

STUDENTS' INDEPENDENT LEARNING IN GROUP WORK ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT:

This study is to find out the students' preferences in independent learning after the implementation of group work activities at the sixth semester students of English Education Department of University of Muhammadiyah Gresik. The number of eighteen students are provided by group work activities (combined by a Lesson Study model) in the subject of Classroom Action Research. After that they are given a questionnaire about the preferences of independent learning with five categories namely self-confidence, discipline, initiative, responsibility, and motivation. Data show that there are positive responses of the students' preferences in terms of better self-confidence, higher discipline, superior initiative, recovered responsibility, and better motivation in learning.

Key Words: *Independent learning, group work activities*

INTRODUCTION

There are two common reasons of successful learning especially on formal setting of classroom teaching and learning that is external and internal factors. In one hand, external aspects such as teaching facilities, curriculum, funds, and teaching methods and teachers dominantly and highly support the success of the learning outcome that was measured commonly by learning assessment of summative and formative. This is universal consideration of educational practitioners to distinguish the implementation of education in any aspects of formal situation. The results of many educational evaluations are usually taken from this model to consider the progress of learning advancement whether they are positioned at local and national scopes. This is of course does not echo yet the holistic progress of educational practices at classroom level. There should be supplementary additional concerns

especially in terms of learners' connection that become the main participants in any educational contexts.

On the other hand, internal aspects such as learner attitudes, motivation, aptitudes, and independent are usually not fully assessed by many educational practitioners. Many researchers believe that these internal aspects of learning give reasonably contribution to learners' progress in learning. The minimum attention of this aspect is also shown by the way common teachers evaluate student progress of learning in that quantitative and cognitive model of assessment is still dominated by many educational reports and research findings. This is also to show the least amount of awareness of many teachers to prepare holistic and comprehensive assessment of teaching in any level of education (particularly at higher level of education). Even many researchers believe that this internal factor of learning can boost other

external aspects in the classroom practices. Internal aspects of learner, therefore, are not necessarily thought as partially unrelated to external factors of learning.

Independent learner (as part of internal learning factor) is an ability of individual student to have a responsibility in learning (Dantec and Jowers from www.hull.ac.uk). In order to maximize the student responsibility, teacher should generate student awareness of doing SWOT (strength, weaknesses, opportunity, and threat) in which this assessment is done personally by each student so that each has clear initial awareness of identifying learning conditions. The assessment is then functioned to find out problems and common weaknesses and their causes with the intention that student can easily begin to complete the gaps to increase their opportunity to have independent learner.

Hued and Stella (2008) propose some important strategies to increase independent learning as part of affective strategies to be precise by having a break, planning and prioritizing, rehearsal and repetition, deep breathing, and scores of others. These proposed strategies are actually quite similar with meta-cognitive strategies developed by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) given that learners are trained by developing beyond cognitive consideration to make their awareness on achieving learning outcome. These affective strategies are believed effective to be practiced to help learner to be always on the right track in learning.

Saber, Crossling, and Rahman (2013) identifies independent as an autonomous process of being a true student personally including the manners to manage individual and social factors in learning. The autonomous learning manners

are as well as the way to prepare learning, individual and group projects, evaluating learning progress, and targeting and detailing learning workloads. In addition Murray, G (2011) argues that teacher's view on independent learning also depends heavily on understanding concepts, attitudes, and the level of preparations in teaching. He further suggests that training teacher preparedness influences positive attitudes and belief of the teachers about independent learning.

Given that Independent learning is part of the realization of student center learning (Meyer:2010), the biggest and important part of the autonomous process is on stimulating personal strategies in and out of classroom procedures. EdgBaston (2014) even describes detail specifications of independent characteristics of students namely self reliance, can be able to make a decisive option, responsive on all strengths and weaknesses, always able to connect classroom and real life advantages, able to plan learning goals, responsible for all learning strategies they use, and to always self motivated in learning progress.

Educational practices and researchers have developed efforts to alternatively promote the advancement of learning autonomy especially by prioritizing procedures and teaching strategies completed by appropriate teaching media. Given that learner center model of learning is the nucleus process of many natural settings of teaching procedures, strategies of teaching which promote interactions and communications among students are importantly applied. The proposed teaching strategy is a group work activity which contends to intensively encourage learners to

have positive interactions and communications each other with its final objective is to achieve learning competences maximally individually or in group.

This research is expected to see the consequence on the use on group work activities in classroom setting towards the student independent learning especially on the content subject of Classroom Action Research (CAR) at the sixth semester students of University of Muhammadiyah Gresik.

SUBJECT AND METHOD OF THE STUDY

The subjects of this study are eighteen students joining the course of Classroom Action Research at University of Muhammadiyah Gresik. There is one instrument used to collect the data that is questionnaire consisting of twenty items reflecting the independent learning in studying CAR with five elements including self confidence of students with four items, students' discipline with four items, students' initiative with four items, students' responsibility with four items, and students' motivation with four questions.

The questionnaire is given to eighteen students of sixth semester student of English Language Education Department at University of Muhammadiyah Gresik as the intended subject of this study.

The class has been organized into the implementation of group work activities by the principle of Lesson Study that is plan, do, and see. Because it is handled in a cooperative teaching procedure, a team teaching has been hold by four lecturers. In the phase of Plan, the team has formulated four meetings and has

decided four lesson plans. Each meeting has been handled by each lecturer consecutively. In the phase of Do, one lecturer handles the class and the rests of the team record and observe the process of teaching and learning in the class. The last phase is See in that all lectures in the team discuss to see the weaknesses and the strength to make some improvements in the next following meetings.

To evaluate the improvements of the students' independent learning in the class of Research in English Language Teaching, finally, the students are given a questionnaire that consists of twenty items. The results of the questionnaire are analyzed by using percentage..

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The questionnaire is about asking students' response to reflect their independent learning after the implementation of group work activities in the class of Action Research subject with 18 (eighteen) respondents. The eighteen students are the ones joining the Classroom Action Research subject at the sixth semester at Muhammadiyah University of Gresik. The given questionnaire of independent learning contains five elements including self confidence of students with four items, students' discipline with four items, students' initiative with four items, students' responsibility with four items, and students' motivation with four questions. Therefore the total items of the questionnaire are 20 (twenty) questions reflecting the above five categories. The results of the questionnaire are presented at table 1 below.

| No | Aspects | Strongly Agree (%) | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) |
|-----|--|--------------------|-----------|--------------|
| | I. Self- Confidence | | | |
| 1. | Enjoyment to follow group discussion | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. | Feel calm to present | 22.3 | 77.7 | 0 |
| 3. | Pleased to ask question in discussion | 27.8 | 72.2 | 0 |
| 4. | Content to answer questions | 27.8 | 72.2 | 0 |
| | Average | 44.5 | 55.5 | 0 |
| | II. Discipline | | | |
| 5. | The enthusiasm of learning | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 6. | The commitment of doing assignment | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 7. | The difficulties in learning | 27.8 | 72.2 | 0 |
| 8. | The ability to lead discussion | 33.4 | 66.6 | 0 |
| | Average | 65.3 | 34.7 | 0 |
| | III. Initiative | | | |
| 9. | Personal curiosity | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 10. | The best contribution in discussion | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 11. | The originality of ideas | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 12. | Risk taking preference | 27.8 | 72.2 | 0 |
| | Average | 81.95 | 18.05 | 0 |
| | IV. Responsibility | | | |
| 13. | The involvement of doing group tasks | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 14. | Personal concern about group difficulties | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 15. | The involvement of completing group report | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 16. | The activeness of presentation | 27.8 | 72.2 | 0 |
| | Average | 81.95 | 18.05 | 0 |
| | V. Motivation | | | |
| 17. | The spirit of joining learning process | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 18. | The enthusiasm of doing tasks | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 19. | The spirit to address difficulties in learning | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 20. | Encouraging group to complete tasks | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| | Average | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| | Total average | 74.7 | 25.3 | 0 |

Table 1.1 above shows that the percentage of the total students' responses are dominantly at the level of strongly agree with 74.7% (seventy four point seven) and agree with 25.3% (twenty five point three). The five categories of the results (self-confidence, discipline, initiative, responsibility, and motivation) are described in the following parts.

In term of self confidence, the students' response indicates that 44.5% (forty four point five) percent of the respondents select strongly agree and 55.5% (fifty five point five) percent choose agree and 0 (zero) percent for disagree. This indicates that student self-confidence is increasing and tends to show positive feeling of being independent to share in the group

discussion even they also feel confidence (although it is not quiet strong) to present, ask questions, and answer questions in group participations.

The second indicator of being independent is the student discipline showing that 65.3 (sixty five point three) percent strongly agree and 34.7 (thirty four point seven) percent agree, and 0 (zero) percent disagree. This data already shows that majority of the students feel better in their discipline in that they feel highly motivated and enthusiastic in learning situation, and committed more of completing class or group assignment. In addition, they also are able to cope with all learning handicaps and some (mostly agree) able to lead the group discussion.

The third part is about student initiative in group of learning activities which shows that 81.95 (eighty one point ninety five) percent of students dominantly and strongly agree, 18.05 (eighteen point zero five) percent agree, and 0 (zero) percent disagree. The data means that all respondents feel better to have initiative in group activities in particular they are always curious to know everything related to the topics to be discussed, their best efforts to share their ideas, their original ideas to share, and their feeling to take risks when discussing in groups.

The fourth indicator of independent learning is responsibility in which 81.95 (eighty one point ninety five) percent of respondents strongly agree, 18.05 (eighteen point zero five) percent of them agree, and 0 (zero) percent disagree. This indicates that majority of students feel better in their responsibility especially on feeling responsible for group assignment, their awareness on group difficulties, their participations on completing final report, and

their concern on presenting the results of group assignment.

The last one is about motivation in group learning activities that represents 100 (a hundreds) percent of respondents strongly agree, 0 (zero) percent of them agree and disagree. This signifies that the student motivation is better especially they feel enthusiastic in learning process and completing class assignment, vigorous to address their problems, and spirited to encourage each other to complete group assignment well.

The findings of this study can be assembled into a conclusion that independent learning of the student in Classroom Action Research is better after the implementation of group work activities. The independent learning is an autonomous and affective process of learning that have been developed in terms of five indicators namely self confidence, discipline, initiative, responsibility, and motivation.

CONCLUSION

This is a research about implementation of group work activities at the sixth semester student of English Education Department of University of Muhammadiyah Gresik. By using a questionnaire distributed to eighteen respondents, the research has concluded that;

1. The students' learning independence of English Students at English Department Education is perceived boosted after the implementation of group work activities during the Classroom Action Research project. This can be proven by indicating positive responses of the students'

preferences in terms of better self-confidence, higher discipline, superior initiative, recovered responsibility, and better motivation in learning.

2. This study suggests on the importance of using group work activities especially on content subject with its natural characteristics of cooperating among learners' activities in terms of mutual interactions and communications. The mutual interactions and communications have contributed to maintain students' affective factors of learning especially not only on the students spirits but also on their social interaction factors.

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