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# Task-Based Language Teaching: Perceptions and Implementation in Teaching Speaking

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study explores teachers' and students' perceptions of task-based language teaching in teaching speaking and the teacher's techniques in implementing task-based language teaching in teaching speaking. This study employs an explanatory case study design with an English teacher and 35 students of vocational schools in Indonesia involved in this Semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were used to collect the data. The data were analyzed qualitatively using interactive models of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). The finding indicates that both teacher and students had a positive perception toward task-based language teaching, especially its implementation in speaking class. Implementing task-based language teaching in speaking classes makes the classroom environment more effective. The implication indicates that how the teacher sets the knowledge into classroom implementation is related to what the teacher has understood about task-based language teaching.

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

While speaking is the most crucial skill to be mastered in learning English, it is also the biggest obstacle for EFL students (Zhang & Liu, 2018). Febriyanti (2011) states that speaking skill is challenging to evolve because students may have low motivation, confidence, and exposure. In addition, Bashir, Azeem, & Dogar (2011) also identify that speaking is a difficult skill because when the students want to speak, they need more time for thinking about what they are going to say. According to Harmer (2007), some students feel unwilling and anxious to deliver their ideas in front of others.

Based on the problems mentioned above, one of the best teaching methods to overcome such problems is task-based language teaching (TBLT). It is necessary since TBLT focuses on meaning without disregarding form and highlights the spontaneous process of learners' natural abilities and engagements as they learn the language based on meaning-making. Thus, TBLT can fill the gaps of the

structural approaches, which mainly deal with systemic teaching, intentional learning, and objectifying language (Ellis, Skehan, Li, Shintani, & Lambert, 2020).

Moreover, since TBLT is principally based on the concept of communicative language teaching and learning, the tasks given need to be related to students' daily lives so that they can understand (making the meaning) more about the target language. This is done to overcome the barriers of the presentation, performance, and exercise approach (Ellis, 2003). Before Prabhu's study (1987), few studies talked about tasks. Jeon and Hahn (2006) state that the objective of TBLT is enhancing students' target language in their genuine language that accentuates for around twenty years on their communicative competencies. Consequently, the utilization of tasks has become significant not only to obtain the information from participants but also for the target of the tasks. TBLT is a teaching approach made through the communicative focus on the use of significant and deliberate activities to enhance language comprehension (Prabhu, 1987). Jeon and Hahn (2006) note that task-based language teaching attempts students with real possibilities in language use in their class due to EFL students in Asia not speaking English within their real life.

Teaching a lesson using TBLT considers the lesson's elements with the task as its important element (Willis & Willis, 2007). It has three standard phases in general, which explain the chronology of a task-based lesson: (1) pre-test, (2) during-test, and (3) post-test. The Pre-task phase is essential to implement the task to encourage students. Then, the during-task phase is essential to improve the students' basic considerations. The post-task phase is useful for reflection on how the students perform the task.

We should recognize that the practice of TBLT has been evolving around the world. A study conducted by Chen and Wang (2019) concluded that task-based language teaching is an advantageous and proficient teaching approach. First, TBLT builds up students' motivation, self-autonomy, and self-improvement. Second, TBLT engages students' critical thinking and organizing skills. Third, student-centred classes enrich students' engagement in language learning, which makes students more active in the classroom. TBLT also improves their interactions because it provides collaborative learning. Most study participants have positive attitudes toward TBLT because it is related to their real life.

Dost, Bohloulzadeh, and Pazhakh's (2017) experimental study indicates that tasks students perform better. The result shows a significant improvement in the experimental group's motivation. It implies that task-based language teaching is beneficial to improve students' grammatical achievement. Setayesh and Marzban (2017) investigate the difference in reading achievement between ESP students who learned by using TBLT and those who did not. The result showed that students in experimental groups performed better than control groups. It can be concluded that task-based language teaching can significantly affect students' reading achievement. Liu (2018) points out that only 28% of English school teachers in China know about TBLT. Teachers feel it is challenging to implement TBLT because their knowledge is limited. The standards of TBLT in Hong Kong and Taiwan begin to turn out in coursebooks proposed at the government public school, yet teachers have a low comprehension of TBLT (Nunan, 2003).

Many studies mentioned above about task-based language teaching can improve students' abilities. However, among these studies, there is a lack of explanation about the teacher's view of task-based language teaching and how he turns his view into classroom implementation, especially in teaching speaking. According to Kumaravadivelu (2012), it is essential to examine teachers' views, as it can be shown in classroom practices. In addition, Farrell (2013) also notes that the congeniality between teachers' perception and their implementation is how they put their understanding into actions in teaching and learning activities.

As an attempt to fill the void above, this present research seeks to examine teachers' and students' perceptions of task-based language teaching and the teacher's techniques in implementing task-based language teaching in teaching speaking. Moreover, this research took place in a vocational school in Indonesia. Research on the implementation of task-based language teaching in a vocational school remains scarce, though this place's specificity is of interest to conceive. Considering that English lessons

in such a school are quite challenging, it is interesting to investigate the teacher's perception and implementation of task-based language teaching.

#### 2. METHODS

This research was conducted to examine the teacher's and students' perception of task-based language teaching in teaching speaking and the teacher's techniques in implementing task-based language teaching in teaching speaking. Thus, the approach that best suits this research is qualitative. Without regarding the number and the different identities of the participants, the qualitative research seeks particular phenomena and comprehensive cases, which makes the researcher dig a deep analytical explanation from the participants' thoughts. The researcher believes that the appropriate method related to this research is a case study regarding the brief description of the certain phenomena analyzed.

This research collected the data through semi-structured interviews and classroom observation. The informants were the teacher and students. The researcher investigated the perception of TBLT of an English teacher and students in a vocational school in Indonesia. The researcher obtained the data about teachers' and students' perceptions from the interview and supported classroom observation. The teacher was male. He had English teaching experience for about 11 years. He practices task-based language teaching in the classroom once or twice a month. The students' perception data were obtained from interviewing five students. In order to examine the teacher's implementation of task-based language teaching, the researcher also observed the live activity and interactions in a classroom consisting of 35 students. Eighteen of the students were male, and 17 were female. The researcher has obtained permission from respondents to use all the information provided for academic publication and research, which is manifested in a consent form.

This research used the Interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) for data analysis. During the process of analyzing the data, the researcher methodically conducted the steps, which are data condensation, data display and drawing conclusion/ verification. The researcher found support for answering the research problems in various sources to credibility the findings. The researcher also compared and double-checked the data gathered from the interviews and classroom observation. Some irrelevant data will be eliminated in order to be more focus on answering the research problems.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to determine the teacher's and students' perceptions of task-based language teaching in teaching speaking. The research also examined the teacher's techniques in implementing task-based language teaching in teaching speaking. Research discussion contains the interpretations of the research findings and their significance.

# Teacher's and Students' Perceptions of Task-based Language Teaching in Teaching Speaking

The first issue was the teacher's and student's perception of task-based language teaching in teaching speaking. The data from observation showed that the students looked active in sharing their opinion when the teacher asked them to discuss the topic with the other students. Better students helped weaker students so that they collaborated more. The results of the interview support it, the teacher stated:

"So far, when implementing task-based language teaching, they look active. Because when I give them some topics, they choose one, they try to make their own statements. After that, they can combine with their friends' statements." (Teacher)

From the interview data above, the teacher claimed that the students look active in speaking by implementing task-based language teaching. These findings are congruent to the study of Chen and Wang (2019). TBLT enriches students' engagement in language learning, which makes students more active in the classroom. It also improves their interactions because it provides collaborative learning.

Jones (2007, p. 30) states that "discussion involves the students talking about personal experience and giving opinions. Every group member can also give their view." One of the students stated:

"It makes it easier for me to speak English because I am used to having discussions with friends in class. I am also not ashamed if I make mistakes in speaking." (Student 3)

By presenting a task, students can raise their learning motivation by reducing their fear through interacting with their friends in the classroom (Chua, 2019). Task-based language teaching helps them to be more active in communicating with their friends in the classroom (Simion & Genova, 2019). Ganta (2015) notes that this teaching approach engages the collaborative learning environment through finishing the task by correcting their friends' errors and helping each other.

Task-based language teaching gives chances to the students to communicate with each other and help them to reduce their anxiety (Ganta, 2015). Pietri (2015) also concludes that TBLT stimulates students' creativity and inspires them to learn English. Interacting with each other motivates them to practise English in the classroom. It is also in line with Bhandari (2020), who identifies that students prefer speaking by using the target language to their friends than to their teacher. They feel more comfortable and free to choose the words to speak to their friends.

In addition, the teacher mentioned that in implementing TBLT in teaching speaking, he should be a motivator to encourage the students to speak. He also found some strategies to make the students speak.

"As a teacher, I should be a motivator. I try hard to motivate students to speak. Even the students sometimes refuse to speak, and I should try to find the strategy how they can share their opinion and think." (Teacher)

Based on the classroom observation, the role of the teacher in task-based language teaching in teaching speaking was as a motivator, as he always motivates students not to be afraid to speak. It is in line with Branden (2006, p. 175) "motivating the language learners to engage in achievement orientation and meaningful learning, such as rising their enthusiasm in doing tasks, arousing the curiosity, and giving positive feedback." Interview data with the teacher is in line with the students, they stated that:

"The teacher always gives advice not to be afraid to speak. He also gives advice related to the topic of conversation, offers help such as telling vocabulary." (Student 1)

"It makes it easier for me to speak English because I have a discussion with friends in class. I am also not ashamed if I make mistakes in speaking." (Student 3)

From the findings above, it can be concluded that most of the students are very motivated to learn English. The students believed that learning English is important for their real life in the future. The students in this research showed that they want to learn more about English as it is necessary to communicate in the future. This is a good attitude towards students' perception of the implementation of task-based language teaching.

Fauziati (2014) adds that teachers can encourage students' motivation by relying on classroom activities on assignments. Dai and Stenberg (2004) recognize that motivation iessential for students' performance. Dornyei (2001) adds that by doing a task, it can motivate students to realize the importance of doing the task, to improve their knowledge related to the task, and to have creative strategies in finishing the task. According to Harris and Duibhir (2011), what motivates the student to learn is supplying exercises in the form of assignments that let them speak. Task-based language teaching raises students' motivation in learning English (Simion & Genova, 2019).

The teacher facilitates the students by applying many strategies in the classroom to speak. Ganta (2015) stated that to produce great activities to increase students' interest, the teacher should be innovative and creative. The findings from observation showed that the teacher always tries to find out any interesting topics related to daily activities to be discussed. The teacher believed that he could encourage the students to speak by talking about interesting topics. From interview data, the teacher stated:

"Find some strategy: I call their names and try to have the relation to their friends, just try to make them speak." (Teacher)

"We just try to find the interesting topics related to daily activities in update situation just like I give the task in the classroom about smoking, online game, bullying. These are interesting topics we can explore with the student. Do not find the old or boring topic because it cannot attract the students' opinion to explore." (Teacher)

Classroom interaction became more effective when the teacher used interesting topics to be discussed. It is congruent to the study of Bhandari (2020). The teachers believe that a meaningful task for students is when it has relation to their experiences and real life. Giving students meaningful tasks can help them to improve their communication skills. The students also claimed that the teacher implemented interesting ways of teaching speaking. Mechraoui, Mechraoui, and Quadri (2014) believe that giving assignments to the students makes teaching and learning activities in the classroom fun and interesting. It is also supported by Hadi (2013, p. 6) "task provides a variety of teaching methods and makes the class much more fun and interesting."

# Teacher's Techniques in Implementing Task-Based Language Teaching in Teaching Speaking

The second issue in this research is teachers' techniques in implementing task-based language teaching in teaching speaking. From observation data, it can be seen that the teacher considered three phases of task-based language teaching proposed by Ellis (2003) in his classroom implementation in teaching speaking. The results of classroom implementation can be concluded in the table below.

Phase	Activities
Pre-task	Review the previous lesson
	Give some introduction
	Brainstorming
	Give interesting topics based on students' interest
	Deliver instruction clearly
	Give an example and similar task related to the main task
During task	Ask students to discuss and collaborate with other students
	Pay attention to students' discussion
	Help and motivate students to speak
Post-task	Ask students to evaluate their own performance
	Give feedback
	Repeat task
	Conclude the lesson

Table 1. The results of classroom implementation

The researcher found students claiming that the teacher is clear enough in delivering the material in teaching speaking on the interview data. It is in line with the teacher. He always finds interesting topics related to the students' real life to make them speak. He stated that:

"In my opinion, TBLT is good to be applied in the classroom as long as the topic is interesting, the students know and like the topic. We just try to find the interesting topics related to daily activities in updated situations, just like I give the task in the classroom about smoking, online game, bullying. These are interesting topics we can explore with the student. Do not find the old or boring topic because it cannot attract the students' opinion to explore." (Teacher)

According to Richards & Rodgers (2002), the first thing a teacher must do to choose the tasks is analyse sudents' needs, abilities, and interests. The selected tasks must be suited best to their needs and interests. The tasks should be relevant, so the students know why they do the tasks and know the reasons behind them (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The student should know that the tasks they are going to do are related to their real life. It is also supported by Bhandari (2020) who found that

language classes become natural and interesting because the teachers analyze the materials of the assignment based on students' interest, level, and age.

If the teacher in the classroom implements the phases in task-based language teaching properly, it will be very advantageous. In the pre-task phase, before the teacher starts the main activity in the teaching and learning process, he delivers common understanding to the students by examining the lesson's topic (Fauziati, 2014). Jafarigohar and Khanjani (2015) add that the teacher gives similar tasks related to the main task. Erten and Altay (2009) conclude that conducting brainstorming is a useful method to help students be engaged in the main task. It is believed that providing students to brainstorm their thoughts will help them remember the lesson they have learned that will be used to finish the task. The finding showed that the teacher always reviews the previous lesson and gives the students some introduction about what they are going to study in this meeting. It is in line with Fauziati (2014), the teacher begins the classroom by triggering students' schemata before executing the main task.

The teacher always reviewed the previous lesson and gave the students some introduction about what they were going to study in this meeting. It is in line with Prabhu (1987), who suggests teachers give a question and answer interaction at the beginning of the class activity. Teachers can ask them to predict what the task will include (Dornyei, 2001). In addition, since the utilization of the task is to promote communicational teaching, it was executed as a learning process with the teacher. It engaged the students to perform a task similar to the main task (Prabhu, 1987).

Next, based on the data observation, the researcher found that the teacher asked the students some new vocabulary related to the topics. Providing students with background information reduces their cognitive and linguistics demands (Ellis, 2010). Brainstorming and mind-maps can be good choices for reaching this (Willis & Willis, 2007). If the students know what words they will say, they can formulate the language needed to communicate their thoughts. Asking students to predict the vocabularies that will appear in the task and guess the meanings are the activities teachers can apply in the classroom recommended by Newton (2001). He states that these activities can help the students in acquiring new vocabulary.

One of the effective teaching and learning processes is giving instruction (Ur, 2009). There were two ways of giving the instruction of the task in speaking class. In this research, the teacher gave the students spoken and written instructions. The teacher gave the instruction more than three times based on the observation data.

"The teacher gives direct instructions, and it was also written on the blackboard. Then we were asked to discuss with our friends. Yes, the teacher guides and goes around the class to see us discussing" (Student 2)

"He gives instructions many times and listens to our discussion." (Student 1)

Before the students were dealing with the task, the teacher gave spoken instructions to them at the beginning of the speaking class. After that, the instructions were delivered in the middle of the lesson while the students were doing the task. Supported by the interview data, the students agreed that the teacher should instruct them more than one time. According to Ur (2009), the instructions should be delivered to the students more than once.

The teachers also gave written instruction in the classroom. Before starting the class, he usually wrote the instructions on the whiteboard. According to him, writing the instruction on the whiteboard should not have to explain the task many times. Clear instruction in the written form can make the students understand more about the task. Based on the observation data, the written form contained topics and instructions. In line with Light, Cox, and Calkins (2009), they conclude that creating a written form consisting of concepts, topics, ideas, problems, and references can add students' resources to embrace their learning and strengthen their understanding.

When the teacher delivered the task instruction to the students, he explained the task and directly asked the students to do that, but he also gave examples. It is in line with the interview data, one of the students stated that:

"The teacher always explains one by one the speaking topic. Before asking us to talk, the teacher also gives an example first." (Student 4)

The teacher believed that giving examples could help them understand what they are going to do with the task. It is supported by David (2009), who summarizes that students remember and understand more about the task if the teachers give examples.

In addition, according to the students, the teacher asks them to discuss and share their opinion with their friends.

"Teachers provide opportunities to discuss with friends." (Student 1)

"We were asked to discuss." (Student 2)

"We do discussion activities with classmates." (Student 5)

This finding agreed with Willis and Willis (2007, pp. 2-3) 'Task-based teaching is effective if the teachers have the confidence to trust the learners and give them every opportunity to use the language for themselves, so they know what they need to learn. The teachers then give form-focused activities to help them develop the language and later do a repetitive task which gives them the opportunity to incorporate some of the languages they have learned from the earlier stage.'. It is also supported by Nunan (2003, p. 9), 'A communicative task involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form.'

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Both teacher and students had a positive attitude toward task-based language teaching, especially its implementation in speaking class. It is believed that by implementing task-based language teaching in speaking class, the classroom environment becomes more effective. Implementing task-based language teaching also improves students' interactions because it provides collaborative learning. In addition, the teacher was aware enough of his role in the teaching and learning process in speaking class. As a motivator, the teacher said that he always tries hard to motivate the students to make them speak by finding out any interesting topics related to daily activities to be discussed. The implication indicates that how the teacher sets the knowledge into classroom implementation is related to what the teacher has understood about task-based language teaching. There are still plenty of areas that can be investigated and explored related to task-based language teaching. Future research can examine the discrepancy between teachers' perception and their implementation of task-based language teaching in teaching speaking. It is also suggested to investigate students' way of perceiving and accomplishing the speaking task.

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