



Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching: What We Can Learn From The Teachers and Students

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at (1) finding out the procedures of Task-Based Language Learning implemented in the teaching of English morphology, (2) finding out the students' response toward the implementation of Task-Based Language Learning in the teaching of English Morphology . (3) finding out the advantages and challenges encountered by the students and lecturers related to the implementation of Task-Based Language Learning in the teaching of English Morphology. The data was collected through conducting the interview in the form of open and structured interview with the three participants of lecturers and five students, doing the observation of the implementation of Task-Based language Learning on the teaching of English Morphology. The result of the research found that the most of the procedures of Task-Based Language Learning have been implemented based on the procedures proposed by expert however there are some sequences of activity do not conducted properly in learning process. The finding in the area of students' response was revealed that the students have a good involvement during the implementation of Task-Based Language Learning however there are some essential conditions should be improved in order to create an effective learning environment. Based on the finding, the research concluded with a couples of recommendation that teachers need to develop and keep up with teaching-learning development since approaches , methods and techniques for language learning are always develop. The second is that based on the data analysis classroom application is still less from what is supposed to happen in a process-oriented of communicative language class. This is due to the fact that the traditional teaching still seems to be the most influential approach. Thus, integrating traditional approach with task-based instruction could be a worth-considering alternatives.

Keywords : *Task-Based Language Learning (TBL), students' response, advantages, challenges, teaching English Morphology*

INTRODUCTION

In many countries where English is being taught as a foreign language, the teaching of English is viewed to enhancing international communication. However, Edward and Willis (2005) argue that the examination system in these countries often put a premium on formal accuracy, and as a result, teachers often prioritize the teaching of forms or patterns of a language learning. Sometimes teachers model the target language forms and get students to repeat them and then ask questions intended to elicit the target forms in students' response.

Having come to the realization that each learner has his/her own style, personality, needs, and so forth, it follows that a single teaching method or approach might not be appropriate and adequate for all the learners in the classroom. Hence, interesting and appropriate drills can be exploited for helping the learner take sufficient practice. However, as controlled practice having mechanical drills may sometimes be boring as my experience engaged in teaching and learning. This type of practice cannot ensure the learner's communicative ability, the teacher should involve the learner in some meaningful, purposive and communicative activities, such as role-play, pair work, group work, etc to make learning interesting and motivating.



It is true that many task-based teachers like learners to work in pairs or groups. This is generally because this gives learners more opportunities to use the language for themselves. Doing a task in pairs or groups has a number of advantages. It gives learners confidence to try out whatever language they know, or think they know, in the relative privacy of a pair or small group, without fear of being wrong or of being corrected in front of the class. It also can help learners gradually gain confidence as they find they can rely on cooperation with their fellow students to achieve the goal of the tasks. Willis & Willis (2007) explain that it is more effective to encourage learner to use the language as much as possible, even if this means that some of the language they produce is inaccurate. This meaning-based approach allow teachers to provide learners with opportunities in the classroom to use the language for genuine communication. When the teacher offer the learner formalized activities to facilitate their participation in meaningful activities, thus they are engaging in Task-Based Learning. Willis & Willis (2007) states that task-based learning is a development on CLT (Communicative Language teaching) in that it lays emphasis on the design of tasks and the development of task-based teaching. So the teacher create tasks to facilitate meaningful activities in the classroom. Tasks are not a substitute for interesting topics which engage learners' interest, but they can enhance that engagement and interest.

English language learning occurs in the formal situation of a classroom, and the learner has hardly any access to the target language beyond the classroom door (Brown, 2001). And in this formal situation, learners receive instruction and practises in the items entirely related to the basic skills of the target language- listening, speaking, reading and writing. That is, the items taught and learned are linguistically related to and considered at different levels of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. While learning the English language, the learners usually encounters varied linguistic problems that evidently handicap and hamper their learning and eventually negatively affect their general proficiency as well. This phenomenon is also found in the learning of English Morphology subject as one of the linguistics field. The knowledge of pedagogy, on the other hand, gives the teachers insight about how to facilitate the classroom techniques to make their teaching more effective and interesting to the students. There will not be any good learning process unless the materials and teaching techniques are attractive and appropriate for them.

Furthermore, (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992) as cited in Oxford, R.L (2006) state that Interest level of the learners in the material is particularly crucial. If materials are perceived as boring or as too easy or too difficult, learners will be unmotivated to do the tasks. This problematic issue driving me to conduct a research in order to facilitate meaningful activities in the classroom with propose Task-based Language Learning in the Teaching of English Morphology.

METHODS

This research is designed as qualitative case study research which involved the observation and interview. The research site is determined based on where the phenomenon occurs. I choose Forth Grade Morphology Class on the English Department of Faculty of Letters and Culture Gorontalo State University as the setting of the study. Such selection also meant that I need to invite my colleagues to be the participants. As I have known my colleagues for quite a while, mutual trust and confidence would be build between interviewer and interviewees. In choosing the research's participant, this research especially intended to choose the participants which are engaged in Morphology subject in English Department at State University of Gorontalo. The participant is covering lecturers and students which are engaged in Morphology subject. There are three lecturers and five students as the participant in this research.

The data was collected through observation and interview. Qualitative observation defines as those activities in which the researcher taking the field notes, on the behavior or individuals activity at the site decided based on the research plan (Creswell, 2009, p.181). Meanwhile, after the observation is perfectly conducted, then the interview with lecturers and students is carried out.



After all data have been organized well, the next step is the analysis preparation. This step is carried out both when the data organization is carried out and after it has already been organized for once again to make sure that the data has already been in the right categorization. Before the data interpreted, it is first correlated and interrelated based on each theme and its description. Thus, from overall step of data analysis previously, it can be seen whether each categorization of the theme have already been met with the data requirement of the research.

The last step was interpreting the meaning of each theme. Before the data are displayed in the next chapter, it is interpreted first based on the category and indicators of interview, observation and the data which have been gathered from examining the thesis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This phase explains the result of the study. It consists of two subchapter. They are findings and discussions of the findings. Findings present the result of the interview from lecturers and students regarding the implementation of task-based language learning and teaching and the classroom observation which enables the researcher to draw an interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated.

This research was conducted to answer three research questions namely; (a) how are the procedures of Task-Based Language Learning in the teaching of English Morphology, (b) how are the students' response toward Task-Based Language Learning in the teaching of English Morphology, (c) what are the advantages and implementation challenges of Task-Based Language Learning in the teaching of English Morphology. These three questions are looked at across some major aspects of the Task-Based Language Learning which are ; the procedures of Task-Based Language Learning, teacher and students interaction, the advantages and challenges faced by the lecturer and students. There should be a standard designated to which the framework of the procedures of Task-Based Learning is benchmarked. In this research the researcher uses the procedures of Task-Based Learning proposed by Willis (2005). The framework proposed by Jane Willis (2005) consists of three phases.

The pre-task phase introduce the topic and the task to the class, activating topic-related words and phrases. Pre-task phase include the activity of preparation, introducing and identifying the topic, giving task instructions and language activities. The next step is Task Cycle, which comprises the Task, Planning and Report. The task stage is a vital opportunity for all learners to use whatever language they can muster, working simultaneously, in pairs or small groups, to achieve the goal of the task. The Planning stage deals with the activities which help the students plan their reports effectively and maximize their learning opportunities. In the report stage, the students presents their report of the task to the class, orally or in writing. Language focus is concerning with the activities of analysis and practice of features of the task. This will help students to recognize the features of the tasks.

1). Pre-Task Activity

There are three lecturers of English Morphology subject and five students whom are involved. Based on the data collected from the interview there are some important points emerging concerning how the preliminary activities conducting before coming to the classroom.

First, the preparation was conducted as one of the preliminary activities in the classroom. The respondents confessed that before coming to the classroom they have made preparation such as writing syllabus and lesson plan, telling the students the objective of the course and designing the tasks. Secondly, teacher introduced the topic to the class. At the beginning of the teaching and learning process, the teacher begin with the introduction to topic of material that will be taught for that day. Thirdly, it was noticed that the teacher identifying topic language with the class. This step



is required to help students recall and activate words and phrase that will be useful both during the task and outside the classroom. Fourthly, it was found that the teacher giving task instruction before doing the task activities. Fifthly, it was found that there have been language activities doing in the classroom during the process of the teaching and learning.

It can be argued that there are some important things that need to be taken into account concerning the preliminary activities that have to be done before coming to the task activity. Preparation to the learning activity has been well prepared. The activity of introduction to topic, and ways to help students recall useful words and phrases and learn new ones will help them cope with the task. It also would be better to explore different ways of helping students to understand task instructions.

2). Task cycle

Through interview data on the task cycle it was revealed that in conducting the task activity the lecturer said that they asked the students to carry out the tasks either individually or in small groups. But nearly most of the lecturer preferred to ask students doing the tasks in small groups. The lecturers also involved all students actively in doing the task activity to explore the topic that being discussed. However, interview data from students showed that the design of task is not varied, the activity in doing task monotonously in one way activity. It was also found that after completing the task they are asked to come in front of the classroom to tell the class about their result of discussion. Moreover, this sequences of activity sometimes do not conducted properly in learning process. After do the task, usually the students immediately come in front of the classroom and present the findings. Eventhough, some of the lecturers take a briefly time to setting up such a planning before the report stage.

In Task-Based Learning framework, the planning stage which comes after the task and before the report, forming the central part of the task cycle. It describes how to help learners plan their reports effectively and maximise their learning opportunities. The report stages, then, gives students a natural stimulus to upgrade and improve their language. It presents a very real linguistic challenge – to communicate clearly and in accurate language appropriate to the circumstances.

3). Language focus.

After students do the sequences of tasks, it is important to get students to identify and think about particular features of language form and language use. The students also explained that this will help them to recognise the new features when they meet them again, both inside and outside class. This kind of activities will also lead them to a deeper understanding the meanings and uses. However, some students argue that only some of them participated actively in this analysis activities, while the other stay passively due to their less motivation and confidence. It is not easy to draw students' attention in this sequences of activities. Although, this kind of activity will help them systematize their knowledge and broaden their understanding .

Willis (2005) suggested that before conducting a range of analysis activities, it is important to examine how the language analysis should be handled. There have been some steps to be considered, those are ; setting up analysis activities, monitoring analysis activities, reviewing analysis activities. Moreover, Willis(2005) argue that this not only make sense in terms of motivation, it also make sense in terms of language description. One of the biggest problem in the classroom is finding a meaningful context to illustrate samples of the language. It is obviously important to expose learners to a well-balanced pedagogic corpus, so as to give students as wide a range of language types and topics as they are likely to need. The aim of such activities is to draw students' attention to the surface forms realizing the meanings they have already become familiar with during the task cycle and so help them to systematize their knowledge and broaden their understanding.



The Advantages and the Implementation Challenges of Task-Based Learning on English Morphology Class

As a pedagogical innovation that aims at solving the problems existing in the traditional language classrooms, task-based language teaching provides many benefits to English language teaching and Ellis (2009) list these benefits as follows:

1. Task-based language teaching provides the opportunity for ‘natural’ learning within the classroom context
2. It stresses meaning over form ; however, it can also emphasize learning form
3. It offers learners a fertile input of target language
4. It is intrinsically motivating
5. It is consistent with a learner-focused educational philosophy but also gives permission for teacher input and guidance
6. It contributes to the improvement of communicative fluency while not disregarding accuracy
7. It can be deployed together with a more traditional approach

Task based learning is not just about getting learners to do one task and then another task and then another. For the task to promote constant learning and improvement, it should be seen as just one component in a larger framework. So a task-based lesson would probably involve not a single task, but a sequence of task. These tasks relate to one another. In order to promote language development, the teachers should provide a rich diet of activities which focus on meaning (Willis & Willis, 2007). At different stages in a task cycle there will be different kinds of opportunities for learners to focus on language. A focus on language occurs naturally when learners pause in their attempts to process language for meaning and switch to thinking about the language itself. This is true for students as they engaged such this activity in the classroom. However, based on the data collected from interview with students sometimes teachers direct learners’ attention to specific forms. The teacher stops a learner and offer correction. Meanwhile the lecturers, who are the respondents of this study said that they also encouraged students to use the language as much as possible, even this means that some of the language they produce is inaccurate. They even participated in the interaction by helping students to clarify what they want to say. Some of students explained that the teachers always engage them to work in pairs or groups. It is true that many task-based teachers like learners to work in pairs or group. This is generally because this gives learners more opportunities to use the language for themselves. From the student’s position, doing a task in pairs or groups has a number of advantages.

- 1). It gives learners confidence to try out whatever language they know, or think they know, in the relative privacy of a pair or small group, without fear of being wrong or of being corrected in front of the class
- 2). It gives learners experience of spontaneous interaction, which involves composing what they want to say in real time, formulating phrases and units of meanings, while listening to what is being said
- 3). It gives learners a chance to benefit from noticing how others express similar meanings
- 4). It gives all learners chance to practice negotiating turns to speak, initiating as well as responding to questions, and reacting to other’s contributions
- 5). It gives learners more chances to try out communicative strategies like checking understanding, paraphrasing to get round an unknown word, reformulating other people’s ideas, and supplying words and phrases for other speakers
- 6). It help learners gradually gain confidence as they find they can rely on co-operation with their fellow students to achieve the goals of the tasks mainly through use of the target language

Thus, it can be concluded that students are encouraged to communicate in English all the times regardless of the accuracy so the more they do the tasks, the more they are exposed to the language.



Introducing a teaching approach may not immediately fit in with the views of classroom learning. In the same way, introducing Task-Based Learning will not always be easy. The first time round, there would be some problems and challenges. This is sometimes not going to go as smoothly as would be hoped. It is therefore the responsibility of teachers to ensure that tasks match up well with students motivationally and that classes become motivated by and involved in the tasks they receive during Task-Based Learning Classes. Implementing a style of learning such as Task-Based Learning into classes will clearly come with some various of challenges and advantages. Teachers and students have their own experiences of challenges as they went through the activities of Task-Based Learning particularly in the teaching of English Morphology . In terms of the students' experiences, the challenges encountered as the following:

- 1). Task Difficulty
- 2). Students' difficulties due to their limited language mastery
- 3). Students' lack of motivation and Confidence

All the tasks that given to students have specified objective that must be achieved, often in a given time. In other words, the emphasis is on understanding and conveying meanings in order to complete the tasks successfully. The tasks also should have an outcome. It is challenging to achieve the goal and the outcome of the task. Confusion over the purpose and the clarity of the tasks are the predominant factors cause tasks difficulty.

Based on the research findings it was found that the students felt difficulty to take part in a task particularly when they participated a group work discussion. They found it very challenging and strenuous to continue the discussion. Furthermore, they might not understand what the tasks demands and might found it hard to make themselves understood while taking part in the task. Ultimately the students might be demotivated to perform the tasks and might even lose confidence in himself/herself.

Motivation is therefore likely to be seen as the key to all learning. Once students are motivated, they can complete the given tasks or desired goals (Brophy in Le Ngoc Thanh 2012). One job of a teacher is to select topics and tasks that will motivate learners engage their attention, present a suitable degree of intellectual and linguistic challenge and promote their language development as efficiently as possible (Willis, 1996).

In terms of teachers' experience through their involvement on task-based learning the challenges encountered as follows:

- 1). Design of task
- 2). The shift of teaching style
- 3). Teachers' language proficiency

The nature of tasks is another crucial aspect that should be accounted for. Tasks should be well-chosen in order for the activities to obtain a beneficial result. The teachers should be sensitive to the students' characteristics, needs and interest. Tasks should also be tailored to suit the students' needs, interests, and situations. Supporting this argument, Prabhu in Griffiths (2001), affirms that tasks should be intellectually challenging enough to maintain students' interest, for that is what will sustain learners' efforts at tasks completion, focus them on meaning, and as part of that process, engage them in confronting the task's linguistic demands. However, interview data from students showed that the design of task is not varied, the activity in doing task monotonously in one way activity.

Regarding to the shift of teaching style , as we know that the traditional methods have dominated English language teaching for decades. Traditional approaches to language teaching gave priority to grammatical competence as the basis of language proficiency. The students said that they were accustomed to the approach. They were presented with grammar rules and then give opportunities to practice using them.



Another challenge for teachers is to improve their mastery of English to meet the demand of the use of the target language in teaching. According to Markee (in Griffiths 2001) teachers are key players in any language teaching innovation and thus, they play a crucial role in its success or lack of it. In conducting task-based activities, there is no doubt that proper mastery of spoken English is required.

Conclusions, Implications and Suggestions

Based on the research finding and discussion there some important points that can be concluded. Firstly, based on the research findings related to the procedures of task-based language learning, it shows that classroom application is still less from what is supposed to happen in a process-oriented, communicative language class. This discrepancy results from the fact that the traditional, structure-oriented teaching which has been employed for a long period of time still seems to be the influential approach of organizing language teaching. Secondly, based on the research findings it can be said that the students experienced the opportunity for 'natural learning within the classroom context as one of the benefits of the implementing task-based learning in the classroom. However, there are students who are not used to speaking up and expressing their opinion in class and as a result they might feel uncomfortable being asked to actively participate in the learning activities. They felt that they are not used to this way of learning. Thirdly is that implementing a style of learning such as Task-Based Learning into classes will clearly come with some various of challenges and advantages. Teachers and students have their own experiences of challenges as they went through the activities of Task-Based Learning particularly in the teaching of English Morphology. The teachers should be sensitive to the students' characteristics, needs and interest. Tasks should also be tailored to suit the students' needs, interests, and situations. Another challenge is the shift of teaching style. As we know that the traditional teaching has been employed for a long period of time and still seems to be the most influential approach of organizing language teaching. It will undoubtedly be difficult to swing from one extreme to another. The teacher should consider other modification.

There are some points that can be offered as suggestion. The first is teachers need to develop and keep up with teaching-learning development since approaches , methods and techniques for language learning are always develop . Task-based language learning is a method of learning a language by using tasks as a central unit of learning. This method can be implemented in all level of learners because it is enjoyable and motivating. The second is that based on the data analysis classroom application is still less from what is supposed to happen in a process-oriented of communicative language class. This is due to the fact that the traditional teaching still seems to be the most influential approach. Thus, integrating traditional approach with task-based instruction could be a worth-considering alternatives.

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