Research

The Application of Task-based Language Teaching to the English Training Course for One Tambon (Village) One Product (OTOP) Entrepreneurs in Thailand

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to compare English listening-speaking abilities of One Tambon (Village) One Product (OTOP) entrepreneurs before and after learning through task-based language teaching. The target group was 20 OTOP entrepreneurs in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province, Thailand volunteered in English training course for OTOP entrepreneurs. The research instruments were English listening-speaking lesson plan used task-based language teaching and listening-speaking abilities test which was implemented before and after using task-based language teaching. The obtained data were analyzed by using means and standard deviation and t-test dependent sample group. The results revealed that the English listening-speaking abilities of OTOP entrepreneurs were increased after learning through task-based language teaching at the significant level of 0.05.

1. Background

In the present time, English has come to have an important role in the lives of Thai people and people around the world. These days communication in English is in humans' contact, watching TV, watching movies, writing computer programs, academic manuals, business contact, strengthening regional economy, and so on. Entrepreneurs with knowledge of the English language certainly have the opportunity to increase their competitive potential and make their business grow more easily than those who are unable to communicate in English. Currently, Thai government gives importance to the stimulation of local economy, continually producing measures to strengthen the regional economy. Most importantly, it

aims to elevate products through the One Tambon One Product (OTOP) project in order to strengthen the local communities of Thailand, reinforcing the potential of entrepreneurs in various aspects. For example, product manufacture has been developed and controlled for the products to have 5-star quality so as to be exported to foreign countries. Packages have been developed to become attractive and interesting in order to add value to them. There have also been development and provision of the knowledge about the methods of product distribution and exportation for distribution in foreign countries, encouragement for the induction of OTOP villages for tourism and encouragement for the development of the potential for communication in foreign languages. Furthermore, since our country is facing an economic crisis due to the global economy and political crisis, language mastering can alleviate the current economic condition. With the government's proclamation of tourism as a national agenda, foreign language comprehension and learning will better the communication with foreigners who will come to travel in Thailand and this will contribute to their decision to come to travel in Thailand.

With the above reasons and needs, English is the language that receives attention and there is a need for the training for the development of English communication skills, especially the listening and speaking skills, which the OTOP entrepreneurs need for communication with buyers, such as asking and answering about the prices, qualities, and other kinds of information of products. Considering reality as regards the background, context and factors of OTOP entrepreneurs favorable to English learning and the guidelines for educational arrangement for the development of the English language skills of OTOP entrepreneurs, it is found that the nature of their occupation is mostly family business. There are individuals to carry on the business with the need to develop their English language skills. These individuals are fit to receive short-term training and need to focus on practicing to actually be able to communicate in English as part of their work rather than learning from the teaching of grammar and translation as it was done in the past. Therefore, the important factor in arranging English language education successfully is the English teacher's method of educational arrangement.

With the basic condition of and notions about English language education as stated above, the researcher became interested in the concept of English language education with the use of task-based language teaching activities, which is a method of English teaching focused on learning through actual practice. The lessons are similar to real situations and the focus is on communicating messages rather than linguistic patterns. After learning, the learners can really apply the knowledge in real life. Therefore, teaching English using task-based language teaching activities is a mode of teaching that promotes the induction of authentic concepts (Krashen, 2009) and is focused on using virtual tasks. It is an educational method that gives the learners the opportunity to be responsible for their own learning process, not only receiving knowledge from the teacher. Moreover, it is the natural way of learning in Skehan's view, and also arranging the language learning in relation to the learners' experience (Maley, 1991). The right way to learn a language should be the induction of linguistic competency that does not happen through merely learning grammatical rules and doing boring exercises. Instead, the linguistic competency should come through subconscious learning as in learning one's mother tongue, which is more about learning the language used in communication than about learning the grammatical rules of the language. It should come through language acquisition rather than language learning (Krashen, 1985).

Since the work performed in the assigned tasks has definite aims, the learners' experience as input, and steps of work to achieve the goals, the teacher's role will shift from that of the knowledge conveyor to that of the facilitator providing assistance. This can also be called "scaffolding", that is, supplementing learning, which is one important principle of learning a foreign language because learners usually encounter problems in the course of learning, such as problems in vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation and word choice. On providing assistance, or scaffolding, Wood, Bruner and Rose (1967, cited in Eggen and Kauchak, 1999) mentioned that the role of the teacher is to assist the learners in various ways, such as inquiry, demonstration and implication so that the learners will do their tasks on their own, which progressively increases their capacity and lessens the need for assistance (Eggen and Kauchak,1999; Foley, 1994). Thus, the activities arranged for the education can help develop the English language learning to become efficient and the learners will have confidence in learning and have freedom in learning how to use the language (Foley, 1994). In contrast to the mode of learning in the past, in which the learners learned only the language, the grammatical rules, which they thought were difficult and unimportant, this is learning for the purpose of using the language in communication in familiar situations that the learners have already experienced.

Besides, English language education with the use of task-based language teaching is aimed to make the learners practice using the analytical and problem-solving process through performing the tasks assigned by the teacher. It has a definite form of learning arrangement consisting of 3 steps. The first one is the pre-task step, which is about preparing the learners before performing the task, such as preparing vocabulary, suggesting a topic about the target language to the learners before performing the task, or having them study the pattern for performing a task that is similar to the one they will actually have to perform. The second one is the during-task step, in which the learners get to perform the real task, using language as an instrument in the performance to achieve the goal set for the task. The focus is on the semantic aspect, using language to communicate the intended messages, rather than form. The last one is the post-task step, the aim of which is for the learners to develop their language use to be correct, in accordance with the grammatical patterns and structures. This part is divided into 2 steps, language analysis and practice. In the step of language analysis, the focus is on having the learners work alone, in pairs, or in groups to analyze the grammatical patterns and structures of the target language. In the step of practice, the focus is on having the learners practice using the target language in order to attain skillfulness, fluency and correctness. On using the language that the learners have learned from the tasks, many educators have opined about learning arrangement with the use of the method of task-based language teaching. For example, Skehan (1998) and Willis (1996) said that learning arrangement with the use of this method is a process of learning arrangement that encourages the learners to do activities related to real life using language in task performance in order to achieve complete works. Willis (1996) also reasserted about the benefit of learning arrangement with the use of the method of task-based language teaching that it is the application of the acquired knowledge to practice using language, which makes the learners have confidence for speaking and writing and interact with other people more. It also affords problem-solving training, enjoyment and challenges in task performance. Doughty and Pica (1986) and Fotos and Ellis (1991) and Ellis (2003) researched about task-based language

teaching and discovered that it had impact on the language-learning efficiency of the learners because they got to develop language using skills through performing various kinds of tasks, which increased their linguistic competency. It is therefore this research aimed at to compare the results of teaching on the English listening-speaking competency of OTOP entrepreneurs before and after using task-based language teaching activities.

2. Research Objective

To compare English listening-speaking abilities of One Tambon (Village) One Product (OTOP) entrepreneurs before and after learning through task-based language teaching.

3. Method

3.1 Research Methodology

The population and sample were determined. The sample in this research was OTOP entrepreneurs in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya who voluntarily participated in the training of the 2nd class of the English Training Course for OTOP Entrepreneurs. The criterion was the level of education the trainees had received had to be not below high school. There were 20 trainees.

The duration of this research was 3 days, 8 hours each, 24 hours in total. 2 hours was spent on a pre-experiment test and 2 hours on a post-experiment test, which make a total of 28 hours.

For the content, there was a topic checklist distributed and informal interview of some of the trainees as representatives of the whole group conducted prior to the research and 2 topics in all were selected:

1. English in daily life and common situations
2. English for explaining and giving information about products, amounts or figures

3.2 Research Instruments

3.2.1 Learning Arrangement Plans

Learning arrangement plans in accordance with the method of using task-based language teaching activities with 2 topics:

1. English in daily life and common situations
2. English for explaining and giving information about products, amounts or figures

The plans were subjected to quality examination by 3 experts with examination criteria regarding definiteness and correctness according to the learning objectives, congruence between activity and content, and congruence between outcome evaluation and learning objectives. The experts included experiences English lecturers and a native speaker of English. To examine the practicality of the lesson plans, they were pilot tested with 10

entrepreneurs who were not the participants of this study.

3.2.2 English Listening-speaking Competency Test

The English listening-speaking competency test had 2 parts. The first one was Listening Test and the second one was Speaking Test. The listening test was an objective one with 3 choices. Examination was done with the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) method to determine the congruence between the test and the learning objectives and the test with an index of 0.5-1.0 was chosen to be used. The difficulty index (p) obtained was in the range of 0.35-0.78, the discrimination index (r) in the range of 0.25-0.65, and the confidence indexes of both tests were 0.86. The speaking test was subjective. The confidence index of the English listening-speaking competency test was 0.83.

3.2.3 Task Evaluation Form

The task evaluation form was a rating scale form. The evaluated elements were the content, composition, language use, task formatting and work presentation. An evaluation form was used by two raters to mark each student's task performances from 2 lesson plans. The form was composed of 1 3-point scale: 0.5 = very poor; 1=average, 1.5 = good and 2 = excellent.

3.2.4 Data Collection Method

The researcher collected the data by having the experimental group take the pretest to assess their English listening-speaking competency and conducted an experiment using 2 learning plans with the method of task-based language teaching. During experimentation, the researcher evaluated the tasks of the trainees in both plans and then conducted a posttest on the experimental group using an assessment test for English listening-speaking competency, which was the same test used in the pretest.

4. Research Results

For the study result of the impact of the training with the use of task-based language teaching activities on the English listening-speaking competency of OTOP entrepreneurs, it was found that their competency increased after the experiment as shown in the diagram in figure 1 below.
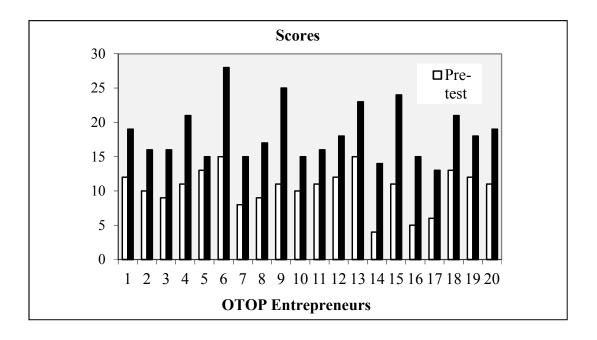
Fig. 1 The diagram shows the scores of the English listening-speaking competency of OTOP entrepreneurs before and after receiving the training with the use of task-based language teaching activities.

According to Fig. 1, overall English speaking- listening scores of OTOP entrepreneurs after using task-based language teaching increased. Four people have increased their score by 30% or higher; 6 people have increased their score by 25%; 7 people have increased their score by 20% or higher, and 3 people have increased their score less than 20.

The comparison of achievement results before and after using take-based language teaching shows how the approach affect English speaking- listening abilities of OTOP entrepreneurs. After calculating to find out the differences of the scores received before and after using task-based language teaching and analyzing the scores of the sample group by using t-test dependent samples, we have found the results as presented in the two tables below:

According to Table 1, it was found that OTOP entrepreneurs who have been taught by using task-based language teaching have higher English speaking-listening skill at statistical significance of 0.05. The average score before experiment was 7.05 and the average score after experiment was 15.65. It shows that task-based language teaching helped OTOP entrepreneurs to achieve higher ability in speaking and listening English.

In the analysis of performance of OTOP entrepreneurs who have been taught by using task-based language teaching for English listening-speaking ability, performance assessment form was used in assessing each individual OTOP entrepreneur during the experiment. Performance assessment was conducted during Lesson Plan 1 and 2. The scores received from the assessment was calculated to find the average value. The results are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 1꞉ Differences of English speaking-listening abilities of OTOP entrepreneurs before and after language teaching.

English speaking-listening abilities	N	$\overline{X}$	∑D	∑D²	t	p-value
Before Experiment	20	7.05				
			171	1729	10.23*	
After Experiment	20	15.65				

*Statistical Significance꞉ 0.05

Table 2꞉ Authentic performance assessment of OTOP entrepreneurs who have been taught by using task-based language teaching.

Evaluated Aspects	Lesson Plan 1		Lesson Plan 2	
	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	$\overline{X}$	S.D.
Content (2 points)	1.43	0.68	1.63	0.49
Forming and ordering of sentences (2 points)	1.35	0.66	1.58	0.50
Language Use (2 points)	1.38	0.67	1.60	0.54
Fluency of communication (2 points)	1.33	0.65	1.58	0.50
Making Presentation (2 points)	1.40	0.59	1.50	0.51

According to Table 2, it was found that the overall performance in each aspect of OTOP entrepreneurs in each lesson plan after using task-based language teaching are higher in their English speaking-listening ability.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

5.1 Conclusions

1. English speaking-listening abilities of OTOP entrepreneurs after being trained by using task-based language teaching are higher than that before the experiment at statistical significance of 0.05.

2. According to performance assessment of OTOP entrepreneurs during Lesson Plan 1 and 2, it was found that their skills in English speaking and listening have increased.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 English Speaking-listening Abilities of OTOP Entrepreneurs

English speaking-listening abilities of OTOP entrepreneurs after being taught by using task-based language teaching were higher at statistical significance of 0.05. The results of the research corresponds with the hypothesis which states that task-based language teaching consists of learning process that focuses on giving learners the opportunities to practice their speaking and listening skill, and contribute in the development of English listening and speaking skill of OTOP entrepreneurs. Task-based language teaching in this research can be divided in the following stages:

- Before task: it is a step that prepares OTOP entrepreneurs with knowledge of language required for performing the task, such as reviewing vocabulary related to products, materials, raw materials, figure, shape, surface, size, etc.

- During task: it is step when OTOP entrepreneurs perform the task, while focusing on learning language from the task assigned to them. There were 3 small steps in this stage: researching or studying vocabulary and structure from training documents and the internet, such as sentences used in answering customer's questions, performing the task individually, in pair, or in group, and presenting the results for analyzing the language by recording the language that they used during performance onto part 1 of the learning log and presenting them to the class.

- After task: it is a step designed for OTOP entrepreneurs to analyze what have been successful and unsuccessful in their language learning. There were 2 small steps in this stage. The first one was language analysis. The teacher provided more knowledge about particular language structure that learners have problem with and then allowed learners to recognize the errors in structure and correct them. The second step was practice. OTOP entrepreneurs practiced using the right structure of language in communication for more fluency.

5.2.2 The Assessment of Performance of OTOP Entrepreneurs

The assessment of performance of OTOP entrepreneurs in Lesson Plan 1 and 2 indicates that OTOP entrepreneurs have better skill in English listening and speaking because the tasks they performed in this research were interesting and related to their real-life experience, as well as challenging and fun. This stimulates them to participate more in language activities and give them more opportunities to practice speaking and listening to English. The tasks performed in this research are:

- Information Gap Activity: OTOP entrepreneurs searched for vocabulary on products, materials, raw materials, figures, shapes, colors, surface, and size. They tried to use and practice the target language by taking turns asking and answering in order to find out the missing information. The entrepreneurs found the activity to be fun and interesting, so they developed their skill in English speaking and listening along the way. This corresponds to the statement of Ur (1988), which said that exchanging of information motivate and stimulate learners to participate more in language activity by using the language to communicate with others. Qasim, A & Qasim Z (2014) studied

the task-based activity "information gap task" in which learners exchange information with others in order to complete their own information. It was found that learners had gained more knowledge of language and had developed their communication skill by this activity.

- Find Your Partner: The trainees had to look for their classmates who sell similar products. This activity helped OTOP entrepreneurs to use target language in making dialogues with their classmates in order to find their partner. They were motivated because they did not want to be the last person who found partner so they used a lot of effort in using the target language. From observation, the entrepreneurs seemed to enjoy the activity very much. Nunan (2004) said that language activities should be enjoyable and interesting for participants. This also corresponds with the idea presented by Harmer (1993) who said language activities should stimulate the participants to put the knowledge of language into use.

- Group work: The trainees were divided into groups of six. Each group had to draw pictures and prepare description of products, then present them to the class. The results of this activity revealed that OTOP entrepreneurs used the target language in searching for vocabulary, preparation of product description, conversation with members of their group, and presentation in front of the class. It corresponds to the statement of Underhill (1998) who said that language activity that focuses on speaking skill should allow the participants to discuss, present, interview, describe, tell stories, and fill in the missing parts. It also corresponds to the research of Arif and Leyla (2016) who found that small group activity is very effective because learners get to know one another and practice language in real-life activities. Using language to communicate with classmates also creates pleasant atmosphere in the classroom, encouraging learners to be interested and have more confident in using language to communicate. It also goes in line with the saying which states that teachers should let students practice their listening skill by listening to description, reports or stories.

Therefore, it can be concluded that tasks which have been designed to focus and promote the use of listening and speaking skill help learners to have better English speaking and listening skill. We can see that from individual performance results of research participants which have been assessed authentically during the experiment in Lesson Plans 1 and 2. The results from Lesson Plan 1 have the average $\overline{X}$ between 1.33-1.43, which means that the performance of the participants was in "sufficient" level. The results from Lesson Plan 2 have the average $\overline{X}$ of performance by the participants in "good" level. The average $\overline{X}$ has been increased to 1.50-165.

The results from testing English speaking and listening skill of 20 OTOP entrepreneurs in the sample group revealed that their overall English speaking and listening skill were increased after participating in task-based language teaching activities. All 20 OTOP entrepreneurs have developed their skills.

5.3 Suggestions

Suggestions for using task-based language teaching activities are as follows:

- To conduct task-based language teaching activities for OTOP entrepreneurs, it is important to provide appropriate length of time for the participants to complete the tasks. If too much is provided, the participants will lose enthusiasm. If too little time is provided, the participants will have to hurry finishing the work and unable to properly learn the language from the task.

- To conduct task-based language teaching activities, one should ensure that there is enough space in the classroom for the learners to do activities and express their full potentials.

6. Acknowledgement

7. References

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