INFLUENCE OF THE CHOSEN TOPICS ON SPEAKING ACTIVITIES
BY EFL STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF PGRI RONGGOLAWE
(UNIROW) TUBAN

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Abstract: Speaking skill is one of important skills in learning English as Foreign
Language. It is also the most difficult skill for EFL students. Therefore, the
students should improve their speaking ability. One of the main ways is through
the speaking activities. In fact, there are many factors that influence the success of
EFL students’ speaking activities. One of the main factors is the chosen topics.
In this study, the writer wants to know the kind of chosen topics which are used on
speaking activities by EFL students, how far the influence of the chosen topics
itself on speaking activities, and the reasons of choosing certain topics.
The findings of this study present that most of EFL students tend to use the kind
of topics of social, health, and culture. The chosen topics also have many
influences on the EFL students’ speaking activities and their performance. The
interesting topics especially about hot issues which happen in society can increase
the students’ interest. Then, the best chosen topics make the EFL students’
speaking activities more interactive and successful. The favourite or interesting
topics will also make the students more eager and do better on their speaking
activities. Moreover, the EFL students choose certain topics for some reasons.
Firstly, they are interested in the issues in the topic. Secondly, the EFL students
use certain topics because they have their own experience about that topic.
Thirdly, the EFL students tend to use hot issues in society to become their chosen
topics on speaking activities. Finally, the EFL students use certain topics because
they like a challenge; they also want to enhance their speaking ability, so they
choose hard topics as their chosen topics on speaking activities.

Key words: Influence, Speaking Activities, The Chosen Topics, the EFL Students

I. INTRODUCTION
A. Background of the Study

Language as a means of communication has an important role in the
social life. It is used to say our idea, thought, opinion, and feeling to other
people. Furthermore, we should be able to communicate to each other as a
part of social human life by using comprehensible language.
Harmer (2012: 1) declares that although English is not the language with the largest number of native or ‘first’ language speaker, it has become *lingua franca*—a language widely adopted for communication between two speakers whose native languages are different from each other’s and where one or both speakers are using it as a ‘second’ language. Based on this statement, English is one of the popular languages in the world. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) which concerns not only in social life but also in politics, technology, economy, etc.

In studying English, the students are demanded to master the four language skills. There are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Richards (2007) says that the mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many foreign language learners. Learners consequently often evaluate their success in language leaning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how well they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency.

Unfortunately, there are many problems in the EFL speaking classroom. As Nunan cited in Celce-Murcia (2001: 110) found the biggest challenges in the EFL classroom to be lack of motivation, getting students to speak (a cultural issue for some where speaking in class is prohibited except when called on). Other problems may arise if the curriculum does not stress speaking skills or views them solely as an avenue to grammatical accuracy, moreover, if the teacher is a non-native speaker of English, he or she may not be competent or confident in speaking English.
The next common problems in EFL speaking classroom is students are unwilling to speak or keep silent during the speaking class. It happens because the teachers do not use authentic text and topics or theme that the students are interested in. Thus, nobody enjoys talking about something that does not interest them (http://ddeubel.edublogs.org/2009/05/08/getting-your-students-speaking-some-strategies/)

From the assumption above, chosen topics surely have influence on the students’ speaking activities. Keith (2007) also states that students will not speak, it may be because: they have no reason to, they do not know anything about the topic, they do not know what to do, they have not got the language they need, and the task was not motivate the students.

Martin (2003) on his research affirms that some aspects that make the students speak up are the best topics and activities that the students find interesting and useful. He has put this point last for a reason. None of the techniques elaborated above will be successful in getting the students to speak English if the students simply do not want to talk about the topic given by the teachers, or if they do not find the topic useful. Motivating and practical activities and topics are necessary to get the students talking in English.

Based on the explanations above, topic is one of essential matter in oral language learning especially in EFL speaking classroom. It has important functions towards EFL speaking activities. Of course, the students cannot do speaking activity without a topic that will be discussed or presented. Besides, topic is one of component that influences a success of the EFL speaking classroom. Some students often find any difficulties on their EFL speaking
activities because of less understanding about their chosen topics. They obviously choose interesting topics; they hopefully will get success on their EFL speaking activities. Therefore, the students must be selective to choose certain topics as their chosen topics on EFL speaking activities. Finally, the writer determines to research the matter concerning the use of the chosen topics on the EFL students’ speaking activities. Based on the background of the study above, the purposes of this study are: to know the topics which are chosen by the EFL students on their speaking activities and its influence at University of PGRI Ronggolawe (UNIROW) Tuban, and to describe the reasons of choosing certain topics on EFL speaking activities.

This research can be contribution matters which are needed in development of English study, especially in teaching speaking, so students can increase their proficiency in mastering speaking on their EFL speaking activities. Besides, this research is hoped to give description and information to the students and the lecturers. For the Students, this research can increase the students’ English skill especially in speaking. They also can get more experience in using of their chosen topics on the EFL speaking activities. So they can recognize how far their ability in their EFL speaking activities by using the best chosen topic in order to increase their proficiency and or their mark on speaking subject. For the Lecturers, with experience of the influence of the chosen topics on EFL speaking activities, the lecturers are able to know how far their students master this material and the problems that the students find. Moreover, the lecturers will also give the topics carefully because it is important on the EFL speaking activities. Therefore, the lecturers are able to
provide the EFL speaking classroom better than before. So, they can make their students master speaking.

II. RESEARCH METHOD
   A. Research Design

   In this study the writer uses descriptive method, a method that is used to illustrate and describe what actually happens in certain situation and condition. There will provide both quantitative and qualitative data in order to describe the data based on the research problems. In this circumstance, the writer wants to describe the uses of the chosen topics and their influence on speaking activities by EFL students at university of PGRI Ronggolawe (UNIROW) Tuban.

   B. Population and Sample

   1. Population

   The population in this study is all of speaking IV students (2010 students) of University of PGRI Ronggolawe (UNIROW) Tuban.

   2. Sample

   In this research, the writer uses a purposive sample. Cohen, et al (2005:103) describes that “in purposive sampling; researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgments of their typicality. In this way, they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs”. As its name suggests, the sample has been chosen for a specific purpose. In this study, one class
of students has been selected to be tracked throughout the speaking activities in order to acquire and describe the data more details which is appropriate with the research objectives. Additionally, the writer takes the students of 2010 B as the sample because this class has the proper characteristics with this study. This class consists of 37 students. The students were conducting their EFL speaking activities by presenting a certain topic. Moreover, from their scores, it can be seen that the students have diverse characteristics included high, intermediate, and low ability in the EFL speaking class. Hence, this research will give the authentic information regarding the influence of the chosen topics on their speaking activities.

C. Techniques of Collecting the Data

In this study, there are three techniques applied to collect data, observation, interview, and questionnaire.

1. Observation

The writer determines to use structured observation in this study. Before doing observation, the researcher has designed the instrument of observation in a check list form in order to get certain data which is needed. The researcher observes the influence of the chosen topics on their speaking activities. In entering the data, a tick (✓) is used against each statement which is observed.

2. Questionnaire

In this study the writer applies open questionnaire and also close questionnaire. The writer constructs the open questionnaire in
Indonesian in order to make the respondent easier to answer the questions. This questionnaire consists of ten questions, while the close questionnaire is in English which consists of fifteen items in yes/no answers.

3. Interview

In this study the writer uses semi-structured interview. In accordance with Nunan, in semi-structured interview, the interviewer has a general idea of where he or she wants the interview to course, and what should come out of it, but does not enter the interview with a list of predetermined questions. Topics and issues rather than questions decide the course of the interview (1992: 149).

D. Method of Analyzing the Data

There are four steps which are used in analyzing the data. They are editing, coding, classification, and tabulation as stated by Kothari (2004).

In addition, the quantitative data particularly the data which have been collected from the questionnaire in yes/no answer forms will be presented on the table percentage. Therefore, the writer will use the formula in order to analyze the data as follows:

\[ n = \frac{F}{N} \times 100 \]

\[ n \% \] : The percentage of respondents’ answer

\[ F \] : Number of respondents who choose certain answer

\[ N \] : Total number of respondents
III. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Findings

1. The Kinds of the Chosen Topics Which Are Used by the EFL Students

The kinds of the chosen topics are presented as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 3.1 The Kinds of the Chosen Topics</th>
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</table>

From the table there are seventeen topics presented by the students in Speaking IV class. Social, Health, and Culture dominated the topic chosen by the students.

2. The influence of the Chosen Topics on the EFL Speaking Activities

There are many influences of the chosen topics on speaking activities. Then, it will be presented in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.2 Students’ Response towards the Influence of the Chosen Topics on the EFL Speaking Activities</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
Do you choose a certain topic by yourself?  
29 (94%)  2 (6%)

Do you get an easy or interesting topic in your speaking activities (presentation and discussion)?  
27 (87%)  4 (13%)

Do you like your chosen topic on your EFL speaking activities (presentation and discussion)?  
29 (94%)  2 (6%)

Do you have a good knowledge about your chosen topic?  
22 (71%)  9 (29%)

Do you feel that your chosen topic is difficult?  
10 (32%)  21 (68%)

Does the best chosen topic make your speaking more interactive and successful in your speaking?  
28 (90%)  3 (10%)

Do you speak fluently in your EFL speaking activities (presentation and discussion) with your chosen topic?  
25 (81%)  6 (19%)

Do you get any difficulties on your EFL speaking activities (presentation and discussion) with your chosen topic?  
22 (71%)  9 (29%)

Do you talk a lot in your EFL speaking activities (presentation and discussion)?  
25 (81%)  6 (19%)

Do you enjoy your EFL speaking activities (presentation and discussion) with your chosen topic?  
29 (94%)  2 (6%)

From the table above, the writer acquired numerous data concerning the influence of the chosen topics on the EFL speaking activities.

In the EFL speaking activities, most of students chose the topic by themselves (29 students/94%), and 27 students (87%) acquired an interesting or an easy topic on their speaking activities. In addition, 21 students (68%) did not feel that their chosen topic was difficult, while 10 students (32%) felt that their chosen topic was difficult. Besides, 29 students (94%) like their chosen topic; and 22 students (71%) have a good knowledge about their chosen topic.

Mainly, great number of students still got any difficulties on their EFL speaking activities by using their chosen topic (22 students/71%). The students felt nervous, shy and or afraid about making mistakes while speaking in the EFL speaking classroom (19 students/61%), while 12 students (39%) did not experience that problems. In spite of the fact 25 students (81%) answered that they talked a lot in their EFL speaking activities, and most of
students also were able to speak fluently in their EFL speaking activities with their chosen topic (25 students/81%).

Most of the students (28 students/90%) clarified that the best chosen topics make their speaking activities more interactive and successful. Finally, from the total number of students, there were only 2 students (6%) who did not enjoy their EFL speaking activities with their chosen topic, whereas large number of students (29 students/94%) answered that they enjoyed their speaking activities with their chosen topic.

After that, the students agreed that the chosen topics have some influences for the students’ speaking activities. It has an important role for achieving their successful on EFL speaking activities. The students considered that assertion for various arguments. First, if the students used interesting topic especially about hot issues which happen in society, it could enhance the students’ interest or audiences when the students used this topic on the EFL speaking activities. In the other words, there was a student who strongly agreed that the exciting topics equal to successful speaking activities. Then, the students confirmed that appropriate topics would help them to control a class when they did their speaking activities. The excellent topics could also provide the students more strength in order to do their EFL speaking activities. Moreover, the favourite or interesting topics would make the students more eager and did better on their speaking activities than the other students. On the contrary, hard or uneasy topics would influence the students’ performance in speaking because the use of chosen topics itself influenced students’ performance. The students who prepared their chosen topics would not be nervous when performed it on EFL speaking activities.
By means of the second questionnaire, the writer found that chosen topics also had important role in order to construct an interactive atmosphere in discussion. The students supposed that when the material concerning their chosen topics provoked questions or pro-contra opinion from the other students, it meant that their chosen topics were influential topics enough.

3. The Reasons of Choosing Certain Topics by EFL Students

There are some reasons of choosing certain topics by EFL students. They are presented in the table 3.3 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>S₃</td>
<td>As a student who lives in the society with the high number of ‘Toak’ drinker. He thought that it was the most exciting issue to be discussed in his speaking activities. First, he told that he wanted to introduce ‘Toak’. Second, he would explain the benefits of ‘Toak’ itself which had not known by the large society</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>S₆</td>
<td>When she got an assignment to make a paper presentation. She told that she thought about “cloning” directly. Finally, she was interested to discuss about that topic. She argued that cloning had both good and bad impact. But she did not agree if it was applied to the people.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>S₈</td>
<td>She thought that earth has the most problems with the globalization. The planting of trees should be campaign in order to save our earth from the damage. Finally, she was interested to inform and socialize how the importance of saving our forest in order to save</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>S₁₂</td>
<td>He chose this topic since he thought that Javanese is the most important language which should be preserved. He would emphasize on how the importance of it. In fact, the using or the existence of Javanese language is being changeable nowadays. So, through his paper presentation he wanted to encourage preserving the Javanese language especially among the young generation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


5. **S₂₀**
   He stated that having an affair was the hot issue in the society. People were very interested about these phenomena. Some people having an affair though they have had a couple in their life. Obviously, he wanted to give their point of view about it. He thought that someone who having an affair should be revenged by having an affair.

6. **S₂₁**
   He told that this was his own experience. He said, “I had ever experienced those ‘bad occurrences’ within my family.” Besides, at present he thought that most of parents or called as adult in this case did the naughtiness such as in politics, and social life e.g. it showed by the politicians who do the practice of corruption and the parents who do not care with their children and they were busy to do their job. Finally, he chose this topic with the aim of presented the

7. **S₂₄**
   He liked a high topic very much with the high level of difficulty too. It would motivate him to become better in order to enhance his proficiency in speaking. Then, he wanted to be different than his classmates because this was the last speaking activity.

8. **S₂₇**
   She was interested about The practice of plastic surgery which had been the hot issue in society now. Most of people wanted to make some of their body parts and or themselves more beautiful than before, though it has some effect for their healthy. Therefore, she wanted to remind that we should be grateful towards all of conditions that the Lord has given for

9. **S₂₆**
   She was interested to the culture of Japanese. She thought that Japanese’s culture was so unique, and she wanted to share about these cultures to the audience.

10. **S₃₃**
    She was interested to discuss this topic for some reasons. First, she was very concerned with the condition of forest which is more ‘bald’ because of the act of damaging the trees by the irresponsible people. Second, she said that there is a culture which can help to save the forest. e.g. ‘Hompong’ one of the Anak Dalam ethnic group’s custom where the people are prohibited to take something in the forest liberally. They believe that when they cut the trees, the disaster will come early. Hopefully and strongly reason, people can both save the culture and the forest. Hence, she

From the table above, the writer concludes that there are some reasons of choosing certain topics by EFL students. Foremost, EFL students choose certain topics because they are interested in the issue in the topic. Secondly,
EFL students use certain topics because they have their own experience about their topics such as “The Naughtiness of The Parents”. Thirdly, EFL students tend to use hot issues in society as their chosen topics on speaking activities such as “Having an Affair Revenged by Having an Affair”. Finally, the EFL students use certain topics because they like a challenge. They also want to increase their speaking ability, so they choose hard topics as their chosen topics on speaking activities e.g. “culture shock”.

B. Discussion

1. The Influence of the Chosen Topics on EFL Speaking Activities

There are significant findings which show the influences of the chosen topics on EFL speaking activities. For instance, from 31 respondents, most of them (28 students/90 %) agree that the best chosen topics make their speaking activities more interactive and successful as Martin (2003) stated that “the best topics and activities that the students find interesting and useful will make the students speak up” Besides, 25 students (81%) are able to speak fluently with their chosen topics though they still get any difficulties on their EFL speaking activities with their chosen topics (22 students/71%). Based on the data, most of students find any difficulties when they prepare their material (preparation stage) such as difficult to choose or decide exciting topics, and look for the references or material about the chosen topics. Actually, they are often confused about the references because of too many references which have been browsed. The students cannot master the topic simply, hence they are difficult to set up it become an interesting subject.

Afterwards, there are two basic subjects about topic which can be discussed. The first subject is the kind of topics or the characteristics of
chosen topics. Most of EFL students consider this subject when they want
to use certain topics, because it has many influences on EFL students
speaking activities. For instance, the interesting topics especially about hot
issue which happens in society can increase the students’ interest.
Moreover, “Nobody enjoys talking about something that does not interest
them, make it real and make it up to date with timely text such as news
items, celebrity gossip, hot topics, etc”. (http://ddeubel.edublogs.org/
2009/05/08/getting-your-students-speaking-some-strategies/) Furthermore,
when the chosen topics or activity inappropriate, students sometimes show
their lack of interest by behaving badly, and students who are interested
and enthusiastic do not generally exhibit problem behaviour (Harmer,
2012: 127-128)

Then, the excellent topics can provide the EFL students more spirit
in order to do their speaking activities. Moreover, the favourite or
interesting topics will make the students more eager and do better on their
speaking activities than the other students. On the contrary, hard or uneasy
topics will influence the students’ performance in speaking.

Secondly, the subject is mastering of topic. For instance, there is the
comparison. The students who master certain topics, they have more self-
confidence when they do speaking activities, whereas the students who do
not master certain topics will not acquire optimal results. In conclusion,
the students should master the chosen topics as the proponent factor in
order to achieve the success of EFL speaking activities.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION
A. Conclusion

There are some conclusions of this study as follows:

1. Most of the EFL students tend to use the kind of topics of social, health, and culture.

2. The kinds of the chosen topics have most roles in achieving the success of speaking activities. First, the interesting topics especially about hot issue which happens in society can increase the students’ interest. The audiences will be more interesting to participate on speaking activities if the topics are interesting. Second, the best chosen topics make the students’ speaking activities more interactive and successful. Third, the favourite or interesting topics will also make the students more eager and do better on their speaking activities than the other students in order to achieve successful speaking activities.

3. There are some reasons of choosing certain topics. Firstly, they are interested in the issue in the topic. Secondly, EFL students use certain topics because they have their own experience about their topics. Thirdly, EFL students tend to use hot issues in society become their chosen topics on speaking activities. Finally, the EFL students want to develop their speaking skill, so they choose hard topics as their chosen topics on speaking activities.

B. Suggestions

From this research, the writer suggests that the EFL students should be careful to choose certain topics. They should be able to choose the best topics in accordance with their interest and their knowledge in order to achieve the best results on speaking activities. Then, they should have good background knowledge about their chosen topics before conducting the speaking activities. In addition, the lecturers should provide more EFL speaking
activities and more chances to the students to practice their speaking in order to increase their speaking skill.

REFERENCES


