Vocabulary Enrichment and Student’ Communicative Competence: The Case in Task-Based Language Teaching

I Made Rai Jaya Widanta*
Mechanical Engineering Department, Politeknik Negeri Bali, Indonesia

ABSTRACT


1. INTRODUCTION

In order to realize and support Indonesian national educational program of MBKM, every higher educational institution is recommended and stimulated to implement learning model of task-based language teaching (TBLT). This study investigated how enriching vocabularies and giving other prompt such as driving question words effective for students’ speaking performance, such as fluency. This was a qualitatively designed study. One class semester two students majoring in civil engineering department were involved as research participants. Learning material in the form of snapshot consisting of pictures was design to bridge the students thought to the whole learning materials. Snapshot without vocabulary enrichment and driving questions was tried in the first two sessions. Discussion upon the lesson was intensively undertaken to know why students hesitated and were doubtful to speak. Observation results combined with students’ perception concluded that enrichment of vocabularies and stimulating questions were found effective to increase students’ speaking performance, learning motivation and enthusiasm. Moreover, by practicing in front of their group and by succeeding in perform such task made them more stimulated to do better. Therefore made their learning meaningful.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA license. Copyright © 2023 by Author. Published by Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha.

* Corresponding Author: I Made Rai Jaya Widanta: maderaijayawidanta@pnb.ac.id
short duration. Hence, students faced difficulty to cope with ESP (Daguay-James & Bulusan, 2020; Prasetya, 2021). The students of Engineering department, for example, have been getting difficulty in coping with English for Engineering for a number of reasons, namely: (1) problem with new and Engineering-related technical vocabularies; (2) insufficient grammar knowledge obtained during GE lesson; and (3) less competent to use English language for verbal communication, such as asking question, presenting, describing (Bilqis et al., 2016; Dudek & Heiser, 2017). Task-based language teaching (TBLT) as recommended by the government has been implemented to help students learn better and easily. The following case came up was insufficient supporting tools for the learning using TBLT. The learning materials were not provided and designed in such away that lecturers and students could not run the learning well. The lecturers tried to implement TBLT which was relying on the conventional learning model (Hima et al., 2021; Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011; Nawaz & Ghulam, 2010). Consequently, TBLT could not be implemented as it utilized communicative approach, conversely the conventional method relied on the grammar-centred and teacher-centred approach. The wide gap resulted in the difficulty for students and lectures to apply TBLT (Castillo-Cuesta, 2022; Ong, 2011).

Some endeavour has been undertaken to implement TBLT. The learning materials were developed to facilitate the in-the-class-learning. For that learning, the lecture teaching in that class developed TBLT-learning materials on her own perception. The materials made in the form of module consisted of some units (Hima et al., 2021; Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011). Each unit was built up of some sub-units, such as snapshot, speaking, reading, writing, and role play. All sub-units were formulized and designed in such away that TBLT concept which consisted off task and focused on speaking could be embodied. The snapshot was presented with a number of pictures for students to describe. Thus, on the snapshot stage students are requested to express their ideas as much as possible (Han et al., 2020; Lim et al., 2018). The pictures and related questions following the pictures function to attract students’ competence to speak. However, the teacher got difficulty to stimulate students to talk about the topic, such as describing the picture, explaining about reason why the thing happens in the picture, thing related to the pictures and much more information. This hinderance was attracting the lecture to do further investigation on how to energize and attract students’ awareness and braveness to speak.

TBLT should be supported with an analytic syllabus about learners’ ability to complete tasks in the target language culture. Previous study claimed that apart from knowing the form or the language learners should also be aware of and competent at the culture under which the language exists (Kitano, 2001). This situation will certainly make the learner to be pragmatically competent, that is they are able to use the language appropriately and effectively. In addition, a procedural syllabus on meaning and grammar construction approach should be in line with this model based on the learning process unconscious to the learners (Richards & Reppen, 2014; Vogel et al., 2011). Other study proposes that TBLT should enable learners to notice the input, such as syntactical, vocabulary, and phonological aspects (Shintani, 2011). This indicates the ease for learners to acquire the language. To realize achievement in the learning process, learners should be grouped according to their abilities for two reasons: (i) to assist accelerated acquisition of more proficient students and (ii) to provide circular support for struggling students. In line with this, success of learners’ language acquisition also depends on how inputs were given by teachers. Previous study claimed that inputs benefited learners when they were explicit and comprehensible by means of problem clarification, explicit concept building, and learners’ awareness building (Hwang et al., 2022). Therefore the aims of this study is to investigated how enriching vocabularies and giving other prompt such as driving question words effective for students’ speaking performance, such as fluency.

2. METHOD

This was a qualitatively designed study (Siregar, 2020). Data of the research were implementation of vocabulary enrichment done during teaching ‘snapshot’. The first sub-unit of the module. In addition, students’ perception and students’ learning motivation was also the data of the research. Research result was shown in the form of learners’ opinion, and motivation and reported in the form of narration not numerical explanation. The participants of the research were students of Politeknik Negeri Bali (PNB) majoring in engineer. As they are in further semester, they have to take English for specific purposes (ESP), that is English for Engineering, specifically Civil engineering. To execute the learning, the instructor implemented TBLT as recommended by the institution to support existence of MBKM. The students were given some session-lessons which used one unit as it took several meetings to finish one unit. The snapshot contained in the unit was tried some times. On the first session, snapshot was used as it was. It contained only pictures and some driving question. In its implementation, students found it hard to make up and word their ideas. Research data were formulized into three parts, namely: data on implementation of the technic, students’ perception, and students’ learning motivation on the technic. The data were collected through observational technic and focused-group discussion. Thus, the instructor the researcher observed the learning process. Upon the data were collected, the data were analysed and reported with narration.
3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Snapshot was the sub-topic which was used to initiate the lesson. The snapshot is put at the beginning of each unit. Of the ten units totally the module covers, all snapshots were put to initiate each unit. Snapshot is a unit slightly designed to give general information about the topic in a certain unit. Snapshot varies in form, some of them are in the form of table, and most of the are in the form of pictures. The module requires the students to be able to read, understand, and explain about the pictures in order to comprehend the topic of the entire unit. The snapshot used in the experiment was on the unit 5, entitled ‘Erosion, abrasion, and damage’. This unit was contained in the book of English for civil engineering department. The unit 5 was chosen as it was the turn for the lesson when the experiment was undertaken. The snapshot about ‘erosion, abrasion, damage’ was firstly performed in the form of picture. The pictures were arranged in one page and was given a slight clue in form of questions. The questions used to trigger students to be able to understand topic of the unit. Snapshot was used to give students chance to practice their speaking as speaking is the main goal of the task-based learning is speaking. Snapshot on first experiment is show in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Snapshot on First Experiment](image-url)

How was the Vocabulary Enrichment Undertaken?

The learning using the snapshot above seemed to be insufficient. The goal of the learning was for the students to be able to speak. Pursuant to the observation both the researcher and the instructor, students faced obstacles, such as they stuck to word their ideas, they had insufficient knowledge of English language, they had problem in arranging sentences, and they lack of vocabularies related to the picture. Relying on the obstacles, experiment using the same snapshot was redesigned again before they used it. The learning was redesigned by the researcher helped by instructor upon the first learning using the snapshot. The redesigning was undertaken based on some reasons: (1) the students’ performance when doing the snapshot; and (2) the students’ opinion and suggestion on the snapshot material. As the interview result to the students during the class learning resulted in the fact that students found it hard to describe the picture and it was hard to construct sentences as students’ shortage of vocabularies. The researcher and instructor concluded that snapshot should be affixed with some aspects arranged in such a way that students are helped to speak. Thus, the snapshot was added with a number of vocabularies related to the pictures, and some driving question which can trigger the students to speak.

Upon revision, the snapshot was then used for the same learning in the next session. To realize the learning activity, instructor distributed the revised snapshot material to students. Similar to the first snapshot stage, the session was open with explanation that students would be assigned to do the same snapshot material with some revision. The instructor also gave the same direction before the students do the lesson. Using the revised materials, the students seemed to be more motivated. They were more highly motivated and showed a sense of enthusiasm. They looked active and creative when doing the task in the snapshot. The students were found talkative. Students felt convenient to discuss the task with friends. They felt a lot easier to learn the snapshot. They could use the provided vocabularies so that they were able to build up sentences. They also could, even though not very fluent, speak a lot better that before. They could make use the vocabularies provide optimally to construct sentences, either question, declarative sentences, negative sentences, and of course speaking. Consequently, they could finish the task sooner with more complete information. Students could make a dialog when being given chance to discuss, to practice the language with a friend and some friend. They could build and construct better structured sentences used in verbal communication. They were also able to keep their pronunciation. They could construct sentences in a relative short time when they discussed with friends and asked their instructors bout their difficulty. They also could make question concerning the topic to their friends.
Unlike using the conventional book, this book using TBLT was able to attract students’ attention to speak the materials through their doing speaking activities. Lastly, students were able to make a small written report and finally reported their work in front of the class. Initiatively, they looked ashamed, hesitate and reluctant to perform, however, assignment and task attracted them to do so.

**Students’ Perception on the Learning**

Students’ perception on the language learning was the second aspect of the research raised upon the learning implementation. Although students were frequently asked to express their thought and feeling on the implementation of the model during the in-class learning, asking their fundamental perception seemed to be crucial and it should be done exclusively. Therefore, the perception gathering was decided to be set in a special moment. The result of the gathering was combined with interview to students done in each session. Perception gathered was specifically focused on how students felt and thought about the implementation of snapshot learning. The perception covered some points arranging from the beginning, while and at the end of the learning. The perception gathering was also combined with opinion, inputs, and recommendation given the learning materials and the learning activity. Basically, students perceived that the existence of snapshot to support TBLT was very essential. This model coincided with the soul of TBLT, i.e., is speaking.

On the beginning of the learning, the instructor initiated by giving information about the snapshot, giving definition, character of the snapshot, and what comprehensible instruction need to be given to them. Of all activities done on the beginning of snapshot, students were enthusiastic. Unlike the first snapshot learning which was conveyed less detail, the second learning of session was seen a lot more helpful. Students were far clearer what to do with the snapshot. Clear instruction from instructor made the students more confident to work out the task. On the while-learning stage, the instructor explained what students had to do with the task. The lesson was initiated with eliciting students’ opinion about the pictures. By asking questions about the pictures, students were able to make up their mind and words their ideas on what to say, what aspects to include in the response. When the students got a problem in extending their ideas, the instructor tried to ask further questions. Based on students’ input at the end of the first session, where students need to be stimulated, the instructor developed the learning material by affixing with two items: (1) list of vocabularies (words) related to the pictures; and (2) driving questions which might be helpful to trigger students’ thought. Upon an interview with the students after the session, they perceived that the presence of vocabularies and driving question was of much benefits for them. Question words such as: What? Where? Which? Why? How to prevent? Who? When? Whose were said to be driving so that the students could successfully their information about the picture. They were stimulated to extend their ideas to vary sentences. At the closing stage, the instructor invited the student to come up to explain what they have discussed with friends on the desk. Explaining in front of the class also energized the student to be creative and productive to explain what they have said on their tables. They were very enthusiastic to convey information to their friends as they have been prepared in prior. They wanted to show how good they could perform speaking in front of the class. In other word, exposing students with such inputs, as vocabularies, driving questions could support their better fluency which resulted in better communicative competence. This project really made them confident finally.

**Students’ Motivation on the Learning**

Focused group discussion was also in purpose to know students’ motivation during the learning. The observation result revealed that Result of observation indicated that students were enthusiastic to do the practice. Based on the observation, students were highly motivated. They were able to decrease and finally release anxiety and found the practicum was fun and. In addition to this, they were found eager and willing to use the language for verbal communication. Snapshot leaded in students to a success. They were brave speak as they could know the key word what to say. By being given driving questions they were helped to know what information are to say. Memorizing the question words definitely helped student to be able to develop sentences. Although some of their sentences were not grammatically correct, they could make up their mind what sentences to make.

**Discussion**

Base on the result they felt more confident, they started to be more creative. They felt that there was new power to lit their braveness to produce sentences. All of this was in line with previous study state idea that learning by doing and learning language by experiencing its use in a real-life situation is more meaningful (Sadiku, 2015; Waluyo, 2019). When student find the learning was meaningful, they were found that the learning was effective and the lesson being taught was easy (Orakci & Gelisli, 2019; Tachaiyaphum & Sukying, 2017). In addition, they found the learning was easy and they could successfully create sentences as they could make use their prior knowledge effectively, thus they could also extend their ideas easily afterward. Lastly, learning in group by sharing knowledge and exchanging information made them more enthusiastic. It can be
implied that having social contact help them enhance their sociocultural cognitive which led in better performance (Strømme & Mork, 2021; Yuan & Lee, 2014). It is in line with previous study with aim to ascertain EFL teachers' perceptions of the benefits and problems associated with enhancing students' speaking abilities through task-based language instruction (TBLT) (Saragih et al., 2022). The result found that TBLT helps their teaching practice by encouraging students to engage in active practice and participation in completing communicative activities in the target language. It is supported by other research findings showed that students enjoyed TBLT in the English class and benefitted from it, in terms of language development and building skills (Huang & Gandhioko, 2021).

Moreover in communication competence there is study that aimed to analyze student interaction and multimodal communication through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in a Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication (SCMC) environment (Belda-Medina, 2021). The result found language teacher candidates complained about the low quality of the digital materials, the use of technology just for substitution, and the lack of peer-to-peer interaction in their live online classes during the pandemic. The primary aim of English language teaching in Indonesia is to equip Indonesian students with communicative competence in English. Previous study try to promote the viabilities of task-based language teaching (TBLT) method to accelerate students’ communicative skills in Indonesia (Maulana, 2021). The result of study found that TBLT promotes natural learning, generates students’ intrinsic motivation, and develops language skill development that can lead the students to accelerate their communicative competence.

The implications of this study can provide evidence that vocabulary mastery through the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach can positively influence students' communication competence. The results of this study can provide guidance for the development of curriculum and teaching methods that are more effective in improving students’ speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. The results of this study can contribute to further validation and support for the Task-Based Language Teaching approach. By linking vocabulary enrichment with improving communication competence, this research can strengthen the argument for adopting TBLT in the context of language learning. However this study might still result in a less clear for some factor, such as number of participants involved, duration of investigation, the stages of study and other factors. In order to obtain better result, a replicated study in such topic or theme has to be undertaken. A longer-term investigation using bigger number of research participants shall also be tried.

4. CONCLUSION

Students’ performance in speaking was resulted by some aspect, one of which is rich vocabularies and triggering questions. Thus, students should be exposed to those items. Such exposure was effective for students’ achievement when doing snapshot. Being compared to the first session trial, where snapshot was not affixed with vocabulary and driving question words, the session was far more effective. The complement of vocabularies and driving questions seemed to help students performed a lot better in speaking. They could expressed their ideas with fluent speech. This case was positively triggered by the situation where they were could do the explanation on their own. They used their prior knowledge and was supported and stimulated with the new inputs given in the form of vocabularies and triggering questions. In addition, working together in group seemed to be effective where every student could share, inform, discuss the topics together.

5. REFERENCES


Siregar, R. A. (2020). The Effective 21st century Pedagogical Competence as Perceived by Pre-service English


