

Action Research: Equal Speaking Opportunity

2016 Spring Practicum
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1. Introduction

English in Action Speaking class is designed to give students an opportunity to develop skills and strategies for increasing their English speaking proficiency. This will help the students to build the skills needed for attaining a higher score on the ACTFL OPI and OPIC speaking tests. In this class, the students mainly focus on skills related spoken English, but other skills, such as reading and writing, are also used in the classroom. This is a student-centered class which focuses on helping students to build their English speaking competency through interactional and transactional tasks. Tasks are designed for students based on the needs analysis. Thus, the tasks are based on students' interests and also help the students practice to improve their English proficiency in the real world.

There are 35 students whose English proficiency level and major are varied. They are all female undergraduate students in S. women's university, located in Seoul, Korea, and their age is between 20 to 29 years old. Majority are Korean, but there are 3 Chinese and 1 Taiwanese students. According to the needs analysis, they have almost 10 years of English learning experience in average at school. The survey indicates that the students have different personalities; some of them are close to introverted while some of them are close to extroverted. Most of them use English for 10 hours in average a week in order to study. They are more confident in vocabulary, writing, and grammar than speaking, listening, and pronunciation. On the question in the needs analysis, how friendly you are with English, most of them think that English is their friend, not enemy. The favorite types of English learning tasks in the class are: describing, group presentation, vocabulary, and pronunciation practice. The analysis also reveals that the types of materials they like to use in the class are: social media, video, sound bites, short articles, and worksheets. The most interesting 5 topics are: travel, movies, cultural differences, art/music, and food (cooking).

In this course, students meet twice a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, and each class goes for two hours from 6pm to 8pm. There are 7 big sisters from TESOL MA program who participate in the class as group leaders and take turns to run the class. Each big sister has around 5 students with varied language proficiency and provide feedback on their English production. For the assessment,

the students are required to take a speaking assessment three times during the course. The students and big sisters have a one-on-one interview formatted according to the ACTFL OPI speaking test. In every week, the students are also responsible for uploading a specific type of speaking assignment on the website on the different topics related to the weekly themes. There are also reading assignments created by big sisters in order to help students to prepare for class each week. The students have to hand in their reading homework on Thursdays, so that the professor checks and provides feedbacks on them. This is the English-only class which means that all aspects of the course including in-class discussion, presentation, and all assignments are conducted in English.

2. Research Question

The positive effectiveness of TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) in second language teaching seems obvious and the number of TBLT-based courses has kept increasing in the Korean language teaching environment. Since TBLT is run through tasks which require students' participation, students' participation is regarded as one of the influential factors in the success of lesson. Likewise, in English in Action Speaking (EAS) class, students' participation has been often mentioned as the biggest issue. Some students are eager to speak while others rarely show their initiatives of speaking during class. Also, it is found that the higher students' proficiency is, the more students take part in the given tasks. As we noticed this issue, we would like to encourage the lower proficiency students to participate more so as for all students to have equal speaking opportunity. Here is the research question:

1. How can we provide more equal speaking opportunities for our students, encouraging especially the low proficiency level students to speak more?

3. Rationale

We have observed the students in EAS class for 5 weeks. In the first week, we found that the students' proficiency was relatively so high that they could understand and perform the tasks quickly and well. The average score of the first interview proved this too – the average score is 56 which means that the average proficiency is Intermediate High. However, from the third week we noticed one problematic area that we want to deal with, which is the unequal speaking opportunities among students. In each group, there are around 1 or 3 advanced level students except one group which consists of 4 intermediate high students and 1 intermediate low. Those advanced level students had

more opportunity to speak in group and most of them usually became each group's presenters when we had presentation time. This issue has been raised couple of times in teachers' reflections.

"I noticed that most of the times, more advanced students tend to talk compare to the shy and less advanced students. We may prepare activities that can be done in pairs more rather than whole group activities."

- HW's reflection March, 18, 2016

"In group activity, there are always some issues on each member's participation rate though, I should have encouraged some students who just sat and looked at the poster to be more involved in the activity."

- WK's reflection March, 11, 2016

"I had two new students as usual. One was in low proficiency and quiet, and another was in high proficiency and very talkative. The talkative student kept talking during the class. I tried to distribute the turns to talk but she always intercepted the turn whenever other talks."

-SY's reflection March, 27, 2016

We think some students who are shy and in lower language level are afraid of making mistakes and it causes them not to talk much. To distribute the speaking opportunities equally, at the first phase of our intervention, we prepared pair works, cooperative learning strategies, presentation checklist, and self-assessment. Then, at the next phase of intervention, including ex-interventions, we decided to add the activities for enhancing student's lexical knowledge because throughout our classroom observation, the students could involve speaking activity when they had more lexical knowledge on the themes and the tasks. The needs analysis in the beginning of this course shows that our students are the most confident in vocabulary, and the least confident in speaking, listening, and then, pronunciation (see Figure 1). We think that if we reinforce the student's strengths, the students can be more confidence which will lead to reducing negative affective filter such as stress, anxiety, lack of self-confidence, and so on.

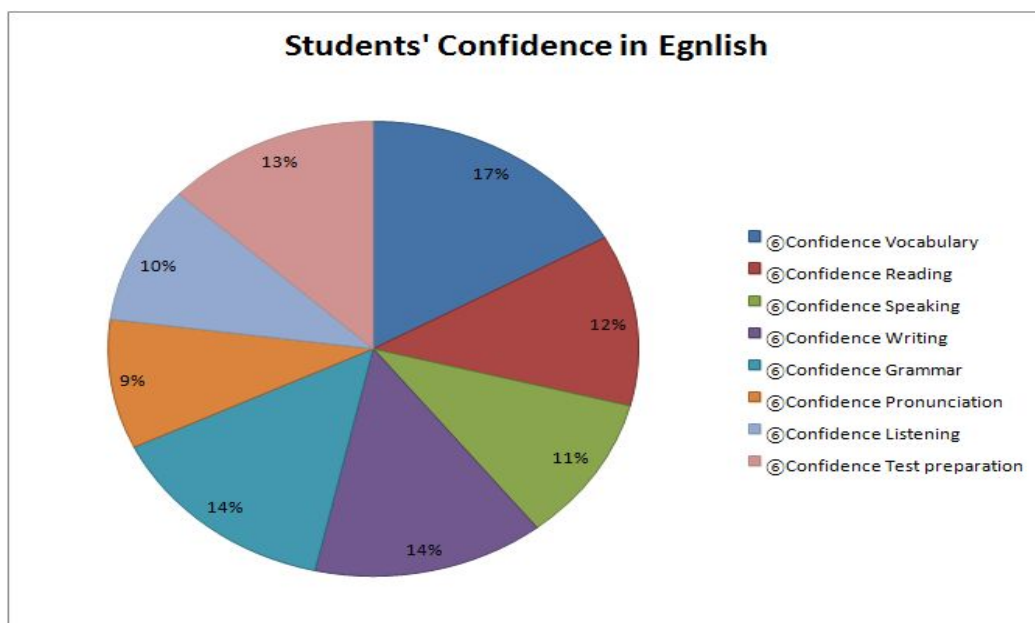


Figure 3.1 Needs Analysis in EAS class 2016. March

In short, we believe that if we help them to work in pair, pair work may lower their anxiety and they perhaps talk more comfortably to the partners. Also, cooperative learning strategies will surely give them opportunities to learn from their peers. Furthermore, self-assessment can make them aware of how much they participate in every class and will stimulate them to intentionally participate more. In addition, presentation checklist will be shown to the students and we believe that by awareness of how many times they present, each student may volunteer for the presentation. Finally, increasing the knowledge of vocabulary related to each day's lesson will make them more confident and it will surely motivate them to speak more.

4. Intervention

This section shows all intervention plans and data collection. The first intervention plan was applied from 7th week of the course and since the first intervention, we have collected the data throughout classroom observation, EPOC, and Self-Assessment.

4.1. Intervention plans

	Treatment	Description
week 7	Intervention week 1 Cooperative learning strategies (Writearound) Equal presentation opportunity Self-assessment	In order to help students to participate actively in activities and have more equal speaking opportunities, we planned four types of intervention strategies: pair work, cooperative learning strategies, self-assessment, and equal presentation opportunity chart. In addition, we applied lexical enhancement strategy after three intervention weeks as we noticed the students needed to increase word knowledge in order to speak more confidently using target language. We implemented the intervention strategies and observed our students based on the plans for five weeks. However, the pair work plan and cooperative learning strategies were done every other week to see the effectiveness of the system.
week 9	Intervention week 2 Pair work Equal presentation opportunity Self-assessment	
week 10	Intervention week 3 Cooperative learning strategies (modified Jigsaw) Equal presentation opportunity Self-assessment	
week 11	Intervention week 4 Pairwork Lexical enhancement (Crossword puzzle, Ice Cream Painting) Equal presentation opportunity Self-assessment	
week 12	Intervention week 5 Cooperative learning strategies (Tea party & Writearound) Lexical enhancement (Bingo) Equal presentation opportunity Self-assessment	

4.2. Data Collection

In this action research, a mixed method was used to collect the qualitative and the quantitative data

from the participants in English in Action Speaking class, the students (called little sisters) and the teachers (called big sisters) including the supervisor of the practicum course. The data was collected in this way: Classroom Observation, EPOC, and Self-Assessment.

1) Classroom Observation

For the classroom observation, Teachers' every week reflections on the practicum reflection board and classroom video tapes were used. All teachers in English in Action Speaking wrote their reflections every week on the board which was accessible only to the teachers in the program and those reflections gave plentiful information of the dynamic between students and students, and between students and teachers. Through these reflections, we could get the useful information and the insights to figure out whether the interventions worked or not and whether we needed to change our strategies. Also, the videos which were taped during every class since the fourth week of EAS class gave more objective evidences that had showed how effectively or ineffectively our interventions worked.

2) Equal Presentation Opportunity Chart (EPOC)

EPOC (see appendix A) was designed to record who gave the presentation to the whole group or within the group in a small group work. This chart showed us by whom and how often presentations were given. This was checked by each teacher at the end of each class for 5 weeks. This chart also was shown to the students so that they could know how often and how many times they presented.

3) Self-Assessment

At the end of every class, all students filled out the form of self-assessment (see appendix B). This includes 4 questionnaires with four choices, yes, so-so, not really, no, and 1 qualitative questionnaire which asks students how they can improve their participation next time. 4 questionnaires are below:

1. I actively participated in all the activities today.
2. I asked questions to others to carry out the activities.
3. I provided some ideas to complete the tasks.
4. I volunteered to present our group work.

The students' answers were counted and summed up in the excel program in order to see how their answers changed throughout the interventions.

Also, the answers of the last question were categorized in three common themes after they were collected: Reading Homework, Vocabulary, and Presentation.

5. Results

5.1. Equal presentation opportunity chart

In English in Action Speaking class, to give students equal presentation opportunities, we made a chart named Equal Presentation Opportunity Chart (EPOC, see appendix A) and have tried to take advantage of it. We explained to other teachers the purpose of the chart and it has been shown to students in order to recognize how many times they themselves have given presentation to the whole class or in their groups so far. To see how EPOC affects the number of presentation given by each student, we collected data from the EPOC result from week 1 to week 5 of interventions. The result of the EPOC is shown in the Figures below.



Figure 5.1.1 Result of Group A

As we can see, Group A shows that students in Group A succeeded in having more even presentation opportunities than other groups. We think the big sister of this group used the EPOC effectively to give students equal speaking chance. The most possible reason this group could yield positive effects from EPOC system is that the big sister of this group payed attention to give equal opportunities with this chart system. We could see that she deeply cared this system from her reflections.

... In order to have an equal opportunity to present our group's idea, I encouraged them to do 'rock, paper, scissors'.

- HW on Apr, 08, 2016

... I noticed that because of the checklist system (EPOC), the sisters had an equal opportunity to present either in group or in class this week. In my opinion, the system works well since the

sisters can see how often they have been presenting; this led them to volunteer more for the presentation opportunities.

- HW on May, 20, 2016

Figure 5.1.2 shows that students in Group B had quite even presentation opportunities. We concluded that the big sister of this group paid more attention when students deciding who would present using EPOC. However, interesting fact is that, still, SB-1 and SB-2 with lower proficiency level did presentation less than other students in spite of EPOC system.

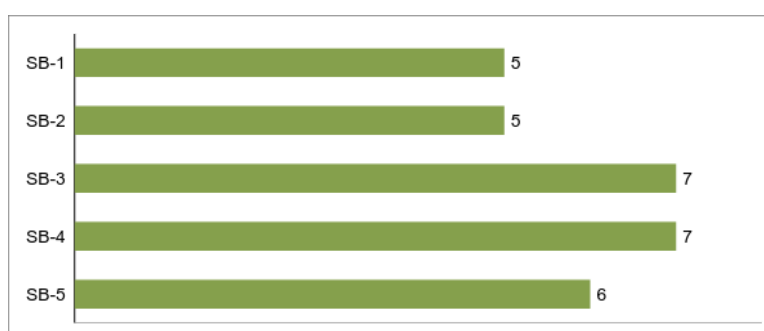


Figure 5.1.2 Result of Group B

Moreover, from the reflection of the big sister of group B, we found that the big sister paid big attention to this EPOC system so that it worked well. She explained the purpose of EPOC and facilitated students to take turns using this system.

... Also, I gave most of my little sisters whole group presentation opportunity. I showed them the equal presentation opportunity chart and explained the goal of the chart, giving them equal chance to speak to the whole class. They seemed to understand the goal of chart and took turns presenting when they were required to present to the whole class.

- WK on May, 02, 2016

... Also, my little sisters had equal opportunities in presenting their work and without my intervention. They divided things they had to do since they all knew they needed to have presenting opportunities equally.

- WK on May, 15, 2016

In Figure 5.1.3, we found that students in Group C had quite even presentation opportunities except SC-4 student. We concluded that SC-4 has not only high proficiency level, but also outgoing and hardworking personality so that she presented when she sat with other group members. That's why she had the most presentation opportunities in the whole class.

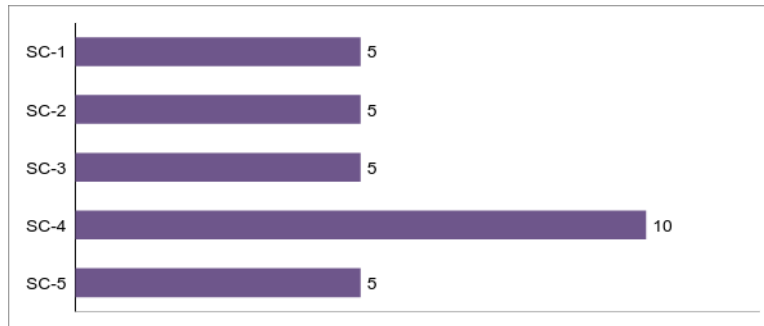


Figure 5.1.3 Result of Group C

Big sister of Group C showed her endeavor to use this EPOC and the positive effects of it in her reflections.

Moreover, before they chose the people who would present, I showed them the checklist of presentation and accordingly they volunteered themselves for the whole group presentation.

- SY on May, 01, 2016

....whenever we had group presentations, I showed the students our presentation checklist. The checklist informed them of who had many presentation opportunities and who had less. According to the list, the students decided who would present.

- SY on May, 21, 2016

Figure 5.1.4 shows that students in Group D had relatively even presentation opportunities except SD-5. SD-5 was absent since intervention week 2 because of her job training. Since the group atmosphere was quite active because of students' nature and characteristics in this group even though big sister didn't care much on the use of EPOC, students could have relatively even presentation chances.

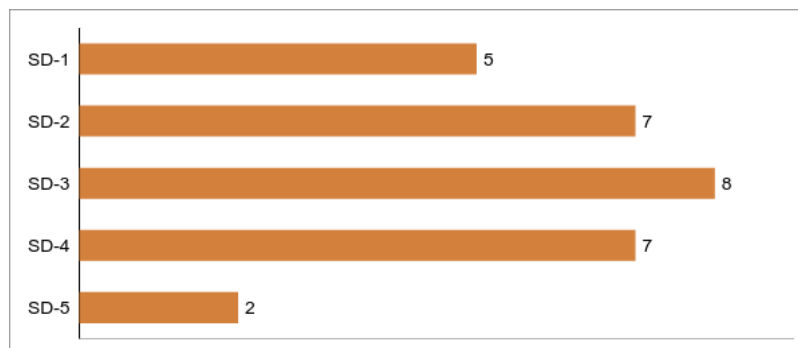


Figure 5.1.4 Result of Group D

Group E failed to give students even presentation opportunities since SA-4 who has the highest

proficiency level presented too much. Also, SA-2 and SA-3 had just three presentation opportunities during the whole six intervention weeks even though they weren't absent. We think that the big sister of this group didn't take into account EPOC system or didn't facilitate enough students who are shy to have more chances to present.

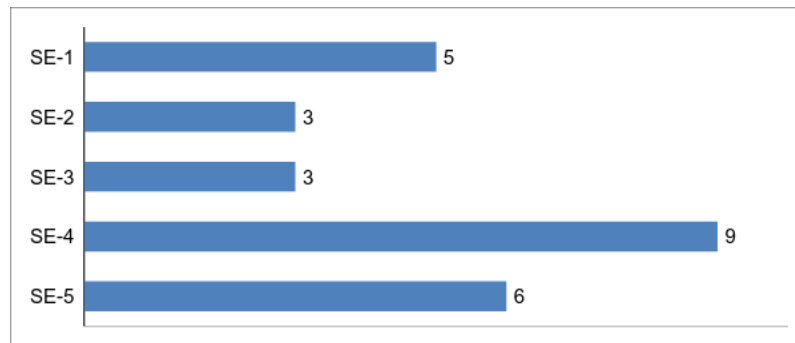


Figure 5.1.5 Result of Group E

Figure 5.1.6 and Figure 5.1.7 also shows that students in group F and G had even presentation opportunities as well owing to effective EPOC use by big sisters.

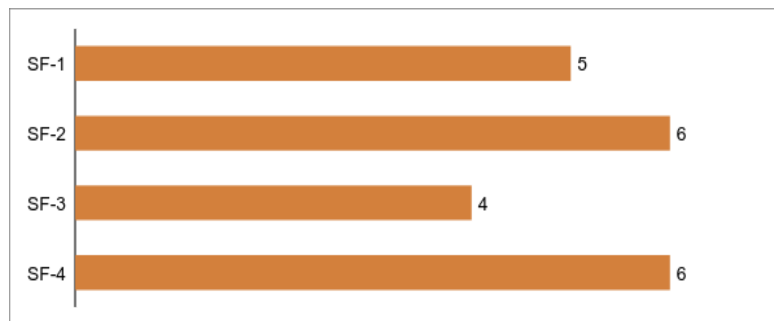


Figure 5.1.6 Result of Group F

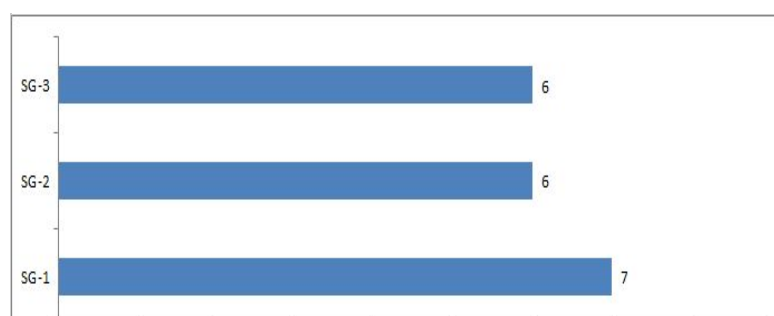


Figure 5.1.7 Result of Group G

In terms of students' initiative, we found that EPOC promotes students to volunteer for the whole group presentation and Figure 5.1.8, self-assessment result, also shows the positive effect of EPOC. The answers to the fourth question of self-assessment show that the number of students who said "I volunteered to present our group work" has increased over time. We concluded that students could

see how many times they presented to the whole group and they volunteered to catch up with other students who had already done whole group presentation. Also, based on the reflection we could see that EPOC promotes students to volunteer while performing class activities.

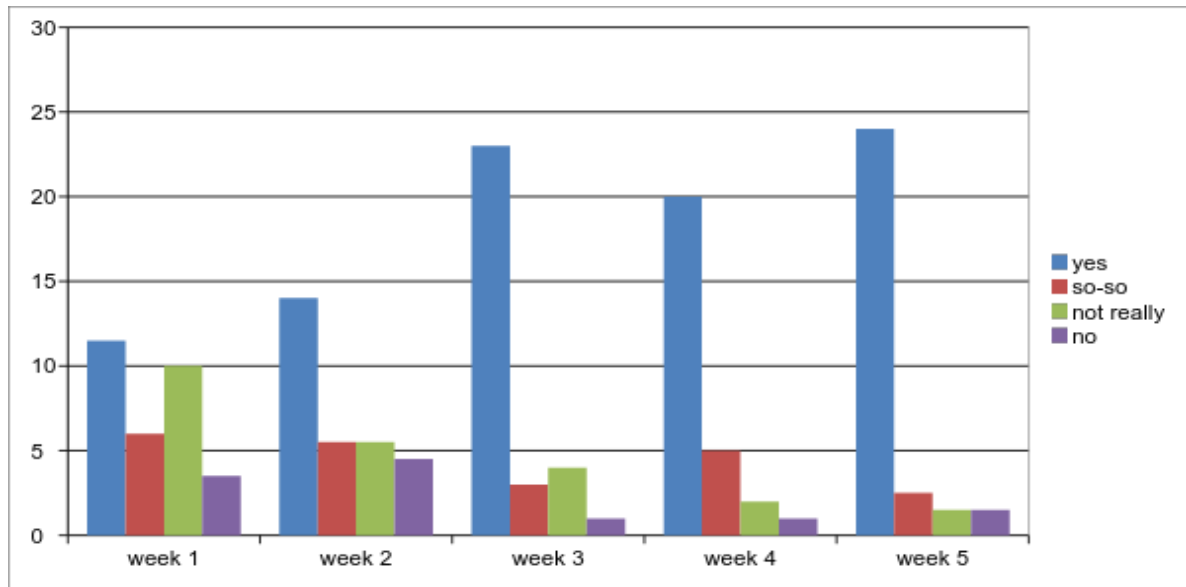


Figure 5.1.8 Result of self-assessment no.4 **I volunteered to present our group work.**

From the all figures above, all in all the chances of presentation were relatively evenly distributed than before EPOC system was implemented. Since week 4, we have videotaped our classroom and when we watched the classes through the classroom videos, we found that in the beginning of EAS course, we usually could see the same students from each group came to the front and presented on behalf of their group. However, after the intervention, we noticed that in every class, different students appeared at the front for the whole group presentation. Dr. D.R., who had supervised our practicum and watched those video together, also mentioned in class that our recent classroom videos showed that many different students participated in the whole group presentation. This proved the effectiveness of using EPOC.

Also, we found that some students actively took part in presentation activities when they were at the other groups, so they had more ticks on the chart. Therefore, EPOC system showed that it also worked when students were at the other groups, which might discourage students to participate in class activities. Additionally, EPOC promoted students to volunteer on tasks since they could see how many times they presented.

However, one of the seven total groups doesn't seem to give even presentation opportunities to students. At this point we can see how important teacher's role is in equally giving chance to speak to students.

5.2. Increased students' participation

From the data, we found that some intervention results show that students' participation in the activities has increased. The interventions are self-assessment and cooperative learning strategy. In order to help students to speak more, we implemented self-assessment opportunity along with other intervention plans. We thought it could help the students to be aware of their participation in the activities. There are four statements and one question for students to assess themselves (See appendix B)

Figure 5.2.1 shows the result of the first statement: I actively participated in all the activities today. This showed a negative result on the second week since the students had a false assumption about the assessment. They weren't being honest about the statement on the first week since they thought this assessment was a part of the grades. However, the students were honest from the second assessment as we gave them a clear explanation about it. The figure shows that the students' participation in the activities started to increase from the third week which means the students have been having more opportunities to speak. However, we noticed that the blue bar became smaller on the fourth week. This is because we didn't use a mean score on the third week since we had only one class because of the national holiday, Children's Day. In addition, there was more presentation opportunities on the third week compare to the fourth and fifth week which we can possibly guess that the students could have felt that they had more actively participated in the activities. Therefore, in overall, we can claim that the students' participation and speaking opportunities were increasing from the third week until the fifth week since they are aware of their performance using the target language during classes by assessing it by themselves. Specifically, as the blue bar for responding yes is much higher than other bars, we can probably argue that the students had more equal opportunities to speak.

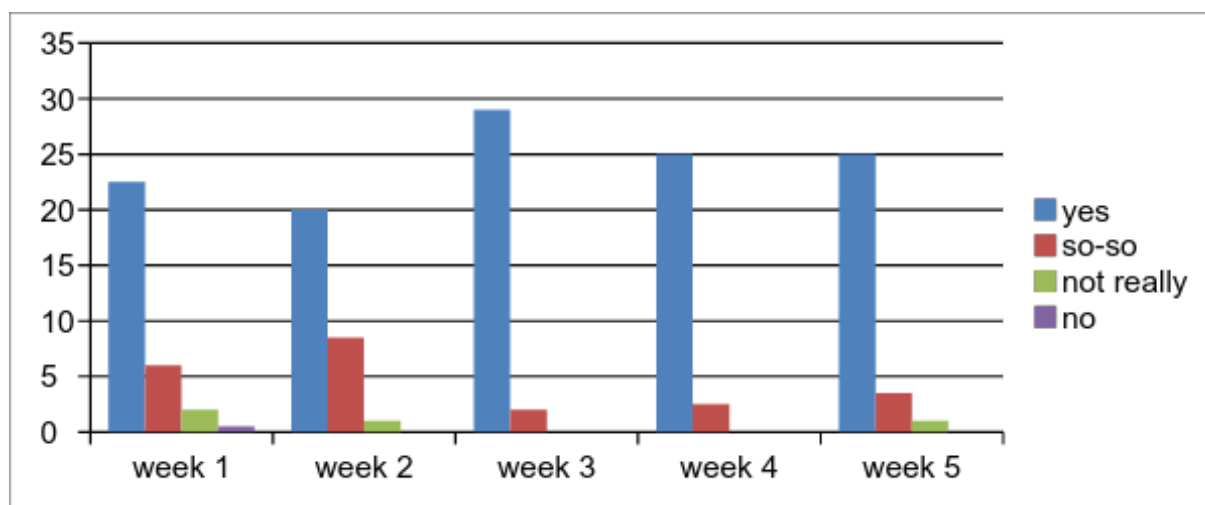


Figure 5.2.1: I actively participated in all the activities today

Figure 5.2.2 shows the result of statement 2: I asked questions to others to carry out the activities. This result has the same problem on the second week because of the false assumption that the students had on the assessment. From the Figure 2.2, we also noticed that the blue bar on the third week is higher than the blue bars on the fourth and fifth week because of the single class and more presentation opportunities on the week. However, similar to the result of the first statement, this shows a positive outcome in overall. The majority of students have been actively asking questions to carry out the activities, which can be interpreted that students' speaking opportunities have increased.

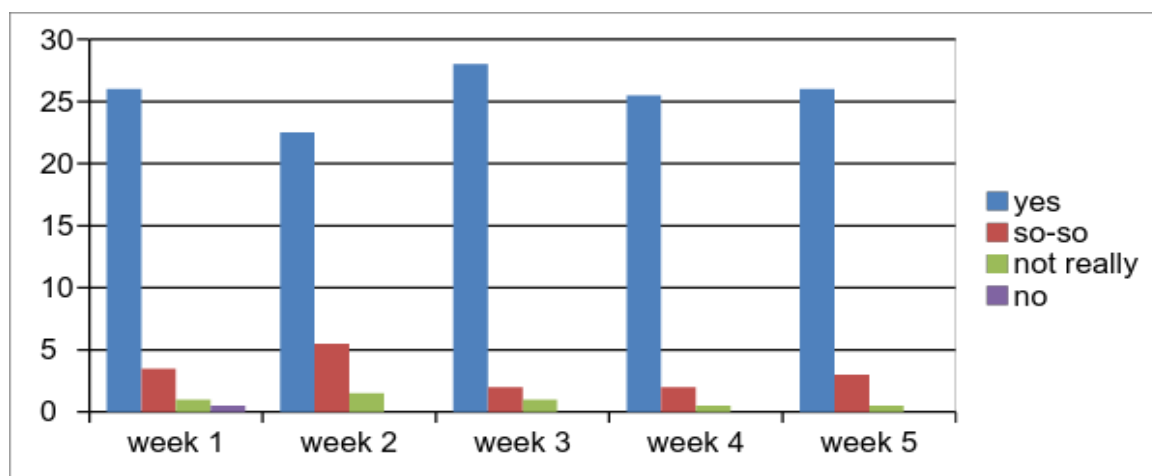


Figure 5.2.2: I asked questions to others to carry out the activities.

Figure 5.2.3 shows the result of the statement 3: I provided some ideas to complete the tasks. Like the Figure 5.2.1 and Figure 5.2.2, the blue bar has decreased on the second week because of the students' false assumption on the self-assessment and also went down on the fourth week with the same issues on the third week. Nevertheless, on the whole, we can see the students have been

providing some ideas for the activities, and the blue bar (yes) has gradually increased every week. From this, we can assert that the students have been having more opportunities to talk during the class. In addition, as the majority of students checked ‘yes’ on this statement, we can see that they have been having more equal opportunities to speak.

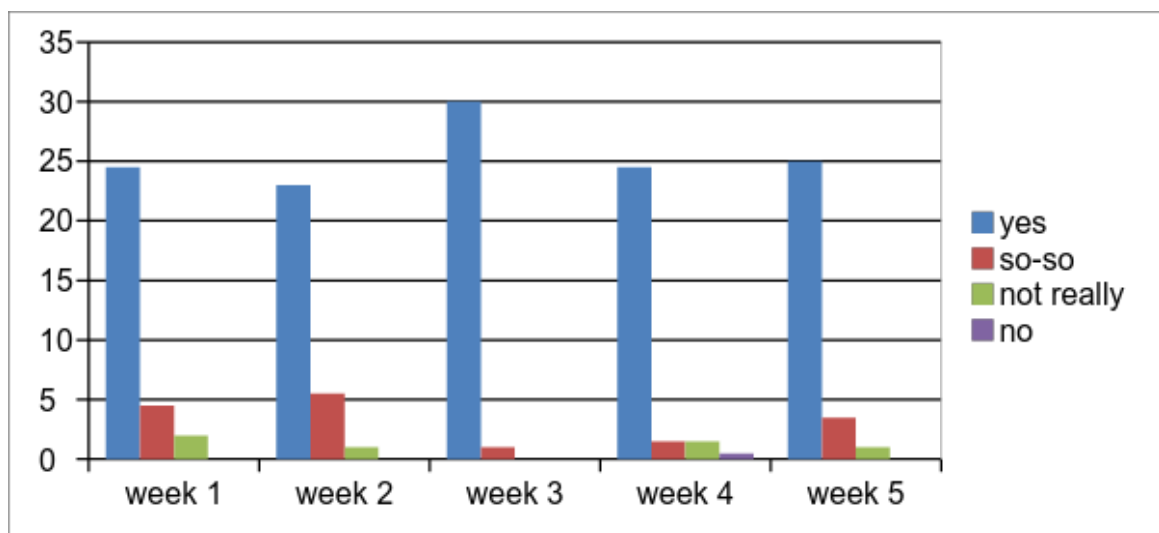


Figure 5.2.3: I provided some ideas to complete the tasks.

In addition, as we know, cooperative learning involves students working in teams to accomplish a common goal. However, cooperative learning is not simply a synonym for students working in groups. In cooperative learning, team members are obliged to rely on one another to achieve the goal. If any team members fail to do their part, everyone suffers consequences. All students in a group are held accountable for doing their share of the work and for mastery of all of the material to be learned. Although some of the group work may be parceled out and done individually, some must be done interactively, with group members providing one another with feedback, challenging reasoning and conclusions, and perhaps most importantly, teaching and encouraging one another. Students are encouraged and helped to develop and practice trust-building, leadership, decision-making, communication, and conflict management skills. Team members set group goals, periodically assess what they are doing well as a team, and identify changes they will make to function more effectively in the future.

In order to increase students’ participation in speaking opportunities, we implemented cooperative learning activities. They were ‘writearound’, ‘modified Jigsaw’ and ‘tea party’. In each activity, we noticed that the students discussed together and negotiated the meaning of vocabulary. Also, higher proficiency students helped with lexical knowledge and lower proficiency ones

provided outstanding ideas to carry out their tasks. Throughout this cooperative learning the students could have more knowledge which led the lower affective filter and helped them to have more speaking opportunities.

In Make a mini scenario, my group split into two groups of three students. In order to create a story from the given first sentence, they discussed a lot and had fun. In a small group, each student gave their ideas and discussed them and also suggested other opinions. There were full of interactions between the students. After their scenario was rolling around in a whole class and finally came back to them, they were excited at how their story had been changed from their original thought.

- SY on April, 18, 2016

In each sub-group, one student led the group discussion and became a moderator among members. Also, one student who had more knowledge about the topic gave the members more information beyond the given list. They asked and answered some questions several times until they understood the delivered knowledge.....They delivered what they searched and concluded, with the logic based on the information. Each sub-group seemed to be experts of the topic.

- SY on Mon, May, 9, 2016

In Writearound activity, one student in lower proficiency took time to read and struggled with what to write in the beginning. However, when she received and read the next person's paper, she could manage to write something on it. If she had worked alone, she might have had a few sentences but when her paper came back to her, she found out many sentences on it. This helped her understand the content for the activity and gave her the opportunity to share what she had on the paper.

- SY on May 21, 2016

'Tea party' and 'write around' worked well enough to encourage all students to speak more. As I mentioned above, the purpose of those two cooperative learning opportunities was to provide students more equal opportunities to speak as we have been noticed that some of the little sisters who are shy and have low English proficiency level are still reluctant to speak and present while others tend to dominate speaking opportunities.

- HW on May 20, 2016

As we can see above, the students became more confident because of the obtained knowledge through the cooperative learning activities and were surely motivated to speak more.

5.3. Low proficiency level students' increased participation

From the class observation at the beginning of the course, we found that there are some students who have low proficiency English level and are reluctant to speak during the group discussion. Because of the problem, we planned some intervention strategies, pair work and lexical enhancement opportunity. From the data we gathered, we found that low proficiency students' participation has

increased by using the intervention strategies. We collected classroom observation data through our teachers' weekly reflections. According to the data, pair work has helped each student talk to their partners. Here are the examples of teachers' reflections:

...as those two activities held in pairs, all of my little sisters (students) had equal opportunities to speak. I felt that it will be beneficial if we plan more pair up activities in the future since students who have low language proficiency level and are shy can participate more and benefit from doing the activities.

- HW on April, 15, 2016

Bingo game was played in pairs. All my students got the chance to talk and they enjoyed.

- SY on Apr 18, 2016

On Tuesday, there were pair activities two times. I tried to mingle my members with new ones. But one pair didn't start to talk and just looked at the table while other pairs were busy talking. They had a hard time in taking initiative for discussion. When I was about to intervene them, one of them initiated the conversation.

- SY on Apr 29, 2016

...on Tuesday, while interviewing their partners about the direct or indirect cultural shock experiences in pairs, I noticed that everybody was busy talking about the experiences and listening to their partners carefully. They even took turns to present one of their experiences to other group members.....Each pair enjoyed taking turns to provide three sentences to complete a formal letter to present at the annual family reunion regarding the Chinese traditional wedding custom.

- HW on Apr 29, 2016

In the first activity on Tuesday, students were actively participated because they were paired up in each group. Each member had more chance to talk and they enjoyed to talk about culture shock experiences.

- EA on May 1, 2016

For example, when Chinese student and shy student sat together as a pair, they didn't create good results and the atmosphere was a little bit awkward I think. Therefore, when students arrived in class I gave them a kind of seating plan to make better pairs than before. I tried to blend high and low proficiency in a pair. Also, my little sisters had equal opportunities in presenting their work and without my intervention. They divided things they had to do since they all knew they needed to have presenting opportunities equally.

- WK on May, 15, 2016

....during a pair activity, HY from another group began to speak in Korean with her partner. Once I noticed that, I used my usual strategy to switch her language back to English but she kept talking in Korean time to time. So I had to tell her not to speak in Korean directly. The reason they were paired up is that HY's proficiency is high but her partner, SW, is in low proficiency. The interesting thing is that it was Hayeon who spoke in Korean the most of the time but SW tried her best not to speak in Korean.

- H on May 22, 2016

Each week during our intervention, the teachers reported that the students in pairs were busy talking to and listening to their partners. Also, two teachers (HW and SY on April, 29) reported that the pairs could present their experiences to the group. This means that each student had an equal speaking opportunity and this pair work helped shy students volunteer themselves to present to the group. Moreover, we found the valuable and important role of pair work activities, in SY's reflection on Apr 29. Two students in pair had a similar character which is shy and unwilling to take initiative for conversation because of their proficiency level. None of them seemed to want to initiate but they finally managed to start their conversation and to finish the task. We are sure that if it was not pair work but group work, they might hide themselves behind other members and did not say anything. However, it was pair work and they felt obliged for one of them to start the conversation to accomplish their task and they did it.

In addition, we found that when the students, especially low proficiency level students had more lexical knowledge, their involvement in the given tasks was increased. Considering this influence of lexical knowledge, we decided to prepare enhancing student's lexical knowledge activities for equal speaking opportunity because throughout our classroom observation, the students could involve speaking activity when they had more lexical knowledge on the themes and the tasks. The needs analysis in the beginning of this course shows that our students are the most confident in vocabulary, and the least confident in speaking, listening, and then, pronunciation (see Figure 1.1). We think that if we reinforce the student's strengths, the students can be more confident which will lead to reducing negative affective filter such as stress, anxiety, lack of self-confidence, and so on. The following teachers' reflections prove this:

...students had lots of opportunities to speak storytelling informally using connectors (from reading homework and bingo game, added by the writer). I think students used the target language during all activities without any pause.

- WK on Apr 18, 2016

....the sisters were able to use lots of information from the reading homeworkAs the sisters were confident about their plans.....all of the group members participated in presenting the plans.

- HW on Apr 29, 2016

....students actively participated to produce target language which is formal narrative.....and it was good that students could have ideas about the information for the activities through the reading homework.

- EA on May 1, 2016

The first activity in each day, Cross puzzle and Ice cream painting, made students focus on

the vocabulary which was targeted in the reading homework and for the day tasks.....These lexical enhancement activities made them aware of many different adjectives to describe music and art, and how they feel about the artistic areas and caused them to speak more with their partners because they wanted to give better and easier explanation for their partners to find the answers.

- SY on May 16, 2016

.....from your reflection and those of your classmates, it is evident that the lexical enhancement aspect of your lessons and it's connection with the various activities were effective in helping students to participate more and to use the target vocabulary more in the lesson.

- Dr. D.R. on May 18, 2016

5.4. Other outcome

On the question 5 from the self-assessment, ‘*What can you do to improve your participation next time?*’, students responded in various ways. Their answers are categorized into three groups: reading homework, vocabulary, and presentation.

Reading Homework
<p><i>Finish my homework before come to class. – K.J</i></p> <p><i>Before the class, I will read the reading materials and memorize the vocabulary. – T.k</i></p> <p><i>Read the reading homework more carefully – E.y</i></p> <p><i>Do my reading assignment in advance. – N.h</i></p> <p><i>Read reading HW more than today. – S.b</i></p> <p><i>Do reading homework more carefully. – J.h</i></p> <p><i>Read the reading homework hard – S.b</i></p> <p><i>Do my homework – J.h</i></p>
Vocabulary
<p><i>I study vocabulary because I am not good at speaking English, so when I am good at speaking English, I will do that.- S.b</i></p> <p><i>Study vocabulary – J.s</i></p> <p><i>Study more words – J.h</i></p> <p><i>I think my vocabulary is poor, so I will prepare to learn more words before class. – Z.n</i></p> <p><i>I reread vocabulary. – S.b</i></p> <p><i>Focus on vocabulary more while I am doing my homework – N.h</i></p>

<p><i>Memorize many new vocabularies. – S.y</i></p> <p><i>I think I need to know more vocabulary – Y.j</i></p>
<p>Presentation</p>
<p><i>Present in front of the whole class. – J.i</i></p> <p><i>I just think about sharing the opportunities of presentation for all. – M.h</i></p> <p><i>I will try to have a presentation as a representative for my group. – S.h</i></p> <p><i>Do presentation. – N.e</i></p> <p><i>Present instead of making others present – D.b</i></p> <p><i>Get more chance to present – S.b</i></p> <p><i>I will volunteer to present – H.s</i></p> <p><i>I will volunteer for presentation next time – T.k</i></p> <p><i>Do presentation – Y.l</i></p> <p><i>I have to volunteer for presentation. – E.y</i></p> <p><i>Present – Y.l</i></p> <p><i>Present – J.e</i></p>

These results show that students are willing to participate more actively in the class by reading the homework before the class, doing more presentation during the class, and studying more vocabulary. In order to help students to speak more, we as teachers have to continue providing reading homework relating to the class activities, adding more lexical enhancement opportunity for students to improve their vocabulary skills, and using presentation checklist thoroughly, so the students can have more equal opportunity to speak.

6. Discussion and implication

This action research was carried out based on three theories: ZPD, cooperative learning strategy, and self-assessment. As far as we were concerned, those theories were effective to help students to increase their speaking opportunities. According to Vygotsky (1978), “the zone of proximal development is defined as those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state (p.45).” In other words, it is the distance between the learner’s individual ability and the ability to perform with assistance is the ZPD. From this concept, ZPD is defined where assistance is required and teaching

happens with given assistance.

There are four stages in ZPD. The first stage of the ZPD is where performance is assisted by more capable others. In this stage, learners can't function as independent agents and they depend on capable others such as teachers or peers. Learners in this stage develop their understanding through conversation during the task performance. They can be assisted by questions, feedback, and other cognitive structuring, called scaffolding. During this stage, learners change from other-regulation to self-regulation. The second stage is where performance is assisted by the self. However, it doesn't mean that learners can perfectly perform or automatize given tasks. In this stage, they begin to control themselves without teachers' instruction, which means self-instruction. This self-speech instruction is an important aspect of cognitive development. The third stage is where performance is developed, automatized, and 'fossilized'. Once the task performance can be done well, it starts to be automatized. In this stage, when performing tasks, instructions are no longer needed. The fourth stage is where de-automatization of performance leads to recursion back through the ZPD. During this stage, when learners who master cognitive strategies encounter difficulties, they go back to the ZPD for the problematic objects again and ask for help from others. Even competent teachers can experience this process and enhance their performance. As the ZPD is the theory that can be incorporated to assist students' learning, we tried to provide opportunities for students to get help from teachers and peers through active interactions and exploring the materials. For example, we provided cooperative learning strategies for all students to have more equal speaking opportunities and especially for low proficiency students to be assisted from interaction with others who are slightly advanced. In addition, we added more lexical items and articles relating to the class discussions in the reading homework for students to study in advance. As we stated previously, those strategies helped students to participate more and to have more equal speaking opportunities. Moreover, we as big sisters jumped into the activities whenever the little sisters needed help. The students also had opportunities to study some difficult vocabularies chosen from the reading homework at the beginning of each class. They could ask other group members or big sisters the meaning of the vocabularies. As a result, the intervention strategies' data turned into positive outcomes as we mentioned earlier.

According to Leiser (2004), research has shown that learners generally perform better in classroom tasks while working together than alone (e.g., Storch, 1999). "Yule and Macdonald (1990) found that when higher and lower proficiency learners had certain roles within the task, more negotiation of meaning and turn taking took place" (Leiser, 2004 , p. 75). Many researchers argue

that cooperative learning puts the student at the center of the class and pair work and group work give much more chances for the students to practice what they already know or what they want to experiment with based on their background knowledge. In a cooperative working environment, students will participate actively and use the target language to complete the given tasks properly. These cooperative opportunities facilitate students' learning. Kagan (1988) states that cooperative learning is a good way for both high proficiency level and low proficiency level students to learn to facilitate learning. In addition, he strongly insists that students in cooperative learning teams increase in self-esteem as they do better academically and are accepted more by their peers. Kagan (1988) also emphasizes that teachers have to provide this opportunity to the students.

It is true that the students in EAS class have different language levels, and some of them are a bit shy. However, they will perform much better in group works as the advanced students can assist the lower level students. The lower level students will benefit from interaction with peers and teachers. From the data, we can assert that our prediction on using the cooperative learning theory worked well. As we previously indicated, we gave students cooperative learning opportunities for them to have more equal speaking opportunities and for those who have lower English proficiency level to get assistance from others. For instance, we provided the pair work chances and cooperative learning activities every other week. We can claim that low English proficiency level students had more chances to use the target language when doing pair work activities. From the data using those cooperative learning strategies, we discovered that students had more actively participated in activities and the low proficiency level students had increased their speaking opportunities as we have provided some various data from teachers' reflections earlier.

Lastly, self-assessment plays an important role in this research. "Throughout the process of acquiring a second language (L2), learners often assess their own developing abilities. Commonly, this self-assessment can facilitate their learning by helping them develop strategies to enhance their linguistic capabilities" (MacIntyre, Noels, & Clément, 1997, p.266). Researchers have asserted that self-perceptions of competence are useful for informally assessing mastery of particular skills and may be a key component in any self-regulated learning program. The interest of self-assessment is increasing in recent years along with promotion of alternative assessment. In Vygotskian terms, self-regulated learners are seen as exercising more control and autonomy over the process and outcome of their own learning when compared with other-related learners (Cameron, 2001). Oscarson (1989) also offered a number of reasons why self-assessment can be beneficial for formative purposes. Such reasons include: 1) the practice of self-evaluating oneself promotes

learning, 2) self-assessment raises learners' awareness of their own learning, 3) it tends to improve the goal orientation of individual learners, 4) it expands the range of assessments (into affective domains in particular), 5) it may ease the burden of assessment placed on teachers, 6) it may have the long-term effect of improving learners autonomy. The advantage of self-assessment is learner-centered language teaching and self-regulated language learning. “When students engage in self-assessment and peer assessment, they develop a better understanding of learning goals, internalize the criteria for high-quality work, and develop metacognitive skills” (Evertson and Neal, 2006, p. 15).

Self-assessment was one of the intervention plans in order to help our students to have equal speaking opportunities and encourage lower proficiency level students to participate more in using the target language. From the self-assessment data, we can argue that the self-assessment helped students to be aware of their performances in class. There were five statements on the assessment. They are:

- 1 I actively participated in all the activities today.
- 2 I asked questions to others to carry out the activities.
- 3 I provided some ideas to complete the tasks.
- 4 I volunteered to present our group work.
- 5 What can you do to improve your participation next time?

The data shows that all of the above results are positive, which indicates that the students had actively participate in activities and had more speaking opportunities. In our opinion, this is because self-assessment was a valuable chance for students to evaluate themselves, and it gave the students motivation for the next learning opportunity.

Based on the results of this action report, we would like to suggest meaningful ways of applying the findings to the real classroom.

First, the use of equal presentation opportunity chart can be used for various language classrooms to give students even speaking opportunities to students. We clearly saw how the use of EPOC positively affected on class where students had quite even presentation opportunities and volunteered to present to the whole group. Thus, any teachers who want to have his or her students participate more evenly can take advantage of this EPOC. However, regarding the fact that EPOC system was

used for adult students with high language proficiency who might be very capable of performing tasks without difficulties, teachers should make some modifications depending on students' proficiency level or age. For example, to use this system for young learners, teachers can add more rewarding system with EPOC to maximize its positive effects.

Second, self-assessment can be employed in language classroom as well to promote all students to have speaking opportunities. With self-assessment at every end of class, students can have a time to think how much they took part in the class activities, which helped them to make endeavors to participate more for the following classes. Therefore, teachers who want to give students chances to look back on their performances and make plans for better participation can make use of self-assessment system.

Lastly, teachers can prepare more fair activities and collaborative learning strategy activities for students to have more and even speaking opportunities. Since students in pairs need to keep communicating with their partners anyway, low proficiency students in pairs are able to have more chances to speak than in bigger groups.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Summary

This Action Research project inquired if equal speaking opportunity, especially with low language proficiency students, can be obtained by implementing pair work, cooperative learning strategies, lexical enhancement, self-assessment, and the presentation checklist (EPOC) inspired by the studies performed by Vygotsky (1978), Leeser (2004), and Oscarson (1989). This project started with 35 undergraduate students from S. Women's University in Seoul, and was carried out in the evening class which happened twice a week for 15 weeks. The students were grouped in 7 groups with 7 teachers from the graduate school program. Reading homework and speaking homework were given to the students every week. After each intervention, data was collected. In this study, it was discovered that Equal Presentation Opportunity Chart was effective to give students equal speaking opportunity. It was also revealed that using pair work, cooperative learning strategies, and lexical enhancement promoted the participation of the low proficiency students in the given tasks. In addition, it was proved that the self-assessment had a good influence on equal speaking opportunity.

7.2 Limitations

There were a couple of limitations throughout this action research. First, even though the students generally got the even speaking opportunity, this project showed that compared to the higher proficiency students, the lower proficiency students still had less speaking and presentation opportunities. Another limitation is the big sisters' different facilitation in each group. We found that when a big sister, as a group leader, considered low proficiency students' participation and encouraged them to volunteer in presentation, the group's equal presentation opportunity was apparent. However, when a big sister was not good at facilitating her group for the less participating students, the group members' participation was not balanced.

7.3 Future Studies

For the future studies, it may be interesting to see how young learners might perform in a study with similar settings. This will be possibly helpful for the teachers who are dealing with the young students who are unwilling to participate and hardly volunteer for presentation in front of other students. Also, researchers may experiment which strategy would be more effective to give students equal speaking opportunity. This may give teachers the insights of which strategy they can appropriately apply to their target students when they make lesson plans.

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Appendix A: Equal Presentation Opportunity Chart

★ Please Check the box V

Name	Week 1		Week 2		Week 3		Week 4		Week 5	
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										

Appendix B: Self-Assessment

★ Please Check the box V.

Name: _____

	Yes	So-so	Not really	No
I actively participated in all the activities today.				
I asked questions to others to carry out the activities.				
I provided some ideas to complete the tasks.				
I volunteered to present our group work.				

❖ What can you do to improve your participation next time?