

Improving english speaking skills for the first year students at thai nguyen university of agriculture and forestry through out- of-class activities

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Received:16/9/2024; Accepted:4/10/2024; Published: 15/10/2024

Abstract: *The study was conducted at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry during the first semester of the school year 2024-2025. The main purpose is to improve speaking skills for the first-year students through out-of-class activities. The survey questionnaires, pretest, and posttest were used as the major instruments to collect data. The subjects involved in the study were 29 students in class K55 Animal Husbandry. They participated in the survey questionnaire, pretest, and posttest to help the researcher do better in this research. The results of the study showed that the out-of-class activities have a positive influence on the development of students' speaking skills and the potential to help students deal with some challenges that they may encounter in speaking lessons. Based on the findings, some suggestions were given to both students and teachers to cooperate to improve students' speaking skills.*

Keywords: *Speaking skills, improve, students, out-of-class activities, Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry*

1. Introduction

Speaking is a language skill that has to be mastered by students in learning a language because the objective of learning a language is communication. In speaking we tend to be getting something done, exploring ideas, working out some aspects of the world, or simply being together. Speaking English well also helps students access up to date information in fields including science, technology, and health. The students have to master all components of speaking skills [1].

Out-of-class project work addresses multiple needs and interests of students and creates a variety of authentic English language inputs [2]. Project Work presents various project activities on different scales. Some can be carried out within one class period; some require weeks. The adoption of project work “[encourages] students to move out of the classroom and into the world” and “helps to bridge the gap between language study and language use” [3]. Project-based learning allows teachers and students to move beyond the limitations of a traditional English curriculum. Engaging students in out-of-class projects offers the significant benefit of expanding the student learning environment. Realizing that their normal surroundings and activities offer meaningful opportunities to learn English is likely to spark interest and increase

motivation to learn. Out-of-class activities are also linked with real life applications; this connection is key to fostering more authentic language usage and autonomy [4].

During the teaching process, the researcher also found that out-of-class activities in English are considered one of the effective tools to create a positive English practice environment for students, increase interaction between lecturers and students, between students or encourage students to acquire language and cultural knowledge.

Therefore, based on the aforementioned reasons, the researcher determines to carry out the research on “Improving English speaking skills for the first- year students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry through English out-of-class activities”.

2. Subjects and research method

2.1. Subjects of study: The participants are 29 students in class K55 Animal Husbandry.

2.2. Research method: This study employed action research. Action research is a research method that aims to simultaneously investigate and solve an issue. In other words, as its name suggests, action research conducts research and takes action at the same time [5]. In order to achieve the research objective and answer research questions, both qualitative and quantitative research methodology is used. There are two research instruments: questionnaires and tests.

The data collected through the questionnaire and the two tests were analyzed using Microsoft Excel application. The results were analyzed with the support of figures, tables, and charts.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Analysis of the information collected from the survey questionnaires

Table 1: The number and percentage of the students' attitudes toward the in-class activities

| N | Items | Strongly disagree | | Disagree | | Neutral | | Agree | | Strongly agree | |
|---|---|-------------------|------|----------|------|---------|----|-------|----|----------------|----|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| 1 | I like learning through out-of-class activities. | 0 | 0.00 | 6 | 20 | 3 | 10 | 10 | 35 | 10 | 35 |
| 2 | The presentation format of the lessons and practice exercises with out-of-class activities are appropriate. | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 14 | 13 | 45 | 10 | 35 |
| 3 | When I take part in out-of-class activities, I feel better able to enhance my speaking. | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 5 | 17 | 16 | 55 | 8 | 28 |
| 4 | When I speak in an out-of-class activity, I can learn and recall more words. | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 10 | 6 | 20 | 9 | 31 | 11 | 38 |
| 5 | After learning through out-of-class activities, I am more interested in speaking English. | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 6 | 11 | 38 | 15 | 53 |

Table 1 shows the number and percentage of the students' attitudes towards the out-of-class activities. As we can see in the table, each shown in the table was applied by a different number of students.

Referring to item number 1 "I like learning through out-of-class activities.", 10 students (35%) strongly agreed, 10 students (35%) agreed, 3 students (10 %) didn't give their opinions, only 6 students (20%) disagreed and no student (0%) strongly disagreed. For item number 2 "The presentation format of the lessons and practice exercises with out-of-class activities are appropriate", 13 students

(45%) agreed and 10 students (35%) strongly agreed. Only 4 students chose to be neutral. For item number 3 "When I take part in out-of-class activities, I feel better able to enhance my speaking", we can see that most students felt that they felt better when taking part in out-of-class activities. We can all analyze the data in the agreed and strongly agreed columns which accounted for a lot of percentages (the total percentage of 2 columns is 83%). For the remaining percentage, students chose to be neutral; No student chose to disagree and strongly disagreed.

For item number 4 "When I speak in an out-of-class activity, I can learn and recall more words.", most of the students commented that when they spoke in out-of-class activities, they could learn and recall more words. However, 3 students disagreed with this item (10%). For item number 5 "After learning through out-of-class activities, I am more interested in speaking English", in this section, one student chose to strongly disagree; the students chose to be neutral at 6% (2 students). And the number of students who chose to agree was 11 students and 15 students chose to strongly agree (the total of students is 91%).

In general, the majority of students chose to agree or strongly agree for a high percentage. Through statistics, we can see that the application of the out-of-class activities in teaching English speaking, helped students receive knowledge and interact with each other with enthusiasm. Findings from the questionnaire highlight that the students illustrated the highest level of agreement and the results may be explained by the fact that learners are more interested in new teaching methods. Based on the result of the questionnaire, the writer concluded that the majority of the students viewed the out-of-class activities positively. The percentages of positive responses for each questionnaire statement were higher. In conclusion, the students generally valued the out-of-class activities as a helpful and fun learning method in English-speaking lessons.

3.2. Analysis of the information collected from Pre-test and Posttest

3.2.1. Distribution of Pretest Scores

Table 2: Distribution of Pretest Scores

| Score | Frequency | Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|
| 3 | 1 | 3.2 |
| 3.5 | 1 | 3.20 |
| 4 | 2 | 7.00 |
| 4.5 | 3 | 10.00 |

| | | |
|-----|-----------|---------------|
| 5 | 6 | 23.00 |
| 5.5 | 2 | 7.00 |
| 6 | 4 | 13.00 |
| 6.5 | 3 | 10 |
| 7 | 3 | 10.00 |
| 7.5 | 2 | 7.20 |
| 8 | 1 | 3.20 |
| 8.5 | 1 | 3.2 |
| | 29 | 100.00 |

In Table 2, we can see the students' Pretest scores. None of the students scored 9 or 10. There were one student (3.2%) who got 8.5 and one who got 8. The average scores (5, 5.5, 6, 6.5, 7, 7.5) were 20 (70%). The rest with scores below average (3, 3.5, 4, 4.5) were 7 students (24 %). The number of students with high scores was less than the number of students with average scores. It is not surprising because most of the students only focused on learning English grammar and neglected to improve their vocabulary, and they did not like to speak English and have the skills to solve the speaking activities, so their scores were low.

3.2.2. Distribution of Posttest Scores

Table 3: Distribution of Posttest Scores

| Score | Frequency | Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------------|
| 4 | 1 | 3.20 |
| 5 | 7 | 24.30 |
| 6 | 7 | 24.30 |
| 6.5 | 1 | 3.20 |
| 7 | 8 | 28.40 |
| 7.5 | 1 | 3.20 |
| 8 | 2 | 7.00 |
| 8.5 | 1 | 3.20 |
| 9.5 | 1 | 3.20 |
| | 29 | 100.00 |

As we can see in Table 3 after applying the out-of-class activities in speaking lessons, the students seemed to get improvement in speaking skills and get better marks in the Posttest. It can be seen that students' results in the posttest were partly improved. There were no students who got a mark of 3 compared with the Pretest results. The total number of the students who got marks below-average mark 4 was only one student (3.2 %), much less in comparison with that of the Pretest. The number of students achieving mark 7 (17 %) and surprisingly, there were 4 students getting marks 8, 8.5 and 9.5.

3.2.3. Comparison of Data on the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Students

Table 4 shows the distribution of the pretest and posttest scores of the students. It is evident that the scores in the posttest have increased as compared with the scores in the pretest. The highest score which used to be 8.5 has increased to 9.5 and the lowest score which used to be 3 has also increased to 4. The findings in Table 4 also demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the study samples in the pretest and posttest, which were 5.6 and 6.2, respectively. This indicates that the students have acquired learning based on the out-of-class activities.

3.2.4. Test of Difference between the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Students

Table 5: Test of Difference between the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the students

| Students | Mean Average Scores | Mean Difference | t _{computed} | t _{tabulated} | Remarks |
|----------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Pretest | 5.6 | 0.05 | 3.9 | 2.04 | Significant |
| Posttest | 6.2 | | | | |

Table 5 shows the comparison of the mean score of students in the Pretest and Posttest. The difference between the means in Pretest and Posttest is significant when tested at $\alpha = 0.05$. The computed value of t is equal to 3.9 which was higher than the tabulated t-value which was equal to 2.04. Therefore, with 95% level of confidence, it can be implied that the mean score of students in the Pretest was lower than the Posttest using the out-of-class activities or there is a significant difference between the mean scores of students in the Pretest and Posttest $\alpha = 0.05$. This indicates that the students have gained mastery of the subject matter when exposed to these activities. The increased level of performance of the students in the Posttest scores also shows that there are improvements in the amount of learning and retention. The concepts of verbs were not only re-learned, moreover, using the out-of-class activities, the students were able to practice and rehearse the application of the principles through the drill activities. In accordance with the present results, previous studies conducted, have demonstrated that the out-of-class activities have resulted in the development of learners' speaking performance. In other words, the test was successful as it was able to identify students who performed better after the intervention.

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