

IMPLEMENTING TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING: A SOLUTION FOR ENGLISH TEACHERS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL

Dewi Nopita

Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji

dewinopita.umrah@gmail.com

Abstract: Teaching speaking brings a different challenge for teachers who teach English as a foreign language. Most English Foreign Language students are reluctant to speak. When the students speak, they focus more on grammar, not on meaning. To cope with this problem, English teachers can implement Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). TBLT is an approach which is based on the assumption that accuracy is acquired after fluency or after successful communication. This approach provides an environment which best promotes the natural language learning. Throughout this article, I would like to describe how TBLT work in each stage of teaching speaking as a foreign language.

Keyword : Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), teaching speaking

INTRODUCTION

English is a lingua franca, a language which is internationally used by people whose first language is different from each other (Harmer, 2007), and which is used for communication by more than one billion people around the world (see Johnson, 2001). This makes English become an important tool that everyone should master; making it one important school subjects in most schools in the world.

In Indonesia, English has been taught and received serious attention in all levels of study, i.e. Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, and High Schools. One common goal of teaching English in Indonesia, and probably in most schools in the world, is the students' ability to use English for communication through four language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Among other language skills, speaking is considered to be the basic mean for human to communicate what they feel and think. In line with this, Miller in Zainil (2010) mentions that people spend more than 40% of their time on listening, 35% on speaking, 16% on reading, and 9% on writing. It indicates that people spend much more time in speaking than in writing where both are means for people to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and feeling. In other words, speaking plays the most important role in human communication.

Considering the importance of speaking, English teachers, in teaching this skill, have to pay attention to how to make their students possess communicative competence which will help them able to communicate in spoken language communicatively. Related to this, Savignon in Zainil (2008) explains four abilities of communicative competence. First, a speaker needs to have linguistic competence which involves the

knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Second, a speaker should have an understanding of social context which refer to sociolinguistic competence. He is supposed to say the appropriate thing in a certain social situation. Third, a speaker has to have discourse competence which refers to the interpretation of an individual message. The last, a speaker should have strategic competence which refers to the coping or survival strategies used to sustain communication.

Related to the communicative competence mentioned above, teaching speaking is not an easy task, especially for English teachers who teach English as a foreign language. It is assumed that they find difficulties in making students get involved in speaking. Some students have low motivation to speak English. Some others have good ability in the grammar of English but are not able to speak communicatively. They are able to speak with correct grammar but are not able to say thing appropriately based on the social context. Moreover, some other students are still confused in understanding an individual message which is expressed through spoken language. Therefore, the teachers are supposed to employ an approach which can best help students achieve the communicative competence in speaking.

To make students achieve communicative competence in speaking, English teachers can employ Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in their classes. It is an approach which focuses on tasks of how to use English communicatively by referring to real life situations. In this paper, the writer would like to give a description of how to implement TBLT as a solution for English teachers to improve students' speaking skill.

DISCUSSION

What is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)?

TBLT is an approach which is based on the assumption that accuracy is acquired after fluency or after successful communication (Willis, 1996). This approach provides an environment which best promotes the natural language learning (Foster, 1999). It means that language use is very crucial in applying this approach. Students are given more opportunities to use the language to express their ideas in which their attentions focus on meaning.

Furthermore, as mentioned before, TBLT focuses its activities on tasks. Related to this, Nunan (2004) explains that there are two kinds of tasks, real world or target tasks and pedagogical tasks. Real world tasks are the uses of language beyond the classroom. On the other hand, pedagogical tasks are the uses of language that occur in the classroom. In applying TBLT, teachers give students communicative tasks (pedagogical tasks) which reflect the language use in real world (target tasks). Furthermore, he defines that a pedagogical task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form.

In addition, Nunan (2005) mentions some principles of TBLT. (1) Task dependency. One task should grow out of, and built upon the ones that have gone before. (2) Recycling. Recycling language maximizes opportunities for learning and activates the organic learning principles. (3) Active learning. Learners acquire the language by actively using it. (4) Integration of forms and functions. Learners are taught in ways that make clear the relationships between grammatical form, communicative function, and semantic meaning. (5) Learning strategies. In reproductive tasks, learners reproduce language models provided by the teacher, the textbook or the CD. These tasks are designed to give learners mastery of form, meaning and function, and provide a basis for creative tasks. In creative tasks, learners are recombining familiar elements in novel ways. (6) Learning strategies. Learners focus on learning process as well as language content. (7) Reflection. Learners should be given opportunities to reflect on what they have learned and how well they are doing.

Dealing with the tasks of TBLT, there are four characteristics proposed by Willis (1996). First, it provides the students with more activities to get exposed to the target language. Second, it does not inhibit students from setting up their own hypothesis and taking risks to test them out. Third, task-based teaching framework allows more flexibility for teacher. The last, it offers the teachers more options and create more dynamism in the classroom.

Furthermore, Willis (1996) also describes the framework for creating a task – based lesson which consist of three stages. Firstly, pre-task stage which consists of an introduction to the topic and to the task. The teacher presents what is expected from the students in the task phase, and gives clear instruction on what they will have to do at the task stage. The pre-task stage includes a model of the task. Secondly, during the task phase, in this stage, the students complete a task, depending on the type of activity. The teacher, here, is the observer or counselor in monitoring the tasks. So the methodology is more student-centered. Then the students prepare either a written or oral report to present to the class. They practice the report in their groups. The instructor takes equations and monitors the students. Finally, the students present their reports to the class and the teacher or the other students provide written or oral feedback. Thirdly, in the language focus stage, the teacher reviews what happened in the task, with regards to language and highlights relevant parts for the students to analyze. It may be language forms used by the students, problems that the students had, or forms that need to be covered more and were not used sufficiently. Then the teacher selects language areas to practice, based upon the needs of the students. Students do practice activities to increase their confidence and make a note of useful language. In this model the students are free of language control and they use their language resources to develop a natural context from their experiences with the language.

Implementing TBLT in Teaching Speaking to Improve Students' Speaking skill

Teaching speaking aims at maintaining students' ability to be able to speak well and to improve their ability in oral communication. In line with this, Harmer (2001) states that the aim of teaching speaking is to train students for communication. To do that, the

teacher should be able to develop activities which promote students to use language in real communication. Moreover, Wenxia (2008) says that the teacher should think, when teaching, not only about presenting language in a certain situation, but also as a communicative act. Learning speaking in English will be easier when learners are actively engaged in attempting to communicate.

Referring to the theories of TBLT and the aim of teaching speaking, it seems that Indonesian English teachers can employ TBLT in teaching speaking. It is aimed at making students able to use English in oral communication communicatively in Indonesian context. In implementing this approach, the teachers are required to consider the following aspects:

- The teachers have to choose topic for each lesson which is familiar to student. The topic should reflect real world tasks, so that the students are interested in learning and are motivated to use the language because it is applicable in their daily life.
- Before students do the task, the teachers have to explain what is expected from the students in the task phase, and gives clear instruction on what they will have to do at the task stage. It includes giving a model of the task they are going to do.
- In doing the task, students are given autonomy of how to do it. The emphasis is on the result of the task, not on whether they used a particular language form to complete the task. In this stage, the teacher can divide the students to work in pairs or in group. As stated previously, the teachers' role here is to observe and to monitor the task completion. For example, if the teachers asked the students to create a conversation on giving direction, they are free to choose the situation, such as in a hospital, in a public places, etc. It will automatically enlarge their vocabulary and improve their understanding of how to use the language in certain social situation.
- If the students have finished completing the task, the teachers ask them to prepare themselves to have oral presentation. For example, if they are asked to create a conversation about how to give direction, they performed their conversation in front of the class.
- While a pair or a group of student is performing their result of the task, others pay attention to the conversation.
- After one presentation finished, the teachers and the students discuss about the conversation orally. It may be about the elements of communicative competence mentioned before. For example, the teachers and the students discuss about the forms of the language and the vocabulary used which refer to linguistic competence, the social context of the language used, the students' understanding about the conversation (discourse competence, etc.)

Beside the above aspects, in implementing TBLT, the teachers are supposed to increase their communicative competence in advance. It is due to the successful of their teaching because without having communicative competence, it is impossible for them train their students to have the competence.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation before, it can be concluded that TBLT can help students to achieve communicative competence in speaking English for it requires students to actively use the language through tasks which reflect the use of language in real life situation. It creates a real purpose for language use and provides a natural context for language study. In addition, this type of approach helps teachers to maximize opportunities for students to practice their knowledge of the language by using it in communication. Therefore, this approach is appropriate to be applied in teaching speaking in Indonesian context to improve students' speaking skill.

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