

EFL TEACHERS' AND LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF NEGOTIATED SYLLABUS: AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF IMPROVING SPEAKING ABILITY

Amrang

Universitas Sulawesi Barat
amrang@unsulbar.ac.id

Muh. Jabal An Nur

Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar
jabal@uin-alauddin.ac.id

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24252/elties.v3i1.18244>

ABSTRACT

The appropriateness of learning material for learners' interests and professions is highly important. The more relevant learning materials and learners' interests, the easier it is for them to participate in a conversation. This research aimed to investigate the EFL teachers' and learners' perception of the negotiated syllabus and the improvement of learners' English speaking ability. This research employed a descriptive qualitative research method in which data collected through documents and in-depth interviews. The subject of this research consisted of five EFL teachers and ten EFL learners. The qualitative results showed both teachers and learners giving positive responses in learning speaking English through the negotiated syllabus. In addition to learners' responses, the negotiated syllabus has facilitated the learners in improving their English speaking ability to be taught based on their needs and wants. On the other hand, vocabulary and comprehension, the speaking skills elements, were improved more than other speaking skill elements.

Keywords: perception, negotiated syllabus, speaking skills

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English whether in formal or in non-formal institution is highly expected giving a good progress to the learners. In the middle of 2014, the official document one of institutions in Makassar showed the result of EFL learners' English speaking ability based on initial data diagnose from 214 learners only 19% of them classified as fair and fairly good and the rest were classified as poor and very poor. This report indicated that their English proficiency is low particularly in English speaking ability.

Those EFL learners came from different professions, such as a student from elementary till university student, an employee whose part of his/her job demands him/her has a good communication in English, a journalist, a contractor who cooperates with international company, an army, a doctor who wants to take his/her specialist and even a civil servant who wants to continue his/her study, etc. Based on the interview conducted by the researcher to

some EFL learners at first meeting, they said that their aim to study English is to improve their English skills particularly speaking skills.

Apart from the fact that most of them have ever studied English at school, their skills in speaking were still unsatisfied. It could be seen at first meeting of learning where they spoke with a very limited vocabulary. The EFL learners could give only a short response to the questions addressed to them. Therefore, they tried to study English again in order that they would have a good improvement in their ability to speak English well.

Concerning improving learners' achievement in English speaking ability, the EFL teachers at White House Makassar employ negotiated syllabus. It is a way of giving high priority to recognizing learner needs within a course and the need to continually adjust courses while they are running to suit changing needs and circumstances (Nation and Macalister, 2010:149). Besides, involving the learner in shaping the syllabus has a strong effect on motivation, satisfaction, and commitment to the course. In this case, it changes from being the teacher's course to the learners' course. Furthermore, the negotiated syllabus may develop learners' awareness of language learning activities' goals and how the goals can be achieved.

At the end of 2014, the institution's official documents showed that learners' achievement based on the test given increased significantly. There were 78% of EFL learners classified as good and fairly good. The improvement of EFL learners' achievement during studying could not be separated from their involvement in designing the course content for instruction. It aims to adjust between teaching materials and learners' needs.

Regarding the explanation, the involvement of learners in designing a course's content will facilitate the learning process. However, most of the course content taught by teachers informal institutions such as junior and senior high school are designed by the government. Ironically, the materials are generalized to the student's needs and want so that the students or the learners are somewhat difficult to adapt the materials. This problem happens since the materials for students are generalized while the students do not have background knowledge dealing with the materials.

In that case, it implies that negotiated syllabus has an important role in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, it is important to know the EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions of the negotiated syllabus and learners' achievement in speaking to convince that its implementation is truly effective to improve EFL learners' speaking ability.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is descriptive qualitative research with interviews and documents as the research instruments. The data from EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions were collected through the interview. To get a clear understanding of teachers' and learners' responses, the researcher interviewed them in Bahasa Indonesia.

The subjects of this research were the EFL teachers and learners of White House Makassar. There were 5 EFL teachers and 10 EFL learners. Those EFL teachers are from English education department and other educational disciplines such as chemistry, fishery, etc. However, those teachers have an excellent English qualification in teaching since they had passed the test before they were accepted to be a teacher. Meanwhile, the learners who participated in this research were the ones who study at school or at university and the ones who already work, whether in a private company or the government office.

In the first phase, the researcher interviewed EFL teachers by using a structured interviews with open-ended questions. Patton (2002:354) states that open-ended question permits those being interviewed to take whatever direction and use whatever words they want to express what they have to say. Moreover, to be genuinely open-ended, a question cannot be phrased as a dichotomy.

They were interviewed by one-on-one interview. It is a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions to and records answers from only one participant in the study (Creswell, 2012:218). Therefore, they were interviewed individually to explore and probe their responses to gather more in-depth data about their negotiated syllabus perceptions. Besides, the process of the interview was recorded, and it probably ranged in a few minutes or a few hours. The interview, however, consisted of a one-time session.

In the second phase, the researcher interviewed the selected sample from the EFL learners based on the characteristics or the reasons for selecting the sample. The same as EFL teachers, it was a one-on-one interview where EFL learners were interviewed using structured interviews with open-ended questions to obtain their in-depth perceptions of the negotiated syllabus.

After the interview sessions of teachers and learners, the researcher analyzed the EFL learners' achievement in speaking English through documents. The researcher classified the learners' progress from the other learners that were out of the sample selected. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique used to analyze the data was based iterative model of Miles and Huberman's (2014) data analysis.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions of the negotiated syllabus

The interview conducted between the researcher and the EFL teachers shows that EFL teachers have their perception of negotiated syllabus. Generally, the implementation of negotiated syllabus at White House based on teachers' perception is appropriate. The transcription of an interview about the implementation of negotiated syllabus can be seen in the following interview quotes:

"... kalau menurut saya untuk metode negotiated syllabus itu sendiri di White House sangat tepat yah, soalnya kita punya client dengan fokusnya mereka masing-masing dengan kemampuan mereka masing-masing. Contoh saja ada client yang ingin fokus ke bisnis English, namun ketika kita diagnose ternyata mereka masih butuh sedikit general English juga jadi syllabus yang dibuatkan untuk mereka atau metode belajar yang dibuatkan untuk mereka tergantung pada client itu masing-masing."

[... in my point of view related to negotiated syllabus at White House is highly appropriate because we have client with their own focus and ability. For example, there are client/students who want to focus on English business. However, when we diagnose, it shows that they still need general English so that the syllabus or the learning method that is made for them depends on the students themselves] (The Interview of T1).

This statement is supported by the other teacher who said *"...negotiated syllabus itu bagus diterapkan pada pengajaran bahasa."* [negotiated syllabus is good to be implemented in language teaching.] (The interview of T3).

Another perception of negotiated syllabus comes from Teacher 5 who stated her opinion as the following quotes:

"... generally whenever individualize approach applied the result in teaching better and faster, so I think by using negotiated syllabus, by the way teaching is done here, it is more effective." (The Interview of T5).

Furthermore, T5 explained of what the word of "effective" means through the use of negotiated syllabus: *"It is more effective because... if focuses more with what actually students need and want so by stratifying students need we reach a better result."* (The Interview of T5).

The use of negotiated syllabus as a means of improving students' ability in speaking based on the EFL learners' perceptions in generally shows positive response. The transcription of interview about the implementation of negotiated syllabus can be seen in the following interview quote:

"Saya rasa itu sangat efektif karena inikan sesuai dengan kebutuhan si klient jadi dengan adanya negosiasi ini si tentor pun lebih tau sebenarnya apasih kebutuhannya klient ..."

[I think it is more effective because this is suitable for the client's needs. So, by negotiating, the teacher may know more what the client needs are...] (The Interview of C1).

It shows that the negotiated syllabus helps the students because what they want and what they need to know are given to them to be learned. In this case, the students feel that they do not have to spend much time to learn all the materials that out of their needs and wants. The statement of the students based on the interview can be seen as the following quote:

“Menurut saya metode ini bagus untuk menunjang kebutuhan klient jadi hanya hal-hal tertentu saja yang diinginkan yang didapatkan... bisa diminta kepada tutornya untuk ajarkan jadi tidak harus semua ...”

[In my point of view, this method is good to help covering the client needs. So, only particular things wanted are taught... it can be requested to teacher to teach... so, not need to learn all ...] (The Interview of C2).

Another perception comes from other students saying that the implementation of a negotiated syllabus makes the teaching and learning process more focused. The transcription of the interview as the following quote:

“... kita ingin mempelajari satu, fokus ke satu. Jadi lebih mendalam, lebih detail, lebih fokus. Kaya gitu ...”

[... we want to learn one thing, we focus on that one. So, it is more deeply, more detail, and more focus. Like that ...] (The Interview of C3).

The findings of the research can be illustrated as the following:

Table 1. EFL Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions of Negotiated Syllabus

No.	The Implementation of Negotiated Syllabus	
1.	The EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions of negotiated syllabus	- Good - Effective - Appropriate
2.	The advantages of negotiated syllabus	- It focuses on clients' needs - Learning materials are more specific - The result in teaching are better and faster
3.	The disadvantages of negotiated syllabus	- It demands teachers' creativity to stimulate a passive client - There were no fix materials designed to be taught to the EFL learners

The EFL learners' achievement in speaking

The achievement of learners in speaking can be seen from the official document which was taken from the office. There were three kinds of documents taken from the office; students' initial data diagnoses, students' progress, students' session history.

The aspect of students' achievement in speaking ability that is significantly improved can be determined by looking at the average of students' initial data diagnosis and students' progress. The chart below presents the improvement of students in speaking.

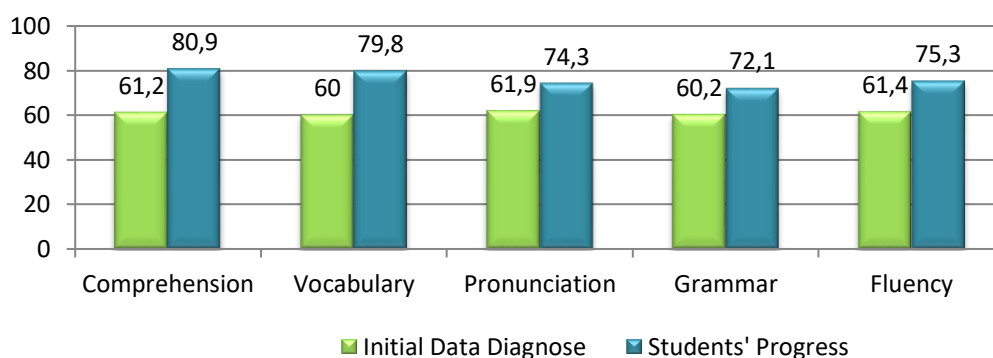


Figure 1 The Comparison of Students' Score

Referring to the chart displayed, vocabulary has the highest score of improvement from 60 to 79.8. It means that students' progress in vocabulary can be classified “good,” and it is increased by 19.8 points. The second is the students' comprehension that shows improvement from 61.2 to 80.9. It means that the students' comprehension in speaking English can be classified as “very good,” and it is increased by 19.7 points. The next one is the students' fluency that has improvement 13.9. It is 75.3 and classified as “good.”

Meanwhile, pronunciation is only increasing by 12.4 points that means the students are still difficult to pronounce the word appropriately. However, the students' pronunciation of 74.3 is classified as “good.” The last one which has the lowest score of improvement is grammar. The average students' score only increases by 11.9. It means that the most difficult to be improved related to the student's ability in speaking is grammar.

The third document used to know the students' progress in their speaking is students' session history. There are several teachers' remarks that show students' progress in learning. The following quote shows the students' progress in her speaking ability where this student has a good comprehension or understanding of what was taught by the teacher.

“She has a good understanding and a lot of ideas. Yet, she is still difficult to express them fluently.” (Student's Session History)

Some of the teachers' remarks related to students' assessment show that the student sometimes has enough vocabulary, but he/she is difficult to construct a sentence grammatically. It can be seen from the teacher's remark like the following quote.

“She has some vocabularies but she doesn't know how to arrange them well” (Student's Session History)

Another case is the student has good progress on expressing her ideas. Yet, she was lack of pronunciation. It can be seen in the following quote:

“So far, she is good at expressing her ideas. However, she needs to improve her pronunciation”. (Student's Session History)

Referring to the students' session history, mostly of students in their progress already can speak English. However, the main problem is their grammar.

Discussion

The EFL teachers and learners have a positive response to negotiated syllabus. They stated that a negotiated syllabus is good and highly appropriate to be used to design learning materials. The students focus on and learn what they want and what they need so that they can achieve their goals faster. Regarding to EFL teacher' and learners' perception, it is supported by Abbasian and Hendi (2011: 26) who found in their research that negotiated syllabus is more promising and effective in both cognitive and affective dimensions.

According to EFL teachers in the previous findings, negotiated syllabus is appropriate in teaching language because the learners have different focus on their learning. Therefore, by the use of negotiated syllabus the result in teaching and learning is much better and faster. It is also supported by the report of the students' progress where the average of students' score is classified as good.

It is very important to communicate what the students want to learn since every student has different interest. Therefore, using a negotiated syllabus based on the teacher's statement that the negotiated syllabus is more effective focuses on what students need and want. Further, by stratifying students' need, booth teachers and students may reach a better result in learning process. This is supported by Boomer (1992:13) concluded that teachers set out to teach according to the students' interest otherwise the quality of learning will suffer.

Learning materials based on learners' needs and wants could make the learners to communicate much better. It deals with the EFL teachers' argument that knowing learners' needs' and wants is important in order to know what should be taught to the learners. Therefore, the teacher's remarks on the student's session history showed the students' progress and the weakness of learner that should be improved by the teacher.

There are not a few students who like negotiated syllabus because they don't have to spend a lot of time learning the materials that are out of their needs and wants. In another word, they do not have to repeat the lesson or the materials that they have known already. Moreover, it was stated by the learners that their involvement in designing learning materials helps them understanding the learning materials that were taught.

The achievement of EFL learners's speaking skills shows good progress. The score of students' progress on vocabulary has a greater improvement than other speaking elements. It is supported by the student session history where the teachers' remarks mostly state that the learners already can speak. It means that the learners have good improvement in their vocabulary because they can express their ideas if they have enough vocabulary.

CONCLUSION

Both the EFL teachers and learners' perception to the negotiated syllabus as an approach in teaching and learning English have positive effect of facilitating the EFL learners in learning. The negotiated syllabus is highly appropriate to students who want to learn and focus on a specific purpose. It is reasonable since students learn based on their needs and want so that the results in teaching and learning is better and effective.

The achievement of EFL learners' in English speaking ability is in their vocabulary since the learners were given materials based on their background and their interest so that the learners were motivated to know the words that they have not known yet. Besides, the EFL learners' comprehension in speaking English also has a good improvement since they practice their English with their teacher intensively. However, it does not mean that the other aspects of speaking ability were not improved. On the contrary, all aspects of learners' achievement in their speaking ability have improved since the teachers always evaluate their students' progress by giving remarks on the students' session history.

REFERENCES

- Abbasian, G. R. & Hendi, N. S. (2011). The Effect of Explicit Negotiated Syllabus on Developing Speaking Ability and Affective Variables. *Journal of Language and Translation*, 7(1), 19-27.
- Allen & Unwin, 1993. *Curriculum Development and Design*. (2nd ed). Australia: Murray Print.
- Boomer, G. (1992). *Negotiating the Curriculum: Educating for the 21st Century*. London: Falmer.
- Breen, M. P. and Littlejohn, A. (2000). *Classroom Decision-Making*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Nation, I.S.P. and Macalister, J. (2010). *Language Curriculum Design*. New York: Routledge.
- Nunan, D. (1988). *Syllabus Design*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Haris. D. P. (1974). *Testing English as a Second Language*. New York: McGraw Book Company.
- Hornby. (1995). *Definition of Speaking Skill*. New York: publisher.
- Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Hughes, A. (2003). *Testing for Language Teachers*. (2nd ed). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (3rd ed). London: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Richard, J. C. (2001). *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richard, J. C. & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman Dcitionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics*. (3rd ed.). London: Person Education Limited.
- Ur, P. (1991). *A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.