

TERTIARY STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH ORAL COMMUNICATION LEARNING OUTDOORS: THE CASE OF INDONESIA

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Abstract:

While much research has documented university students' attitude towards learning English oral communication skill in the classroom, their attitude to the learning of English oral communication skill outdoors has been under researched. To fill this gap, the present study aims to investigate university students' attitudes to the learning of oral communication skill outdoors. Eight university students of English Department (4 males and 4 females) aged between 20-22 years old voluntarily participated in the study. Data of the study were gathered from informal interviews and students' reflective writings carried out over the completion of tasks. The data were analyzed using attitudinal analysis system. The findings from affect aspect showcased students' negative emotion to speak English outdoors. However, the result from judgement dimension showed that students were able to adapt to outdoor context; built their confidence; improve speaking skill, and engage in communication. The findings from appreciation aspects also showed positive trends that learning to speak English outdoors was engaging, authentic, and helpful to build students' confidence. These empirical evidences suggest that learning to speak English outdoors promotes university students' oral communication skill development in authentic and engaging ways.

Keywords:

Tertiary student;
Attitude; Oral
Communication;
Outdoor Learning



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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a complicated activity. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) point out that speaking is often regarded as the most challenging skill to learn due to its demand for mastery in speech production elements such as recalling vocabulary, selecting grammatical structures, and understanding sociocultural contexts. In addition, Pawlak, Waniek-Klimczak, and Majer (2011) contend that the difficulty of speaking becomes even greater when learners have insufficient opportunities to engage with the target language both in class or beyond. Gagnon & Dolz (2016) point out that speaking comprises both verbal and non-verbal aspects. Thus, the ability to speak target language comprises linguistics and sociolinguistics knowledge, verbal and non-verbal aspects, and

access to the target language in the classroom and beyond. To provide students with these needs, outdoor learning and teaching environment can be an alternative way.

Outdoor education, also known as outdoor learning and teaching, is described as ‘... an approach to teaching in which parts of the school day are spent in the local environment’ (Jordet 1998, 24). Outdoor education conventionally occurs in surrounding school nearby, enabling learners to engage with the local environment and get insights from their direct experiences (Beames and Ross 2010). Outdoor learning has been widely used in many levels of education and disciplines such as early childhood education (Ulset et, 2017; Kiviranta, 2024), elementary school (Ayotte-Beaudet – science education, 2023; Finn et al – physical education, 2018; Khan et al, 2019), and post secondary school or university (Barrable et al –teacher education, 2022; Kärki et al – teacher education, 2018). In foreign language learning context, outdoor education plays a significant role in successful language learning (Inozu et al., 2010; Pearson, 2004). Out-of-class activities can also foster language acquisition among EFL learners. According to Hyland (2004), pre-service teachers harbored reluctance toward using English in public settings; however, those who excelled in English actively pursued opportunities to utilize the language in their private lives. Myhre and Fiskum (2021) found that young teenagers in Norway perceived learning spoken English outdoors as less stressful compared to classroom settings because of reduced emphasis on correctness and fewer instances of direct teacher observation. Nguyen and Stracke (2021) found that students actively sought and creatively crafted practice opportunities through part-time jobs, social activities, and hobbies focused more on enhancing language skills than achieving high test scores. Myhre et al (2023) found that outdoor experience in English was highly valued.

While much research has showcased the positive effects of outdoor context on English oral communication skill, students’ attitude to the learning of English oral communication outdoor has been under researched. To fill this gap, the present phenomenological case study aims to investigate tertiary students’ attitude towards English oral communication in outdoor learning environment. The study provides insights about students’ attitude towards English oral communication outdoor in higher education context. It is worth to investigate if tertiary students’ attitudes towards English oral communication learning outside the classroom are positives because learners who possess a positive attitude and strong motivation are likely to succeed in acquiring language proficiency and vice versa (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Thus, the present study seeks to answer the question what are tertiary students’ attitudes towards English oral communication learning outdoors?

METHOD

Research Design

This research used qualitative method. The present study employes a phenomenological case study approach. Case studies are “anchored in real-life situations,” from which “...a rich and holistic account” of a particular phenomenon were created (Merriam, 2009, p. 51). This design allows researchers to gain a more in depth understanding of participants’ attitudes towards outdoor learning environment. Case studies enable researchers to examine and analyze data at a more detailed and personal level. Meanwhile, phenomenologists seek to explore the real-life experiences of a specific group of individuals in order to accurately depict and describe their subjective realities within a specific context (Moustakas, 1994). By combining the phenomenological approach with

the case study method, researchers can gain insight into and interpret complex human experiences more effectively and “the essence and the underlying structure of a phenomenon” (Merriam, 2009, p. 23).

Research Context and Participants

This study situated in a private university based in East Java, Indonesia. 14 students of English Department (8 males and 6 females) aged between 20-22 years old voluntarily participated in the study. However, only 8 students or four pairs were selected because they completed all the stages of speaking tasks. They have been anonymized as Amar, Yahay, Dema, Ucis, Uya, Arif, Mihaf, and Sarti. For conversational purposes, they were divided into pairs consisting of two to three students depending on the situation given. Most of participants are from different cultural background (Madurese, Osingnese, and Javanese) and from different former educational background (vocational high school, senior high school, and Islamic secondary school). They are also from urban and rural areas. Prior to study, the participants indicated a lack of confidence, hesitancy in speaking, and anxiety about making errors in aspects of language such as pronunciation and grammar. Each student agreed to participate by signing a consent form that detailed the goal of the project, methods, information, and the opportunity to ask questions about the project. All data were anonymized. Students were informed that their participation was on the voluntary basis. They could withdraw from the project if they found it inconvenient. Ethical approval was obtained for conducting and sharing the findings of this study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data of the study were garnered from informal interviews and reflective writings. A One-to-one interview was conducted over the completion of all speaking tasks. It took 15 to 20 minutes for each participant. For the second data, the students were asked to write a reflective account regarding their experiences in oral communication learning outside the classroom. Following Widodo (2014) interview data analysis procedure, the interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. All collected data from interview were labelled as ID, and data from reflective writing were coded as RW. The data collected from interview and reflective writing were classified into three dimensions, namely affect (AF), judgement (JU), and Appreciation (AP). Data from interview which comprise affect were coded as IDAF (interview data affective), IDJU for interview data judgement, and IDAP for interview data appreciation. Data from reflective writing were coded as RWDAF (reflective writing data affect), RWDJU (reflective writing data judgement), and RWDAP (reflective writing data appreciation). All classified data were selected and analyzed using language appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005). The researchers highlighted words, phrases, and sentences that represent attitudinal aspects. Finally, the researchers interpreted the the highlighted data to uncover the meanings of attitudes expressed in those words, phrases, and sentences.

Method of Instruction

The cyclical process of teaching speaking proposed by Goh & Burns (2012) was adopted. Video recording as a learning tool in learning to speak outside the classroom was chosen because students have android-based cell phones equipped with video recording features to practice speaking extensively. They can review their speaking performance and correct mistakes in language aspects such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. (Gromik,

2012). Additionally, Yuan, R., Mak P, & Yang, M (2020) argue that students can use recorded video to reflect their experience. Meanwhile, out-of-class context was chosen because it is relevant to real life situation. Pearson (2004) emphasizes that environments outside the classroom can promote more genuine language use and independence.

Table 1 The teaching cycle of speaking through video recording

NO	STAGES	GOALS
1	Focus on speaking	Discussing the nature of speaking.
2	Provide input	Acquire appropriate vocabulary and accurate language form relevant to speaking need. Fabricate more utterances to express meaning more precisely. Learn a range of core speaking skill.
3	Conduct speaking task	Focus more on fluency in expressing meaning. Directing students to investigate inaccurate speech feature, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar.
4	Focus on language /skill/discourse/ /strategies	Asking students to Identify inappropriate gestures, facial expression, volume, and speech rate Learn a range of core speaking skill.
5	Repeat speaking tasks	Focus more on fluency in expressing meaning
6	Direct students' Reflection on Learning	Reflecting on and for learning of speaking
7	Facilitate feedback on learning	Evaluating and giving comments on learner's speaking performance based on the recorded video

Source: *Teaching Speaking: A Holistic Approach* (Go & Burns, 2012)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Affect: *“When I practiced speaking with my partner at a parking alot of supermarket, I felt shy with people around me”*

Grounded from informal interviews and reflective writings, the finding of study showed that students felt nervous to speak English outdoors. They were not confident to speak in a public setting such as parking lot, café, and supermarket. Amar and Mihaf (pseudonym) reacted negatively. He felt awkward to speak English in a parking lot of supermarket. This phenomenon can be seen in the following informal interview result.

“During oral practice outdoor, I felt less confident, nervous, and confused about expressing myself according to the given situation. Maybe because it was a new thing to speak English to my own friends outside the classroom. I was also difficult to express myself as naturally as possible.” (Amar, IDAF).

“Speaking at a public place is challenging. When I practiced speaking with my partner at a parking alot of supermarket, I felt shy with people around me. I was afraid if they could speak English better than me. If they did so, they

would identify my mistakes on pronunciation, grammar, and many more.”
(Mihaf, IDAF)

In the same vein, Yahay (pseudonym) felt not confident as many people looked at his speaking performance. But he gradually felt more confident. It was his first experience to have conversation in a public setting. This can be seen in his reflective writing below.

At the beginning of recording my speaking performance in the supermarket, I felt not confident. Many people looked at me while I performed the conversation. I felt awkward at that time. Sometimes, I forgot to say some expression. It was my new experience to perform a conversation in a supermarket. I used to speak English in classroom, but gradually I felt more confident because I practiced a lot. (Yahay, RWDAF)

Arif (pseudonym) had greater nervousness when speaking in a minimarket. He felt insecure with the people around him that made him embarrassed and not confident. This phenomenon can be seen in the following reflective writing.

Talking in front of a class that is only seen by friends is already nervous. I felt more nervous when speaking in front of many strangers. Even though our conversation was not addressed to these people, their eyes seemed to focus on us. This makes me so embarrassed and not confidence that I could not focus on the talk. (Arif, RWDAF)

Judgement : *“I was able to speak more confidently and pronounced words correctly”*
Martin & White (2005) conceptualize judgment as evaluations of individuals and their actions, including assessments of their character and how they are perceived. Grounded from students’ reflective writing, Amar was able to adapt to speak in a public place, built his confidence, and engaged in communication as it can be seen from the result of interview below.

“During recording process of English conversation outdoor, I experienced speaking anxiety and nervousness. But my partner always give positive feedback such as stay focus on task and rehearse speaking all the time. His positive feedback was helpful. Gradually, I can adapt to speak in a public place. I can build my confidence and engaged in a speaking task.” (Amar, IDJU)

Another participants, Ucis reported that she could speak outside the classroom successfully after she practiced alot and reflected on her performances. By doing so, she was able to identify her weaknesses on linguistics and non linguistics aspects. This can be seen from the result of interview below:

“I and my partner were able to speak English outdoor successfully. I did it after I practiced alot and reflected our previous performance. I identified some unclear pronunciation and incorrect grammar. I also noticed from the video recording that my expression was not natural. Knowing those

weaknesses and finding strategies to cope with were the key to successfully speak English in a public place.” (Ucis, IDJU)

Sarti also reported that her speaking performance improved. She was able to speak more confidently and pronounced words correctly after she revised her performance several times. This can be seen in her reflective writing below.

Practice speaking English outdoor helped me prepare the scene as well as memorized my role. I was able to better adjust to the places and the properties. After we practiced several times, my speaking performance improved. I was able to speak more confidently and pronounced words correctly. (Sarti, RWDJU)

Appreciation: *“Such activities were helpful to increase my confidence and speaking ability”*

Martin & White (2005) conceptualize appreciation as our assessments of 'things', particularly creations we produce and performances we deliver, as well as natural occurrences – how we assess their value and worth. When students completed the speaking task, they were required to reflect on their learning experience to speak English outdoor mediated by video recording. Geared from students' reflective writing, the finding indicated that students reacted positively. Sarti reported that she engaged in speaking English outdoor. She thought that learning to speak English outdoor was more authentic. This can be seen from her reflective writing below.

I felt happy after completing this task and uploading the video. I really engaged in this task. I tried best to produce the video recording as good as I can. Speaking English outdoor was more authentic compared with doing it in the classroom. I met different people in different minute that I never experienced it in the classroom. (Sarti, RWDAP)

Another participant, Arif reported that the task allowed him to practice pronouncing words correctly and reflecting on his weaknesses. The task was helpful to develop his confidence and speaking ability. This can be seen from his reflective writing below.

What I can learn from the experience of speaking English using video recordings was I could practice a lot pronouncing words correctly. I reflected the previous video from which I knew my weaknesses and revised them immediately. Such activities were helpful to increase my confidence and speaking ability. (Arif, RWDAP)

In the same vein, Uci, Dema, and Uya found that speaking English outdoor mediated by video recording was helpful to build their confidence, pronunciation, grammar, and expression. Through the task, they could revised and recorded their performance several times until they produced a good video recording. Following is the result of interview with Uci, Dema and Uya.

“ In my opinion, this task was helpful to build my confidence to speak English in front of many people. It was also useful to improve my pronunciation,

grammar and expression. When I made unclear pronunciation, grammar mistakes, and appropriate expression I could revise the mistakes and record my performance until I produced the good ones. Now, when I speak English in front of many people, I did not feel as nervous as in the first speaking performance." (Uci, IDAP)

"Practice speaking English outdoor and record it was useful. I could speak English in the real context. I could practice many times and reflected my performance through video recording. Such activities can improve my confidence and speaking ability." (Dema, IDAP)

"I think speaking English outdoor mediated by video recording can help me improve my English, especially speaking ability. I learned alot how to pronounce work correctly and speak confidently. If I made mistakes on pronunciation or I looked nervous, I could revise the mistakes and record my speaking performance again." (Uya, IDAP)

Discussion

The findings from affective dimension showed that students experienced greater negative emotion to speak English outdoor mediated by video recording. Anxiety was the major problem appeared during the task. This finding corroborates previous research that statistically demonstrated minimal influence of learners' emotions in outdoor settings on their levels of foreign language anxiety and enjoyment (Myhre et al, 2023). In other words, students still felt greater anxious and insecure to speak English as a foreign language in outdoor learning environment. The negative emotion, however, is counter productive. Medrano et al (2016) found that induction of positive and negative emotions respectively raised and lowered levels of academic self-efficacy in college students. In other word, students' negative emotion can turn to the positive emotion. Thus, reconstructing students' negative emotion to positive one is crucial in learning foreign language outdoor environment.

While the finding of the present study from affect dimension showed negative emotion, the result from appreciation aspect was positive. Students' engagement in learning to speak English outdoor was positive. The finding also showed that practicing spoken English outdoor was authentic and helpful to build students' confidence. These empirical findings support the qualitative data, which showed a strong appreciation for the outdoor English learning experience (Myhre et al, 2023). They found that studying outdoors enhanced students' sense of security, reduced performance pressure and anxiety-inducing situations, thereby boosting their enthusiasm for learning. The finding was also relevant to study by Myhre and Fiskum (2021) which showed that students are eager to engage in communication in the target language because it boosts their confidence, allows them to use the language in real-life contexts, and makes learning more engaging. The finding also supports the previous research which showed a strong relationship between foreign language enjoyment and out of class foreign language use (Acosta-Monzano et al, 2023).

The finding from judgement aspect was also positive. The result indicated that students were able to adapt to speak in outdoor learning environment; built his confidence; improved pronunciation, grammar, and expression; and engaged in communication. The

findings is relevant to the previous study which showed that students were able to enhance both their English fluency and their confidence in an outdoor learning environment. (Myhre and Fiskum, 2021). The finding of the present study is also consistent with the previous research which indicated that students scored high in out of class foreign language use (Acosta-Monzano et al, 2023).

CONCLUSION

These empirical findings of the present study looked into the students' attitude towards learning oral communication skill outdoors. While the findings from affect aspect showed that students felt negative emotion such as anxious and insecure to speak English in outdoors learning environment, findings from judgement dimension showed that they were able to adapt to speak in outdoor context; built their confidence; improve speaking skill, and engage in communication. Furthermore, finding from appreciation aspect indicated that learning to speak English outdoors was engaging, authentic, and helpful to build students confidence. The findings suggest that learning to speak English outdoors mediated by video recording promotes university students' oral communication skill development in authentic and engaging ways. The instructional implication of the present study recommends teacher educators to use outdoor context and video recording as meaningful learning environment and tool to develop university students' oral communication skill. Teacher educators are also suggested to guide students to reconstruct their negative emotion because negative emotion can turn into positive one. Future researchers are recommended to investigate students' attitudes towards learning English oral communication outdoors using quantitative data to confirm or strengthen the present or previous findings.

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