

COMPETITION IN CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

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Submitted: May, 2 2024

Accepted: May, 4 2024

Published: May, 22 2024

Abstract

This study is a class action research study which is aimed to find out how the competition in classroom activities in relation with communicative competence can be conducted properly. Communicative competence as the ability to utilize both knowledge and skills of a language to communicate appropriately by involving social and cultural context is an essential competence which should be mastered by English learners, especially in college level. Mastering communicative competence means having capacity in four areas of the competence namely grammatical competence, sociolinguistics competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. In achieving this goal of learning, the synergy among strategy, method and learning instruments is a must. The synergy of the mentioned parts of teaching and learning activity then should be presented in effective classroom activities. Classroom activities should be designed to encourage students to perform their communicative competence. Collaborating students and teachers' roles to trigger students' motivation to develop themselves by competing in healthy environment is a movement to help students enhancing their communicative competence. The researchers use qualitative approach. The result shows that healthy competition can elevate students' communicative competence.

Keywords: Classroom Activities, Communicative Competence, Competition

Introduction

Communicative competence can be the face of the quality of education as well as skills and knowledge obtained by the students from their educational institution. When students perform their communicative competence, their understanding and proficiency of the knowledge and skills can be easily judged. Students who find difficulty in performing their communication skills are most likely students who have limited knowledge about grammar, vocabulary, or in other words, their proficiency level is low. Tarvin (2015) defined that communicative competence is the ability to use language effectively in communication, in a culturally-appropriate manner in order to make meaning and accomplish social tasks. Muammar, et all (2020) elaborated the theory proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) that was developed by Canale (1983) clearly explained that communicative competence must meet four areas of skills. Grammatical competence covers the skill of mastering the knowledge of Linguistics Code; Pronunciation, Lexical/Vocabulary, Structural, Syntax, Punctuation, Rules of Word and Sentence Formation. Sociolinguistic competence includes deals with the skill of understanding and producing utterances appropriately, including speech acts. Discourse competence covers the ability to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve text in different genres. Meanwhile strategic competence includes mastering the communication strategy to enhance the effectiveness of communication or to compensate for breakdowns in communication. Hymes (1972) has very clear idea about communicative competence in its relevance to linguistics discipline that communicative



competence is the ability of showing the ways in which the systematically possible, the feasible, and the appropriate are linked.

Savignon (1997) appeared with a view that teacher of language learner plays role to help learners to get along in real-life situations. The attendance of a teacher is not merely to guide the learner to achieve the goal of study. In more essential part of learning activities, the teacher should help the learner to master the knowledge and to be skillful enough to implement their knowledge. Therefore, the classroom activities designed by the teacher should help the students to be able to master both knowledge and skill in communication. Human competition appeared genuinely as a contest where two or more people strive for a goal that cannot be shared. This contest results a victory for one party and lost for the other parties (Cantador and Conde, 2010). Students instinctively have sense on competition. They will be highly-motivated when their achievements are well-appreciated. They love to compare their proficiency level with their classmates. The fact that children spontaneously seek competition with their peers and that education and competition are intimately related which was researched by Verhoeff (1991) lead to the conclusion that competitions are good measures and should be developed and supported to be a positive sign in education. By utilizing students' sense of competition, students will be triggered naturally to develop and enrich their knowledge and skills. Though different proficiency levels of students will find this competition as different treatment, the combination of appropriate portion of competition and suitable collaboration among different styles and proficiency levels of students can be great motivation for them in developing themselves (Murray, 2019).

Pros and cons have been arising in respond to this kind of activity in classroom. Some people call this as competition method, while the others call it competition strategy. Shindler (2010) furthermore suggested that competition can be divided into two types. The first is healthy competition that the goal is primarily fun, the competitive goal is not real or valuable, short-term, for solely symbolic reward, and all individuals or groups see a reasonable chance of winning. The second one is unhealthy competition where the competition feels real, the winners and the losers will be affected, and over time students develop an increasingly competitive mind-set. Oztruk and Debelak (2008) proposed that academic competition can be a tool for differentiation. It means that, a competition in academic field can be a means of content differentiation that enable students to sharpen their competencies to be involved in competition. Furthermore, competition can also be a means of process differentiation that students will elevate their order thinking while sharpen their competencies in this competition. These two kinds of differentiation then lead to another differentiation which is called as product differentiation. Students who are involved in this competition will have different performance than students who are not involved in any competition because they are accustomed to think and to sharpen their own competencies. In academic competition, students will also experience different learning environment that is surely more competitive environment. This learning environment should be a great help for them to trigger their competition energy. However, all those differentiations in academic competition should involve the importance of teachers' guidance, supervision and support. Important things that should be considered in applying academic competition are: the competition is not designed only for students who are gifted or has higher proficiency level, but it should be designed for all students and this competition should be means of fostering academic and psychological growth.

Though experiences shows that most students love to measure their own competencies through scores and they also love to compare themselves with others and

the facts that most students are not able to perform their grammatical competence, sociolinguistics competence, discourse competence and strategic competence while delivering their presentation, there still a few research that focus on the correlation between them. This excitement leads the researchers to study more about how far competition in classroom activities can be utilized to trigger students to enrich their knowledge and to improve their communicative competence. It's broadly understood that creating competitive atmosphere in classroom can bring both negative and positive impacts to students, nonetheless this study will focus on how to implement healthy competition in enhancing students' communicative competence.

This class action research is conducted to find the appropriate competition and students' collaboration to help students to improve their communicative competence. Competition applied in this study is healthy competition proposed by Shindler (2010) and focuses on four areas of communicative competence proposed by Canale and Swain (1980). This strategy is hopefully applicable to almost all subjects in English language learning classroom. By challenging students to compete with their classmates in a good way, the researcher hopes that they will become highly-motivated students. The competitive atmosphere hopefully will lead students to improve their knowledge and skills.

Research Methodology

This is a Class Action Research (CAR) study as it is explained by Burn (2010) that action research is related to "reflective practice" where the teacher plays a role as a researcher. This kind of research implements self-reflective, critical and systematic approach to explore in teaching context. This research design implement the principle of action research: plan, act, observe and reflect. As it is proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart in Burns (2010). Kusumarasdiyanti (2016) suggested that class action research plays a vital role in promoting better teaching and learning process in classroom activities. Some teachers may find class action research as a relevant research to create better teaching and learning environment. In gaining in-depth understanding to observe and overcome the problems, the result of the research is described qualitatively.

1. Research Location

This research will be conducted in English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Letters, Pamulang University. The address or the location details of English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Letters, Pamulang University is in the third building of Pamulang university at Jl. Puspitek, Buaran, Pamulang, in Banten Province.

2. Participants

The object of this research is communicative competence of the third semester students of English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Letters, Pamulang University in Academic Presentation class that consisted of 35 students. The data sources are students pre-test, students form of interview, and the result of post-test.

3. Data Collection Method

From the data sources above, the collection was conducted in three ways. The first was by giving them pre-test related to their communicative competence. The second was taken from the treatment through competition. They were given chance to participate in classroom competition by performing their presentation voluntarily during 6 weeks and take their right to collect their blue-ink signatures. In the end of the first cycle, the blue-ink signatures were collected. The third was conducted by doing work group. Students who collect more blue signature became the leaders of the group. They were given topic



to discuss and to be presented. Then, the presentation was done by giving opportunities for those who do not have blue signatures in their individual presentation. Then in the end of the activities, the students will be interviewed to know their responses towards this competition.

4. Data Analysis

The first data was taken from the pre-test that covers four areas of communicative competence. The second data was taken the individual-voluntarily presentation. The students capacity in areas of communicative competence including grammatical competence, sociolinguistics competence, discourse competence and strategic competence can be seen from their performance during the first six weeks. The third data was taken from the group presentation and the interview. Those data were analyzed and presented qualitatively. Flick (2013) stated that qualitative data analysis can be explained as classification and interpretation linguistics and non-linguistics to create both implicit and explicit statements and a structure of meaning arrangement that is represented by material or object. He emphasized that meaning this structure of meaning arrangement can be in social or subjective context. This qualitative data analysis can be applied to find and explain issues related to the object of this research. The analysis followed below steps:

5. Data Interpretation

After collecting and analyzing the data, the selected data will be presented as appendix of this research. Furthermore, the data will be interpreted through analysis and presented in descriptive form to explain the result of the analysis.

By completing all steps of analysis in this research, the researcher will answer the research questions. The analysis and discussion will be descriptively presented to give detail explanation. The data is presented qualitatively.

Result

Data 1 are collected from the pre-test. The pre-test activities include structure analysis, speaking, and writing a text to cover grammatical competence, sociolinguistics competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. These data are useful to know the level of students' competences. The levels of students' competences are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Students' Levels

No	Level	Level Specification
1	A	Advanced
2.	B	Intermediate
3.	C	Pre-Intermediate
4.	D	Beginner

The following table shows the result of students' pre-test. The data are taken from 35 students who are taking Academic Presentation class. This subject is chosen because most students do not feel encouraged to do presentation due to the lack of communicative competence.

Table 2. Pretest result

No.	Name	GC	SC	DC	SC
1	Student A	B	C	C	B
2	Student B	C	D	D	D
3	Student C	C	D	D	D
4	Student D	D	D	D	D

5	Student E	D	D	D	D
6	Student F	B	C	C	B
7	Student G	C	D	D	D
8	Student H	D	D	D	D
9	Student I	B	C	C	B
10	Student J	C	C	C	C
11	Student K	B	C	C	B
12	Student L	B	B	C	B
13	Student M	C	C	C	C
14	Student N	B	C	C	B
15	Student O	B	C	C	B
16	Student P	C	C	D	D
17	Student Q	B	C	C	B
18	Student R	C	C	C	D
19	Student S	D	D	D	D
20	Student T	C	D	D	D
21	Student U	D	D	D	D
22	Student V	B	C	C	C
23	Student W	C	D	D	C
24	Student X	B	C	C	B
25	Student Y	C	D	D	D
26	Student Z	C	D	D	C
27	Student AB	C	D	D	C
28	Student CD	C	D	D	D
29	Student EF	B	C	C	B
30	Student GH	D	D	D	D
31	Student IJ	B	B	C	B
32	Student KL	D	D	D	D
33	Student MN	C	C	D	D
34	Student OP	B	C	C	B
35	Student QR	C	C	C	C

GC indicates Grammatical Competence. The score is taken from structure and pronunciation test. SC indicates Sociolinguistics Competence. The score of Sociolinguistics Competence is taken from direct conversation with random topic. DC for Discourse Competence's score is taken by both conversation and writing the text for their presentation. Meanwhile, SC which is Strategic Competence's score is taken from both written text and oral presentation. The pre-test was initiated by doing structure and pronunciation test. This activity is done to check their grammatical competence. Then it was continued by doing an interview or conversation with random topic to find out their sociolinguistics competence. Then it was continued by writing the text for their individual presentation. The text is used to find out their discourse competence, whereas the presentation is used to find out their strategic competence.

From the table above it can be understood that no one in the class who are at advance level for all areas of knowledge and skill. The highest level is upper-intermediate which is achieved by some students that mostly in grammatical competence. Meanwhile almost all students are still at beginner level in their sociolinguistics and discourse competences. It indicates that their verbal communication is highly needed to be elevated.

Data 2

Individual Presentation

In this activity, students were given chance to do individual presentations and those who voluntarily took the chance were given credited with the blue ink. This activity is done in 6 meetings. Each meeting accommodated 6 presenters. The students were also allowed to take more than one chance. The following table shows the chances of doing presentation taken by the students:

Table 3. Students presentation frequency

No	Name	Times
1	Student IJ	4
2	Student L	4
3	Student I	3
4	Student K	3
5	Student X	2
6	Student QP	2
7	Student O	1
8	Student EF	1
9	Student N	1
10	Student Q	1
11	Student K	1
12	Student A	1
13	Student F	1
14	Student V	1
15	Student X	1
16	Student J	1
17	Student M	1
18	Student QR	1
19	Student R	1
20	Student MN	1
21	Student CD	1
22	Student B	1
23	Student C	1
24	Student D	1

The above table indicates that some students are highly motivated to be challenged to perform. Meanwhile, there are 12 students who do not have courage to perform in front of the class. The students who have collected the blue ink more than 1 were then appointed to be the leaders of the groups to prepare the text, slides and group presentation. This group presentation is focused to encourage those who do not have the blue ink during individual presentation activity.

Group Presentation

Data 3

The treatment was then continued by conducting group presentation. There are 6 groups which are led by Student IJ, Student L, Student I, Student K, Student X, and Student QP. In this activity, all students took their chance to speak in front of class. Although some of the students, especially those who did not collect the blue ink in the previous activity, still delivered their part of presentation by reading the text, their confidence in doing it with group seemed to be increased. Some of them who already

collect the blue ink but were not appointed as the leaders tried their best to do better performance. Meanwhile, the leaders assisted their members at their best.

Table 3. Students group presentation and interview result

No	Name	GC	SC	DC	SC	Interview
1	Student A	B	B	C	B	5
2	Student B	C	C	D	C	4
3	Student C	C	C	D	C	5
4	Student D	C	C	C	C	5
5	Student E	C	D	D	C	4
6	Student F	B	C	C	B	4
7	Student G	C	C	D	C	5
8	Student H	C	C	C	C	5
9	Student I	B	C	C	B	5
10	Student J	B	B	C	B	5
11	Student K	B	B	C	B	5
12	Student L	B	B	B	B	5
13	Student M	B	B	C	C	5
14	Student N	B	C	C	B	5
15	Student O	B	C	C	B	5
16	Student P	C	C	C	C	4
17	Student Q	B	C	C	B	4
18	Student R	C	C	C	D	4
19	Student S	D	D	C	C	4
20	Student T	C	C	D	D	4
21	Student U	D	D	D	C	4
22	Student V	b	C	C	C	4
23	Student W	C	D	D	C	4
24	Student X	B	C	C	B	5
25	Student Y	C	C	D	D	4
26	Student Z	C	D	D	C	4
27	Student AB	C	C	D	C	4
28	Student CD	C	D	D	C	4
29	Student EF	B	B	B	B	5
30	Student GH	D	D	D	D	4
31	Student IJ	B	B	C	B	5
32	Student KL	C	C	C	C	4
33	Student MN	B	C	D	B	5
34	Student OP	B	C	C	B	4
35	Student QR	B	C	C	B	4

The Interview column in the above table shows their opinion about the competition done in this class. They are asked to rate the competition from 1 to 5 which indicates from less satisfying to very satisfying. The result of the post-test presented in other columns show that most students' competences are improved after the treatment. Therefore, it can be concluded that competition can enhance students' communicative competences.

Discussion

It can be understood from the above findings that after the students participating individual competition, their communicative competence was increased. It was also proved in the interview result that they were satisfied with the activities. The competition used as a treatment for student to elevate their communicative competence was successfully conducted. This competition can be categorized as a healthy competition because of the following facts:

1. The goal is primarily fun;
The goal of the competition is to collect the blue ink, so that the students who collect the blue ink can be the leader of the group. It was fun because the more blue ink they collected the more responsibility they get.
2. The competitive goal is not real or valuable, short-term, for solely symbolic reward.,
The competition is only conducted in the first half of the term. The blue ink is the symbol of the reward.
3. The learning or growth goal is conspicuously characterized as valuable;
The competition gives the students chance to encourage themselves and to give them more experiences in performing their competence.
4. The competition has short duration and is characterized by high energy;
The competition was only conducted in 6 meetings, and in each meeting all students have the same chance and the same period of time to do preparation.
5. There is no long-term effect from the episode;
The effect of this competition is gaining more confidence, and this effect is positive enough for students.
6. All individuals or groups see a reasonable chance of winning;
By giving the same chance and the same time allowance to prepare, the students have the same opportunity to win.
7. All students understand how competition works in their classroom.
The instruction and the rule of the activities were clearly explained before this treatment was given.

The healthy competition which does not give negative or long-term effect the students and do not affect on their life is good enough to be applied in English Language Teaching classroom so that the students will be encourage to perform and to improve their competence. Therefore, a healthy competition in the classroom can be applied to elevate students communicative competence. Meanwhile, in elevating students' competition that should cover areas of competency proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) namely Grammatical Competence, Sociolinguistics Competence, Discourse Competence, and Strategic Competence the competition activities include the following activities:

1. Building self confidence, finding speech topics and gathering materials
In the first meeting before pre-test, the students were asked to find topics that can be the easiest or the most familiar thing to discuss or is the most interesting topic to find out or study more. This activity took place before they were asked to present their topic. So this first individual presentation in cycle 1 is used to find out the grammatical competence that can be seen from their grammar during their speech, sociolinguistics competence that can be seen during their performance, and discourse competence that can be seen from the coherence of their speech. The students who took their turn voluntarily in this activity were given chance to sign in their attendance list with blue ink.
2. Making a speech outline and script

Activities in this second meeting focused on students' writing skill to see deeper on their grammatical competence. Their grammatical competence can be seen through both script and presentation. The students had been exposed to a good speech outline before they were given chance to make their own speech outline. Those who have finished making their own outline were given chance to perform their presentation and took their right to sign with blue ink.

3. Choosing and preparing visual aids

After the exposure to a speech outline, the students were led how to make good visual aids. Then, for those who agreed to present their previous speech outline that was supported with visual aids voluntarily could take their turn and right to sign with blue ink. This activity can elevate students' discourse competence and strategic competence because visual aids help the presenter to visualize their idea so that the message they need to convey can be delivered well. Visual aids can also be a help to the presenter to memorize difficult things. This is a great strategy to overcome their stage fright.

Making a powerful power point by using graph, tables and chart

The students were exposed to a good academic power point so that they will never put the whole text into their slide and then during the presentation all they did was reading the slide that seems to be useless because the audience can read themselves. This activity was again to help students elevating their discourse and strategic competence.

4. Managing stage fright

When the students hold sufficient experience and exposure to perform their communicative competence, they will be able to manage their stage fright. In this activity, students were encouraged to make sure that their script outline and their visual aids are correctly and properly designed and prepared. In this activities more students were encouraged to collect their blue ink.

5. Practice more

The last meeting before mid-term examination was used to give more time for students to practice and more students were encourage to do that.

Thus, healthy competition that does not apply any punishment or long-term psychological impact can be implemented in classroom activities to elevate students communicative competence. The activities should concern more on students' grammatical competence which is the students' ability to use correct grammar or linguistics form and structures, sociolinguistics competence which is the students' capacity to adapt language in different context, discourse competence that deals with students' capacity of organizing discourse with coherence and cohesion, and strategic competence is the capacity of getting on even though they do not know how to say something. It can be seen from the explanation that the earliest activities focused more on grammatical and sociolinguistics competencies because they are competencies that can be the bridge to other competencies. By developing students grammatical and sociolinguistics competencies, it will be easier to develop their discourse and strategic competencies. Because knowing how to use grammar, or language form correctly and choose language properly, the capacity to organize language with coherence and cohesion will not be difficult. It also happens when students find the moment to overcome situation that they do not know how to say something but they have to get on.



Conclusion

A healthy competition which focuses to encourage students to perform in a fun can be an effective way to elevate their communicative competence. In this research which involved the third semester students of English Literature major who have studied two semesters, it is found that some students are still in beginner level for their grammatical competence, sociolinguistics competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Through competition activities which were used as a treatment to trigger their willingness and courage to gain their confidence while performing their communicative competence, students competed in a positive way to elevate their competence and to be the leaders of the group. It was then supported by an activity which involves group work. By doing so, the students who have participated actively in competition felt honored and appreciated, whereas those who missed the chance in the competition will be encouraged in the group work.

In sum, this study was conducted to know how healthy competition activities can be effectively and appropriately implemented in classroom which consists of level of motivation and proficiency of the students to enhance their communicative competence. By revealing how good competition activities play a role in improving students' communicative competence, students will find competition as a chance to develop themselves rather than a show case to show their inability to perform their knowledge and skills, teachers will use this type of activity to help their students performing their communicative skills. Furthermore, university will support classroom activities which enable students to experience competition in education effectively.

After conducting this research, the researcher proposes some suggestions as follows:

1. For English teacher, more healthy competition activities can be applied in classroom to trigger their confidence to perform their competence;
2. For English students, classroom is the best place and studying is the best time to make mistakes, do not miss any single chance to perform your competence;
3. For the readers, this research has a lot of shortcomings, the researcher is open to your suggestions.

To sum, Elevating students' communicative competence can be done by implementing a healthy learning environment that makes it possible for students to explore more about the field they are studying, to sharpen their thinking, to be more creative and to be more encouraged in performing their competences, (Allado, n.d). This healthy learning competitive environment should be guided, supervised, and supported by teachers who should monitor students' psychological and academic growth. Teachers should also make sure that this competition is fairly accepted by all students. The competition should also cover all four areas of knowledge and skill which are grammatical competence, sociolinguistics competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

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