THE EFFECT OF TASK-BASED LEARNING ON STUDENTS SPEAKING SKILLS AND MOTIVATION: THE CASE OF WOLDIA SECONDARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study evaluates the effect of task-based learning on students speaking skill and motivation of Woldia secondary school grade 9 students. An experimental design was employed to test the effect of TBL on students speaking skills. Two classes were purposely selected for the study based on their mean score registered at first-semester English subject result and assigned as control and experimental groups. The two groups were given speaking pre-tests at the beginning of the experiment. The experimental group was taught through TBL for seven weeks while the control group was taught the same unit in the traditional way in which TBL was not implemented. After the seventh weeks of implementing the program for two periods of 42 minutes a week, the students were given the speaking test as post-test similar to the pre-test in order to assess the effect of the program on participants speaking skills before and after the implementation. And also questionnaire were conducted after the post test. Paired T-test was employed to find out if the result obtained from the tests was statistically significant or not. The result of the test showed that (t= 7.605, p<0.05) the experimental group had better score gains over the control group because of the implementation of task-based learning on their speaking skills. Likewise, the data gathered from the questionnaire prove that students' motivation were also promising to say a positive and high degree of motivation. The results of this study indicated that TBL had a positive effect on speaking skills and motivation.

Introduction

The English language has a vital role in various aspects throughout the world. English as a medium of instruction in teaching and learning at large and language teaching in focus is/are among these pivotal roles. Cremin (2009) presents her idea on English teaching and learning as at its richest, energizing, purposeful and imaginatively vital experience for all involved, developing students' competence, confidence, and creativity as well as building positive attitudes to learning. So as to create a positive image for the students it needs to teach the student in a better language learning method.

In order to use English language as a medium of instruction, we are expected to know how to use language. Edge (1993) suggests that the need to know the word that expresses our meanings and how to put those words together to make sense is appropriate to communicate with other people. To make a better sympathetic of English teaching, Esfandiari, et.al (2012) indicates that task-based approach in language teaching has evolved in response to a better understanding of the way languages are learned. For the better use of English language as a medium of instruction TBL plays a pivotal role. The reason is that task-based language education starts from the basic idea that students learn a language by performing tasks (Bygate, Skehan & Swain, 2002; Long, 1985; and Van den Branden, 2006 cited in Branden, Van Gorp and Verhelst, 2007). They suggest a task is described as an activity in which people engage to attain an objective, and which involves the meaningful use of language

Task-Based Learning (TBL) was early developed in 1980's. Since then, it becomes one of the dominant teaching methodologies in the area of second and foreign language teaching (Esfandiari, et.al, 2012). In line with being TBL as a principal method, it uses in other skills of English language effectively.

Similarly, the need for effective teaching and learning, TBL creates a better opportunity for learners. Hence, TBL has a great contribution for language learners to attain the minimum learning goal/s. Harden et.al (1996) notes that TBL has various roles like an educationally sound, effective and efficient strategy for delivering relevant education. It is also ensured to achieve the learning outcomes of the learners while the advantage is taken off the rich opportunities and experiences to those students can be exposed in a real or replicated setting.

In line with this, McKinnon and Rigby (n.d) describes that TBL gives an opportunity to students to focus on classroom activity, and deal with the task and language as the instrument which the students use to complete it. In the same way, the task is an activity in which students use language to achieve a specific outcome because the activity reflects real life and learners focus on

meaning; they are free to use any language as they want. Similarly, playing a game, solving a problem or sharing information or experiences, can all be considered as relevant and authentic tasks as part of TBL.This implies that task and authentic material are important to implement TBL. But, the tasks should contain problem-solving elements and goals that must come with an agreement to reach a given outcome. If it is so, it is possible to say that the tasks are genuine.

Brown (2013) says that the main advantage of TBL is used for a genuine purpose that should take places and offers a great deal of flexibility. This model is used as motivating activities for learners. Hence, it gets much attention as an effective teaching strategy. To show its effectiveness, Esfandiari, et.al (2012) reveals that the role of TBL is reflected in the increasing attention which is given to the notion of tasks based approach in the development of national curriculums, and the greater focus on TBL in initial and in-service language teacher education. It is also observed in the increasing amount of commercially published teaching materials that claim to follow a task-based approach.

In light of speaking skills, TBL has its own effect on learners' skills (Brown, 2013). In line with this, Chuang (n.d) notes that TBL approach has positive effects on students' perception and attitude to learning to speak and it helps them to improve their oral proficiency. Besides, Torkey (2006), Farahani and Nejad (2009), Murad (2009), and Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010), also strengthen this notion.

One of the most challenging tasks constantly facing language teachers is how to capture the interest of their learners' and to stimulate the thoughts of their students (Oura, n.d.). Regarding this, Ruso (2008) notes the problems are generally caused by students' lack of motivation to the lesson. In Ethiopia context, Niguse (2011) notes fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and inappropriate topics given for discussion are challenges for TBL to be implemented. In line with the above point, he also comments on the learners' background that can create the smooth ground for anxiety to be generated and regenerated on the students while they were practicing English speaking skill.

In the same vein, not only students' but also most teachers create a problem on teaching speaking through the task. Among the problem, teachers have not been using group work properly, they did not supervise students by moving through the rows, they did not give feedback for students on how well they do their group activity and the English environment is not convenient to perform group activities. In addition, he has found that most of the students do not take turns during group work in speaking lessons (Melese, 2010). However, studies such as Gruma (2004 E.C) shows that effective task performance of learners was strongly inhibited by the unavailability of reference materials, unsuitable classroom environment, students having less understanding about task work and complicatedness of teaching methodology.

Amare (2013), Gruma (2004), Niguse (2011) Temesgen (2013), and Shambel (2012) has done their research on task-based language teaching, task-based instruction, motivation, and motivation towards EFL respectively. Though these researchers conducted studies on TBL, TBI, and motivation in Ethiopia, it does not mean they exhaustively studied the area. Thus, the current researcher would like to examine a study on the effect of TBL on students' speaking skills, motivation, and usage of the task in the case of Woldia secondary school.

Statement of the Problem

Many scholars suggest tasks are essential for teaching English. Willis (1996) indicates the use of tasks should be the main focus in language classrooms, claiming that tasks create a supportive methodological framework. She also holds the aim of tasks is to create a real purpose for language use and to provide a natural context for language study. Regarding her idea, TBL offers learners the chance to use whatever language they already know in order to carry out the task and then to improve their language under the teacher's guidance while planning their reports on the task. With respect to the above point, an evaluation of the effect of task-based learning on students' English speaking skill is important for students and teachers of Ethiopia. This is because only fewer students are well in performing on speaking skill. Especially, in Woldia secondary school grade nine.

Many studies have been conducted on the overall influence of TBL in EFL classroom at large and speaking skills in focus. Ruso's (2008), Choo and Too (2012), Cuesta (1996), Torkey (2006), Farahani and Nejad (2009), Murad (2009), Chuang (nd), and Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010), and their result indicates the students who experiences TBLT were found better in English. .

In Ethiopia context, we can find different studies in relation to speaking skills in general and task-based learning and motivation in focus. Some of these are Amare (2013), Gruma (2004), Niguse (2011), Temesgen (2013), Sisay (2012), Meles (2010), and Shambel (2012) on task-based learning, students motivation towards learning English and overall speaking skills. Some of these are briefly presented as follows.

Amare's (2013) study "The Effect of Task – Based Language Teaching on Developing Speaking Skills of EFL Learners: The Case of Woldia Preparatory School" used data gathered from test and observation. His analysis reflected that students who experienced task based principle of teaching were found remarkably better in speaking.

Gruma (2004 E.C) in his study, "An investigation of the implementation of TBI: focus on Arjo Gudetu secondary school" used data gathered from questionnaires, interview, and observations. His analysis reflected that effective task performance of learners

was strongly inhibited by the unavailability of reference materials, unsuitable classroom environment, students having less understanding about task work and complicatedness of teaching methodology.

Temesgen's (2013) "the relationship among motivation, Metacognitive strategy and learner autonomy in EFL setting: Focus on grade 12 Bahir Dar Preparatory School Students" in his effort to show the effects of motivation on EFL setting describes motivation affect learners autonomy significantly.

Shambel (2012) on his study in titled "Students' motivation towards learning English as a foreign language grade 11 students at Addis- Zemen in focus" revealed that, knowing factors affecting students' motivation towards learning English as a foreign language is advisable and recommend teachers, educators and syllabus designers should be sensitive to learners' motives by recognizing their motivational type and the foreign language teacher should adopt the role of facilitator rather than an authority figure in the classroom to increase students' motivation.

However, the aforementioned foreign and local researchers did not integrate learners' motivation and use of task on students speaking skill on evaluating the effect of TBL in secondary school. Therefore, the above reason in mind, the researcher instigate to conduct the research on the effect of Task-Based Learning on students speaking skills, motivation, and usage of the task in the cases of Woldia secondary school.

To do this, the following research questions were formulated:

i.   Does TBL have an effect on students speaking skills?
ii.   Does TBL have an effect on students' motivation?

Research Design, Participants, Sampling, and Sampling Techniques

To answer the research questions, to achieve the objectives and draw ample conclusion based on data sources, experimental study, was employed. There are 765 students in grade nine in 18 different sections enrolled during this academic year. Of the 18 sections, nine of the classes were taught in an opposite shift. Among the classes, two sections (section A and D) were selected purposely based on the mean score registered at first-semester English subject result. Of the two sections, section 'D' is chosen purposely based on students' positive feeling to the program than section 'A'. The two sections have 42 students each and score an average point among 18 classes.

Data Gathering Instruments

Test and questionnaire were employed in the study to answer the research question. After gathering all the necessary information, the data collected from speaking test were analyzed using SPSS version 20.0. A t-test was used to test the difference in the adjusted mean scores between the two groups to find out statistically significant difference between the experimental and control group. Questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively using frequency and percentage to know the level of students' motivation and use of task.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

The pre-test (which was given to identify the targeted groups' general speaking skill and the post-test (administered to measure the development of students' speaking skill after implementing TBL) were analyzed quantitatively through T-test to measure the mean difference between the two tests. Then, the data gathered through questionnaire were calculated through frequency and percentage to know the level of the learners' motivation and usage of task who were assigned to the experimental group. Finally, focus group discussions were analyzed with the experimental group to know students opinions on implementing task-based learning.

Analysis and Findings of Data Collected Using Speaking Test

One of the objectives of this study was to explore the effects TBL on students speaking skills under the two groups. To do this T-test is used and the result is presented as follows.

Statistical Analysis of Control Group Pre-Post Tests

Table 1 Mean scores of speaking proficiency pre-Post test for the control group.

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed
Pre-	3.6548	42	1.32742	-2.154	41	.037

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation			
test						
Post-test	3.7619	42	1.35807			

Paired sample T- test is employed to find out if there was statistically significant difference in means between the pre- and post-test of a control group or not. The statistical results in Table 1 show the mean scores of speaking pre-test and post-test of the control group are almost similar. As indicates from the table, the control group has M=3.6548 in speaking pre-tests and M= 3.7619 speaking posttest. The results show that there is not quite statically significant difference between the groups (t= -2.154, df=41, p>0.05).

Statistical Analysis of Experimental Group Pre-Post Tests

Table 2 Mean scores of speaking proficiency pre-post tests for the experimental group

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed
Pre-test	3.7143	42	1.23042	-16.420	41	.000
Post-test	5.7024	42	1.01248			

Paired sample T- test was also employed to find out if there was statistically significant difference in means between the pre- and post-test of experimental group or not. The results in Table 2 show there is a statistically significant mean difference between pre-test and post-test of the experimental group (t= -16.42, df= 41, p<0.05). The mean score of the experimental group increases (M = 3.7143, S.D=1.23042) pre-test to (M=5.7024, S.D=1.01248) post-test.

Statistical Analyses of Pre-Post Tests of Experimental and Control Group

Table 3 Mean scores of speaking proficiency pre-post test for the control and experimental group

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed
Pre-test	Experimental	42	3.7143	1.23042	.212	82	.833
	Control	42	3.6548	1.32742			
Post-test	Experimental	42	5.7024	1.01248	7.605	82	.000
	Control	42	3.7619	1.35807			

Paired T-test was employed to know whether there would be statistically significant mean difference between experimental and control groups of pre-and post-test results. The result above shows that there is no significant mean difference between the two groups pre-test (t= .212, p>0.05). But, the results in post-test indicate that there is statistically significant mean difference between the experimental and control groups (t= 7.605, p<0.05). Besides, as can be seen in table 3 there exists almost no significance difference in mean score between the two groups in their pre-test of speaking (M=3.7143 experimental and M=3.6548 control group). Reasonably, there is a greater mean difference among the two groups in their post-test (M=5.7024 experimental and M=3.7619 control group).

Analysis and Findings of Data on Students Motivation

One of the major objectives of the study was to evaluate the effect of TBL on students' motivation under experimental group. In order to find out whether task-based learning was manifested in the classes, the questionnaire was designed in accordance with the two types of motivation. The results and analysis of students' questionnaire are presented as follows:

Table: 4 Frequency and Percentage of Nine Items Related To Integrative Motivation (N=42)

R.No	Learning English can be important to me because:	Response											
		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree.		Total	
		Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%
1	It will allow me to be more at ease with other people who speak English	-	-	-		2	4.8	8	19	32	76.8	42	100
2	It will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people	-	--	1	2.4	5	11.9	9	21.6	27	64.8	42	100
3	It will enable me to better understand and appreciate English art and literature	1	2.4	2	4.8	7	16.7	13	31.2	21	50	42	100
4	It will enable me to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups	7	16.8	14	33.3	6	14.4	12	28.8	3	7.1	42	100
5	It enables me to know the life the English speaking nations	1	2.4	3	7.1	4	9.1	10	24	24	57.6	42	100
6	To know various culture and people	4	9.6	12	28.8	5	11.9	13	31.2	8	19	42	100
7	To keep in touch with foreign friends and acquaintances	-	-	1	2.4	4	9.6	11	26.4	26	62.4	42	100
8	The more I got to know native English speakers, the more I like them	6	14.4	9	21.6	3	7.1	15	35.7	9	21.6	42	100
9	To know more about native English speakers	-	-	1	2.4	4	9.6	13	31.2	24	57.6	42	100

As shown in table 4. the result of frequency and percentage indicated that students are a positive and high degree of integrative motivation on the items 1, 2,3,5,7 and 9. On the other hand item, 8 shows students had moderate motivation in the item. An item 4 and 6 shows the weak motivation. Based on the result in the above table, students' integrative motivation ranges from 95.8% on item one to 35.7% on item four.

In detail, related with integrative motivation the result shows students had a positive and high degree of motivation on: to be more at ease with other people who speak English, to meet and converse with more and varied people, to better understand and appreciate English art and literature, to know the life the English-speaking nations, to keep in touch with foreign friends and acquaintances, and to know more about native English speakers. Based on the result students in the experimental group had a high degree of integrative motivated on the above-selected items.

Table: 5 Frequencies and Percentage of 13 Items Related To Instrumental Motivation (N=42)

R.No	Learning English can be important to me because:	Response											
		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree.		Total	
		Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%	Fre	%
10	It will need it for future career and future education	1	2.4	2	4.8	1	2.4	10	24	26	62.4	42	100
11	It will make me more knowledgeable person	1	2.4	1	2.4	3	7.1	16	38.1	21	50	42	100
12	It will someday be useful in getting in a good job	5	11.9	9	21.6	4	9.1	10	24	14	33.3	42	100
13	Other people respect me if I have knowledge of English	16	38.1	14	33.3	4	9.1	6	14.4	2	4.8	42	100
14	It helps me succeeded in other courses	3	7.1	3	7.1	5	11.9	14	33.3	17	40.5	42	100
15	It helps me pass the exam and join university	2	4.8	2	4.8	4	9.1	16	38.1	18	42.8	42	100
16	It will learn more about what's happening in the world	3	7.1	6	14.4	4	9.1	12	28.8	17	40.5	42	100
17	Language learning often gives me a feeling of success	1	2.4	1	2.4	2	4.8	17	40.5	21	50	42	100
18	Language learning makes me happy	1	2.4	2	4.8	2	4.8	14	33.3	23	54.7	42	100
19	I can understand English-speaking films, videos, TV or radio	-	-	1	2.4	3	7.1	14	33.3	24	57.6	42	100
20	I can read English books	1	2.4	1	2.4	2	4.8	20	48	18	42.8	42	100
21	To know new people from different parts of the world	-	-	2	4.8	3	7.1	15	35.7	22	52.4	42	100
22	Without it, one can be successful in any subject	8	19	14	33.3	7	16.8	8	19	5	11.9	42	100

As shown in table 5, the result of frequency and percentage indicated that students are a positive and high degree of instrumental motivation. The above table shows that the frequency and the percentages of items 10, 11, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 indicated that students were strongly motivated. On the other hand items 12, 14 and 16 show moderate motivation and item 13 and 22 shows weak in motivation. Based on the result in the above table, students' instrumental motivation ranges from 90.9% on item nineteen to 19.2% on item thirteen.

In general, concerned with instrumental motivation, the result shows students had a high degree of motivation to achieve future career and future education, to be more knowledgeable person, to pass the exam and join university, to gain a feeling of success,

to make themselves happy on English learning, to understand English-speaking films and other, to read English books, and to be successful in any subject showed students were instrumentally motivated on learning English.

Summary of the Study

Based on the data found on Test and questionnaire the following major findings were obtained.

❖ The result of the test showed that students in the experimental group score high and registered statistically significant difference after TBP is implemented (post-test) in speaking skills than pre-test.
❖ Based on students' response on motivation questionnaire, students had a positive and high degree of motivation.
❖ The study found that students were very satisfied with tasks while implementing task-based learning.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on what has been found out as a result of the research study and the summary stated above; this study grants evidence for the effectiveness of task-based learning to develop students speaking skills; due to the TBL students begin to communicate and speak inside and outside the classroom. The study also gives evidence that task-based learning can create a positive and high degree of motivation; task gives an opportunity to speak in English and encourage their motivation, and the result of this study showed that task-based learning creates an opportunity of interacting with friends and teachers freely.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations are given.

❖ The researcher recommended that the concept of 'task' should become an important element in syllabus design, classroom teaching, and learner assessment.
❖ Teachers should give more attention on preparing familiar tasks.
❖ Teachers should focus on group discussion while they are teaching.
❖ Teachers should be friendly for the students. This needs for students to ask a question and the teacher can shape the student.
❖ Teachers should give much more time to update themselves and to be familiar with the concept of TBL
❖ School administrators should give training for teachers on task-based learning and also prepare awards for those who achieve high.
❖ Curriculum developers should focus on the concept of TBL while they are preparing students' material.
❖ At the end, further studies are needed to explore the effectiveness of TBL in developing speaking and other skills.

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