Abstract: This case study of 4 students learning English in a Multi-user virtual environment (MUVE) explores the speaking self-efficacy and English speaking skill development. The result shows that speaking self-efficacy improved and MUVE fosters English speaking skill development through authentic target language use, more effective vocabulary learning, and self-regulated learning.

Background

The absence of input-rich learning environment and students' motivation have been one of the problems in English as a foreign Language (EFL) learning. Previous research found that Multi-user Virtual Environments (MUVEs) improve attitude toward English Learning (Zheng, 2006), encourage more language production (Bumgarner, 2008), develop communicative competence (Shih & Yang, 2008), and provide motivation to work outside set hours (Sekiguchi, Gruba, & Al-asmari, 2006).

This research investigated the speaking self-efficacy and English speaking skill development in a MUVE.

Literature review

Self-efficacy, influenced by enactive mastery experience, verbal persuasion, vicarious experience, and physiological states (Bandura, 1997), influences academic motivation, learning, and achievement (Pajares, 1996; Schunk, 1995). Learners, who believe that they can learn foreign language, will be more likely to learn the language than those who do not.

Learning is a socially situated, collaborative, and task-based procedure that occurs through interaction with others (Brown & Dunguid, 2000). MUVE might act as a catalyst for change in students' self-efficacy and learning process (Ketelhut, 2007) since it provides opportunities for students to interact with others.

Case Study

Participants: 4 EFL learners of Universitas Islam Indonesia.

Learning Environment: virtual classes of Language lab, a MUVE-based English class in Second Life.

Activities: 6 sessions of MUVE-based English class at Language lab (Figures 1 & 2).

Data Collection: questionnaire, weekly interview, IELTS-based Speaking Test, and Participant observation.

Data Analysis: descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis, transcribing and coding based on Bandura's sources of self-efficacy.

Results

Speaking self-efficacy: Participants improved their speaking self-efficacy (Tables 1&2). The sources of speaking self-efficacy based on the interview and observation were enactive mastery experience, verbal persuasion, and physical and affective states.

Speaking Skills development: Participants improved their English speaking skill in terms of complexity of expressions (Table 4) despite slight improvement in English speaking test score (Table 3). MUVE fosters authentic target language use, more effective vocabulary learning, and motivation to engage in a more self-regulated learning.

Implications

Despite the good result on speaking self-efficacy improvement, this research involved only four participants, which might be difficult to judge the statistical validity. Besides, the results that MUVE supports English speaking skill development through authentic language use, more effective vocabulary learning, and its motivational effect to result more self-regulated EFL learners derived from a short case study. Further research in the topic should be conducted in longer research with larger number of participants and different methodologies.

References


The University of Sydney