Developing Students' Speaking Skillsthrough Task-based Learning

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Abstract: This study aims to develop the students' speaking skills. The initial data showed the students' problems in speaking due to inadequate knowledge of languaeg: grammar, vocabulaey, pronuncation, fluency, and comprehension. They were not familiar with different communicative tasks.This concern led to a study design as an action research through three cycles conducted in one semester course employing task-based learning. The participants were 15 students of an English Department. The data were taken from the results of pre-test to post test, interview and observation. Quantitative data were analized using SPSS into descriptivestatistics. Qualitative data were elaborated in term of words. The findings indicated that the use of task-based leaning can develop students' speaking skills. The pre-test score shows the value of learning completness was only 20%. The post-test score reveals that the students' speaking skills develop with satisfactory results as 86.6% of 15 students have completed the lesson. The students manage to complete different tasks and to evaluate their learning in pair and group works. This learning experience will enable the students develop their speaking skills significantly in the future.

1 INTRODUCTION

Speaking as one of the four skills is perceived as the most prominent. It has been an ultimate goal of language learning. People who know a language are referred to as 'speaker' of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing (Ur: 2012). These people employ their linguistics knowledge and non-linguistics knowledge at ease when speaking.They negotiate meaning, convey objection, negate arguments, and explore ideas in an interaction. However, in the case of students learning another language, the situation might be in the contrary since they do not have sufficient knowledge of language to convey the ideas.

To be able to speak fluently postulates not only knowledge of language feature, but also ability to process information and language at the time the speakers are demonstrating the skill (Harmer: 2001). The features of language such as grammar and vocabulary support meaning. The use of appropriate sentence structure helps the students understand and respond the message transferred. The communication will keep on going if the students use their sufficient knowledge of vocabulary and their background knowledge of the topic being said.

They can develop the topic into many different fields. The students will produce proper pronunciation if they can notice the rules of how to sound the language, for instance, an English word has two syllables, the stress is usually on the first syllable for nouns and adjectives, and the second syllables for verbs. In other words, to be able to speak fluently is not easy.

The difficulty to learn to speak puts the students into an unpleasant learning. The students will have a feeling of frustrated and unconfident when speaking, and eventually they refuse to speak. A study conducted by Arafat Hamouda from Qassim University Saudi Arabia (2013) found that a number of students in EFL classroom felt reluctant to respond to the teacher and remain silent in speaking class because of many causes such as low English proficiency, fear of speaking in front of others, negative evaluation, shyness, lack of confidence and preparation, and fear of making mistakes.

In line with the above concern, EFL students feeling reluctance to speak English in Indonesia share similar causes and are influenced by cultural matter. Indonesian students' speaking skill tends to be inadequate.Although they have graduated from university, most of them do not acquire good

command of English (Lie: 2004 and Thala: 2010 in Suryanto: 2014).Sirisrimangkorn says that some EFL students lack their confidence to use English in and outside of the classroom though they have studied Englsh for many years (2018). The students always face problems when conveying their ideas both in written and spoken. They prefer to use bahasa Indonesia for interaction in speaking class. The students become "unquestioning mind" during the interaction and they believe that a teacher can do no wrong (Marcelino: 2008). Cultural aspect of Indonesian in which people tend to avoid conflict and enjoy to live in harmony shapes the students' mind and behavior in learning (Suryanto:2014).They are not challenged, for example, to find something new or just to confirm what the teacher has already said and believed are true. They are not eager to take part in an activity without being told by their teacher. Being shy and silent is considered good manner for some people living in outside towns. This condition becomes worse when the students are not much exposed to various oral practices in an interaction. In an interview to gather initial data of the students' speaking skills for this study, the students reported that they rarely experienced speaking class activities in which they can learn to communicate to each other in fun ways. The students themselves confessed that they had problems with grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation when speaking. They memorized dialogues as they were not sure how to start and what to say in a conversation. They conveyed ideas by reading texts unless other people would misunderstand their ideas. The students had no chances to process information and language through real-life spoken exchanges facilitating them todevelop the language.They were not familiar with different tasks that challenge them to be actively involved in an interaction. Hence, to overcome their problems, the students need to undergo various communication tasks.

Task is an activity that requires the students to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of though and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process (Prabu: 2004; 47). One of the characteristics of a task is something that students do or carry using their existing language resources (Richards; 2006; 31). Communication tasks facilitate the students for interaction using the language. Communicative interaction can have a positive affecton L2 acquisition, therefore it is important to bring communicative tasks into the classroom to allow for the oral exchange and negotiated meaning (Lowen

2015 in Michael Lessard-Clouston 2018).To optimize the interaction a lecturer is suggested to adopt task-based learning in teaching since this approach activates communicative environment for the students. Ellis (2003a) elaborates that TBL is suitable to fit into different curricula and different teaching context, and it can also be used to different degrees.

A number of researches relating to the task-based implementation to improve the students speaking skills have shown the benefits. The findings of a study conducted by Jenefer Philp, Susan Walter and Basturkmen reveals that the task and social consideration effect the students' motivation to cope with the difficulties of language form during peer task-based interaction (2010). This could occur since the students have a chance to do negotiation of form during the interaction. Negotiation in interaction promotes comprehension. Negotiation of form is oriented toward resolving linguistic problem in which the students and their interlocutors attempt to improve linguistic accuracy in students' speech even when there is no communication breakdown between them, while negotiation of meaning is oriented toward resolving communication problems (Suzuki: 2018). Palma carried out a research on negotiation of meaning to seek the interactional adjustment produced by English students and found participants conducting significant amount of meaning and negotiation and producing modified output. The findings of two researches above indicate that assigning students to participate in different tasks challenges them to maintain and to evaluate their learning process. The more frequent the students participate in different tasks, the better they evaluate their own performance (Meng and Cheng: 2010).

Bearing in mind all aspects which make speaking is not easy for the students and some suggestions mentioned by the experts above, the researcher is interested to conduct a study to develop students' speaking skills of English at Pamulang University. The difference of this study compared to the previous studies mentioned above is that this study aims to develop students' speaking skills of the fifth aspects: grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and pronunciation. The students were provided with tasks that require them to negotiate in both form and meaning since they have problems with the language aspects. The researcher adopts action research method (CAR) through three cycles conducted in one semester course employing task-based learning. It is hoped that the students experience various communicative tasks and they

can evaluate their learning, therefore they can develop their speaking skills. This study tries to answer a question, Do EFL students of English Department at Pamulang University develop their speaking skills through task-based learning?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Developing Speaking Skill

The students need to have adequate linguistic knowledge and non-linguistic knowledge or background knowledge in order to be able to speak. Linguistic knowledge embraces structure, meaning, and use through four types of knowledge: phonological, grammatical, lexical, and discourse organization skill (Burn: 2007). Goh mentions other skills that one need to be competent in speaking such as phonological skill, speech function skill, interaction management skill, and extended discourse organization skill (2007). However, all knowledge cannot be utilized during communication interaction if the students are not involved in different types of speaking performance.

Brown suggests five types of speaking performance to facilitate students learning to speak in the classroom (2007) The fifth types performance are (1) imitation, the students learn language by imitating vowel sound and intonation contours, (2) responsive, the students need to replay to the teacher or initiate question, (3) transactional dialog, the students try to exchange information, (4) interpersonal dialog, the students learn to maintain social relationship, (5) extensive, the students try to provide extensive monologues such as oral reports, summaries, and short speech. In the case of students in tertiary education, they need to expand their speaking skill by undergoing more various communicative tasks in pair and group works. These tasks can be effectively carried out through task-based learning.

2.2 Employing Task-Based Learning

Tasks are activities which require the students to arrive at an outcome from given information through process of thought, and which allow teacher to control and to regulate that process (Van den and others: 2006). Task is crucial for performance (Harmer: 2007). The students will have no idea whether they have problems with their language performance without completing the tasks. To solve the problems, lecturers teaching students in higher education level can adopt task-based learning since this approach relies heavily on a sequence of tasks during the a lesson.

In TBL or Task-Based Learning perspective, task provides focus and context for learning, and the students are motivated to use language while completing the tasks (Ellis: 2003a). As the progress of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), TBL extends its focus on both form and communication (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson; 20011). The students are stimulated to prioritize a focus on meaning more than on form of language and it is not necessarily to be well-formed in order to be meaningful (Nunan: 2006). Specific vocabulary and grammar can be reviewed as target language for raising students' consciousness of their linguistic knowledge (Willis and Willis: 2007). The complete task-based implementation follows certain phases which are pre-task, during the task, and post-task (Ellis; 2006; 19-20).

The first phase is pre-task in which the lecturer introduces the topic and gives the students instructions for completing the tasks. The lecturer reviews some language that will be used during completing the tasks (Frost: 2004). This phase is followed by 'during the task' in which the students increase their part in learning. The role of the lecturer shifts from an instructor to a facilitator. The students sit in pairs or groups and helps them in negotiating the words or phrase, grammar, and pronunciation. The students may practice small dialogs or short role play using the language (Frost: 2004). The third phase is 'post-task' in which the students report to the whole class in the form of discussion. The lecturer as the advisor gives feedback on form or word meaning from context. The lecturer may ask the students to repeat or develop the previous task.

As task-based learning is suitable to fit into different curricula and different teaching contexts and used to different degrees, the task types performance completed during the task and post task are likely to be varied. For the students at intermediate to advanced level, communicative tasks are appropriate to be carried out in the classroom. Communicative tasks facilitate the students to allow for the exchange and negotiated meaning (Lowen: 2005 in Michel Lessard-Clouston; 2008). Negotiation contributes comprehension and promotes L2 acquisition. The most important properties of task that will work best for acquisition are those that stimulate negotiation and through this provide comprehensible input and feedback and

push the students to reformulate their own utterances.

There are various tasks that the students can complete during the pair and group work interactions. Brown suggests that the students can overcome their difficulties in language form by doing activities such as practicing dialogues with partner, simple question and answer exercises, performing certain meaningful substitute, and checking written work with each other (Brown; 2001; 163). Other speaking activities which are suitable for advanced language learners such as conversation, interview, a class survey, discussion, academic presentation, storytelling, jokes, drama, role play and simulation can be conducted in the pattern of student-studentinteraction as pair work and group activities (Magdalena Alexsandrzak: 2011).

3 METHOD

The participants involvedin this study were the researcher who also acts as the lecturer teaching Speking III, a colaborator and 15 students of English Department of their third semester of 2018/2019 academic year at Pamulang University, South Tangerang, Indonesia. Being a lecture-reseracher gives opportunities for the researcher to actively engage in reflection and examination into facts particularly problems occured in class and look for the solution (Coborouglu: 2014). The observer was the researcher's colleaguewho has been a lecturer of English for more than 15 years. She helped the researcher planning, observing, and volunteering ideas during the classroon action research implementation. The fifteen students taking Speaking III class were redomly choosen. The course they were taking was available at the time the researcher conducting the reseach.

The students' speaking skills was not satisfactory. Based on the results of an interview and observation to get initial data of students' speaking skills, it indicated that the students had problems in speaking due to lack of four English aspects: grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation.To solve the problems, the reshearcer conducted a classroom action research (CAR) through three cycles. It focuses on the common issue or the existence problems in the classroom (Fraenkel&Wallen: 2009). Each cycle consists of four steps namely planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis and Mc Taggart; 1988 in Anne Burn; 2010). Plan for the first cycle is made based

on the results of observation, pre-test score, and an interview. The second cycle is based on students' test scores and reflection at the first cycle. The third cycle is carried out with similar proceduresdone at second cycle.

The data consist of two: quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data in number were taken from the results of pre-test, test in each cycle, and post-test. The pre-test is conducted to measure the students' present achievement and post-test is to compare students' progress after being taught. The test at the end of each cycle is to see whether there is improvement after taking the action. The variable measured for each test are the fifth of speaking components: grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation. The rubric or assessment criteria for each speaking component is adopted from Brown and Priyanvada (2010). The qualitative data written in the form of words are (1) the result of initial interview and observation conducted before planning the first action, (2) observation carried out during classroom interaction in each cycle, and (3) semi-structure interview to obtain students' comments on the implementation of task-based learning at the end of learning.

To optimize the students' speaking development, the researcher adopted task-based learning. The students were provided with various tasks that demand negotiation in both form and meaning. They experienced speaking performance such as information gap, short role play, conversation, interview, brainstorming, discussion, problem solving, storytelling, drama, and simulation. The students were given feedback and chance to report to the whole class or comment on each the task used, therefore they learned to manage and evaluate their learning process.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the planning section, the researcher together with the lecturer planned and decided various communication tasks to facilitate the students develop their speaking skill, particularly the fifth elements of language. Lesson plans, teaching materials, and teaching aids were prepared. The tasks provided were practicing dialogues with partner, simple question and answer exercises, performing certain meaningful substitute, conversation, interview, discussion, information gap activities, storytelling, drama, role play and simulation. These tasks were carried out at the action

section in which the lecturer started employing the task-based learning that consists of three phases of learning. Certain language form or expressions, vocabularies, and topic introduced were reviewed by the lecturer at the pre-task phase to activate students' background knowledge.

The students did the tasks in fun ways. They mingled to find partner in order to get paired correct expressions and meaning of vocabularies at the pre-task. They checked for the structure and meaning with each other and by the lecturer's assistance. Those grammar expressions and vocabularies would be used in dialogs, role play and others activities requiring the students to speak at the next phase. The students started planning and completing the tasks at 'during the task'. They practiced small dialogs, short role play or other activities using the language.The students reported, performed, and evaluated their learning process at the post-task. The students also used pictures to guide themto speak and they listened to music to compete in completing simple question and answer exercises. The test results and all activities carried out during the action section were observed and noted as data to be used as reflection for planning and deciding teaching activities for the next cycles until the expected results was achieved and conclusion was made.

4.1 Students' Speaking Skills Development

Fifteen samples or students participated in this study. The students were given pre-test to post-test. The students were also evaluated at the end of cycle one, two, and three in order to identify their speaking development on accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary and comprehension. The students' pre-test score on their speaking skillscan be seen in figure 1.

4.1.1 Pre-test

Category	Score Range	Total	%
Very good	81-100		
Good	71-80	1	6.67
Adequate	61-70	2	13.33
Poor	50-60	8	53.33
Fail	0-49	4	26.67

Figure 1: Students' pre-test score

Figure 1 is the students' pre-test score. It shows the value of students' learning completeness is only 20%. It means 80% of the learners have not

completed the lesson since the score was in poor category. One student is categorized as *good* while 8 students out of 15 are in poor category and 4 students are fail.

4.1.2 Cycle 1

Category	Score Range	Total	%
Very good	81-100		
Good	71-80	2	13.33%
Adequate	61-70	4	26.67%
Poor	50-60	6	40%
Fail	0-49	3	20%

Figure 2: Students' score in cycle 1

Figure 2 is the students' score after conducting action in cycle 1. It shows that the score of students learning completeness in cycle 1 is 40% with the range of speaking score is 61-80, meanwhile the students who cannot complete the lesson is 60 % with the lowest score 37.6. The figure reveals the development of students' speaking skills compared to figure 1.

4.1.3 Cycle 2

Category	Score Range	Total	%
Very good	81-100	2	13.33%
Good	71-80	3	20.00%
Adequate	61-70	6	40.00%
Poor	50-60	2	13.33%
Fail	0-49	2	13.33%

Figure 3: Students' score in cycle 2

Figure 3 shows that although there is an improvement of students' speaking score compared to figure 2, but there are only 12 students (13.33%) are categorized in very good level while 6 students (40.00%) are in adequate level. Since 26.66% of the students couldn't complete the lesson, thus the research was taken into cycle 3.

4.1.4 Cycle 3

Category	Score Range	Total	%
Very good	81-100	6	40.00%
Good	71-80	2	13.33%
Adequate	61-70	5	33.33%
Poor	50-60	2	13.33%
Fail	0-49		

Figure 4: Students' score in cycle 3

Figure 4 shows that students' speaking ability has improved with satisfactory results as 86.67% of 15 students have completed the lesson. Six students are very good (40%), two students (13.33%) are good and   five students (33.33%) are classified as adequate.The score in cycle 3 is considered as the post-test score since it shows the development of students' speaking skills satisfactorily.

4.2 Students' Comments on The Implementation of Task-Based Learning

In general all students agree that various communication tasks facilitate them to develop their speaking skills. They used to read what they were going to say and they conveyed ideas by reading the texts. However, the students realize that they need to practices more different tasks in order to be fluent in speaking. The three phases of task-based learning help the students to undergo the speaking process. They also have chances to maintain and evaluate their learning.

"I was shy to say in English because my English was not good. If my friends said something in English sometimes I could understand. If the lecturer spoke in English sometime I asked my friends the meaning. After I joined my friends to do the tasks in three phases of learning.I am not shy to speak because I know what I say." [Eka]

"I hated to do presentation all the time when learning to speak in class. I did not like to talk in front of class because my English was not good, but when I do role paly with my friends I can say my opinion because I say it not in long sentences. I like task-based learning" [M Irfani]

"I was confused to start speaking if the lecturer did not give me time to write down what I was going to say. I was not sure whether I used appropriate grammar. I forgot the vocabularies. By doing short dialogs using grammar expression that I learned before speaking helps me to speak better English." [Saskia].

"I was very afraid if I had to say in English without seeing my notes because I made mistakes in using vocabulary and grammar. I sometimes made mistakes when pronouncing the words so I had to write how people pronounce the words."   I like studying in pair and group works because my friends help me to use the vocabulary and grammar in sentences before I speak. They give me feedback. I

like drama and simulation. I feel happy to do that activities." [M Anwar]

"I was afraid if my friends asked me questions because I had to memorize the answer first, if not, I could not say my answer. I like filling gap activities because I only need to give short answer."[Alfath]

Based on the students'comments above, it can be said that the students are motivated to speak because they know they use appropriate grammar and vocabulary when speaking. As Philip, Waltern and Basturkmen say that the students can cope with the difficulties of language form during peer interaction (2010).They don't need to read their sentences as they negotiate the formand meaning of sentences in pair and group works before speaking.Negotiation of form is oriented toward resolving linguistic problemin students' speech. (Suzuki: 2018). They students develop their speech as they do role play and simulation. They also try to use better pronunciation when performimg drama.The students can repeat the speech to work and practice on pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation during drama rehersal(Maley & Duff; 2006: p229). Drama activities help the type of language behaviour that lead to fluency(Zyoud: 2010).The learning process facilitates the students develop their speaking skills as they are given feedback by their peer, therefore evaluation for a better learning takes place.

5 CONCLUSION

This study tries to develop students' speaking skills by employing task-based learning. The result of pre-test to post-test shows improvement on students' score. The score of learning completeness in cycle 1 is 40% with the range of speaking score is 61-80, meanwhile the students who cannot complete the lesson is 60 % with the lowest score 37.6. In cycle 2, there is an improvement of students' speaking score but only 2 students (13.33%) are categorized in very good level while 6 students (40.00%) are in adequate level, and 26.66% of the students couldn't complete the lesson. In cycle 3, the students' speaking skills has developed with satisfactory results as 86.67% of 15 students have completed the lesson. Six students (40%) are cotagorized very good, two students (13.33%) are good, and five students (33.33%) are classified as adequate.

The result of the improvement is supported by the students' comments on the implementation of task-based which creates relax communicative environment for the students to practice conveying ideas, negotiating form and meaning, and the most

important is to evaluate their learning process. Exposure to communicative tasks with the assisstance of lecturer challenges them to perform better. The students understand that undergoing various tasks give benefits for their learning particularly for developing their speaking skills in the future.

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