Task based learning approach: a strategic intervention in enhancing English-speaking skills

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ABSTRACT

Task Based Learning is available way back years ago but the utilization is not widely spread and utilized especially in the Philippine setting. This study evaluates how effective Task Based Learning in enhancing English speaking skills of the students. Study uses quasi-experimental utilizing pretest-posttest design. The data gathered were presented, interpreted and analyzed. Results showed that entries of control and experimental groups have no significant difference. The entry and exit of the control group have negative significant difference. The entry and exit of the experimental group have significant difference. And, exit of both groups have significant difference because students who are immersed in the Task Based Learning increases performance. Therefore, based on the findings, Task Based Learning Approach is effective in enhancing English speaking skills of the students.

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I. Introduction

Speaking as a skill in English language plays an imperative and significant role towards efficient and effective communication. According to Brown (1994) as cited by the Center for Applied Linguistics (n.d), speaking is an interactive process that involves production and reception of information. It is the act of speaking that people express thoughts, opinions, or feelings orally. Using the English language in speaking has been part of the curriculum in the country and is the medium of communication to most of the subjects. Thus, it is important to enhance this skill for better understanding. Teachers in school utilize variety of methods in enhancing English Speaking Skills. One of those is the Task Based Learning (TBL). Task Based Learning is an approach that has roots in the Communicative Language Teaching Method, where the teaching is done entirely through communicative tasks. In order to fully acquire the language, it must have real meaning by being used in natural context. With TBL, teachers ask students to complete purposeful tasks that elicit the use of the target language. Assessment centers in the general outcome of the task, rather than meticulously picking apart each element of speech. With that, this study determines the effectiveness of the Task Based Learning in Enhancing he English Speaking Skills of the Students.

The researchers have observed that a number of students are still struggling to enhance their Speaking Skills. According to Paakki (2013), English seems to be a very challenging task because English education does not only develop knowledge of grammar and written skills but also to teach oral skills. More practical and functional communication skills should be emphasized to attain better active oral skills.

The communicative approach has been encouraged nowadays in English language teaching. It has firmly established itself where learners have enough opportunities to put into practice the formal aspects of language under real operating conditions. However, gradual waves of criticism revealed that meaningful communication which focuses solely on meaning processing are not adequate for

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learning English language. In order to strike a balance between meaning and form and in order to get the best of two worlds, 'task' was proposed as the desired solution. 'Task' seems to be an appropriate candidate for engaging learners in using language pragmatically, where the primary attention is devoted to meaning and any formal acquisition that occurs during conversing with an interlocutor is incidental (Ellis, 2003 as cited by Talebi, 2015).

In the recent study conducted by Talebi (2015) titled "Form Based Approaches versus Task Based Approaches", he investigated whether task-based approaches bear any superiority to that of the traditional ones evident in presentation practice and production phase. The results of the analysis showed that participants in the traditional group or PPP gained significantly in grammar recognition of the posttest than that of the task group. However, their counterparts in the task group gained better scores in the writing section of the test. The result essentially means that each of the methods have still proven its effectiveness depending on the area being tested.

Moreover, Task Based Learning Approach impeccably complements with the Commission on Higher Education Memorandum Order No. 37 s. of 2012 of implementation of Outcomes Based Education (OBE). The OBE emphasizes students' activity to achieve desired outcomes in which TBL could be best utilized. The suitability and applicability of the approach is timely and relevant.

Majority of the studies conducted about Task Based Learning focused only in teaching grammar and writing. There are just few studies yet that determine the effectiveness of TBL in enhancing English Speaking Skills. Moreover, in the workplace also of the researcher, there has no study conducted yet in determining the effectiveness of the said strategy. For this reason, the researcher prompted to conduct this study to be able to at least address the students' need in enhancing and cultivating more of their English-Speaking Skills effectively and efficiently. Therefore, this study is aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of Task Based Approach, through quantitative means, if TBL is effective in enhancing the speaking skills of the students.

2. Statement of Purpose

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The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of Task Based Learning as a strategy in enhancing the English-Speaking Skills among Grade 11 students of the University of the Visayas for First Semester of School Year 2020-2021 as basis for the Proposed Enhancement Module.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the entry and exit Speaking Skills of the students from the Control group and Experimental group in terms of:

    1.1 Grammatical Competence;

    1.2 Discourse Competence;

    1.3 Sociolinguistic Competence; and

    1.4 Strategic Competence?

2. Is there a significant difference in the entry performance between control and experimental group?

3. Is there a significant improvement in the performance of the:

    3.1. Control Group: and

    3.2. Experimental?

4. Is there a significant mean gain of the control and experimental group?

5. Based on the findings of the study, what speaking enhancement module can be proposed?

Null Hypotheses

Ho_1: There is no significant difference in the entry performance between control and experimental.

Ho_2: There is no significant improvement in the performance of the Control and Experimental group.

Ho_3: There is no significant mean gain of the control and experimental group.

3. Research Methodology

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This study utilized the Quasi-experimental method. This method resembles experimental research but is not true experimental research. Although the independent variable is manipulated, participants are not randomly assigned to conditions or orders of conditions (Cook & Campbell, 1979). This is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of Task Based Learning in enhancing English speaking skills of the Grade 11 students of the University of the Visayas. According to United Nations Children's Fund (2014), there are several types of quasi-experimental designs but the most common type is the comparison group pre-test/posttest design. The comparison group is most often used, it is not possible to randomize individuals or groups to treatment. To officially support this study, the researchers focus on a pretest and posttest of students to measure their ability. Students who meet the standards then continue and be a part of the experimental demonstration. By that, this design is viewed as an intervention in which treatment measured the set indicators.

4. Results and Discussions

Table 1. Summary of the Entry and Exit Speaking Skills of the students from the Control Group

Dimensions	Entry			Exit		
	Mean	*SD*	Interpretation	Mean	*SD*	Interpretation
Grammatical Competence	2.38	0.62	Fair	2.42	0.52	Fair
Discourse Competence	2.48	0.52	Fair	2.38	0.55	Fair
Sociolinguistic Competence	2.59	0.59	Good	2.37	0.61	Fair
Strategic Competence	2.44	0.53	Fair	2.41	0.50	Fair
Grand Mean	2.47	0.57	Fair	2.40	0.54	Fair

Note. n = 15. 1.00-1.75 – Poor; 1.76-2.50 – Fair; 2.51-3.25 – Good; 3.26-4.00 – Very Good.

The table 1 shows that the Grand mean of the students in pretest of the control group has a factor mean of 2.47 which is classified as Fair. Moreover, in the posttest, the factor mean is 2.40 which is interpreted as Fair. It is evident that the factor mean decreased from 2.47 to 2.40. This implies

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that in the control group, the speaking performance of the students decreased from entry to exit. According to the Research Division Assessment and Development Cambridge Assessment (2005), one of the disadvantages of modular approach is the fragmentation of learning. Fragmented Learning could possibly be affected by time, space, information or behavior. This could not be conducive to the logic of individual knowledge system, and it is not suitable for learners to complete complex learning task (Wenxui, 2015).

Notably, the competence with the highest mean in entry is Sociolinguistic Competence but decreased in the exit. It was observable that the modular approach has fragmented the learning of the students. Strkingly, the competence with the lowest mean in the entry is the Grammatical Competence but increased in the exit. According to Ibyatova et al. (2018), in their study *Modular Approach To Teaching And Learning English Grammar In Technical Universities*, results show that students of modular syllabuses find it useful and motivating and say that it encourages them to do better on the next modules. At the same time, modular learning and assessment does not remove the stress and workload of traditional approaches.

Table 2. Entry and Exit Speaking Skills of the students from the Experimental Group

Dimensions	Entry			Exit		
	Mean	*SD*	Interpretation	Mean	*SD*	Interpretation
Grammatical Competence	2.44	0.53	Fair	2.96	0.59	Good
Discourse Competence	2.42	0.51	Fair	2.95	0.59	Good
Sociolinguistic Competence	2.59	0.50	Good	3.07	0.58	Good
Strategic Competence	2.36	0.54	Fair	2.97	0.61	Good
Grand Mean	2.45	0.53	Fair	2.99	0.59	Good

Note. n = 15. 1.00-1.75 – Poor; 1.76-2.50 – Fair; 2.51-3.25 – Good; 3.26-4.00 – Very Good.

The table 2 shows that the Grand mean of the students in pretest of the experimental group has a factor mean of 2.45 which is categorized as Fair. In contrast, in the posttest, the factor mean is 2.99

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which is interpreted as Good. It is evident that the factor mean improved from 2.45 to 2.99. This implies that in the experimental group, the speaking performance of the students increased from entry to exit. Task based learning has the advantage of getting the student to use his/her skills at his/her current level to help develop language through its use. It has the advantage of getting the focus of the student toward achieving a goal where language becomes a tool, making the use of language a necessity.

The results affirm to the study of Ruso (2007), entitled, "The Influence of Task Based Learning on EFL Classrooms", in which the approach increases learners' motivation and performance. IT is revealed that implementing a TBL approach in EFL classes creates variety for the students. Moreover it enhances their learning, since TBL tasks encourage student involvement and lead to significant improvements regarding their language performance. The research participants suggest that they do not like teacher-directed lessons where they cannot find enough opportunities to express themselves in the target language.

Notably, the competence with the highest mean in entry is Sociolinguistic Competence. It is also evident that there is an improvement in the exit performance of the students. It testifies that the students show politeness and focused on the topic with content. However, the competence with the lowest mean in the entry is the Strategic Competence. In addition, it is clear that the performance of the students improved in the posttest.

Table 3. Difference in the Entry Performance between Control and Experimental Groups

Groups	n	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Control	15	2.47	0.09	0.72	0.480	Fail to Reject Ho1	Not Significant
Experimental	15	2.45	0.10				

Note. Significant α < 0.05

Table 3 reveals that there is no significant difference between the entry performances of the two groups since the p-value is 0.480 which is more than alpha level of significance at 0.05. This

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implies that both groups are seen proportionate and matched. Therefore, they are acceptable to undergo the control and experimental group and be compared in their exit performances. The null hypothesis of the study is failed to reject. This means that there is no significant difference in the entry performance between control and experimental.

Table 4. Difference in the Entry and Exit Performance of the Students in the Control Group

Observations	n	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Entry	15	2.47	0.09	2.44	0.029	Reject Ho	Significant
Exit	15	2.39	0.06				

Note. Significant $\alpha < 0.05$

Table 4 reveals that there is a significant difference between the entry and exit performances of the control group since the p-value is 0.029 which is less than alpha level of significance at 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. It is evident that the performance decreased from 2.47 in the entry to 2.39 in the exit. This means that there is a significant difference. According to Gulsah (2013), in his study entitled, *An Evaluation Of Modular Teaching In The Preparatory English Program: A Quantitative Case Study,* it was found that the participating students did not consider themselves as active learners in the learning environment empowered by a modular teaching method. As the participants were asked to weigh their more recent experiences with modular learning of English in comparison with their previous experiences with more traditional methods, they seemed to have no preferences towards modular teaching approach. Moreover, according to these claims of participants, neither their motivation nor their interest towards learning English showed any significant improvement.

Table 5. Difference in the Entry and Exit Performance of the Students in the Experimental Group

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Observations	n	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Entry	15	2.44	0.10	15.29	0.000	Reject Ho2	Significant
Exit	15	2.99	0.08				

Note. Significant α < 0.05

Table 5 reveals that there is a significant difference between the entry and exit performances of the experimental group since the p-value is 0.029 which is less than alpha level of significance at 0.05. This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected and Task Based Learning shows effectiveness in the enhancement of the English-Speaking Skills of the students.

The result above is supported by the study of Viriya (2018) entitled "Using Task Based Learning with Students of Academic English ". He studied the effects of using task-based learning (TBL) to teach English for Academic Purposes (EAP) students and to explore their opinions towards TBL at Thammasat University. Forty students were chosen via purposely selected sampling. The research instruments included a reading and writing pretest-posttest, a speaking pretest-posttest, and a questionnaire.   The questionnaire was divided into three parts: the students' demographic information, the students' opinions about Pre-Task, During Task or Task Cycle, and Post-Task, as well as their additional opinions and suggestions of TBL. The data was statistically analyzed by mean, standard deviation, and t-test for dependent samples. The results of this study indicated that the reading-writing and speaking abilities of EAP students through TBL after the experiment were significantly higher at the .05 level. Similarly, they were highly satisfied to study with TBL.

Furthermore, the study of Kagan (2009) entitled "A Critical Analysis of Task Based Approach", supports the result in which he examined some proposals for a favourite method in language teaching and learning: Task Based Approach. According to him, the problems and difficulties of learning a second language are the major factors for scholars to develop new methods to be employed in language pedagogy. When Prahbu developed Task Based learning, he thought that if students' mind engaged in a task, they may learn more effectively because the basic condition of

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education is learner engagement. He added that TBL was seen as another device to handle learning problems and has been the target of many researches during the past two decades. Looking at its development, the initial priority was given to the definition of tasks and philosophy behind it. At present, the main concern of leading researchers is the kinds of tasks and whether at which level task-based learning is effective. In, sum task-based learning has made significant progress in the last two decades and has remained a potentially fertile approach for many ESL teachers despite the fact that some researchers still questions TBL.

Table 6. Difference in the Exit Performance between Control and Experimental Groups

Groups	n	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Control	15	2.39	0.06	23.09	0.000	Reject Ho3	Significant
Experimental	15	2.99	0.08				

Note. Significant $\alpha < 0.05$

Table 6 reveals that there is a significant difference between the exit performances of the experimental group since the p-value is 0.00 which is less than alpha level of significance at 0.05. This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected. It is seen in the table that the experimental group gained higher mean than the control group which means that students immersed in Task Based Learning has high performance evaluation in the exit performance.

In the study of Sae-Ong (2010), he developed English speaking ability of Mattayom Suksa 4 learners at the Demonstration School of Silpakorn University in Nakornpathom Province through task-based learning. The informants were 40 Mattayom Suksa 4 learners gained via random sampling. The results of this study support the table above in which it indicated that the English speaking ability of Mattayom Suksa 4 learners through task-based learning after the experiment was significantly higher at the .05 level.

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Pongsawang (2012) support the result of the study in which he also examined Task Based Learning Activities in Enhancing English Speaking Abilities of Pramthomsuska. The participants were 40 Prathom Suska 5 studentsselected via convenient sampling. The students studied with the researcher in a speaking classroom for six weeks, in which the teacher used task-based learning. The instruments were three Task Based Lesson Plans, Students' Behavior Forms, English Speaking Rating Scale, and Students' Perception Questionnaires. The data from the speaking test were analyzed using mean scores, standard deviation scores and t-test scores for dependent. The data from the speaking observation and open-ended forms were described qualitatively. The result of this study indicated that the students' English-speaking ability after learning English speaking through task-based learning was much higher, with a statistical significance at .05 level. Then before encountering the instructional method based on doing tasks.

5. Summary of Findings

The findings reveal that there is no significant difference between the entry performances of the two groups. This implies that both groups are seen proportionate and matched. Therefore, they are acceptable to undergo the control and experimental group and be compared in their exit performance. It is also revealed that there is a significant difference between the entry and exit performances of the control group. This difference is a decrease of performance. Thus, Modular Learning affects the enhancement of the speaking skills of the students negatively. However, there is a significant difference between the entry and exit performances of the experimental group. Therefore, Task Based Learning Approach improves the Speaking Skills of the students. Moreover, there is a significant difference between the exit performances of the control and experimental group since the p-value is 0.00 which is less than alpha level of significance at 0.05. The experimental group gained high exit performances than the control group. Hence, students immersed in the Task-Based Learning perform more than Modula Learning Approach.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the researchers concluded that Task Based Learning Approach is effective in enhancing the English-Speaking Skill of the students. This means that the Communicative

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Competence namely: Grammatical, Discourse, Sociolinguistic and Strategic, of the students will be much improved by utilizing the Task Based Learning Approach.

7. Recommendations

The researchers propose the following recommendations based on the derived results that the Task Based Learning Approach is indeed capable in enhancing English Speaking Skills.

1. Teachers should utilize the Task Based Learning Approach more in different classroom activities especially in the subject English.

2. Teacher should be able to give feedback to students so that student would be aware of their mistakes and weaknesses.

3. The teacher should integrate macro skills in English, Writing, Reading, Listening, Speaking and Viewing.

4. In depth understanding of the enhancement of speaking skills, future research of the "Online Class and Face to face classes in the Enhancement of Communication skills" is recommended.

5. Further research experiment utilizing Task Based Learning Approach is recommended to strengthen the claim of its effectiveness.

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