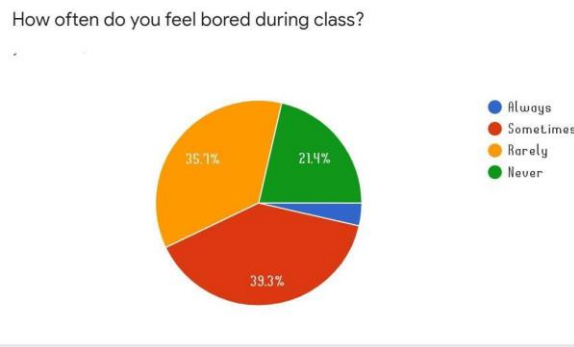

Figure 8 Boredom During the Class

In question number two, it has been asked whether students are feeling bored during class. The number of those who answered rarely and sometimes is almost equal. And those who answered never comes next. Boredom can be caused by many factors such as the teaching method, the teacher's performance, and the student's condition. However, as educators, it is suggested to always come up with better and more lively teaching methods to avoid this situation. Moreover, the teacher should motivate students to be active to participate in the teaching and learning process. Because it never makes sense if we want to speak another language fluently, but we never practice it in our daily life.
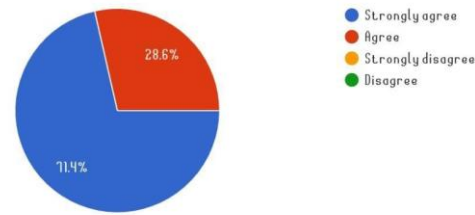
Figure 9 The Students' Awareness About the Importance of Using English in Daily Life

To know the students' awareness about the importance of using English in daily life, the writers provide question number ten. The awareness is shown by the 71,4% of respondents who stated that they strongly agree with the statement "if we want to speak other languages fluently, we have to practice it". This such behavior is believed will lead them to get better achievement and progress.
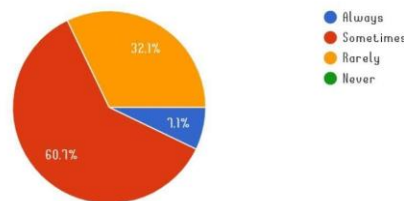

Figure 10 Speaking English in the Daily Life

The writers also want to know whether there is a relationship between their habit in speaking English and their participation in the class. It can be seen in question number five. The number of respondents who have a habit of speaking English in their daily life showed a quite satisfactory number. 60,7% of the respondents said they sometimes speak English in their daily life, but 32,1% said that they rarely do that. Meanwhile, only 7,1% of the respondents said that they always speak English in their daily life which is a very small number out of 100%. Somehow this situation is understood as the participants do not live in English speaking country therefore it is quite difficult to meet people who are able to talk in English with.

In conclusion, the students are actually aware that their participation in the class and their habit of using English in their daily life can help to increase their fluency in speaking. But still many students are reluctant to participate in class discussions. One of the reasons is the students are worried about making mistakes.

3. *Internet Issues*

Some researchers tried to explore the impact of Pandemic Covid-19 in the educational sector. It led to a big impact after most governments in the world decided to do teaching and learning

online to increase the transmission of Covid-19. One of the big problems which is appeared during this implementation is internet issues and the needs to improve some factors dealing with quality of internet access (Mahat, 2021). This research was conducted to find other issues of online courses faced by the lecture when conducting speaking class. Question number three in the questionnaire is about internet issues. It has been asked whether internet issues influence their participation in the class discussion or not.

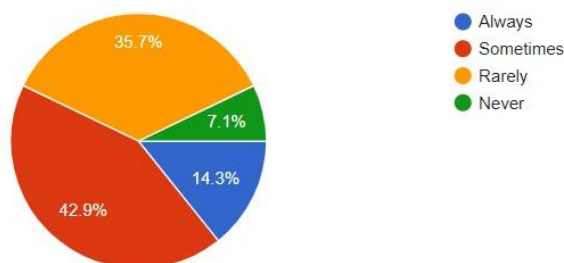How often do you get internet issues that make you unable to participate in class?

28 responses

Figure 11 Internet Issues

As it is stated in figure eleven above, only 7,1% out of the 28 respondents have never had a problem related to the internet. The biggest number is shown that the issue came up sometimes for 42,9% out of the respondents. The second biggest number that is 35,7% can be seen on the yellow part, that is the number of respondents who rarely have internet issues. Which actually kind of unsurprising fact since the government also provide internet data subsidy for the students all over Indonesia. The number of respondents who always have internet issues is 14,3%.

From the diagram above we can conclude that the internet issues are not the biggest problem in relating to giving participation during online learning. It is true that we can see the number of respondents with zero internet issues is the lowest, which is not surprising, but the number of respondents with less issues is big.

Discussion

Research has shown that online learning can be as effective as offline courses, but only if learners are provided well-designed interaction activities (Hawkins et al., 2013) Based on the result of the questionnaires and interviewing the respondents, all of the respondents like learning in speaking class. They want to enrich their vocabularies by communicating in English, so that they can speak English fluently. But some of the respondents still feel that speaking class is difficult. It is because they still feel afraid of making mistakes when they speak, they are shy and not confident to say in front of the lecturer and their friends, and they are still confused when making a statement in English. And those problems are becoming a bigger problem because of the pandemic. Almost two years, the teaching and learning process has been conducted in online learning. From the result of interviewing 28 respondents, only 6 respondents like to communicate online rather than offline. They like to communicate offline because they can communicate by seeing each other's gestures and body language, there is no error connection, and they can focus more on the communication

itself. That is the reason why the respondents participate less in the class discussion and choose not to contribute in the online class. Therefore, the role of the lecturers is very important. They have to motivate the students in the teaching and learning process to be more active in participating and giving contribution during the running class activities and they should choose an appropriate teaching method.

CONCLUSION

Referring to the data analysis which covers research finding and discussion, some technical issues came up in the online class such as internet connection, students' contribution and students' condition. Those issues somehow have affected the online teaching and learning process. Internet connection which mostly became the hottest issue and also the device being used which was sometimes not compatible to the program used in the teaching and learning process. Thus, some students like to communicate offline rather than online. The other reasons why they like to communicate offline are they can communicate by seeing each other's gestures and body language so that they can focus more on the communication itself and forget about technical issue caused by digital technology.

Actually, all of the students like learning to speak in English. But some of the students still have difficulties in speaking class. It is because they still feel afraid of making mistakes when they speak, they are shy and not confident to say in front of the lecturer and their friends, and they are still confused when making a statement in English. Here, the role of the lecturers is very important. They have to motivate the students in the teaching and learning process and it is suggested to always come up with better and more lively teaching methods. There are many ways to make the online class better and more lively, such as better presentation using supported applications and interactive games.

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