Volume 20 Issue 37
Originally issued as G6

Global Journal of human-social science: G
Linguistics & Education
Volume 20 Issue 6 Version 1.0 Year 2020
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

A Brief Exploration of Application of TBLT to Oral English Teaching in Chinese Rural Middle Schools

By Yali YIN

Gannan Normal University

Abstract- Since the language teaching approach of Task-based Approach issued by The New National Criterion for English Course, the term Task-based Language Teaching has been comprehensively introduced and advocated and popularized among English teachers in China. Although ten years have passed since the Task-based Language Teaching was applied in China, in the current rural areas, the students still have a poor performance in English, especially in oral English. Then what is in the way of the progress of oral English teaching in rural areas? Combined with the condition of rural areas, the task-based language teaching and an experiment, this study will probe into the obstruction of the improvement of oral English teaching in rural areas and put forward some feasible suggestions to improve oral English on the condition of the adoption of the Task-based Language Teaching.

Keywords: TBLT; rural middle schools; spoken english teaching.

GJHSS-G Classification: FOR Code: 200302, 200399

ABRIEFEXPLORATIONOFAPPLICATIONOFTBLTTOORALENGLISHTEACHINGINCHINESERURALMIDDLESCHOOLS

Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:

Open Association of Research Society, USA
Research | Diversity | Ethics

© 2020. Yali YIN. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/), permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

A Brief Exploration of Application of TBLT to Oral English Teaching in Chinese Rural Middle Schools

Yali YIN

Abstract- Since the language teaching approach of Task-based Approach issued by The New National Criterion for English Course, the term Task-based Language Teaching has been comprehensively introduced and advocated and popularized among English teachers in China. Although ten years have passed since the Task-based Language Teaching was applied in China, in the current rural areas, the students still have a poor performance in English, especially in oral English. Then what is in the way of the progress of oral English teaching in rural areas? Combined with the condition of rural areas, the task-based language teaching and an experiment, this study will probe into the obstruction of the improvement of oral English teaching in rural areas and put forward some feasible suggestions to improve oral English on the condition of the adoption of the Task-based Language Teaching.

Keywords: TBLT; rural middle schools; spoken english teaching.

Chapter I

I. Introduction

a) Significance and Purpose of the study

With the development of the world and the rapid formation of globalization, the great importance of English is increasingly obvious. However, the great distance of English level between urban and rural areas is not in harmonious state with prosperous development of globalization. This study aims to provide methods to improve the oral English class efficiency. Thus the improvement of English teaching in rural areas is the key to the progress of the whole English level. The analysis of the reasons and the countermeasures of English improvement in rural areas prove necessary. Meanwhile, more attention on the English teaching in rural areas is also a way to the quality of education both in urban and rural areas. Moreover, the analysis of the reasons and measures of English teaching in rural areas will contribute to the theory study of the English teaching in rural areas to some extent.

b) Task-Based Language Teaching

i. *Task-based language teaching*

Task-based language teaching: Task-based language learning (TBLL), also known as task-based language teaching (TBLT) or task-based instruction, refers to a type of language teaching approach which takes 'task' as its key units for designing and implementation of second language instruction. Much like regular tasks that we perform everyday such as making the tea, writing an essay, talking to someone on the phone, TBLT seeks to develop students' interlingua through providing a task and then using language to solve it.

Task-based learning is advantageous to the student because it is more student-centered, allows for more meaningful communication, and often provides for practical extra-linguistic skill building. As the tasks are likely to be familiar to the students (eg: visiting the doctor), students are more likely to be engaged, which may further motivate them in their language learning.

Additionally, tasks promote language acquisition through the types of language and interaction they require. Although the teacher may present language in the pre-task, the students are ultimately free to use what grammar constructs and vocabulary they want. This allows them to use all the language they know and are learning, rather than just the 'target language' of the lesson. On the other hand, tasks can also be designed to make certain target forms 'task-essential,' thus making it communicatively necessary for students to practice using them. In terms of interaction, information gap tasks in particular have been shown to promote negotiation of meaning and output modification.

ii. *Current Study of TBLT at Home and Abroad*

TBLT is the production of Communicative Teaching and Second Language Acquisition .It is originally developed by Prabhu's experiment of Strong Version Communicative Opinion during the 1980s in Bangladore, southern India. Since then, the approach has prevailed in America, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore and even some developing countries. Many linguists and language researchers especially Willis, Skehan, Nunan, Ellis, Long have greatly contributed to the issue in theory. In China, the study on TBLT has also been popularized especially after it is strongly advocated in The New English Curriculum Standards drafted in 2001.

As for TBLT in speaking, scholars have done considerable exploration. In the theoretical study, Zhu Yuncai (2003) concludes that TBLT aims at providing

Author: School of Foreign Language, Gannan Normal University, Ganzhou, Jiangxi, China. e-mail: yinyali1981@163.com

© 2020 Global Journals

opportunities for the learners to experiment and explore both spoken and written language through learning activities that are designed to engage learners in the authentic, practical and functional use of language for meaningful purposes. In this regard, TBLT is closely related to oral English. Wen (1999) emphasizes that group work is an ideal oral organization style and the success of the group work greatly depends on oral tasks. They all agree that TBLT is helpful in fostering their oral English proficiency.

c) *Current situation of spoken English in middle schools in rural areas.*

With the deeper reform of Junior Middle School English course, English textbook highlights speaking ability training and sets up a large number of speaking activities. Students' speaking ability has also got improved in a certain extent. But compared with the related speaking ability put forward in "Full-time compulsory education, Ordinary School English Curriculum Standards", at present, in rural middle school English teaching, speaking ability training still exists great gap. "Dumb English" is still a common phenomenon in Junior Middle School students of rural areas. This is affected by all kinds of factors.

Learning English in a non-English spoken country and in the countryside where English is seldom heard, the chances that students use English is only limited in class. And out of class they seldom have chances to use English in natural environment, which is an objective reality. In students' daily life, there is no need for them to ask directions in English, that is to say, they lack real motivation to use English in real-world environment. Even though in classroom teaching, there are too many students in a class, which adds a certain difficulty to arrange English spoken activities, at the same time, students get less chances of speaking English.

In China, students who register for English majors must take part in National Matriculation English Test. In recent years, some majors of some universities also require students to take part in spoken English test, and high school entrance examination in several districts and cities carry out spoken English test, too. This has greatly accelerated speaking ability training of middle school students. However, the range of spoken English test in college entrance examination is not universal; the content of spoken English test is single (limited in the fields of reading and simple questioning and answering); the scores is only regarded as the reference when enrolling, but not added into the final scores. Most of the schools seldom carry out spoken English test in mid-term test and final-term test in particular. These have unconsciously resulted in teachers paying less attention to speaking ability training. Under the pragmatical influences of "what tested, what studied", students disregard speaking ability training to a large extent, which has affected speaking teaching.

d) *The relation between the task-based language teaching and oral English*

English should become the tool of communication as a language. But Chinese students focus on the grammar and vocabulary knowledge while studying English and ignore the language ability like spoken communication of English, which results in the birth of' Dumb English'. What delights us is that the units at various levels educate and instruct the department to pay attention to the question on this respect in recent years. The New National Criterion for English Course put speaking first among the goals. The high school and college entrance examination put out the spoken test of English in recent years. The cultivation of students' speaking ability has already become the subject that vast English teachers have explored actively. Task-based language learning (TBLL) has overcome the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) based on function and does not pay attention on the deficiency that the course causes in teaching. This method chooses the language material of the intelligible authenticity, and processes the material into various tasks, which enable the students to improve their spoken ability through finishing the communication task of languages and practice the target language. So it is desirable to implement the Task-based language learning (TBLL) in the English teaching of junior middle school.

e) *The distinction of oral English development between urban and rural areas*

With the rising of Chinese international status, people have more and more opportunities to contact with foreigners. Radio, television and other media in the foreign language programs is available. And there are more and more people learning foreign language, especially the language of English. Various English textbooks, reference books, dictionaries and electronic tools for English learning can be found easily. More and more schools focus on English teaching. Schools in urban areas have the projector, tape and recorders in the class. There are some key middle school language labs, multimedia classrooms, computer language labs, bigger libraries and information. However, compared with the urban areas, the rural middle school of our Jiangxi province has not basically been offered English course at the stage, and the students feel strange when they are reading the English material in junior middle school. Because most of the students speak dialect, they can not understand what they learn until they use mandarin as the bridge language. No basically contacting with foreigners in their daily life, they seldom watch the foreign language program in Medias such as the broadcast and televisions. The students in rural middle school have little perceptual knowledge or

© 2020 Global Journals

information. Moreover, the students are with poor hardware conditions and the students are lack of English language environment. So the English foundation of students in rural middle school is relatively poor, especially in oral English.

Although the New National Criterion for English Course has been introduced and implemented for more than ten years both in the cities and the rural areas in China, there exists different effect in different areas. Compared with the city, the rural middle schools are poor in carrying out the different tasks in the The New National Criterion for English Course. Although spoken English is an active type of output, in rural middle schools, because of the social reasons, the home education, and the factor of the students, it makes the establishment of the task quite difficult. What's more, rural areas are lack of the real English situation. Here I am going to discuss the reasons that preventing oral English from improving in details.

Chapter II

II. The Reasons for Low Efficiency of Oral English Class in Rural Areas

a) Reason analysis of low oral English ability from the point of view of the teachers

i. *The obsolete teaching concepts and low efficiency of teaching activities*

Because of the introduction of the Communicative Language Teaching, there are more or less several activities in the English classes. Thus the current class has get rid of teacher-centered situation, which delights us. However, what depresses us is another extreme that some activities are having nothing to do with teaching contents, and diverge from the teaching goals. Such case are activities for activities and the students can get nothing from the activities but pleasure. In other words, the activities are not educative. Thus the students can have no their own thoughts.

Although many new teaching means and new concepts have been introduced in the English teaching, in rural areas, because of the reformation and transformation are affected by various reasons, many advanced teaching means is not in common use in their English class. For example, the teachers tend to fix too much attention on the explanation and accumulation of grammar, vocabulary, whereas they ignore the importance of the listening and oral English which includes both the pronunciation correctness and fluency.

Because of lack of oral English class, In the ordinary English class, nearly every teacher will have the goal that improve the students' oral English ability and speed their English speaking accuracy and fluency in their teaching goals lists. However, we can rarely see the specific goals of the classes, for example, the students should master the new English expressions and use the newly learned expressions easily in their conversations, while the specific goals such as: the teacher should manage to encourage student A and student B who are always too shy to show themselves speak out English loudly and bravely and rectify their incorrect pronunciation. Their teaching goals are broad and lack of feasibility, which naturally leads to the low efficiency of the improvement of the oral English in English classes.

In the English class, when the teacher want to train their speaking ability, then the teachers should try to put forward a topic that is able to arouse students' interest and passion to air their views and ideas. What the teacher said acts as glue between different opinions and clue of the next topic, which shows the great significance of teachers' language. However, there are some teachers who ask questions as they please. In the class, it seems like they have asked many questions, but the questions asked are not of much communicative significance and the students can not get much clues from their speech. Moreover, some teachers rarely take the degree of difficulty into their consideration when ask questions, which will naturally cause confusion and frustration among students frustration after the class. Then the students will be unwilling to take such oral English classes.

ii. *Wrong awareness of evaluation*

The evaluation of teachers on their students is of great importance in that it has great influence on their confidence-building and self-improvement. However, some evaluation is not in harmonious with The New National Criterion for English Course in which evaluation criteria should be diversified and teachers should pay more attention on the diversified characteristics of the students and respect their merits and shortcomings. In the evaluation, the teacher should highlight the students' merits and speak well of them reasonably, which will impact a lot on the confidence and enterprising spirit of the students.

b) Reason analysis of low oral English ability from the point of view of the rural environment

i. *Lack of language environment*

To the students of rural areas, The New National Criterion for English Course is a bit difficult. Because of the lack of teaching equipment and facility, then the students have a poor mastery of English, especially have a poor mastery of oral English.

For the aim of finding out the third reason that leads to their poor performance in oral English, we will first look at the linguistic theories. According to *A New Concise Course on Linguistics for Students of English (*Dai Weidong, 2002): In behaviorist approach, language environment plays a major role in providing both language models to be imitated and the necessary feedbacks among which the positive reinforcement of

© 2020 Global Journals

reward encourages children's efforts and facilitates the "correct" learning of the language while the negative feedback discourages children to repeat the "mistakes". However, the innatist view emphasizes more on children's internal processing of the language items to be learned. The environment functions as a stimulus that triggers and activates the pre-equipped UG to process the materials interactionist view calls for the quality of the language samples available in the linguistic environment, only when the language is modified and adjusted to the level of children's comprehension, do they process and internalize the language items.

From what I have quoted above, both the behaviorists and the innatists put great emphasis on the influence of the environment on the second language learning. Compared with urban areas, the most crucial factor that affects their English study is the lack of true language environment. Many people in the rural have not heard English, not alone to speak English. Thus many students acquire "Dumb English" which refers to take the English course that their courses teach them about the grammar behind English while neglecting the most important aspect — how to actually speak English. The most important duty of language is delivering information and knowledge. However, English teaching in rural areas deviate from this aim. Thus although students are trying hard to learn grammar construction and vocabulary instead of listening and oral English, they made little progress.

ii. *The ignorance of education in rural areas*

Another reason that causes the students do not learn English well is the ignorance of education in rural areas. In rural areas, parents are occupied by making a living and live in the place where they work, while their children are living with their grandparents. So part of the parents do not care the children's study, nor do they care a lot about their children's English learning. Without their parents' watching and inspiration, students do not care much with their study naturally.

In the process of urbanization, there are less and less young educated teachers willing to teach in rural areas, thus the students here can not receive the latest information. It is a common phenomenon that over too much students are having class in the same classroom. In this case, the teacher can not give enough attention to every student. Moreover, compared with urban areas, there are short of modern equipment and facility which can deliver more information、enrich students' study life and invoke their interests in English.

c) *Reason analysis of low oral English ability from the point of view of the students*

i. *Lack of the right concept of the language of English*

In China, English enters students' study life as the second language, which gives the students a lot of pressure and scary, especially for the students from the rural areas who have nearly no knowledge of English. Thus the negative attitude that the students hold towards English prevents students form rural areas learning English well.

Few students could truly realize the necessity of learning English, thus they are lack of the power that inspires them to learn English hard. Although the globalization is forming rapidly and the world is changing quickly, the change that happened is still not so obvious. Thus parents and students can not see the great role that English plays, the great influence that English have on the whole world. They have not truly realized that it is of great importance to master a kind of foreign language to adapt oneself well into the world of globalization. Thus the necessity of learning English is not so obvious, which leads to the fact that the will to learn English is accordingly weak.

ii. *Lack of confidence and their introversive characteristics*

According to the factors analysis of the second language learning in *A New Concise Course on Linguistics for Students of English (*Dai Weidong, 2002): A number of personality characteristics have been proposed as likely to affect the second language learning. Despite the varied results produced by different studies, in terms of communicative ability rather than grammatical accuracy or knowledge of grammatical rules, the personality traits such as extroversion, talkative, self-esteem, self-confidence can be found in successful second language learners. Certain personality traits appear helpful in completing certain tasks in learning a second language.

Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication. Communication is achieved when information is transferred successfully. Information can only be transferred by the means of oral and written language. Thus when two person is face to face and communication is to be achieved, oral language is in burning necessity. From which we can know the great significance of the good mastery of the spoken language. It is in the same case when we speak of the learning of English. Oral English is really important. However, for the students in the rural areas, they are very shy. Sometimes they are so shy that they are afraid of talking to strangers, not to mention to communicate with others in a foreign language. For those who have received English education, their teachers pay a lot attention to the learning of oral English, form which we can see the importance of the acquiring of the oral English. We can certainly realize the students' poor performance when we know the importance of oral English and students form rural areas are unwilling and shy to speak out.

© 2020 Global Journals

Chapter III

III. The Application and Adoption of TBLT to Oral English Teaching in Rural Middle School

a) Basic principles for designing oral English tasks

The basic principles for designing oral English tasks is creating a real-life situation in which the students can play a role actively and motivating the students to help enable them to better communicate with the others in English. Gradually their oral English will be promoted.

i. *The authenticity principle*

The linguistic data that learners work with should be authentic. The relationship between linguistic form and communicative function are clear to the learner (Liu Xia, 2003). The tasks should be similar to activities of the daily life.

ii. *The form-function principle*

Teaching language in ways that make form and function relationships transparent. It is important to emphasize both the forms and functions of language in the task design. It tends to cultivate learners' ability of mastering the function of the language on the basis of language form teaching (Liu Xia, 2003).

iii. "*Learning by doing*" *principle*

Learning by doing motivates students to fulfill their potential. Learners master the language by using it communicatively in the classroom, although they still have to learn grammar and memorize vocabulary (Cheng Xiaotang, 2004).

iv. *Information exchange principle*

In the process of the task accomplishing, learners must experience the process of getting information, processing information and conveying information. In our daily life, people use language mainly to get and convey information. If the activities have no relationship with the information exchange, these activities are not tasks (Bao Yubin、Chen Suyan, 2004).

v. *The outcome principle*

When the task is finished, there must be a result and the outcome should be explicit. For example, the pictures made by the learners, the decision they made, the content they listed. The outcome of the task is judgment of the quality of the task.

b) Application of TBLT to oral English teaching of rural middle schools

i. *The steps of applying the TBLT to the oral English teaching*

a. *Pre-task*

In the pre-task, the teacher will present what will be expected of the students in the task phase. Additionally, the teacher may prime the students with key vocabulary or grammatical constructs, although, in "pure" task-based learning lessons, these will be presented as suggestions and the students would be encouraged to use what they are comfortable with in order to complete the task. The instructor may also present a model of the task by either doing it themselves or by presenting picture, audio, or video demonstrating the task.

b. *Task*

During the task phase, the students perform the task, typically in small groups, although this is dependent on the type of activity. And unless the teacher plays a particular role in the task, then the teacher's role is typically limited to one of an observer or counselor-thus the reason for it being a more student-centered methodology.

c. *Planning*

Having completed the task, the students prepare either a written or oral report to present to the class. The instructor takes questions and otherwise simply monitors the students.

d. *Report*

The students then present this information to the rest of the class. Here the teacher may provide written or oral feedback, as appropriate, and the students observing may do the same.

e. *Analysis*

Here the focus returns to the teacher who reviews what happened in the task, in regards to language. It may include language forms that the students were using, problems that students had, and perhaps forms that need to be covered more or were not used enough.

Practice

The practice stage may be used to cover material mentioned by the teacher in the analysis stage. It is an opportunity for the teacher to emphasize key language

f. *Post-task: Language focus*

Language focus is also called post-task, which is the stage to analyze the language. While the task is being carried out, the teacher may wish to make notes on the language: Could any vocabulary be added? Were there any structures that caused misunderstanding or confusion? Were there any phrases which could have been expressed differently? Could any of the language have been used to better? In order to develop students' language competence, it is not adequate to accomplish the task only; students should do some meaningful learning and practice on the language (Willis1996). It is the stage for the students to learn the language from the meaning to the form. In this stage, teachers can design some language focus tasks. The purpose of these tasks is to develop students' language awareness. And then do some practice on those knowledge. In the end,

© 2020 Global Journals

teachers and students all together make a conclusion of the important language points and also some improvement.

ii. *Ways of applying TBLT to the oral English teaching in rural areas*

a. *Situation creating*

The teachers can put forward some topics, showing pictures, or students acting roles or using some real objects. In this way, the students will imagine themselves to be in a certain environment, thus they will be more eager to take part in the practice.

For example, when the teacher put forward a situation of seeing the doctor, the students will quickly think of the situation of seeing the doctor in their daily life and they can have the eager to put the situation into the English situation.

b. *Game*

Game is popular among the junior students, such as the word guessing. In this case, the students can relax themselves and become less anxious about the lesson. In such mood, the students are eager to speak out their guessing and thoughts.

c. *Discussion*

Discussion is a good way to communicate and also a splendid means to intrigue the students to speak out their ideas. The teachers can divide the students into groups and ask them to discuss. A discussion can broaden students' mind and excite their spirits.

Chapter IV

IV. An Experimental Study

This short study will examine the effectiveness of the Task-based Language Teaching on the oral English teaching and learning. In this experimentation, we can use the fluency and the correctness of the spoken English to decide the students' spoken ability.

The subjects of the study are two middle school classes of Grade 8 in NO.3 middle school in Xingguo, Jiangxi. There are 56 students in each class. These two classes are in the same grade and are taught by the same teacher and with the same textbooks. Therefore the author decides to use these two classes to do the research and choose one class to be experimented by the using of the Task-based Language Teaching, while the other is in the traditional means of English teaching and learning. The pronunciation is measured by the pronunciation of the phonetic symbols. The fluency is measured by the number of sentences they have articulated in a fix time phase over a fix topic. And the students are given the same experimental material. The following is the result of the experiment:

Table 1

Items	Class 1(traditional method)	Class 2(Task-based Teaching Method)
Correctness of pronunciation	Correct(40) Incorrect(8)	Correct(47) Incorrect(1)
Fluency	Less fluent and with some pauses	Fluent and with less pauses

Chapter V

V. Conclusion

Because the existence of the problem in the English teaching and learning and the poor performance of students' English ability, so we are carry out a series of reform on the elementary education. Thus the Task-based Language Method is brought in for the aim of improving the English ability of the students both in urban and rural areas.

This study focuses on the application of the Task-based Language Teaching Method to the oral English improvement and learning in the rural middle schools. It focus on the reasons of the present situation of the English teaching and learning in rural areas and the feasible measures to the improvement of oral English in rural areas when the Task-based Language Teaching Method is applied in the English class.

The research has identified that the implementation of the TBLT in the speaking in the middle school is successful and effective. In the TBLT lessons, students' motivation to learn the language is stimulated because of the authenticity of the language materials and the task-based activities. Besides, students' learning style is changed because TBLT emphasizes co-operation, participation and exploration in study. Students can fully display themselves in the lesson because the TBLT lessons reduce the anxiety of language learning and encourage students to communicate and discuss with others in the target language. Students can enjoy themselves and get a lot of in-put and out-put of the language in the "learning by doing" lesson. It is superior to the traditional PPT lesson, in which students are passive and the learning environment is depressing. In the TBLT lesson students not only can master the form of the language, the usage of the words but also can master the pronunciation of the new words. Students' language competence is greatly developed and all kinds of ability is well promoted.

Form the experimentation, we can get the information that the Task-based Language Teaching is desirable and feasible to the improvement of the oral English performance for the students from the rural

© 2020 Global Journals

middle schools, which will have a great instructive significance on the teaching and learning of the oral English in rural middle schools.

Bibliography

1. Foster, P and P. Skehan. 1996. -The influence of planning on performance in task - based learning. [J]. Studies in Second Language Acquisition 18: 299- 324
2. Prabhu, N. S. 1987. Second Language Pedagogy. [M]. Oxford: OUP
3. Skehan, P. 1998. A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning [M]. Cambridge: CUP
4. Du, Z.Y. (2011) Speech by Vice Minister Zhanyuan Du at the Symposium on the Construction and Sharing of Educational Resources. China Educational Technology, 1-3.
5. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2010) The National Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020 Years). http://www.moe.edu.cn/srcsite/A01/s7048/201007/t20100729_171904.html
6. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. (2016) The Development of "National Education Plan" in 13th Five-Year. http://www.moe.edu.cn/srcsite/A16/s3342/201606/t20160622_269367.html
7. Hornby AS. Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Chinese Dictionary.
8. Angles F.L. Body Language. Jinan University press.1998.
9. Wang Qiang. A Course in Language Teaching. High education press. 2014.
10. Kobayashi, H. & C. Rinnert. Effects of first language on second language writing: Translation versus direct composition [J]. Language Learning, 42 (1992): 183-215
11. Morris. D. Gesture. Wenhui press. 2010（178）
12. Cyxomjnhcknn. B. A. A Hundred Advice to Teachers. People Press. 1981
13. James Asher. Learning Another Language Through Actions. 1977.
14. Jean Piaget. The Language and Thought of the Child. Cultural Education Press.1980.

© 2020 Global Journals