Using Task-Based Learning To Develop The 10th Graders' English Speaking Skill

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ABSTRACT: *The purposes of this study were: 1) to study how task-based learning have an effect on Grade 10 students' English speaking skill, and 2) to investigate students' opinions toward task -based learning. The participants were 12 Grade 10 students at a secondary school in Ubon Ratchathani province, Thailand. The research instruments were pre-post speaking tests, TBL activities checklists and an opinion questionnaire. The three TBL lesson plans i.e., 1) Our Ideal Timetable, 2) Our Own Dishes, 3) Our Ideal Hometown were constructed. A t-test was used to compare the mean score between the pre-speaking test and post speaking test. The results of the research study showed that students' English speaking skills were improved after learning with task-based learning and students had positive opinion toward learning English through TBL approach.*
KEYWORDS–*speaking skill, task based language learning, task based learning, TBL approach*

I. INTRODUCTION

English is classified as an international language (Aring, 2015)in the sense that it is used in communication among people who do not share the same linguistic as well as cultural backgrounds across many regions of the world. In such case, English becomes a tool to reflect identity and convey local culture to other countries. Additionally, in 2016, Thailand was developed under the concept of The Fourth Industrial Revolution (Thailand 4.0)which is the vision to transform Thai economy into an innovation-driven one. According to the 20-year national strategy, Thailand 4.0 is the new model to develop the country along with economic reform so students will be exposed to information in English version.

In Thai education, although students have learned English since they were a child, most of them still have had low proficiency in all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In other word, Thai students start learning English when they are in Grade 1 and keep learning it until Grade 12, but their English proficiency is very low (Noom-ura, 2013).According to English First's latest English proficiency index, in 2017 English language proficiency in Thailand ranks 53 out of 80 countries; in 2016, English language proficiency in Thailand ranks 56 out of 72 countries. It is the 5th worst in Asia. This confirms that Thai students confront with the difficulty in acquiring English language. Nonetheless, in the study by Warawudhi (2013), it was found that speaking skills were mostly used in daily life and were ranked as the most difficult skills for the students. The finding of Noom-Ura (2013) also supported this tendency as it revealed that the problem of Thai students who learn English has mainly related to speaking.

To achieve English language speaking competency, Edwards and Willis (2005) suggested that task based learning provides more effective tasks to promote language learning of second language (L2) learners than other language teaching methods that focus on form or structure. Providing tasks more than the language system will help learners more develop their communicative competence. In task-based learning (TBL), students learn the way to use language appropriately, purposefully and meaningfully (MA, 2008). Traditional language teaching approach focuses on grammar; whereas an alternative approach focuses on communicative competence. Tasks were designed to attend on meaning and also focus on form (Ellis, 2003).

As a teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the government school, it is found that most students fail to understand the message in the conversation and are unable to speak English effectively. They are shy, worried about pronunciation, afraid of making mistakes and lack of confidence to speak English. All of the aforementioned reasons are the reasons to conduct a study on using TBL to develop students'speaking skill.

II. TASK

Phabhu (1987)pointed out that task is an activity that contain the process to give the information to students in order to help them to reach outcome. Teacher also plays the role of facilitator. Similarly, Ellis (2003) stated that a task is a work schedule which asks students to use language correctly and appropriately in different situations. It provides students with an opportunity to negotiate meaning by using their own linguistic knowledge. Although the task is designed to persuade students to choose a specific form of language, it is designed to promote language use in real life.

III. TASK-BASED LEARNING APPROACH

Task-based learning approach (TBL) is an approach in language learning developed from Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)approach by Phabhu (1987). Phabhu (1987)believed that when students focus on task, they will learn more effectively rather than focus on language they are using. Harmer (2007) mentioned that task based learning provides opportunity for students to learn language from real-life situation. Instead of learning language structure or function of language, students have to perform the task. This approach uses the series of task to help learners perform target language to interact with other people.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) suggested about the teacher's roles in TBL. They mentioned that teacher plays three important roles: 1) selector and sequencer of task, 2) preparing learner for task and 3) consciousness rising. For being a selector and sequencer of task, teacher needs to select, design and prepare the task based on students' need or interest and focus on students' language proficiency. Teacher also has to give the task which follows the principle instructional scaffolding. For preparing students for task, teacher has to help them to get ready for tasks. In task stage, teacher must introduce students the topic in order to let them know what they are going to study.

Van den Branden (2006) also mentioned that task based learning is a student-centered approach in which students play an important role in their learning process. The students are free to form the language in order to complete the task. Students who learn English through TBL should perform the three important roles including: 1) a group participant; 2) a monitor and 3) a risk-taker and an innovator.

Willis (1996) introduced three stages of TBLwhich are pre-task, task-cycle, and language focus.

3.1 Pre-Task Stage

Pre-task stage is the shortest stage in the framework of TBL. It introduces topic and task to students. In doing the pre-task phase, the teacher should not take more than 20 minutes; however, this depends on the familiarity of student with the topic. According to Willis (1996) and Harmer (2007), in the pre-task stage, topic, important words or phrases will be introduced to students in order to have them know what the topic they are going to study and use the given words or phrases as the guideline to produce language.

3.2 Task Cycle

The task cycle is divided into three phrases: task, planning and report. Task gives an opportunity for students to use their own prior language knowledge to perform the task. It lets students work in pair or group to reach the goals of task. Teacher plays a guidance role to provide the opportunity for students to be exposed to the target language and lets students complete the task on their own. Teacher observes and encourages students to use their target language.

3.2.1 Planning

At planning phase, students work on their task in pair or group. They have time and get support from the teacher to prepare the linguistic for their tasks before presenting it to the class. Teacher helps students check grammar so it helps their language development. Students try to plan their report by using language they already know, and improve the language by following their teacher's guidance. While students are doing their tasks, teachers have to walk around the class in order to notice the students' languageuse. Teacher needs to note down some interesting information. Teacher is the person who gives advice to students to express the target language.

3.2.2 Report

The report phase helps students to enhance their language through a natural learning situation in a classroom. It requires students to focus on forms and meanings both accuracy and fluency. Teacher chooses pairs or groups of students to present the task to the class. So, the students have opportunity to present their task that they have done. All students in the class listen to the task that other groups present, so they can learn language from other groups. Teacher also gives students some feedback on content or form.

3.3 Language Focus
Language focus is divided into two phases: analysis and practice.
3.3.1Analysis
Students have to examine the feature of language form and language used during the task cycle. It helps students ready to recognize the language feature when they meet it again. It also helps students understand both language meaning and language and students focus on language form and use.
3.3.2 Practice
Teacher has to provide opportunity for students to practice their acquired language from the analysis stage.

IV. A VARIETY OF TASK

Many scholars have proposed types of task in the task-based learning and teaching. However, in this study, Willis (1996)'s task types were applied. Willis offers six types of task and labels the task examples as follows.

4.1 Listing
This task encourages students to talk a lot as it asks them to express their idea. Students have time to think and share their idea. These tasks involve brainstorming and fact-finding processes. The type of work will be in a listing or mind mapping form. It classifies only the important idea.

4.2 Ordering and Sorting
There are four main activities, including sequencing items, action, and events; ranking; categorizing; and classifying. It allows students to organize the information.

4.3 Comparing
The comparing tasks involve comparing information of a related character from various resources in order to specify common points or differences. The activities include matching and finding similarities and differences.

4.4 Problem Solving
The problem solving task requires intellectual activity which students need to solve the problem such as real life problem, short puzzle.

4.5 Sharing Personal Experiences
The task helps students to use language freely to talk about themselves and tell other people about their experiences.

4.6 Creative Task
The creative taskis commonly called project and involves pair or group work. It also has more activities than other types of tasks and involves a combination of task types such as listing, ordering and sorting, comparing and problem solving.

V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS
5.1 How does task-based learning have an effect onGrade 10 students' English speaking skill?
5.2 What are students'opinions toward using task-based learning?

VI. METHODOLOGY
6.1 Participants
        Twelve students who were studying in Grade 10 at a secondary school in Ubon Ratchathani Province, Thailand were participated in this study. Convenience sampling was used to include students who live in the district to make them convenient to join the class during weekends. However, the participants in this study had different English proficiency levels.

6.2 Research Instruments
        There were three research instruments. The first is pre- and post-speaking tests which are the same. The speaking tests were used to investigate the students' speaking skill after learning with TBL. The tests contain six questions. The participants had to answer the questions before and after the task-based learning. Second, an opinion questionnaire was used to collect the participants 'opinion toward using task-based learning to facilitate the English speaking skill. There were three parts provided in the questionnaire: students' roles, teacher's roles, and interesting activities. Third, TBL activities checklists were used to find participants' interesting activities.

6.3 Data collection and data analysis

Before learning with TBL, each participant had to do the pre-speaking test which is face-to-face interview. After that students were participated in three task - based language learning lessons. When students finished each lesson, students were asked to rate each activity in the TBL activities checklist. After the participants finished learning with TBL, they were asked to answer the post-speaking test. After they completed the post speaking - test, the questionnaire was distributed to them.A t-test was used to compare the mean scores between pre-speaking test and post speaking test.

VII.LESSON PLANS

Three lesson plans were created based on Willis' task-based learning theory (Willis, 1996). Each lesson plan was divided into three main parts including pre-task stage, task cycle and language focus. Seven activities: two listing activities, two comparing activities, one ordering and sorting activity, one sharing personal experiences activity, and one creating task activity were included in each lesson plan. The three topics of the lesson plans selected from students' most votes were:1)Our ideal timetable, 2)Our ideal hometown, and 3) Our own dishes. The students took three hours to complete each lesson plan.

VIII.   RESULTS

To answer the research question no. 1, "How does task-based learning have an effect on Grade 10 students' English speaking skills?", pre-test and post-test scores were compared.

Table 1 Comparison of Participants' English Speaking Skill

No.	Pre-test scores	Post-test scores	Differences
1	0	18	18
2	15	17	2
3	0	20	20
4	0	21.66	21.66
5	15	19	4
6	17.33	46.33	29
7	9	38.66	29.66
8	0	16	16
9	0	16.33	16.33
10	0	17	17
11	20	31.33	10.33
12	9	15	6
Mean	7.11	23.02	15.83

Table 1 shows that the mean score of the pre-test, post-test and the standard deviation. The mean of post-test score is higher than the mean of the pre-test. It means that the participants got higher mean scores on the post-test ($\bar{x}$ = 23.02) than the pre-test ($\bar{x}$ = 7.11). The result shows that students' English speaking ability was improved after learning with task-based learning.

To answer research question no.2, "What are students' opinions toward using task-based learning?", the results of the questionnaire and TBL activities checklist were used.

Table 2Participants'Opinions toward Their Roles in the Class

Students	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level
I have more participation in the class.	4.50	0.67	Strongly agree
I have opportunity to share my idea to class	4.33	0.65	Strongly agree
I prefer to work in group	4.25	0.62	Strongly agree
I like learning grammar rather than speaking.	4.00	1.12	agree
TBL makesme understand the content.	3.66	0.98	agree

Table 2 shows that the participants rated 3 items in the "strongly agree" level. The highest ranking item is that students have more participation in the class ($\bar{x}$ =4.50). ehT second highest item was that students have opportunity to share their idea to class ($\bar{x}$= 4.33). The third highest average score was that students like to work in a group ($\bar{x}$= 4.25). The mean score of the participants who agreed that they like studying grammar rather than speaking was 4.00. The mean score of the participants who agreed that the TBL makes them understand the content was 3.66 (SD = 0.98).

Table 3Participants'Opinions toward Teacher's Roles in the Class

Teachers	x̄	SD	Level
Teacher encourages students to have participation in the class.	4.66	0.49	Strongly agree
Teacher provides the model to students before we complete the task.	4.58	0.51	Strongly agree
Teacher provides suitable activities for students.	4.50	0.67	Strongly agree
Teacher helps me to relax from stress.	4.25	0.62	Strongly agree
Teacher gives me some feedback immediately.	3.91	0.66	agree

Table 3 shows that the participants rated most items in teachers' category in a "strongly agree" level. The highest mean (4.66, SD = 0.49) was that, "teacher encourages students to have participation in the class." Teacher provides the model to students before they complete the task was ranked the second with mean = 4.58 (SD = 0.51). The participants also strongly agreed that teacher provided suitable activities for students and helped them to relaxfrom stress. These two items get average scoresof 4.50 and 4.25 respectively.

Table 4Participants' Opinions toward Interesting Activities

Interesting Activities	x̄	SD	Level
Activities were designed to allow student notice language used.	4.33	0.77	Strongly agree
Group work activities make me enjoy in learning.	4.16	0.57	agree
Activities focus on meaning rather than grammar.	4.16	0.71	agree
Activities help me to improve English speaking skill.	4.16	0.93	agree
Task-based learning activities are interesting.	3.91	0.51	agree

Table 4 shows that the participants rated most items in the activities' category at the "average" level. The highest ranking item is that activities in this study were designed in order to allow students to notice language used (x̄ = 4.33, SD = 0.77). Moreover, three items were in the second place. The average score was 4.16. The lowest ranking in this category was that, the activities were interesting (x̄ = 3.91).

Moreover, the results from the TBL activities checklists revealed that, the task that participants liked the most was matching vocabulary with pictures in groups   (x̄ = 4.24). The second task that participants liked was sharing experiences (x̄ = 4.13). The third most favorite task was listing   (x̄ = 4.05) and creative tasks (x̄ = 4.02) respectively.

IX. DISCUSSION

The result of the study showed that students' English speaking skill improved after learning with the task-based learning approach. The result is similar to Promruang (2012)'s study which investigated the use of task - based learning to improve English listening and speaking ability of Grade 7 students. In this study, the topic lessons were about the situation that students can face in their daily life. Students can practice talking about how to ask and give direction, talk about their free time activities and learn how to talk about food and practice using the language to talk about their favorite food. These were related to students' lifestyles and activities that may happen in their daily. Hussein (2017) mentioned that one of the most effective tools to use in a classroom is using authentic materials in the communicative aspect. The aforementioned lesson topics allowed students to use the language to interact with others outside the class.

According to the open-ended question results, students thought that TBL had positive effect on their English learning because it made classroom much more fun, and they preferred to work in group. They also practiced speaking English more and they liked to learn with TBL. Costa (2016) also mentioned that TBL is suitable for a foreign language classroom because it encouraged students to be active, interactive, learn by doing and prepares them to have the skill for living in the society. Hadi (2012) emphasized that students are active to learn with TBL because they believe that TBL benefits to students' communication. Task - based learning increases students' motivation for learning language. The tasks provide students to interact with others in class.

TBL approach makes the class become more student-centered. Students help each other to understand and complete the task. Students have opportunities to practice real world language and they also acquire how to use the language by noticing the language used in each stage of the teaching process. They were asked to notice the language form both correct and incorrect form and then they acquired the language from. That means students also learn from their mistakes, or try to find the mistakes and then they have to improve language by themselves. If students know the mistakes and know how to improve it, they will be able to remember the language. Sharing and discussion are the main important things that help students learn language and complete tasks. Students also prefer to do familiar tasks because they have their previous knowledge in their mind.

X. CONCLUSION

This study illustratedthe idea of using TBL in English speaking class. The results of the study revealed that students' English speaking ability was improved after learning with task-based learning. Learning by using task based learning offers positive effects on students. According to speaking test, some students understood the questions, but they did not know how to answer the questions in English. Some could give a short answer. They could not give more details or use full sentences to answer the questions. At the end, they understood the questions and could answer them. These make them have positive opinions toward speaking English and learning English in the future.

For further studies, it would be better to collect the data from larger groups of students in order to make the study more reliable. The present study did not compare students who have different English proficiency or control students to have the same English proficiency. For further study, it would be good to compare students' low and high proficiency levels or categorize only the same proficiency level to participate in class.

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