

ACQUIRING ENGLISH SKILLS ABILITY THROUGH VIRTUAL SPEECH COMMUNITY

Ambar Pujiyatno
The University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto
barjiyat@yahoo.co.id

Abstract

The aim in making Virtual speech community is to create a natural and enjoyable learning. It is a native speaker-like speech community that makes the learners live as if in the native speaking country. Some requirements are needed; they are members of the community, commitment, and rules. The members can be teachers, tutors, and learners. They must have commitment. Rules must cover everything that makes all activities run well. Members' job descriptions are as follows: teachers teach the learners, tutors help the teachers teach the learner. Learners are the subject of learning who can acquire learning materials. The process of learning happens at every communication activities. The scopes of learning can be speaking, listening, writing, reading, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The learners can also learn how to communicate well and respect others. The result shows that they can improve their English and they have natural and enjoyable learning.

Keywords: *skills, speech community, and rules*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays English becomes more and more important in all aspects of lives in the world. People use English as their way of communication, whether it is as the native, second, or foreign language. In Indonesia, as a developing country, English also has very important roles, although it is only as the foreign language.

The role of English in Indonesia is more important as the gate for Indonesian people to know sciences that mostly in English. Besides, global communication is also conducted by using English. It means that written and oral English skills are very needed by Indonesian people. No wonder, if English has been taught in Indonesia for a long time, whether it is conducted formally at schools; Elementary schools, Junior High Schools, Senior High Schools, universities, and also Kindergartens or non-formally ones at English courses. There are also a lot of references used in teaching and learning English. Those are available at schools, bookstores, and also internet as books and eBooks that can be downloaded with free of charge or pay. Beside that, there are also webs for English learning and teaching consisting all English learning and teaching materials that make learners study English easily. Various learning and teaching approaches, such as structural and

communicative approaches; method such as grammar translation method, direct method, bilingual method, reading method, and situation method; and techniques have been applied. The curriculum used at schools also causes the teaching and learning English does not develop very well. It limits the improvisations of learning materials and teachers' teaching techniques. Although the curriculums change from time to time, the result of teaching learning is still unsatisfactory. It needs additional learning and teaching English outside the classroom that can be conducted informally.

Teaching and learning English way that is usually used and often heard is communicative approach. It emphasizes communication as the basis to learn. Inspired by the paper in COTEFL 7th entitled "Improving Speaking Ability through Speech Community-based Learning" (Pujiyatno, 2015) this paper discusses on "Comprehensive English Learning through Speech Community-Based Learning Method" is written. It explains a different method of learning and teaching English that is virtual speech community-based learning method (VSC-BLM). It has different sense and wider scope than communicative one.

Speech community is a term in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology for a group of people who use the same variety of a language and who share specific

rules for speaking and for interpreting speech. While Corder (1973:53) states that a speech community is made up of individuals who regard themselves as speaking the same language; it need have no other defining attributes." It means that Speech community is a group of people who share the same language to communicate each other in limited area. The group of people is the learners who want to learn a language. The same language means the learners will use one language that is English in every communication situation.

Virtual means "very close to being something without actually being it" <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/virtual>. Therefore, virtual speech community is a speech community that is like the real speech community. In this case, the virtual speech community is made like the native English speech community. The virtual speech community has some conditions.

The essence of this method is that language lives in a society and the society cannot live without language. Both society and language cannot be separated each other. Speech community, in this case, is only a miniature of real speech community. It belongs to a small speech community; therefore the learning and teaching process can be conducted comprehensively. "Comprehensive" means that it includes everything or nearly everything (Hornsby, 1995). It means broadly or completely covering; including a large proportion of something. In this paper, the comprehensiveness includes all aspects in language learning, such as: four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, diction, and the way in communication.

There are some stages in implementing virtual speech community; they are preparation, implementation, supervision, assessment, and reflection.

Preparation covers making some regulations, determining the members, and forming the speech community. Implementation is the learning and teaching activities using virtual speech community. Supervision or controlling is an activity to control the process of learning and teaching process that is conducted by the teachers and mentors. Supervision is done during the implementation of the method. While learning the learners also are supervised by the teachers or mentors. Assess-

ment is the tests conducted to measure the learners' learning achievement. Reflection is an activity to evaluate that all aspects of learning and teaching using virtual speech community run well. If there are some weaknesses and mistakes from the method, it can be discussed and revised.

There are some requirements to implement the virtual speech community; they are aims, regulations, members of speech community, commitment, and speech community.

Aims may depend on the need that the learners want. It can be a single aspect of English or many aspects of English learning. It can consist of only one material or topic or many materials or topics. It means that the learning material can be single or integrated.

Regulations are very important to govern that the activities in this speech community run very well. They consist of two kinds, namely; the authority regulation, such as from headmaster at school, dean at faculty or others depending on the condition; the technical rules to operate the method. The decree from the headmaster or the dean gives very influential impact for the sustainability of the program. The regulations also consist of some rewards and sanctions. The rewards will be given to the learners who make a very good achievement and the sanctions will be for the ones who do not commit to do the program. The forms of rewards and sanctions depend on the members' agreement.

Members of speech community are the persons who will learn the language. They can be students at school or faculty, the students who stay in a boarding house, the members of a family, etc.

Commitment is an intention of every member to join learning and teaching using virtual speech community. It can be as the soul in implementing the method. Without a commitment it will be very impossible that the method can run very well.

Speech community is the place to conduct the method. It can cover small areas or wide ones like class, school, faculty, boarding house, house, and so on. It depends on the members' agreement. It actually the same as the real community, but here it is made as if the members of the speech community or the learners live in a real native English speech community. So it has been conditioned.

In virtual speech community, the learners can learn all aspects of language, such

as four Basic English skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. They also learn how to communicate well and to respect other people.

METHOD

Method is a particular procedure for accomplishing or approaching something, especially a systematic or established one. In this case VSC-BLM is used as a method to overcome the problem, so it is a method which applies virtual speech community as a place for learning process. There are three steps to implement this method; 1) Preparation, 2) Implementation, 3) Supervision (Pujiyatno, 2015).

FINDING AND INTERPRETATION

The preparation covers the making of some policies, aims, regulations, commitment, members of speech community, and speech community. The important policy is the decision letter of the authority, such as dean or head master. It is used as a legal standing of the program. It also used to force the members of speech community to do the program. The aims in this study focus on speaking and listening skills. The regulations are rules that will manage all the activities during learning process. It includes the rewards and punishment. Commitment is the most important thing, if there is no members' commitment the program cannot run well. Members of speech community are a must in this program. They become the subject and object of learning. The speech community constitutes a place (limited area or wide area) used to learn English.

The implementation covers the learning process. It is the focus of learning. The fo-

cus is all the learning materials or it can depend on only some skills. The learners are not only learning the language skills but also they are learning the way in conducting the conversation process or communication. The materials that they learn cover everything that they need. It is from a very simple materials or topics until the ones that are more difficult and complicated; such as greeting, personal introduction, daily routines, telling stories, discussion, presentation, and speech. It will develop step by step depending on what they need. The teachers' and tutors' roles are very important in this stage. They must be able to trigger learners to get what they need. They must always invite the learners to be more active in leaning and teach them whenever the other learners have difficulties, for example when the learner does not know the vocabulary, diction, grammar, pronunciation, and so on. Beside that, the teachers and the tutors also teach the learners when they make mistakes in conducting the communication with other people, especially from different age, such as how to speak with older and command others. The process of learning not only merely conversation, but also there are other way such as discussion and speech. Both usually are conducted for higher level.

Basically, in doing this program, the cooperation among the members of speech community is a must. Pujiyatno (2016) said they must work each other. They must commit to join the learning process until the program successful. The learners are eager to learn English, the mentors and the teachers help the learners' difficulties. They are like a chain. Principally, they cooperate during the process of learning. It can be seen in the following diagram:

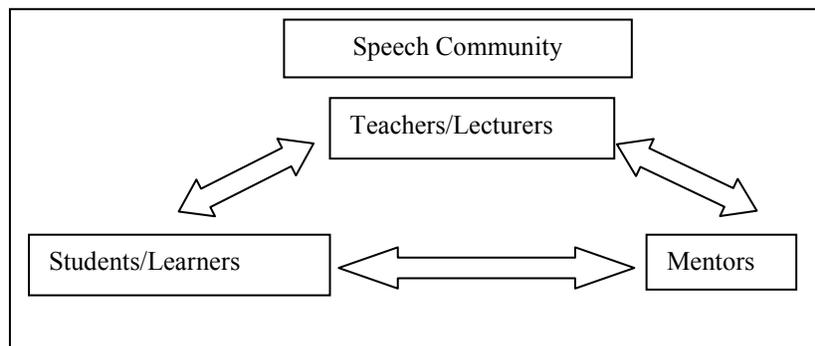


Diagram 1

To ensure that the implementation stage runs well, the supervision is needed. This supervision stage is done by the teachers and tutors. They make sure that the rules are applied well. They also supervise the mistakes the learners make during the learning process. This stage should be conducted naturally.

This virtual speech community was conducted at Faculty of Letters, University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto. The number of members of virtual speech community is 60 students. Based on the supervision, it can be seen that most students are active in learning process and they have enjoyable learning. Related to the second, it is supported by the questionnaire. It shows that 8% of learners (5 students) said that it was less enjoyable, 56% of learners (34 students) said enjoyable, and 36% of learners (21 students) said that it was very enjoyable. They also improve their English ability. It is indicated by the result of the test which shows that 20 % of learners (12 students) got enough category, 64% of learners (38 students) got good category, and 16% of learners (10 students) got very good category. It means that 80% of learners can acquire English well.

It can be concluded that the result shows that most students are active in learning (supervision), they have enjoyable learning (supervision and questionnaire), and they are able to improve their English ability (test).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the virtual speech community is a method that can be used to acquire English ability. It can be applied especially for informal and natural learning situation. It is one of alternative methods in learning English aimed at improving the learners' English ability and performance. Some preparations should be arranged well before the implementation to make the program run well. It is actually an integrated method that conducted mostly for outdoor activities. The activities can be like individual learning, conversation, small discussion, and presentation. It is very helpful to help the English learners improve their English ability and performance. All aspects can be learnt by using virtual speech community. That is why virtual speech community is recommended very much to apply to acquire English ability. It is also good as the additional activity for English clubs in schools.

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