The Effect of Instructional Methods in Teaching Speaking to Young Learners

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Abstract

This study searched for empirical evidence of which instructional method, either Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) or Task-based Learning (TBL), was more effective in teaching speaking to real beginners of young learners. The selected samples were taken by non-random sampling from Foundation II level with ten students for each class. This study, whose data was collected through an oral test, was an experimental research by using T-test at 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that t-computation was higher than t-table (+2,11 > +2,10). It implied that the mean of PPP class was significantly higher than TBL class. The findings above led to a conclusion that the use of PPP was more effective than TBL in teaching speaking to young learners. It was also discovered that drilling activities, which occurred intensively in PPP, yet not in TBL, gave a great contribution in supporting the effectiveness of PPP in teaching speaking. Drillings were beneficial and met the characteristics of the students who belonged to the population of this study. Therefore, PPP, rather than TBL, was more recommended in teaching speaking to real beginners of young learners whose characteristics met the ones mentioned in the discussion below. However, since drillings can be very mechanical and meaningless, in order not to cause boredom, the length of time allocated for the activities should be considered carefully. Moreover, for an optimum result, drillings must always be accompanied by communicative activities.

Keywords: Presentation-Practice-Production, PPP, Task-based Learning, TBL, young learners

Pengaruh dari Metode Instruksional dalam Mengajar Berbicara untuk Anak-anak

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan bukti empiris tentang metode yang lebih efektif, antara PPP dan TBL, dalam mengajarkan keterampilan berbicara pada anak yang termasuk ke dalam kategori pembelajar pemula. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian eksperimental dengan menggunakan T-test pada taraf signifikansi 0,05. Teknik pengambilan sampel secara non random sampling dari Foundation tingkat II dengan 10 siswa setiap kelas. Data penelitian ini dikumpulkan melalui tes lisan. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa t-hitung lebih besar dari t-tabel (+2,11> +2,10). Hal ini berarti bahwa rata-rata tes lisan kelas PPP secara signifikan lebih tinggi daripada rata-rata tes lisan kelas TBL. Dengan demikian disimpulkan bahwa penggunaan PPP lebih efektif daripada TBL dalam mengajarkan keterampilan berbicara kepada anak. Ditemukan juga bahwa kegiatan drilling, yang terjadi secara intensif di PPP namun tidak di TBL, merupakan faktor yang berkontribusi besar dalam mendukung efektivitas PPP dalam pengajaran keterampilan berbicara. Kegiatan drilling sangat bermanfaat dan sesuai dengan karakteristik siswa yang termasuk dalam populasi penelitian ini. Oleh karena itu, penggunaan PPP lebih dianjurkan dalam mengajarkan keterampilan berbicara pada siswa pemula yang karakteristiknya sama dengan yang disebutkan dalam diskusi di bawah ini. Namun, karena drilling bisa sangat mekanis dan jauh dari kebermaknaan, maka rentang waktu untuk kegiatan ini harus diperhatikan agar tidak menyebabkan kebosanan. Selain itu, untuk hasil belajar yang optimal, drilling juga harus selalu diikuti dengan kegiatan komunikatif.

Kata kunci: Presentation-Practice-Production, PPP, Task-based Learning, TBL, young learners

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INTRODUCTION

Study on children as young language learners has continued to grow since the past few decades. New methods and techniques are developed in the quest for better understanding and outcome in teaching English as a foreign language to young learners. Two of the well-known methods in EFL teaching are Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) and Task-based Learning (TBL). Basically, both PPP and TBL promote rich exposures to the target language. The differences are TBL offers far more opportunities for free language use, is genuinely freer of language control, and learners rely on their own linguistic resources. TBL begins by providing learners a genuine experience of language and then helps them to analyze the language in order to help them learn more effectively (Willis & Willis, 2007). While in PPP, the exposure of the target language is more restricted. PPP controls the learner's experience of language by focusing on a single language item and then looks for some activities to practice them (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Previous studies discovered that the use of TBL in language teaching was successfully giving contribution to students' speaking skill, especially in accuracy and fluency (Munirah & Muhsin, 2015). Furthermore, TBL also offered variety of learning experiences which promoted students' motivation and which in turn improved their performance (Ismaili, 2013). Learning was believed to be more effective when students were fully involved with language tasks instead of just learning the language itself (Oxford, 2006). However, through a preliminary investigation, the writer revealed some general features that characterized the young language learners who belonged to the population of this study: (1) the students learned English as a foreign language; (2) the students were real beginners who had never had a close interaction with English; (3) the students did not come from English-speaking community; (4) most of the students studied at public schools where English was taught as a local-content subject from the fourth grade; (5) the duration of the English lesson at school was only around sixty minutes in a week; (6) the students were taught by English teachers who spoke more mother tongue in the classroom; and (7) the students were more used to written rather than oral exercises. Taking into account these features, it is assumed that teaching speaking by using TBL is more difficult than by using PPP since the tasks in TBL require students to use their own linguistic resources. The students are to use whatever language they have known before in order to reach an outcome and then improve the language by themselves. This situation can be very problematic for real beginners, especially young learners. On the other hand, PPP promotes drilling activities that give opportunities for learners to rehearse the new language more often. This can be very beneficial to real beginners, especially young learners. Therefore, this study intends to seek for empirical evidence of which method, either PPP or TBL, is more effective in teaching speaking to real beginners of young learners.

Teaching English to children is quite different from teaching English to teenagers or adults. Children are unique creatures and have a world of their own. They see things from their own point of view which sometimes not easy for adults to understand. In learning a foreign language, children use their mother tongue as their point of reference. It is going to be difficult for children to learn in foreign language something which they have not mastered in their own mother tongue yet. If they do not know how to express time in their mother tongue yet, for example, it will be very hard for them to express time in another language. Moreover, for young children, language learning is still a matter of experiencing language rather than commuting information, such as grammatical patterns, to memory. They are more interested in activities that provide them the opportunity to use language rather than to language usage (McKay, 2006). Children are also excellent acquirers. They are able to acquire their mother tongue as well as another language very quickly. Their ability to imitate is so good that sometimes they are indistinguishable from native speakers. And finally, children have great expectation about learning a foreign language. They want immediate result. They wish to be able to speak in a foreign language fluently as soon as

possible (Nunan, 2011).

PPP is an extension and a further development of the earlier Situational Language Teaching (SLT) which was emerged in Britain in the fifties. SLT formed a basis for a situational approach and a drill-based manner in presenting and practicing new sentence patterns. However, as time passes by, the view of language learning and language teaching underlying SLT is beginning to be called into questions. Methodologists argue that even though drillings can ease students' accuracy towards a new language, yet the students still need to be given many opportunities to produce the new language by themselves rather than reproducing it under the teacher's direction. In other words, providing students with activities that involve using language naturally, as in real life communication, is a must. Hence, methodologists start to conduct more free communicative activities right after the practice stage. The free communicative activities are also known as the production stage.

PPP consists of three stages, respectively Presentation, Practice, and Production. The sequence of PPP of course does not have to be strictly Presentation → Practice → Production. The sequence can flexibly change according to the level and the need of the students. Considering the fact that the population of this study is still real beginners, the writer prefers to start her teachings with a presentation which is directly followed by practice and production stages.

Presentation is a stage at which exposures of the new language are given. The aim of this stage is to get the learners understand the meaning, the use, the form, and the pronunciation of the new language (Harmer, 2007). Basically, a new language item can be presented either spoken or written. Yet, since the main concern for early language learning will be teaching the spoken language, so it is best if the presentation is done orally. After the new material has been presented in a meaningful context, the next stage would be the practice stage. Here, the students are given the opportunity to practice or reproduce the new material for themselves with the whole class together. Practice itself, according to Ur, is defined as repetitive practice of behaviors in order to improve learning and performance (Ur, 2012). There are many ways in getting the learners practice a new language orally. Oral drills, defined as controlled practices which allow the students to produce a new material only in a fixed way, are the common ways of oral practice (Byrne, 1986). Oral drills, which range from mechanical to meaningful, are perhaps the safest way for students in practicing a new material. The main concern of this stage would be the students' accuracy which gradually increases to their fluency. Therefore, the activities should also increase from the mechanical to the meaningful ones. And in order to get an optimum result, it is better for a teacher to conduct a transition phase activity at the end of the practice stage. Hopefully, the transition phase can bridge the practice stage and the next stage, production stage.

Presentation and practice only are not enough. It is true that at the two stages mentioned earlier, the students get the opportunity to hear the new language item and to reproduce accurately what they have just heard. Yet, the communicative purpose has not been reached. Therefore, providing the students with opportunities to use the language by themselves, that is letting them to say whatever they want to say rather than what they are directed to say, is a must. As Byrne says, ". . . so that they can see for themselves the value and the use of what they are learning: to appreciate that language is an instrument to be used, not knowledge or information to be stored away" (Byrne, 1986). The main concern of this stage is the students' fluency. Therefore, teachers should be able to provide the students with activities that promote language to be used as well as an environment in which the students communicate freely and work together independently with only the minimum amount of direction from the teachers.

The idea for task-based learning has risen since the 1970s. At that time, there were many linguists who did not put so much attention on the nature of language input. Instead, they put a great emphasis on the learning tasks that students were involved in. Two of the linguists who pioneer the use of task-based learning are Allwright and N.S. Prabhu.

Allwright, a British applied linguist, argues that there is no need for teaching grammatical items. What a teacher has to do is simply asks the students to perform communicative activities which require them to use the target language. The more they do the activities the better they will become at using the target language. In harmony with Allwright, Prabhu, a teacher of secondary school in Bangalore-Southern India, states that if the emphasis in class is on meaning rather on form, then the language will be learnt incidentally. He recommends a series of tasks which have a problem-solving element for that type of tasks will promote students to come into contact with language naturally (Harmer, 2007).

Though Allwright and Prabhu put the basis for the development of task-based learning, yet it is Jane Willis who offers a general model of how to implement task-based learning in classroom teachings. She divides the approach into three phases: (1) Pre-task Phase, (2) Task Cycle, (3) Language Focus (Willis, 1996). The pre-task phase offers rich exposures of the target language. What students, especially young learners, need in learning a language is a lot of comprehensible input. They will first listen, understand, then gradually experience the language by themselves. Here, in order the get the learners tune into the target language, a teacher must be able to, as much as possible, speak in the target language in such a way, for example by using mimes and demonstrations, so that the students can understand the language easily.

Having done the pre-task phase, the learning then continues to the task cycle. The word 'task' has been used as a term for various activities including grammar exercises, practice activities, and role plays (Nunan, 2004). Yet in this experiment, 'task' is defined as process-oriented activities which require the students to use whatever language they have known in order to achieve a specific outcome. The emphasis here will be on exchanging meaning rather than producing a certain language item. In other words, fluency is what it matters, while accuracy can be build up at the later stage. In the task cycle, the students are given every opportunity to use whatever language they have known before in order to reach an outcome, and then improve the language by themselves. Of course, the main concern for this phase will be the students' fluency. The students should also be encouraged to use the target language as much as they can and appreciate themselves no matter how little language they speak.

After a series of tasks, when the learners have gained some experiences in using the new language, its patterns will begin to make sense. This is the right time to bring the learners to the last phase of the framework, the language focus (Willis & Willis, 2007). This phase will bring the learner closer to some of the features that naturally occur during the task cycle. The aims are to promote observation through identification as well as to investigate some linguistics features. However, analysis activities should not consist of presenting or practicing language items in isolation. The language item presented here should be the ones which the learners are already familiar with, the ones occur during the task cycle.

METHODS

This research was quantitative which used an experimental design by giving two different treatments to each sample class. This research was conducted at Lembaga Pendidikan Indonesia Amerika (LPIA), a non-formal educational institution which engaged with teaching English as a foreign language. The selected samples were taken by non-random sampling as it did not have many classes. They were from Foundation II level with ten students for each class. Foundation Level is a specific term used in LPIA to refer to the level provided for children. The data collection was done by giving the students oral pre-test and post-test made based on the syllabus used in LPIA. The oral test rubric was used to measure the students' speaking skill by two raters with five components of speaking, namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. After collecting the data,

the researcher conducted homogeneity and normality test before continuing the analysis with t-test.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The early step in analyzing the data was collecting the score of the students' English-speaking skill. The data was obtained from pre-test and post-test. The table below is the pre-test score of both class.

Table 1. Pre-test Score

No	PPP Class Score	No	TBL Class Score
1	16	1	16
2	12	2	8
3	7	3	7
4	7	4	6
5	16	5	14
6	17	6	12
7	16	7	15
8	12	8	8
9	11	9	10
10	12	10	8

In order to analyze the data before the treatment, the researcher had tested the two groups of data based on their homogeneity. Bartlett test was used and below was the result.

Table 2. Homogeneity Test for Pre-test

Sample	df	1/df	S_i^2	log S_i^2	(df) log S_i^2
1 (x)	9	1/9	13,4	1,1271	10,1439
2 (y)	9	1/9	12,9	1,1106	9,9954
Sum	18	2/99	-	-	20,1393

In the degree of freedom α (α = 0,05) and df = (2-1), X^2 table was 3,84 and the X^2 computation was 0,0021. Consequently, H_o was accepted because X^2 computation was located between X^2 table (-3,84 < 0,0021 < +3,84). It can be said that both classes were homogenous.

Having finished with the treatments, the researcher gave the students oral post-test the same way as the oral test for pre-test. The score was in the table below:

Table 3. Post-test Score

No	PPP Class Score	No	TBL Class Score
1	25	1	25
2	23	2	21
3	24	3	21
4	24	4	20
5	24	5	20
6	24	6	19
7	24	7	21
8	19	8	15
9	18	9	18
10	18	10	17

The obtained data above were analyzed by using t-test formula. Before doing t-computation, the researcher computed the post-test score to find some supported data. The supported data were as follows:

Table 4. Data of Mean, Variance, and Standard Deviation

Subject	Mean	s^2	s	t	df
PPP Class (x)	22,3	7,79	2,75	2,11	18
TBL Class (y)	19,7	7,34			

Based on the table above, it was clearly seen that t-computation was +2,11 with α=0,05 and df=18. It indicated that H_i was accepted because t-computation was higher than t-table (+2,11 > +2,10). It implied that the average score or mean of PPP class was significantly higher than TBL class. Therefore, the use of PPP was more effective than the use of TBL in teaching speaking to young learners.

In the following discussion, the writer compares the characteristics of the students that belong to the sample of the study with the strengths and weaknesses of both methods, PPP and TBL. As a foreign language, English is hardly used in daily life. Unlike mother tongue, only few people use English to communicate in everyday life. While language acquisition demands rich exposure of the target language, the students who learn English rarely receive any natural exposure of the target language. This condition also found in the students who belong to the population of this study. As stated in the earlier discussion, the students are still considered real beginners who learn English as a foreign language. They have never had a close interaction with English, and they do not come from English-speaking community. They study English at school only within a short time (around sixty minutes in a week), and they were used to be taught by English teachers who spoke more mother tongue. Moreover, they are more used to written rather than oral exercises. With such characters, the students are to achieve a goal of mastering some language functions within a short time. Therefore, in order to achieve the goal, the students need some activities which enable them to practice in a fixed way as well as, which is the most important, to memorize some features of the new language material/function.

Basically both PPP and TBL offered wide exposure of the target language. The difference was, the exposure in PPP was followed by some drills or controlled practices. Drillings were repetitive oral practices under teacher's direction. When students drilled the new language, basically they were practicing and memorizing the form and the pronunciation, and at the same time, they also got rich exposures of the new language. They heard and produced the new language repetitively as in first language acquisition. Drillings also allowed learners to rehearse the new language more often. This can be very beneficial for real beginners, especially young learners because they get to hear and produce the new language repetitively and more often. On the other hand, TBL offered far more opportunities for free language use and was genuinely free of language control. In other words, there were not any drills or controlled practices take place in TBL procedure. The tasks in TBL required students to use their own linguistic resources or whatever language they have known before in order to reach an outcome and then improve the language by themselves. This was not easy for real beginners, especially young learners who happen to be quite limited in vocabulary.

Drillings intensively occur in PPP procedure, yet not in TBL. Though most drillings appeared to be meaningless, the method also proposed meaningful practices in addition to the mechanical ones. Mechanical drills were very controlled and lack of meaningfulness, while on the other hand students needed activities which can bring them closer to the meaning of the new language. Therefore, it was wise and reasonable to provide the students with a more meaningful practice right after the mechanical drills.

Furthermore, the following were some differences between the use of PPP and the use of TBL that the writer found throughout the experiment:

Table 5. The Difference between PPP and TBL during the Treatment

	PPP	TBL
1	The exposure was more restricted.	The exposure was freer of language control.
2	A controlled practice or mechanical drill took place.	No controlled practice or mechanical drill took place.
3	When the writer conducted the mechanical drill within a longer time, the students' excitement changed into a boredom.	Since the lesson started with some games (in the pre-task language activities), the students were able to maintain their excitement.
4	Both PPP and TBL promoted an oral presentation/introduction of a new material. Yet, in PPP, the presentation was followed by non-communicative activities, such as mechanical drills, which emphasized accuracy towards the new material. Later, when accuracy had already been established, the activities gradually increased to the more communicative ones (the production stage), which emphasized fluency towards the new material. The flow can simply be made like the following: • presentation → non-communicative activities → communicative activities • accuracy → fluency	Both PPP and TBL promoted an oral presentation/introduction of a new material. Yet, in TBL, the introduction was followed directly by communicative activities (the task cycle) which emphasized fluency towards the new material. Later, when the students had gotten sufficient experience in using the new language material naturally, the lessons gradually entered a more conscious learning (the language focus) which emphasized accuracy towards the new material. The flow can simply be made like the following: • introduction → communicative activities → non-communicative activities • fluency → accuracy
5	When performing the communicative activities in the production stage, the students tended to communicate in complete sentence. For example: A: Are there any radios in your house? B: Yes. A: How many radios are there in your house? B: There are five radios in my house. The writer was sure that this happened as a result of the use of drills in the practice stage. Yet, the dialog above did not sound natural and far from real-life communication.	When performing the communicative activities in the task cycle, the students tended to communicate in incomplete/short sentences. For example: A: Are there any radios in your house? B: Yes. A: How many? B: Five. The writer was sure that this happened because there was smaller language control put here than that of in PPP. The dialog above sounded more natural and closer to real-life communication.

The discussions above clearly revealed the positive sides of drillings and how proportional drillings can bring benefits to students. Although repetition activities also occurred in the language focus phase of TBL, yet they were not as intensive as the drillings in PPP. However, since drillings sometimes appeared to be very mechanical and meaningless, a teacher should pay attention to the length of time allocated for the activities in order not to cause boredom. Moreover, drilling itself was not enough to improve the students' speaking skill if it stood alone. For an optimum result, drillings must always be accompanied by communicative activities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the whole result of the experiment, it is empirically proved that the use of PPP was more effective than the use of TBL in teaching speaking to young learners. Reviewing the whole experiment, the writer also concluded that the characteristics of the students who belong to the population of this study give a great contribution to the effectiveness of the use of PPP and TBL in teaching speaking. In other words, the use of PPP, rather than TBL, was more recommended in teaching speaking to real beginners whose characteristics meet the ones mentioned in early discussion.

Therefore, here are some suggestions that can be done as an effort to improve students' speaking skill and similar research in the future. First, in teaching speaking by using PPP to real beginners, a teacher should pay attention to the length of time allocated for the mechanical practices or drills. In order not to cause boredom, they should not be conducted too long. Second, though drillings were beneficial for teaching speaking to real beginner, yet, teachers should not rely too much on them. Instead, teachers should also give sufficient amount of communicative activities which promote the students to use the new language in a more natural way. The use of drillings is not enough to improve the students' speaking skill if it stands alone. For an optimum result, it must be accompanied with communicative activities. Third, a teacher should always give his students as many exposures to the target language as possible. In other words, he should use the target language as much as possible in communicating with his students and avoid the use of the students' mother tongue unless a major communication breakdown occurs. He should also encourage his students to use the target language as far as they can, no matter how little language they speak. These actions have to be taken in order to reach an optimum learning outcome. Fourth, a teacher should provide his students with visual and/or audio-visual aids which can help both the teacher himself in teaching speaking and the students in motivating their learning. Fifth, in rating the students' oral skill, if the new language consists of several different functions, it is better for the rater to use separate rating sheet. For example, if there are two language functions tested, namely expressing on going activities and describing locations, then using two separated rating sheets is preferable. This is because students might have different skills in performing different language functions. It is possible to have a student who is not so good at one function, yet do best in others. Therefore, in order to obtain a more valid result, separate rating sheet for different language functions is necessary. Finally, since the sample of this is study is quite limited, it is advisable to conduct further researches by using larger samples and better methodology.

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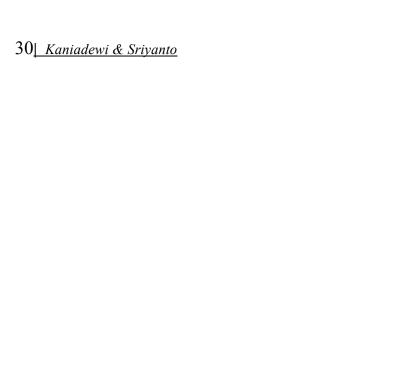
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