Enhancing Students` Speaking Skill through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) at English Tadris Department of STAIN Kerinci

Heri Mudra
Tadris English Department, STAIN Kerinci, Jambi, Indonesia

E-mail: herimudra1985@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper reports a classroom action research which conducted in an EFL classroom. The problem of this study is that teaching and learning process tends to be monotonous due to the single method used by English teachers. The learners` speaking course is familiarized with English structures. It requires a communicative and constructive method such as TBLT. The purpose of this study is to describe the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing students` speaking skill. 30 EFL learners at the seventh semester at STAIN Kerinci took a part in this study. The instruments used to collect the data were speaking test, observation, and field-note. The results of the study showed that there were 2 cycles needed to implement the method. The process of teaching and learning in the first cycle indicates that TBLT improved learners` speaking skill, though some problems were needed to be solved. Unlike the cycle I, the process in the cycle II was improved in term of learners` speaking score and their motivation to attend the course if compared with those in cycle I. So, it is concluded that TBLT is an appropriate method to improve learners` speaking skill.

INTRODUCTION

The use of communication skill is unquestionable since it is needed for connecting with other people on daily basis. Without the communication skill, people find it hard to share ideas and get various information, or give opinions. This does not only happen in our surroundings, neighborhood, or markets, but also in formal situation such as in a higher education environment. Communication takes place between lecturers and students, lecturers and lecturers, or students and students. Lecturers deliver their speech and subject by using communication skill in order that the students get a better understanding toward a course. Students are to share their ideas, opinions, suggestions, to give

questions, or simply to greet the lecturers with a good communication skill.

Lecturers discuss

courses, exams, college problems and situations. Students interact with their classmates both inside and outside the classroom. All of these atmospheres require a communication skill which is formulated in a spoken form, or speaking.

Speaking as a basic skill of communication (Bailey and Savage, 1993) is an essential element in determining whether a student`s English skills have reached a success, particularly in the college. The students who study a speaking course are greatly expected to communicate well in English, practice doing it many times and are not afraid of making any kind of mistake or error. Unfortunately, the success of students` speaking skill is not only influenced by their styles of learning, but also methods or strategies organized by their teachers in the classroom. In short, problems in the classroom may be due to students and teachers' lack of competencies.

Based on a pre-research conducted by the author to a group of English learners at Islamic College of Kerinci (STAIN Kerinci) in August2015, several problems of teaching methods and learning styles emerge. These problems are analyzed through a pre-observation and a pre-interview conducted. The analysis shows that the students find it hard to follow the speaking course and practice it either with the lecturer and classmates. As for the students, a conventional method implemented in the speaking class has been likely uninteresting and does not motivate them to speak English as what the lecturer ask them to do.

Two serious problems appear in presenting such conventional method. The lecturer begins with enlisting several formulas of sentences that are used in speaking. Then, the students are asked to communicate either one-by-one, with their lecturer or classmates. The problem is students` spoken language tends to be monotonous as it is bound by the structure presented. Another problem which reflects on the method is that the lecturer does not act as a raw model for them. They have to find the way of speaking with their lecturer or classmates. They still need some guidance of the speaking lecturer though their level is in a higher education. That may be normal for some groups of students whose abilities are in an intermediate level.

Teaching students in a higher education level cannot be undertaken by implementing one method only, but various methods can be a good outlet for an English instructor in increasing students` knowledge and getting away of classroom problems. A suitable teaching method for solving such problems is "Task-Based Language Teaching" or TBLT (Ellis, 2003a; Nunan, 2004). TBLT, as the name suggests, relies heavily on a sequence of tasks during a lesson. The students are to follow a speaking lesson which consists of tasks. The tasks are communicative and contextual that the students have experience it daily. So, it enables them to practice the tasks and communicate as to better understanding on speaking skill.

To focus, this study seeks to find the answers out of the following question: To what extent does Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) improve the students` speaking skill? Therefore, the purpose of this study is that it seeks to describe the process of teaching and learning by implementing TBLT as the method.

METHOD

Design of Research

This study employs Classroom Action Research (CAR). CAR is a research that highlights improvement of learners` English skills based on an underlying problem observed in the classroom. Oliver (1980) stated that classroom action research is advantageous that it enhances a continuing process of professional development in a climate in which teachers (and other school personnel) not only pose the research questions, but also test their own solutions. CAR begins with an underlying problem that is initiated through a teacher or a lecturer`s experience in their own classroom. CAR 'lets teachers to study any problem in their own classrooms… in order to better understand them and to be able to improve their quality or effectiveness' (Mertler, 2012b).

CAR is a cyclical process which include some steps: planning for a CAR, action on the plan, observation towards the action, and reflection of the process (Mertler, 2012b). The steps are accomplished from the plan, action, observation, and reflection. Each step is synchronized each other, so when one step is not accomplished, then the other steps remain useless.

Participants

This study was conducted in the seventh semester of English Department at State Islamic College (STAIN) of Kerinci, Indonesia. It was selected because the researcher found several problems of speaking skill faced by the students. The number of participants of the study was 30 students. Before conducting the study, the researcher asked for the students` permission as one of good research ethics. The participants agreed with the study which was proposed to improve their speaking skill.

Instruments

An instrument is used to ensure that a study is carried out of procedural and scientific ways. In the same line, this study employed some instruments that help the researcher to get detailed, accurate data from the participants. The instruments include speaking test, observation sheet, field-notes, and interview.

Speaking test, as the name suggests, includes some questions or instructions by which the participants express their oral skill. The questions were about giving directions, giving opinions, asking for something, and expressing ideas. The test given was based on indicators of speaking test namely, "grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation" (Brown, 2009). The results of the test were evaluated and scored. It reflects their speaking skill after the instructor implemented TBLT in their classroom. Moreover, it shows whether or not TBLT has enhanced their speaking skill.

Observation sheet consists of activities of speaking course which is used for digging data during teaching and learning process in the classroom. The researcher used this sheet both before the study began and during the study. Field-notes were used by the collaborator to take notes which were not stated in the observation sheet. The results of both observation sheet and field-notes were analyzed in order to get related data on the improvement of students` speaking skill.

Data analysis

Having finished the data collection, the data were analyzed in order to answer the research questions as stated earlier. The quantitative data were analyzed by using mean scores. Since this study was focused more on qualitative analysis rather than the quantitative one, the data

resulted from the speaking test were only used to find out the mean scores of the participants` answers.

Gay& Airasian (2000) described that qualitative data can be analyzed through the following steps. Data managing, as the first step, enables the researcher to categorize collected data into specific group or category. The data categorized were gathered out of observation, field notes, and interview. Having finished that, reading and memoing are the next step to follow. In this case, the researcher read all categorized data and took some related notes to interpret. Then, the true data were described based on what the researcher has categorized and read. Description is an important part as it describes raw data that normally do not have any detailed explanation. Finally, the researcher interpreted the data by referring to the description and related theories.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Improvement of students` speaking skill in Cycle I

Planning

In this step, the researcher prepared time allotment, teaching materials and/or media, syllabus, and lesson plan. The time allocated in the first cycle was 5 (five) meetings which consisted of 4 (four) meetings for implementing TBLT and 1 (one) meeting for evaluating the effectiveness of the method or post-test. This cycle was carried out of 7th, 10th, 14th, 17th up to 21st of September 2015. It was conducted when the new academic year 2014/2015 began. The reason for doing the study during the dates is because the researcher is the lecturer of speaking course. It enabled the researcher to adjust materials for speaking course with those used during the study.

As for teaching materials for speaking course, there were various topics of discussion presented in the first cycle. The materials include natural conversations that usually take place in learners` daily life. The topics were selected because TBLT requires the learners to chat as if they were doing daily activities. However, the topics were chosen based on a need analysis towards the learners` real experiences. The purpose of this need analysis was to ensure that the tasks addressed to the learners were highly contextual.

The topics of teaching materials for each meeting were different. The following table is a list of the teaching materials during the four meetings. The materials consist of purpose of linguistic feature followed by its description as a part of real-world task.

Table 1.Teaching speaking materials of cycle I

No	Meeting	Purpose	Description
1.	First meeting	Giving an information	Student A as a newcomer asks for a place to student B as a citizen. The direction needed must be based on a map of the town or area. To run a conversation, the students can work in group of 2 (pair work).

2.	Second meeting	Giving advice	Students A and B act as parents/ teachers/ close friends of student C. Std C needs some advice due to his/her problem. Students A, B, C makes a conversation which highlights more on giving some and responding to advice.
3.	Third meeting	Making a request	Student A visits popular big cities during holidays. Student B and C request some 'gift' from the city. The students are allowed to have a conversation via a phone.
4.	Fourth meeting	Ordering for something	Some students (A, B, C) are having a dinner/ a lunch/ a breakfast in a restaurant. The students order some foods to student D (as a waiter).

The above list of materials was a part of the lesson plan. The materials also require some media such as maps, pictures, handphone, table, plates, glasses, or food (if available). The researcher provided the media of teaching in order to accomplish the study and to ensure that the conversation run well.

Action

In the first meeting, the lecturer who was also the researcher intrigued the learners` attention to follow the speaking class enthusiastically. It seemed successful since the learners paid much attention to the lecturer at the beginning of the lesson. It means that their motivation was higher than before. The lecturer explained about the concept and procedures of TBLT as the method of teaching speaking. He also explained how to follow the course, work on the task, give a report, and acknowledge the feedback afterward. After that, he divided them into several groups which were responsible with the task given.

The next phase was during-task activity. He asked each group to be prepared with their conversation entitled *"Asking for and giving information based on a map."* Each group was asked to run their natural conversation in front of the class. He mentioned several related clues to the group to avoid any some mistakes. Other groups were allowed to take some notes on each presentation. To focus, he used a rubric to score their spoken dialogue. The components of speaking are fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension (Reunyoot, 2010). The score was given to each learner though some learners were working on one group.

The last phase, post-task, was supposed to affect the learners and the lecturer in term of some feedback. The lecturer gave some view on how the learners performed their conversation, what they might or might not do during their performance, and what they need to do in future meetings. The use of language and choice of diction were put on his attention. The learners were offered to discuss their performance with the lecturer.

The second, third and fourth meetings were also undertaken based on the procedures or phases of TBLT. The lecturer kept scoring the learners` speaking skill by using the rubric. There was no big difference in each meeting. Some groups increased their better

performance in the third and fourth meetings, while some others did not meet their better performance.

Observation

Another important procedure of the study is observation. The lecturer enlisted several notes to take into account during the observation. The following table divides the results of the observation into some categories, as follows:

Table 2.Results of observation in cycle I

No	Category	Result of observation
1.	Learners	a) The learners follow the speaking course enthusiastically; b) The learners are motivated due to the natural, daily conversation; c) All materials are accomplished well; d) Most of the learners interact with other learners professionally; e) Some learners do not raise up their mind during the class; and f) Some learners are not brave to give a good performance.
2.	Classroom atmosphere	a) The class looks more challenging; b) The class is still noisy with group discussion; and c) The class becomes really active.
3.	Lecturer	a) The lecturer is aware of new teaching method; b) The lecturer manages the performance based on the procedures; and c) The lecturer acknowledges the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching method.

Reflection

The observation of cycle I is followed by its reflection which shows the strengths and weaknesses of TBLT. The reflection was enlisted based on a deep analysis during the teaching process.

Table 3.Reflection in cycle I

No	Reflection	Description
1.	Strength	a) TBLT is a challenging method in teaching speaking; b) TBLT enables the learners to make a natural, daily-life dialogues; c) TBLT raises up learners` minds to express their thoughts; and d) TBLT proves that the "Task" is not a simply procedures of

		excercises.
2.	Weakness es	a) Some learners are not accustomed with time pressure; b) Some learners memorize dialogues which result in a less natural setting; and c) The class becomes noisy as each group keep trying out their dialogue.

Finally, the lecturer evaluated the learners` competency on speaking skill by asking them to perform a task. In this case, the learners were allowed to choose their own topics without any list of topics from the lecturer. Each group presented their dialogue as natural as they could. The lecturer scored their performance by using the rubric of speaking component namely, fluency, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension. As a result, the lecturer summed up the following speaking achievement during cycle I.
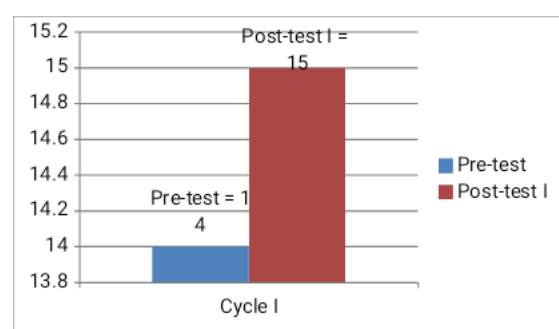

Figure 1. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-Test I

Table 4.Result of learners` speaking skill in cycle I

Cycle	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	14.1	2.8
Post-test I	15.0	2.7

The following chart shows the result of students` speaking skill in cycle I. The chart consists of mean score of Pre-test and Post-test I. The mean score for both tests are bit different. Students` mean score in cycle I is 15.0, while the result of the pre-test is 14.1. The score seems to increase, but it is not really significant.

Improvement of students` speaking skill in Cycle II

Planning

The planning phase in cycle II is more or less similar to that in cycle I. This cycle was accomplished for five meetings. There was four meetings for implementing the materials, and one meeting, for the post-test. This cycle was carried out of 5th, 7th, 12th, 14th, and 19th of October 2015. The materials were prepared and described as they were in cycle I. The difference was that the topics in cycle II were different from those in cycle I. Real-world task was still the focus

of teaching speaking through TBLT.

The media of teaching came along with the materials which reflected real-life situation and natural settings. The following table describes each material of teaching speaking.

Table 5.Teaching speaking materials of cycle II

No	Meeting	Purpose	Description
1.	First meeting	Delivering specific information	Student A and B come to a hospital/ a station/ an office and ask for some guidance. Student C comes to them and gives some specific information.
2.	Second meeting	Commanding other people	Student A who is a manager in a company lets his men know what he wants them to do. Other students B, C, D, and E agree on the command.
3.	Third meeting	Telephoning for an interview	Student A is invited to a new job interview. The student is interviewed by student B.
4.	Fourth meeting	Booking a hotel/ a restaurant/ a ticket	Students A, B, and C book a hotel/ a restaurant/ a ticket. They are talking about all things related to the booking. Student C is a man-in-charge towards the place to which the students visit.

Action

The activity in cycle II was more focused than it was in cycle I. The learners were expected to follow the course in order to improve their speaking skill and eradicate some problems that emerged during the course in cycle I. The lecturer, during the course in cycle II, implemented TBLT as the teaching method. The course was not only focused on running the materials, but also making sure that all problems in cycle I did not emerge anymore. Fortunately, several problems in cycle I such as lack of courage, lack of motivation, noisy classroom, and rush hour were cleared up by running new techniques in action phase.

Like the meetings in the previous cycle, the meeting in cycle II was commenced with new motivation that the learners became more active in attending the lesson. The lecturer explained the procedures of implementing TBLT in the speaking course though most of them already knew the steps of the course. One of the topic *"Delivering specific information"* was performed by groups of learners enthusiastically. The other topics in meeting two *"Commanding other people"*, in meeting three *"Telephoning for an interview"*, and in meeting four *"Booking a hotel/ a restaurant/ a ticket"* were also performed well by the groups of learners.

Each group used related media

during their performance which made the performance more natural. The learners looked really motivated with the activity and the lecturer was controlling them by giving them some instructions that directed their discussion to the given topics. The implementation of TBLT in cycle II showed some improvement on both the learners` scores and their attitudes during the course.

Observation

Some improvement on scores and attitudes appeared to be a better achievement for the lecturer by implementing TBLT. As for the learners, they tended not to make noisy classroom when they tried out of their performance. They became more focused on their tasks since they were to give a better performance in front of the class. They were active in both practising their conversation and discussion any possible problems that were found during the course. They did not feel any limit of time when they worked in a relaxed way.

Reflection

There were not more serious problems to be discussed in the reflection phase. The atmosphere of the speaking course changed to a better situation. Small problems found in cycle II were not considered as a serious problem to be solved. Some noise was an indicator of being active. Some students were still willing to perform their competency in front of the class, while some other did not.

The result of post-test in cycle II can be seen in the following table.

Table 6. Comparison of learners` speaking skill in cycle I and cycle II

Cycle	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	14.1	2.8
Post-test I	15.0	2.7
Post-test II	17.5	2.5

The following shows a summary of mean score in the Pre-test, Post-test I, and Post-test II. The mean score of pre-test is 14, and the Std. Deviation is 2.8. The mean score of post-test I or test in cycle I is 15, and the Std. Deviation is 2.7. The mean score of post-test II or test in cycle II is 17.1, and the Std. Deviation is 2.5. the result of post-test II is higher than that in previous tests.
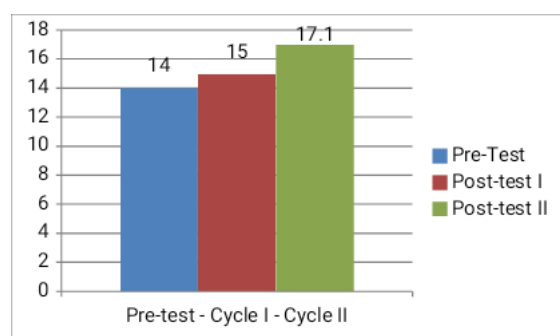

Figure 2. Comparison of Pre-test, Post-Test I, and Post-test II

Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an appropriate method for teaching speaking. It enables the learners to focus their exercise on accomplishing the real-world task consisting of pre-task, during-task, and post-task activities (Ellis, 2003). The study proves that TBLT improves learners` speaking skill in a way that the learners become more active, more focused, and more motivated in performing natural conversation.

Natural or real-world conversation is very important for the learners in order that they can use English as fluent as possible. Krashen (1985) stated that it is a good idea that learners learn English and bring real-life communicative skill into the classroom which reflects a real world. This means that TBLT is used as methods that connect daily conversation with classroom activities and tasks.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Task Based Language Teaching can be used as a teaching method for teaching speaking course. TBLT is advantageous for both the lecturer and the learners. It raises up learners` motivation and enthusiasm to attend the course. In short, TBLT can be implemented not only in a higher education context, but also in secondary schools since it provides some phases to create a better classroom atmosphere.

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