IMPLEMENTATION OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING TO TEACH READING COMPREHENSION IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

So far, the process of teaching in many reading classrooms offers students less chance to use target language communicatively. Mostly, language forms are introduced early before students read texts alternately. The activity is then followed by group work or discussion. As such, students will not be able to develop their ability in using target language intended for real communication. In order to deal with this condition, it is argued that the use of task will be fruitful. Unlike common classroom activities, task has some specific criteria which will provide context and stimulate students to produce target language meaningfully so that reading activity will be more communicative. Through its three main principles, namely pre-task, task cycle and language focus, task-based instruction will help students to focus mainly on meaning without overlooking the importance of language forms. This will help students to make sense of the language they have experienced during task performance. This article proposes the feasibility of task-based language teaching implementation intended for teaching reading comprehension in senior high school.

Keywords: Task-based Language Teaching, Reading Comprehension.

Introduction

Through Curriculum 2013, Indonesia Government has emphasized that the ultimate goal of teaching English in Indonesia is to enable students to use the language communicatively. This goal seems reasonable since the ability of using language communicatively represents someone's declarative knowledge of that language. In reading, for instance, when readers are able to communicate or retell what they have read to others, it can be assumed that they have gained comprehension after reading. Hence, English teachers have to make teaching and learning process become communicative.

However, in the field, the process of teaching in the classroom, especially for reading, seems less communicative in which it only focuses on teaching students to be able to read text accurately, discuss the content in group and answer several comprehension questions related to the text. In addition, the process of teaching and learning tends to be teacher-centered; teachers take control over the class and the students are depicted as passive object who sit quietly and attentively to receive knowledge. As consequence, there is a tendency that students have poor reading skills to comprehend the text so that they feel somewhat reluctant to communicate their reading. This fact is clearly contradictory to the goal of Curriculum 2013 which has been mentioned previously. Thus, teachers, as classroom manager and initiator, have to be able to implement appropriate teaching strategy.

Reflecting on the fact above, Ellis (2003) states that in order to enable students to produce target language communicatively, teachers should consider the use of task in teaching and learning process. This concept refers to what many language teaching experts called as task-based language teaching (task-based instruction or task-based learning). Richards and Rodger (2001) define task-based language teaching as an approach which is based on the use of tasks, real-world tasks or pedagogical tasks, as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching. As for reading, the use of task will prevent students from boredom and help them in developing reading skills and strategies which are important for text comprehension. Therefore, the implementation of task-based language teaching to teach reading is worth a try.

Globally, there have been some studies related to the implementation of task-based language teaching for teaching reading. Keşli (2017) for example, argues that the implementation of task-based language teaching is beneficial for reading comprehension and vocabulary mastery of Turkish students conducted in one of private universities in Istanbul. In different place, Amer and Demirel (2017) found that task-based language teaching is more effective, authentic, meaningful and purposeful for reading activities intended for students in Cyprus

Universities. From these studies, it is fairly enough to assume that the implementation of task-based language teaching gives a positive effect toward students' reading comprehension ability.

Yet, even though the studies have revealed that task-based implementation is beneficial for students' reading comprehension, this research is still important since in Indonesia, the study on task-based implementation particularly to teach reading for senior high school is still very limited and yet inconclusive. Thus, this research will try to investigate the effect of task-based language teaching implementation towards students' reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension is a complex process. It requires integration of some important aspects. According to Anderson (2003), there are some aspects which should be involved in reading comprehension. They are reader's background knowledge, information from the text, fluency and reading strategies performed by readers. All of these aspects will help reader to gain comprehension in reading activity.

Moreover, reading comprehension requires readers to be involved in the story of the text, internalize the text by making connections (Hennen 2009). It means whatever skills or reading strategies used by readers, without connection, reading comprehension is unlikely to happen. Readers can use their background knowledge to start making connection with the text. Thus, when connection is present, meaning can be easily obtained by the readers. Reading comprehension is therefore, the process of making connection with the text to obtain the meaning.

In the same line, Wolley (2011) argues that reading comprehension is the process of making meaning from the texts**.** She argues that the goal of reading comprehension is to gain overall understanding of what is described in the texts rather than to obtain meaning from isolated words or sentences.

In nutshell, it can be concluded that reading comprehension is the process in which readers try to connect and engage themselves with the texts by activating their background knowledge and then relate it with information in the text. In addition, reading comprehension requires readers to perform certain reading strategies and individual skills in order to confront some problems while reading to get whole understanding of the text.

Generally speaking, definition of task and other common classroom activities are overlapped. Many people assume that task is similar with common classroom activities and vice versa. However, it is not always the case. There are some criteria which make task different from common classroom activities. Richards and Rodgers (2001) mentions that task is an activity or goal which is carried out using language, such as finding a solution to a puzzle, reading a map and giving direction, making a telephone call, writing a letter, or reading a set of instructions for assembling a toy. Thus, task is any classroom activities involve target language.

In different place, Nunan (2004) argues that to define task, it is important to divide it into two kinds: real world tasks (target task) and pedagogical task. Real-world tasks are activities which use language in the world beyond the classroom. The examples of target task are making hotel reservation, taking a driving test, buying a pair of shoes and etc. Pedagogical tasks are those that occur in the classroom. It is any kinds of activities or techniques designed by teachers to teach students to perform target tasks in the classroom (Brown, 1994). Thus, task is any activities involve language occurred beyond the classroom. When it is performed in the classroom for educational purpose, it becomes pedagogical task in nature.

Furthermore, according to Willis and Willis (2007), there is something greater which make it clear that task is different from any other classroom activities students do in language learning. They argue that in task-based language teaching, the notion of task has to be characterized. They propose that a task should have the following criteria:

Table 1. Task criteria Proposed by Willis and Willis

No	Task Criteria
1	Engage the learners
2	Focus on meaning
3	Had an outcome
4	Be judged in terms of outcome
5	Has the priority of completion
6	Relate to real-world activity

Based on the table above, task should, therefore, involve some of those criteria. Considering all the arguments, it can be concluded that task is not always the same to what we give and ask our students to do in the classroom. Task is defined as an activity in the classroom which has some criteria: it engages the students, involves the use of target language communicatively, reflects to real-world activity and it is intended to enable students to perform a hundred or one thing people do in everyday life outside of classroom.

In task-based language teaching, task has many types. In this research, the task types which will be discussed are limited to classification of the general task types which are applicable for all language skills and specific reading tasks intended to teach reading.

The General Tasks

Among the task types, the three common tasks that many people pay attention to are those proposed by Prahbu (1987), Willis (1996), and Nunan (2004).There are three types of task which have been used in the early curricular of task-based language teaching in Bangalore Project. The tasks are information gap, reasoning gap, and opinion gap (Prabhu in Nunan, 2004, Ellis, 2003). Information gap involves a transfer of given information from one person to another or from one form to another. Reasoning gap involves deriving some new information from given information through processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or a perception of relationships and patterns. Opinion gap activity involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling or attitude, in response to a given situation. These tasks are classified based on cognitive operation of the students.

Furthermore, Willis (1996) also proposes six tasks varieties which can be implemented by teachers. She argues that these varieties can involve reading and speaking skill in the implementation. Many of them can lead naturally into writing stage. The intended tasks are:

1. Listing. In listing task, learners tend to generate a lot of talk as they will explain their ideas.
2. Ordering and sorting. These tasks involve four main processes: first, sequencing the items, actions, or events in a logical or chronological order. Second, ranking items according to personal values or specified criteria. Third, categorizing items in given groups or grouping them under given headings. Finally, classifying items in different ways, where the categories themselves are not given.
3. Comparing. This can be comparing information of the same topic but with different sources in order to identify the common point, or the differences.
4. Problem Solving. It requires people reasoning power to solve the problem. Problem solving task is believed to be engaging and satisfying.
5. Sharing Personal Experiences. It encourages learners to talk more freely about themselves and share their experiences with others. It close to casual social conversation.
6. Creative tasks. It is usually called as project and involved pairs or groups of learners in free creative work. It can combine other types of task such as listing, ordering and problem solving.

The Specific Reading Tasks

Reading tasks is simply defined as tasks which are particularly designed and adjusted based on reading text. According to Willis (1996), when carefully chosen, texts can become a starting point, or one of good sources to start designing communicative tasks. It will thus make reading activity become more communicative. Willis (1996) further proposes six different kinds of task which can be use specifically in teaching reading. The tasks are:

Table 2. Willis' Task types for Reading

No	Task	Description
1	Prediction Tasks	From headline and early text
		From selected parts of text
		From picture of video with/without words
2	Jumbles	Jumbled sections of text
		Jumbled key point of a summary
		Jumbled picture from a series
3	Restoration Tasks	Identifying words/phrases/sentences omitted from or added to a text
4	Jigsaw/Split Information Tasks	Each student in a group reads/hear different part of a whole text and then combined to form a whole
5	Comparison Tasks	Two account of the same incident/event
		A diagram/picture to compare with a written account/descriptions
6	Memory Challenge Tasks	After a single brief exposure to the text, students list/describe/write a quiz questions about what they can remember to show other pairs

For the purpose of this research, the tasks that will be used in task-based implementation include both reading tasks and general tasks which have been mentioned above. This decision is based on the fact that general tasks are applicable for any language skills, including reading.

Teaching Reading through Task-Based Framework

Unlike teaching children of native speakers to read for the first time, teaching reading to foreign language learners has completely different purpose. Sadoski (2004) agues that the purposes of teaching reading, especially for foreign language learners, are to help them developing a set of reading skills which are necessary to gain comprehension of a text (cognitive domain) and developing positive attitudes and personal interest toward reading (affective domain). In the same line, Qin (2007) also mentions that reading class should have purposes to cultivate students reading skills and interest toward reading. Thus, it can be argued that skills and

students' interest toward reading are very important so that teachers have to teach students how to develop these two aspects in reading classroom.

Task based teaching can help students to improve their reading skills. Willis (1996) mentions that task-based has a framework which consists of three main phase namely pre-task, task cycle and language focus activity. In pre-task phase, there are two important elements namely topic introduction and task introduction. Teacher can activate topic-related words and phrases. Teachers can also ask students to do simple tasks such as classifying words and phrases, matching phrases with picture, brainstorming and mind-mapping and etc. Immediately, teachers can give students clear instructions of the main tasks. If necessary, teachers can do little illustrations or demonstrations about the task.

Then, task cycle phase consists of three elements: tasks, planning and report. In the task stage, students do the task in pairs or group. The role of teachers in this stage is to monitor their students while doing the task. Teachers are suggested not to stand close to the groups to avoid major interferences to the task. In the planning stage, students will plan their task report either in oral or written language. Finally, in the report stage, what important is to acknowledge that students are offering the best they can achieve at the moment. Hence, strange wording or grammatical errors are admitted during the report.

The last phase is language focus. In this stage, the two important elements are analysis and practice. Analysis activities aim to get students to identify and think about particular features of language form and language use. The analysis will help them to recognize the features once they encounter them again. Then, practice activities can be combined with analysis work. It can be based on features of language that have already occurred in the previous texts and transcripts, or on the features that have just been studied in the analysis activities.

In relation to task-based lesson outline, the above purposes need to be integrated within task-based framework. The following is simple design of task-based lesson plan outline:

Table 3. Lesson Plan Outline for Task based

No	Phase	Description
1	Pre task	Teacher introduces topic, source of the text, its original purpose, characters, and other relevant information to set scene and activate learners' prior knowledge, using background material if suitable.
2	Task Cycle	Teacher sets up initial task for students to do in pairs. The task is (for example) "memory challenge": - Students read the whole text/hear or view the recorded materials once or twice. - Students are asks to lists specific number of points, events, etc. orderly. Or, the pairs of student prepare list of quiz questions for other pairs to answer from memory. Planning and Report - Pairs tell or ask other pairs, exchange lists or report to the whole class. - Teacher encourages but doesn't reveal the solution yet. - All students read/hear, or view again the materials, to check what they have written, and see which pairs remember the most. Teacher chair general discussion. Note: If it is still possible, teacher can go on with other kinds of tasks from the same text and go through the second planning and report.
3	Language Focus	- Students preview, observe their language production during the task or report stage - Teacher helps students recognize language rules and explain them how to use it properly - Students are asked to write items in target language to practice the form focus activity

Adopted from Willis (1996)

Method

This is a research proposal. It will be quasy-experimental research. It will involve two groups actively; one as experimental group and the other as control group. The researcher cannot make it possible to randomly select and assign the research's participants into experimental group so that the experimental group will go on with the existing intact group of students in the school. In order to see the influence of the treatment, experimental group will be taught by implementing task-based language teaching and control group will be taught by using conventional teaching. The researcher will use the post test-only control group design with the assumption that the groups have no significant difference on the dependent variable (reading comprehension ability). The post test-only control group design implies that both experimental and control groups will be given a post test after the treatment.

Then, population in this research will be the first year science students of SMAN 3 Padang 2018/2019 academic year. They are 287 students who are grouped into eight classes. The researcher will calculate homogeneity and normality of the population before deciding to choose sample classes for the research.

Yet, in deciding the sample, sampling technique which will be used is cluster sampling. Cluster sampling is chosen due to inability of the researcher to randomly assign the students into either experimental class or control class. Thus, already existing class will be used. The researcher will then determine two classes (experimental and control) as the sample of the research. The technique to assign the two classes is through the use of lottery. From some pieces of rolled paper, the researcher will pick up two of them and assign the first paper as experimental class and the second paper as control class.

Furthermore, to collect the data of students' reading comprehension score after the treatment, the researcher will use reading comprehension test as an instrument. The items of the test will be in multiple-choice form. This form is chosen since it is more representative in covering all materials which will be taught to the students. Moreover, it requires less time to administer and is easy to score. The multiple choice test will consist of 50 questions with four possible alternatives or options A, B, C, and D. The test will be based on the common reading comprehension indicator assessment which will be then interpreted to assess reading comprehension of specific text genres taught during this research. Before using the test to the sample classes, it will be tried out to the class beyond the sample. Then, validity and reliability of the test will be calculated.

Eventually, after collecting the data from the sample classes through a valid and reliable reading test, the researcher will analyze their normality and homogeneity. These analyses will be followed by hypothesis testing in order to draw conclusion on the effect of task-based language teaching implementation to teach reading.

Acknowledgments

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