

ENHANCING STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH ECAFE LEARNING

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Abstract

ECAFE (English Communication Activity for Fun and Enjoyable) Learning is a program which was designed to make students actively use English. Through ECAFE Learning, students practiced English through communicative activities. The activities in ECAFE Learning were designed to engage the students to speak in an enjoyable learning process. This program was designed by the West Sumatera Education Department by involving lecturers, teachers and practitioners of education to design the curriculum of ECAFE Learning. Eventhough this program is focus on speaking and listening skills, but reading and writing are also integrated in it. This program was previously proposed to be used for extracurricular activity but later the writer applied it in her regular teaching process in SMAN 3 Padang. The teaching process using ECAFE was designed to suit the curriculum. The teacher had to see the materials and designed the strategies to engage students in learning. There are many techniques that have been applied in ECAFE Learning such as Finding Lost Person, Being an Illustrator, Running Dictation, Strip Line, Selling Product, Mingle, Talk Show and TV program. After implementing ECAFE learning in the classrooms, it showed that the students are active in learning process and engaged in learning English. Moreover, ECAFE also improve students' ability in speaking as well as increase their self confidence to speak English.

Keywords: *ECAFE, Active Learning, Students' engagement*

Abstrak

Pembelajaran ECAFE (Aktivitas Komunikasi Bahasa Inggris yang Menyenangkan) adalah program yang dirancang untuk membuat siswa secara aktif menggunakan bahasa Inggris. Melalui Pembelajaran ECAFE, siswa mempraktikkan Bahasa Inggris melalui kegiatan komunikatif. Kegiatan dalam ECAFE Learning dirancang untuk melibatkan siswa untuk berbicara dalam proses pembelajaran yang menyenangkan. Program ini dirancang oleh Departemen Pendidikan Sumbar dengan melibatkan dosen, guru, dan praktisi pendidikan untuk merancang kurikulum Pembelajaran ECAFE. Meskipun program ini fokus pada keterampilan berbicara dan mendengarkan, tetapi membaca dan menulis juga terintegrasi di dalamnya. Program ini sebelumnya diusulkan untuk digunakan untuk kegiatan ekstrakurikuler tetapi kemudian penulis menerapkannya dalam proses mengajar regulernya di SMAN 3 Padang. Proses pengajaran menggunakan ECAFE dirancang untuk menyesuaikan dengan kurikulum. Guru harus melihat materi dan merancang strategi untuk melibatkan siswa dalam pembelajaran. Ada banyak teknik yang telah diterapkan dalam Pembelajaran ECAFE seperti Menemukan Orang Hilang, Menjadi Ilustrator, Menjalankan Dikte, Jalur Garis, Menjual Produk, Berbaur, Talk Show dan Program TV. Setelah menerapkan pembelajaran ECAFE di ruang kelas, terlihat bahwa siswa aktif dalam proses belajar dan terlibat dalam belajar bahasa Inggris. Selain itu, ECAFE juga meningkatnya kemampuan siswa dalam berbicara serta meningkatnya kepercayaan diri mereka untuk berbicara bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: ECAFE, Belajar Aktif, Keterlibatan Siswa

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

The purpose of learning English for Senior High School students are to develop students' potential in order to have communicative competence in interpersonal, transactional, and functional. These competencies are developed through the learning activities which guide students to use various kinds of text in spoken and written by using accurate and acceptable language features, about factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognition. It is also hoped the character building could be built through teaching and learning process.

However, the ability of the students to communicate orally are far from the expectation. Based on teachers' observation during teaching and learning processes and the result of their assessment especially in speaking it indicated that students still have low ability in speaking. When teachers asked students questions in English, it was quite hard for them to express their feeling in English. Moreover, when they have to present dialogs in front of the class, they hasitated and had a tendency to speak in a low voice. This indicated that they did not have self confidence to speak English. This condition influenced the result of their speaking tests. The result of speaking tests, using the speaking indicators, showed that the students were not fluent in expressing their ideas and used inappropriate pronunciation, intonation, and expressions. These conditions happened, among others, because students were not used to practice their English.

It is undeniable that this condition was also influenced by teachers' ways of teaching. Teachers might not use various techniques in teaching. For example, in teaching the transactional or interpersonal expressions, a teacher might only asked her/his students to practice a dialog in pairs and then discussed the expressions used in the dialog and finally, asked them to create similar dialogs and perform it in front of the classroom. This technique made the students bored and unmotivated. Moreover, the time allocation was not enough for the students to practice their English. The time allocation for English subject is only two hours in a week also influence students low ability in speaking.

Based on the condition above, in trying to overcome the problem, the writer tried to apply ECAFE Learning. ECAFE Learning stand for English Communication Activities for Fun and Enjoyable Learning. It was an English teaching program composed and proposed by the West Sumatra Education Department since 2009 which focus on Listening and Speaking skills. Through ECAFE Learning, students practice English in fun and enjoyable activities. The activities in ECAFE Learning are based on the basic competence. It implements what *Teach International* (2004: 168) says that teachers have to create communicative activities in the classroom to enhance students to speak. The activities should stimulate students, are fun and can reinforce learnt structures. The activities should have purposes and always be adapted to suit the particular group of the students, match their levels, ages and interests.

B. Problems

The problem found in the writer's class was the students' low ability in speaking. The students got difficulties to express their ideas in English. When the teacher asked them, they tended to answer it hesitatingly and got problem in

pronunciation and intonation. This problem made the students did not have confidence to use their English and unmotivated to practice their English.

From the teacher side, in teaching speaking, the teacher did not provide the students with various techniques which can stimulate the students to speak. The activities in the classroom were monotonous and did not engage the the students to use their English. Moreover, the time available for speaking (2 x 45 minutes) was not enough for the students to practice their english.

C. The Strategies to Solve the Problems

To solve the problems above, the writer then use ECAFE Learning. ECAFE Learning is a program which was designed to make students actively use English. Through ECAFE Learning, students practiced English through communicative activities. The activities in ECAFE Learning were designed to engage the students to speak in an enjoyable learning process.

This program was designed by the West Sumatera Education Department by involving lecturers, teachers and practitioners of education to design the curriculum of ECAFE Learning. The focus of this program is on speaking and listening skills, since it was hoped that the Senior High School graduation have ability to speak English fluently.

Since in ECAFE learning, the students are learning in enjoyable environment and in engaging way, so it correlated with the active learning. Bell, Daniel and Jahna Kahrhoff in *Active Learning Handbook* (2006) defines active learning as a process wherein students are actively engaged in building understanding of facts, ideas, and skills through the completion of instructor directed tasks and activities. Through this activity the students are participated actively in learning process.

Even though, ECAFE learning is proposed to be implemented as the extra curricular activities, the writer also applied in the regular class. It was hoped that implementing ECAFE Learning could improve students' ability in speaking as well as increase their self confidence to speak English.

DISCUSSION

1. Reasons of Choosing the Strategy

Speaking skill is a complex skill which involve many aspects. Hedge (200:261) says that speaking skill is a complex task because it involves the grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency. To be able to speak fluently needs practice. Thornbury (2007: 79) states that speaking is a cognitive skill where idea or knowledge becomes increasingly automated through successive practice. Practice makes – if not perfect – at least, fluent. Based on the opinions above, it can be concluded that speaking skill is a complex activity which need practice to master it.

The role of the teacher to make students practice their English could not be denied. The teacher's ability to design various communicative activities is unquestionably needed to give the chance to her/his students to practice their English. Harmer (2007: 131) says that to make the teaching learning process run well and enjoyable for the students, the teacher should plan it in such a way by considering the objectives, time allocation, and classroom space.

Based on the opinion above, the writer implemented the ECAFE Learning in her class to improve her students' speaking skill. The reason of choosing ECAFE Learning to solve the problem is based on the condition of her student who are unmotivated to learn English and have no confidence to use their English. These condition made the students speaking ability very low. The writer believed that implementing ECAFE Learning could make her students enjoy learning English and could engage them to practice their English in a real life situations.

Moreover, by implenting ECAFE, she could implement the 2013 curriculum demand that is character building, 21st centry skills, literacy, and using higher order thinking skills assessment in the learning and also in assessment. Those are all could be reached through ECAFE Learning activity.

The implementation of ECAFE Learning was done in her classes and implemented in the extracurricular activity. There were some communicative activities done in those classes. They were *Strip Song*, *Running Dictation*, *Talk Show*, *Mini Drama*, *Minggle*, *Promoting Products*, *Predicting Story*, *Finding Lost Person*, and *Being an illustrator*. The writer carried out each communicative activities as follows:

A. Strip Songs

This technique is used to train listening skill and speaking skills. The writer used it to train her students in the topic of song. The teacher distributed the strips of the song lyrics randomly to all students. Then she played the song (*Daddy*, by *Richardo*) and asked the students to listen carefully to it. The student who listened that the lyrics of the song which were in the strip she/he had in her/his hand, was sung by the singer, would run to the teacher's desk and put the strip on it or stick it on the whiteboard. At the end of the activity the teacher and students checked the lyric together and sang the song unisonly, twice or three times. Then, the activity was continued to the discussion of the song. Finally, the students were asked to show their gratitude to their father by writing one or two short paragraphs about their father or write a poem about him and then read it out to other students.

The song entittle *Daddy* is chosen because the writer saw the condition nowadays where some teenagers do not respect to their parents especially their father. They disobay their parents and like to speak impolite to their parents. For these reason, the writer wanted to touch them through the son. The character buiding was developed through this activity is respectful and honest. Moreover, literacy is also develop through listening to the song lyric and writing about their own father.

B. Running Dictation

This technique is also used through the material about the song lyric. In this technique the teacher used the song "*What a Wonderful World*" by Louis Armstrong. The teacher grouped the students based on their seating rows. Then she asked each group to choose one of them to be the writer who will write the lyric on the board. Then, the teacher posted the lyrics of the song on the wall and asked them, in turn, to run to the lyrics and read the lines and whisper it to the writer. The writer then wrote the lyrics she/he heard on the board. The teacher set the time. After all lyrics have been written on the board, the teacher and the students checked it together. Then the activity is continued to watching the video

of the song. After watching the video, the students are asked to answer some questions about the video. The activity then was continued to the discussion about the situation of the environment in the video compared to the situation of the environment nowadays and find the solution of the problems. Students then wrote the problems and the solutions on the cardboard and stick on the wall. Then she told students to do gallery walk. Each group had to assign one or two students to stand in their gallery and explain to their guests the result of their discussion. While other members walked around to visit others' gallery and listened to the explanation. The class, then, decided the best group which had the great solution of the problem.

From this activity, the teacher could build students' character building. They are environmental awareness, respect, collaboration, and honest. In addition, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication also implement through this activity. Moreover, literacy and applying higher order thinking skills (HOTS) in teaching and learning and assessment also arouse through this activity.



Running dictation with the students



Sharing ECAFE Learning (running dictation) with English teachers in West Sumatera

C. Talk Show

This communicative activity was adapted from the talk shows on the television. The students worked in a group of four and the teacher distributed the role cards. The teacher and the students discussed about the role of the host, and the guest speakers. The teacher provided the topics about the environment, by writing them on them on the boards, and then she asked them to find the resources about the topic their group interested in. After that, she asked them to discuss and prepare their presentation. From this communicative activity the students can train some basic competence such as introducing, giving opinion and recommendation, intention and other kinds of expressions that they have learnt before.

Through this activity, there some character building could be developed through working together such respectful, and honest. Moreover through activity students' critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and collaboration could be improved. Since before presenting their talk show students are preparing their material well, literacy aspects could not be denied. In short, through this kind of activity, almost all aspects of curriculum demand could be reached.



Talk show Activity

D. Mini Drama

This technique was used to train the students with some basic competences such as asking and giving opinion, giving suggestion and recommendation, and expression of hope and wish. The students worked in groups and created a mini drama using those expressions. The teacher monitored while the students preparing their scripts and assisted them when they needed. When they were ready, the teacher asked them to perform their mini drama in front of the class.

To link with the curriculum demand, through this activity the students' character building such as working together, respectful, and hard work could be built beside literacy where they have to prepare the script beforehand. In presenting their mini drama, students will have their own way to make it interesting presentation. This effort corresponds to 21st century skills as the 2013 curriculum demand, such as collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and communication.

E. Mingle

This activity is done at the second or third meeting after the students analyze the report text and know the social function, generic structure, and the linguistic features of the report text. There are some procedures in applying this technique such as firstly, teacher prepared stick notes about names of animals for each of the students. Then, she stuck the note on each of the students' back. After that she prepared students with list of questions to be asked such as:

- ✓ Does my animal live on land/ocean/trees/mountains/savanah
- ✓ Is my animal a reptile/an amphibian/a mammal
- ✓ Is my animal carnivore/herbivore?
- ✓ Does my animal have a tail?
- ✓ Does my animal have four legs?
- ✓ Is my animal fearce?
- ✓ Is my animal wild/tame?
- ✓ Does my animal have fur/feather/scale/skin?
- ✓ Does my animal live in a colony?
- ✓ Does my animal lay eggs?

Students noted the questions and asked their friends about what animal he/she is. One student might ask only two questions to each of his/her friends and then found another friends to be asked until all questions answered. While the students

did the activity, the teacher monitored it. The students, then, sat in a group of five and guess what animal she/he had based on the information that she/he has got. The student guessed the animal based on the information from their friend. The students who could not guess the animal, keep asking the questions in the group until he/she knows the animal. Then, they students wrote the report text about the animal based on the information that they have collected. As the follow up activity, the students stuck their writing on the wall and every student had to go around to edit their friends' writing. They then revised their writing based on their friends' editing. During the process, the students consulted their writing to the teacher and decorated their writing with pictures and colorful pencils. Finally, the compiled their writing into a book entitled '**The Encyclopedia of Animal**'.

This activity could be as the students' project for the semester and could be done during teaching and learning process and out of the class. Through this activity the teacher could build students' character building, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication. Moreover, literacy is also built since the students are asked to find more information about the animal that they are going to write through reading.

Promoting Products

This activity was used to train the students with basic competence of Advertisement. Through this activity the students practiced how to promote a product. The students worked in pairs. The teacher put some empty products (shampoo bottle, drink can, soap, syrup bottle, etc) in a dark plastic bag. Then she asked them to take one product and promote the product to his/her partner. While the students prepared their presentation, the teacher monitored the activity and gave helps if necessary.

Character building could be built through this activity such as collaboration and honest. Moreover, critical thinking, creativity and communication are also accured in this activity.



Promoting Product activity

F. Predicting Story

This activity was used to train students to be competent in telling stories. The teacher began the activity by showing some pictures and sticked them on the whiteboard randomly. Then she asked them to predict the story, based on the random pictures and after that, in groups, rearranged the pictures to make a good

story. Next, the teacher told the story and the students listened. After the teacher told the story, the class, as a whole, decided which group had similar story with the story told by the teacher. At last, the teacher asked the students to retell the story.

This activity could enhance students' critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication. In addition, character building such as self confidence and respect.

G. Finding Lost Person

This communicative activity was used to train the students in describing. The teacher divided the class into two groups, the first group will be the one who lost their family member and the other will be someone who found the missing person. The teacher first aroused the students' knowledge about what they would do if they had lost their family member and then the teacher and her students made a dialog about the situation and asked the students to practice the dialog. Then, the teacher distributed a picture card to each of the first group member and asked them to keep the description of the boy/girl in mind. The teacher told the students that the one in the picture was the students' missing sister/brother. Then, she took the cards back and gave randomly it to each of the second group member and told them that they had found the missing person. Again, the teacher asked the students to memorize the description of the boy/girl in the picture and hid the picture on their back. Then the teacher asked them to stand in front of the class or around the class, facing each group, and asked the first group to ask the second group about their losing brother or sister. The couple(s) who could match the description with the picture would be the winner. The point was the students had to find the one who held the picture of his/her lost sister/brother.

From this activity, the teacher could develop students' character building such as cooperation, curiosity, and honesty; while the 21st century skills that could be developed through this activity is critical thinking, collaboration and communication.

H. Being an illustrator

This technique was also used to train the students with Descriptive Texts. The teacher asked the students to work in pairs and sat face to face. The teacher told the students that one of them will be the one who had met a strange person and the other would be the one to illustrate or sketch or draw the picture based on the description given. Then, the teacher distributed the pictures of a famous person to one of them and asked them to describe the picture while their partner drew the picture based on the description given. After they finished with the drawing, they had to stick the picture on the wall. Then all students were asked to go around the class and gave a star sign to the drawing which matched the picture. The illustrator who got the most stars would be the winner.

Through this activity, the teacher could improve students' character building such as cooperation, honesty, and curiosity. Moreover, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication also can be developed through this technique.

2. The Obstacles in Implementing the Strategy

In implementing ECAFE Learning in teaching and learning process, the teacher faced some obstacles. The obstacles were:

1. The class was rather noisy. For some activities, all students communicated actively. This condition sometime disturbed other class. To overcome this, the teacher closed the door and asked students not to speak loudly.
2. The classroom space was not adequate to do activities such as running dictation and finding lost person. To solve this problem, the teacher asked the students to push all their tables and chairs close to the wall before doing the activity or asked the students to go outside and did the activity outside the classroom.
3. Time allocation. Since time allocation for English is only two hours per week, so the teacher applied this activity in extracurricular activity or English Club.

3. The Supporting Factors

The implementation of ECAFE Learning could be carried out properly due to several contributing factors such as material, facilities, and the media used. Since the writer's school is applying 2013 curriculum, these techniques could be applied, as demanded by the curriculum. They are teaching learning process with active learning learning, character building, four century skills (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication), literacy and higher order thinking skills (HOTS) in the process and in assessment. All of them could be found in ECAFE Learning activities.

Another factors that influenced the result was the use of facilities used in the class. The use of LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) and tape recorder in the classroom would make easier to do the activities such as running dictation and strips lyric. Moreover, the media which were used in the activity such as Finding lost Person and Being an Illustrator were easy to get. The pictures were downloaded from internet or took from the calendar. Then, for activity promoting product, the teacher used the unused products such as the shampoo bottle, plastic bottle, cans, toothpaste tube and others. This was also due to support the Adiwiyata Program at school.

To motivate the students, the teacher also invited some foreigners to the class and asked them to ask the questions and had conversation with him. This effort built their self confidence to speak English as well as had them communicating in a real context.

THE RESULT

1. Impact of Applying the Strategy

After implementing ECAFE Learning at school and sharing with English teachers in West Sumatra for years, there were some good impacts could be reached such as:

Firstly, the students were more active in learning English. All students actively involved and excited in carrying out the activities. The communicative activities applied in ECAFE Learning program engaged the students to speak and give chance to all students to practice their English through an enjoyable learning.

Secondly, the class became more dynamic because all students not only listened to teacher's explanation but also did practice the communicative activities. They moved, listened, spoke, smiled during the activity which made the

teaching learning process run in enjoyable environment. Moreover, the character building could be built such as collaboration, curiosity, self confidence, honesty, and responsibility. The four century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication, as demanded by the 2013 curriculum, could be achieved..

Thirdly, the students' ability in speaking enhanced. It could be seen from the results of their achievement in the aspect of skills. Moreover, the students' self confidence to use their English was also increased. It was because the teacher always encouraged them to use their English. Moreover, the students were also have desire to join the English competitions held by other schools or institutions. In some competitions that they followed, the students could reach the championship.

In addition, besides implementing ECAFE learning to her students, the writer also shared ECAFE learning with the English teachers in West Sumatra in the workshop held by Education Department of West Sumatra, school's in house training and in the English teachers forum. Through cascading ECAFE Learning to the teachers, they could enrich their teaching strategies and inspire them to model or modify the techniques for their own classes.

2. The Alternative Development

Based on the condition happened while implementing ECAFE Learning and the result of the implementation, it showed that the students enjoyed the communicative activities used in the classroom besides improved students' ability in speaking. For this pupose, the alternative development of this strategy is implementing ECAFE Learning in extracurricular activity through English club.

Since ECAFE Learning could give contribution to the English teachers in teaching English, the alternative development of ECAFE is designing more activities which realted to the curriculum and make the books and video on how implement it. This expected to make clear descriptions to the teacher on how to implement ECAFE learning in their class.

Moreover, the techniques or the communicative activities used in ECAFE Learning could be applied in both curriculum , 2006 and 2013. In curriculum 2013, there are 4 main competences should be reached by the students, they are; religious, attitude, knowledge, and skill competence. The communicative activities could use to reach the skill competence.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

1. Conclusion

Students' ability to communicate in oral and written language are one of the objectives of learning English at Senior High School students. To reach this aim needs practice and chances from the teacher in providing enjoyable communicative activities. The teacher should design the activities to make it eaiser to reach the teaching objectives. Halliwell (1992:27) says that the teacher should make the lesson varied to make the students motivated to learn. Moreover, the activities done should be challenging and engaging the students to speak and use their English.

ECAFE Learning is a program that focus on listening and speaking. Through this program, the students do the communicative activities in enjoyable learning. The various activities make the students motivated to do the activities

and as the result improve their ability in speaking. The communicative activities in ECAFE learning were based on the Basic Competence set up in that semester.

After implementing ECAFE learning for years, it showed that there was an improvement on students' ability in speaking. It can be seen from the skills achievement (performance) and their self confidence to use their English increased as well. They intended to join the competitions held by other school or other institution.

Moreover, based on the data and reported by the English teachers where the writers have shared about ECAFE, they said that ECAFE could enhance their students' motivation and engagement in learning English.

2. Recommendation

Based on the conclusion above, there are some points to be recommended. They are :

1. The teacher could implement ECAFE Learning in both regular class and in Extracurricular activity. The communicative activities used in the program should relate to the basic competence that is learnt in that semester.
2. The teacher could use the communicative activities used in ECAFE Learning to motivate and improve students' ability in speaking.
3. The communicative activities in ECAFE Learning could be used for both curriculum (20016 curriculum and 2013 curriculum). The communicative activities which are used to reach the objectives for basic competence especially for skills.
4. To make ECAFE Learning run well need the support from school stakeholders.
5. Other English teachers should be introduced and trained on how to implement ECAFE Learning in their class to make their students enjoy in learning.

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