TEACHING EFL SPEAKING SKILLS: A SELF-STUDY OF EFFECTIVE LESSON PLANNING AND DELIVERY

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ABSTRACT

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers will encounter challenges while instructing students from diverse backgrounds. They will overcome these challenges when they use strategically designed, well-conducted lessons that have the potential to enhance students' engagement and proficiency in communication greatly. This research studied the best practices in planning and delivering English-speaking lessons to EFL students in China and Indonesia, utilizing a self-analysis of the teaching practice approach. This study clarifies the principles underlying the inception of two speaking exercises, namely "Friendship Soup" and "Chain Story," and provides precise insight into the techniques employed in students speaking practices. The findings emphasized the students' enthusiastic engagement, favorable dispositions towards the assignments, and favorable responses to the prompt feedback they got. Another advantageous result of such tasks is the enhanced proficiency of the students in speaking. By looking at EFL speaking activities from a global point of view, this study adds to what is known by making them suitable for students from a range of backgrounds and points of view. The findings have significance for educators seeking to enhance student involvement and self-assurance in speaking to others and to improve their level of EFL instruction in diverse settings.

Keywords: Self-Study, Teaching Practice, Speaking Skills

INTRODUCTION

Studying an issue of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructions involves employing a variety of methodologies that differ from commonly utilized approaches such as surveys, case studies, or experimental studies. Among all the available choices, the self-study of teaching practice (SSTP) comes across as a noteworthy analytical framework. The perspective of the teacher-researcher in SSTP offers a unique perspective that not only reveals instructional strategies but also provides comprehensive insights into personal development and effective methods directly connected to the observation of students' learning processes (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2014; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009; Russell & Fuentealba Jara, 2023). SSTP possesses the capacity to uncover detailed insights that might go unnoticed by conventional approaches (Latifah & The, 2021). This is especially true when it comes to gaining knowledge about how educators modify, improve, and perfect their teaching methods within the intricate framework of EFL education.

Much research highlights the imperative for active student engagement as a crucial requirement in the instruction of EFL (Berry & Kowal, 2022; Martin & Bolliger, 2018). Generally, a few learners with different levels of confidence and linguistic proficiency enroll in language courses (Suliyati, 2021). As a result, many educators hold the opinion that an optimal learning environment would have students possessing similar levels of competence. Nevertheless, this educational setting presents a teaching obstacle due to the presence of students who exhibit diverse levels of confidence and proficiency. Certain students encounter challenges because of language barriers. Hence, it is crucial to use supporting strategies that encourage active engagement in classroom discussions.

Educators use innovative teaching strategies to increase student engagement (Androutsos & Brinia, 2019), particularly when addressing the significant differences in language proficiency among students. Fostering cooperation among students with diverse proficiency in languages is important for developing an ideal classroom. Incorporating speaking activities into EFL lessons is seen as a strategic approach to enhance students' engagement and active involvement in class (Adawiyah, 2021; Agustina, 2018; Khotimah et al., 2022).

The effectiveness of these strategies depends on educators' effective adjustment to the student's first language (L1) and the cultural context of the society where students live. Aligning assignments with students' cultural backgrounds not only helps their language acquisition but also promotes their social and emotional development. Educators aim to select activities that can be readily linked to various cultural settings while maintaining the learning content's integrity and adjusting it to the learners' cultural practices. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies in promoting active engagement and collaboration among students who are studying EFL through the implementation of the SSTP approach. The primary emphasis is on students from two specific backgrounds, specifically those of Chinese-Mandarin and Indonesian countries of origin. Utilizing SSTP as a means for reflective analysis and professional development is crucial in this pursuit. The study comprehensively analyzes learning activities

and student development to identify specific areas in need of improvement, providing helpful suggestions for enhancing teaching approaches.

The study highlights two speaking tasks, specifically "Friendship Soup" and "Chain Story," as typical illustrations of prevalent activities encountered in educational environments. The context in 'Friendship Soup' takes place within the Oral English Course, a foundational course provided at a Chinese college. 'Chain Story' takes place in the setting of EFL activities at an Indonesian high school. The purpose of this study is to improve the practical understanding of teaching EFL by promoting the creation of more efficient methods that promote collaboration among students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The research done in Indonesia and China served to assist with this study by putting together a list of useful ways for EFL teachers to teach. These methodologies can serve as helpful assets for EFL educators in their scholarly endeavors. The research highlights the significance of continuous professional growth, which is shaped by a dedication to lifelong learning and the integration of diverse cultural experiences into teaching and pedagogical reflections.

METHODOLOGY

By implementing the SSTP framework, this study seeks to produce new perspectives on how to teach EFL, foster professional development, and enable a comprehensive analysis of teaching methodologies. Although acknowledging the benefits of several qualitative research methods, the SSTP framework distinguishes itself as a capable and unique strategy for addressing challenges in educational settings. The main application of SSTP is to provide an opportunity for researchers and educators to enhance their abilities and exchange their knowledge with fellow educators (McDaniel & Samaras, 2007; Russell & Fuentealba Jara, 2023). The basis of SSTP centers on reflection, involving an in-depth review of instructional strategies, evaluation of the educator's teaching philosophy, and avoiding making pre-assumptions to students without having observation.

Using credible sources, the study continues by discussing methodological concerns to ease data gathering and analysis. The main goal is to ensure the accuracy of results and the ability to share effective teaching methods with the education community, therefore fostering continuous improvement in teachers' skills and enhancing student learning outcomes.

The study trajectory evolves from self-reflection to the analysis of the educational environment and student engagement. The study conforms to the principles of SSTP by closely observing student engagement and cooperation during oral practices, collecting student viewpoints through interviews, recording activity planning, implementation, and assessment, and asking for valuable feedback from peers. Different types of data sources help the study of how oral tasks affect students' learning. These aspects include students' introspective accounts regarding their educational experiences, extended journals derived from classroom assessments,

visual evidence in the shape of photos documenting students' projects, and careful study of finishing assignments.

Carefully chosen qualitative methods are used to comprehend the study results. This process involves systematically collecting and referencing material, which then leads to the classification of themes based on recurring patterns and underlying concepts identified in the data. The thematic organization looks into three main areas such as educational philosophy, pedagogical assignments and approaches, and dynamic student engagement and learning. This methodical approach not only improves a comprehensive understanding of the teacher's background, instructional strategies, and their influence on student learning but also facilitates an in-depth evaluation for other EFL teachers searching for valuable perspectives on effective teaching approaches.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, I analyze the results and ideas of the research, specifically emphasizing four very important areas. To begin, I will describe my EFL teaching, offering an overview of my experiences and the obstacles I encountered. Then, I present the Friendship Soup Project, a group speaking task created to improve Chinese students' involvement and confidence in English speaking. Next, I focus on the Chain Story Speaking Practice, which is a collaborative activity designed to enhance the storytelling and speaking skills of Indonesian students. Finally, I examine the influence of these activities on students from various cultural backgrounds, emphasizing the varied viewpoints and methods observed. My goal in this discussion is to provide insight into the success of different teaching methods and their impact on EFL instruction.

My EFL Teaching Background

In the area of SSTP research, the starting point typically focuses on revealing the teacher-researcher's background or educational philosophy. This discussion centers on my years of experience in teaching EFL. Introducing this important choice in the EFL teaching context, I can delve into teaching strategies and personal visions within the SSTP framework. As an EFL educator, this analysis of teaching approaches and differences in culture is founded on a complex scaffolding of interactions, experiences, and adjustments. This study will build on my prior job experience teaching EFL to explore the challenges, adaptations, and methodological advances I have faced in this field.

Since completing my doctoral studies in Learning Design and Technology in the United States in 2014, I have been actively involved in the subject of teaching EFL. I have skills in second language training, particularly in the domain of EFL pedagogy. I was able to get a job teaching business English and spoken English in China after getting this degree. Furthermore, I had the chance to offer business courses using English as the predominant medium of instruction.

During my time in China until 2022, my primary focus was on instructing undergraduate students in their freshman and sophomore years. Students demonstrated an array of English proficiency, ranging from basic to moderate levels. As an educator with a distinct mother tongue and cultural heritage, I encountered considerable challenges at the beginning of my career, particularly in addressing complexities arising from language barriers and misunderstandings prevalent among my Chinese students.

A Chinese EFL teacher, whom the institution officially recognized as my co-teacher, helped solve these issues. This collaboration was crucial to improving communication and understanding students' needs and language barriers.

Because my Chinese students are primarily extra cautious and hesitant, I had to change my teaching style and mindset. Adapting the way, I taught was essential in order to assist and empower these introverted learners, resulting in their heightened interest and participation.

Upon returning to Indonesia in 2022, I undertook the role of a substitute English teacher at a local high school while concurrently seeking employment at a university. Upon completing my term as a substitute teacher, I was offered a spot to lead the English Club, an extracurricular program designed to improve students' language skills and engagement.

The unique educational settings and cultural nuances in China and Indonesia provided me with a wonderful perspective to analyze and evaluate my teaching strategies. This intercultural encounter offers me a chance to contemplate and enhance my pedagogical approaches, particularly in addressing the distinct needs of pupils from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Friendship Soup Project

The "Friendship Soup" task in the EFL classroom had several major effects on student learning and engagement. The main aim of this study was to investigate students' encounters with friendship, promote group collaboration, and enhance their confidence in speaking within a group context. The use of visual aids, metaphoric metaphors, and creative participation was crucial in creating an immersive educational environment for the students during this endeavor.

The "Friendship Soup" activity consisted of two separate phases, each making a unique contribution to the learning outcomes and linguistic development of the students. The first task required students to create components of friendship by utilizing stickers, drawing convincingly, and employing artistic expression to make a poster that illustrated the process of making a friendship soup. Students used their creativity, artistic skills, and language ability to show the multiple facets of friendship dynamics in this phase. The use of artistic instruments not only enhanced visual learning but also acted as a catalyst for linguistic expression, allowing students to visualize abstract notions pertaining to friendship concretely.

The next step was incorporating similes, quantitative terminology, and lexicon to elaborate on the "components" that make up profound and intricate friendships. Through the use of metaphors, learners managed to understand and express different degrees of acquaintance, making creative resemblances to clarify the quiet distinctions among various forms of friendships. This phase served as a language enrichment exercise, promoting the growth of expressive language abilities, and offering students an opportunity to express deeper feelings and connections realistically and innovatively.

The presenting component of the work had substantial significance, serving as an opportunity for students to exhibit their products and articulate their comprehension of friendship dynamics. During these presentations, students actively participated in public speaking, refining their oral communication abilities, and showcasing their understanding of the contents they had produced. The talks encouraged a lively exchange of ideas among peers, creating a collaborative and supportive learning atmosphere.

A notable aspect of this project was the ability of groups that wanted more than their initial performance to enhance and revise their presentations by submitting videos. This portion of the assignment not only fostered responsibility but also offered an opportunity for students to participate in self-directed learning and enhancement. It allowed students to contemplate their performance, recognize areas for improvement, and actively take measures to strengthen their communication and presentation abilities.

Overall, the "Friendship Soup" project had a big effect on how the EFL students learned. It enabled a comprehensive method for language acquisition, integrating visual, verbal, and interpersonal aspects. The assignment promoted imaginative self-expression, nurtured teamwork, and offered an opportunity for linguistic enrichment using creative metaphors and descriptive language. Moreover, the chance to engage in self-evaluation and enhance their abilities by making videos allowed learners to assume responsibility for their learning process and aim for ongoing progress.

With its broad approach to language acquisition and emphasis on creative expression, this project improved students' language skills while encouraging learners to express difficult thoughts in a friendly and collaborative atmosphere. The integration of visual components, metaphorical language, and interactive presentations greatly enhanced the diverse learning experience in the EFL classroom.

Chain Story Speaking Practice

The "Chain Story" activity in high school Indonesian-speaking students' lessons emphasized cooperative storytelling to strengthen the ability to speak. This exercise skillfully integrated crucial linguistic components, including conjunctions, chronological markers, and transitional expressions, acknowledging their importance in improving the coherence and fluidity of the narrative. The assignment was done in an organized way to ensure thorough skill development among the students.

The first part of the "Chain Story" assignment focused on providing clear guidance on the use of sequence words, connecting words, and transition phrases, highlighting their significance in creating a coherent story. Students received focused teaching designed to familiarize them with these language strategies and their function in organizing and tying ideas together within a narrative. The foundation for students' understanding and application of these language components in their narrative activities was laid during this educational period, which was very important.

After the educational phase, a guided practice session was implemented, which presented students with a graphic depiction and real-world instances of the "Chain Story" assignment. Students were shown a brief film illustrating examples of students participating in the chain-tale activity. This film illustrated the actual implementation of connecting words, sequence words, and transition phrases in a collaborative storytelling context. The guided exercise sought to provide students with a tangible grasp of how these language aspects operate within the framework of storytelling, fostering a more profound comprehension of their utilization.

The collaborative storytelling activity began with students collectively constructing a story, using a teacher-provided opening sentence as a cue. The purpose of this cooperative stage was to promote student participation, teamwork, and creativity in the creation of a coherent story. The teacher's original prompt acted as a catalyst for students to begin the process of storytelling, giving them a starting point from which they could collectively develop the narrative.

During this activity, students were prompted to actively utilize the linking words, sequence words, and transition phrases that they had acquired in the previous teaching phase. These linguistic strategies served as structural aspects, assisting students in effortlessly linking tale pieces, preserving narrative coherence, and directing the flow of the storytelling process. This task supported linguistic skill development, interpersonal communication, and teamwork among students through collaboration.

The implementation of a collaborative methodology in the "Chain Story" activity not only improved students' oral communication abilities but also fostered their self-assurance in articulating their thoughts within a collective environment. Through group storytelling, students might refine and polish their storytelling skills, using newly acquired language structures to create cohesive and well-organized stories.

Furthermore, the collaborative aspect of the activity allowed for peer-to-peer contact, creating a helpful and interactive learning environment. By actively sharing ideas, building on each other's contributions, and working together to create a narrative, students were able to develop a sense of ownership and teamwork during the storytelling process.

The "Chain Story" activity provided students with an opportunity to enhance their linguistic proficiency and cultivate their speaking abilities through collaborative storytelling.

Additionally, it fostered the development of crucial teamwork and communication skills. This assignment prompted students to utilize their acquired linguistic elements in a real-life setting, promoting a comprehensive method of language learning in the high school EFL classroom.

Students From Two Different Cultures

The interactions among students in the context of studying EFL exhibit unique viewpoints and methods, which have a substantial impact on the way they learn through encounters and participation in the classroom. The disparities in these viewpoints are evident in multiple aspects, ranging from the need for guidance and motivation to the level of comfort in taking part in class and self-assurance in verbal expression.

Chinese students' success in learning EFL often requires extra assistance, advice, and motivation to navigate through assignments and speaking tasks successfully. Certain students display indications of fear and reluctance when delivering presentations in class, which can have an impact on their level of confidence. However, a noteworthy finding arose when students were given the chance to record their speech; this medium appeared to enhance the practice and advance their speaking skills. Chinese students were able to practice speaking in a less stressful setting and with less nervousness, thanks to the use of recordings.

In addition, the physical classroom setting poses difficulties for Chinese students, particularly in relation to the seating arrangements that are utilized for group activity. They have trouble working together on group projects because of how difficult it is to rearrange their seats, which affects the efficiency and effectiveness of their teamwork.

Within the framework of group work, Chinese students typically exhibit an ordered partition, whereby advanced learners tend to be drawn towards more demanding portions of the project while assigning fewer complex duties to less advanced students. This divide illustrates how they approach work; it is based on perceived competence levels, which may affect how duties are distributed among the group.

Indonesian students, on the other hand, exhibit strong levels of motivation and excitement for EFL study, especially when it comes to language proficiency development. They demonstrate a clear approach, displaying no reluctance to speak and embracing mistakes as an integral part of their learning process. The classroom setting facilitates their engagement by providing flexible seating arrangements and an open space that allows for seamless mobility during group work. Indonesian students are encouraged to participate actively and comfortably in practice sessions because this environment promotes spontaneity and enjoyment.

In addition, Indonesian students demonstrate a proactive attitude by actively seeking help and support from teachers when preparing for assignments. They exhibit a proactive approach to instruction by frequently asking questions and seeking clarification, especially when preparing for tasks.

The different techniques that Chinese and Indonesian students use when learning EFL highlight how crucial it is to recognize each student's unique learning needs and modify teaching

tactics accordingly. Chinese students utilize speech recordings to alleviate speaking nervousness, whereas Indonesian students benefit in a way that fosters active participation, embraces mistakes as a natural part of the learning process, and provides plenty of chances for reaching out and seeking advice. By adapting teaching strategies to the various requirements and preferences of students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, recognizing and using these unique learning techniques can greatly improve the efficacy of EFL training.

CONCLUSION

The results and debates in this paper demonstrate the important role that group speaking exercises play in providing English instruction to speakers of other languages. Based on an analysis of the researcher's experience teaching EFL, instructional strategies that have been specifically developed to emphasize student engagement and confidence-building are essential for creating a safe and engaging learning environment (Bedi, 2023; Wang et al., 2022). The Friendship Soup Project and Chain Story Speaking Practice exemplify the profound impact of interactive and cooperative activities on language learning and student growth. Along with enhancing language proficiency, these activities foster personal development, cultural sensitivity, and a strong desire for effective communication. Furthermore, the examination of students from varying cultural origins underscores the significance of modifying instructional approaches to accommodate unique linguistic requirements and viewpoints. Educators may foster an inclusive learning environment that develops self-assured communicators proficient in navigating the challenges of a globally interconnected world through adaptable instructional methods and offering timely feedback.

To summarize, this research highlights the efficacy of cooperative speaking exercises as potent instruments for teaching English as a foreign language (Kansil et al., 2022; Ngatmini, 2019). The findings underscore the significant impact of these activities on stimulating student participation, improving language skills, and cultivating self-assurance. The findings not only offer concrete illustrations of effective teaching techniques but also underscore the necessity for continuous pedagogical innovation in the realm of EFL instruction. By adapting activities to each student's particular needs, offering timely and insightful feedback, and utilizing technology, teachers may establish a vibrant and welcoming classroom where students feel empowered to succeed in how they learn a language (Ajjawi et al., 2022; Dang & Le, 2023; Rifah & Sabilah, 2022; Suliyati, 2021). In the end, cooperative speaking exercises have an impact that extends beyond language acquisition, giving students the tools, they need to succeed in a globalized society.

The results of this study provide insightful advice for EFL instructors and legislators. First and foremost, educators should give the most attention to incorporating collaborative speaking activities in their classrooms. These exercises have proven to be helpful in encouraging

active student participation, improving language proficiency, and nurturing confidence in oneself. By integrating initiatives like the Friendship Soup Project and Chain Story Speaking Practice, educators may establish a nurturing and engaging learning atmosphere that motivates children to engage with and interact with the English language actively. Furthermore, educators need to adapt their instructional approaches to accommodate the varied linguistic requirements and viewpoints of pupils hailing from distinct cultural backgrounds. This personalization fosters inclusivity and guarantees that any student may actively participate in the language acquisition process. Finally, policymakers must acknowledge the significance of continuous pedagogical innovation in teaching English as a foreign language. They should support educator professional development, technological integration in language learning, and EFL practitioner study and cooperation to improve teaching techniques. Through these guidelines, educators and policymakers can give learners of EFL an effective and transformed educational endeavor that prepares them to navigate a globalized society.

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