Improving The Oral Communication Skills of Senior High School Students Through The Use of Task-Based Strategy

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ABSTRACT

Notably, students stand to accomplish a wide range of goals when basic instruction and opportunities to practice speaking are made available to them in class. Relative to this, oral communication brings to fruition task-based approach which makes use of the target expressions or language functions in the carrying out of task-types. Utilizing the results of the pre- and posttests in Oral Communication after using task-based approach, this study looked into the level of oral communication skills of the Grade 11 General Academic Strand students of Domalandan Center Integrated School in the school year 2018- 2019. Although the results showed that the overall rating before using task-based strategies were satisfactory, it was noteworthy that majority of the students proved to be outstanding in their performance after the use of task-based activities. Likewise, it also showed that the level of oral communication skills of the Grade 11 GAS students significantly differed before and after using task-based strategy. From hereon, the results of the study indicated that students worked best in instructional formats that best suit their learning styles. Thus; teachers, are called to task to exploit the role of tasks in students' higher motivation in classroom language learning. Similarly, it also called on the teachers, to develop alternative methods in aid of creating more effective learning environment.

Keywords: fluency, intervention, language structures, oral communication, simulation task-based speaking strategy

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

The K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum Framework is a system under the Department of Education aimed at holistically developing the Filipino learners with 21st Century Skills. Cognizant of communication skills as one of the 21st century skills, the framework clearly states the need of developing the oral communication skills of students in preparation for the world of work, entrepreneurship and/or pursuing higher education. Recognizing this has led a major shift in the education sector that enhances the basic education curriculum through adding two years with high hopes to master the competences needed by a student as stipulated in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act 10533, also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013.

In answer to this call, the Senior High School Program included the core subject Oral Communication in Context to Grade 11 students. Oral communication is considered to be a core aspect of employability (Knight and Yorke, 2006) and in recognition of its importance for students and graduates also included that under transferable or non-subject specific skills, there is a need to be able to present information orally.

In today's competitive world, oral communication skill is essential to be developed among students to gear them with appropriate knowledge on presentations. Being communicatively competent likewise boosts marketability and viability for work in variety of careers in the future, thus reiterates the essential of being equipped.

In the recently conducted unit test, item analyses revealed that students of General Academic Strand (GAS) obtained low mean performance. Recognizing the importance of oral communication in this strand, the

researcher aimed to improve the Oral Communication Skills of Grade 11 GAS students through a task-based strategy called simulations. They were the students enrolled under the academic track with the General Academic as their preferred strand. The subject, Oral Communication in Context, is a requirement for all students for the completion of the senior high school.

Simulations give students the chance to apply theory, develop critical skills, and provide a welcome relief from the everyday tasks of reading and preparing for classes (Kanner, 2007). An additional benefit of many of these simulations is the introduction of an aspect of realism into the students' experience. Such simulations are historically seen in the medical fields, where mock-up patients take on the signs and symptoms of a certain disease or injury and the student is asked to assess, diagnose, and/or treat the patient. Here the students must apply what they have learned to a reasonably realistic scenario. Further, there is evidence that the experiential learning that occurs in simulations promotes long-term retention of course material (Bernstein & Meizlish, 2003; Brookfield, 1990).

With regard to Oral Communication in Context teaching, simulation is a more recent strategy which aims to achieve communicative competence rather than grammatical competence. This means that performance and actual output are represented in one's actual real life situations. Many teachers want their students to apply the book knowledge to the real world, to see how the abstract concepts and theories play out in the real world, to be able to experience real-world processes, and to become motivated to become involved in the real-world processes that are discussed in class. Through this, teachers may conclude the long-term effect of their lessons to their students.

Willis & Willis (2001) have called for a move in language teaching toward task-based strategy to instruction. They agree that it is a form of teaching that treats language primarily as a tool for communication rather than a subject for study or manipulation.

Several researchers such as Nunan (2004), Ellis (2003) agreed that simulation view of language teaching is based on constructivist theory of learning. In the area of constructivism, Jean Piaget (2001) agreed that humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between the students' experiences and their ideas with full of tasks best exemplify learning.

It is clear that if learners are to develop the competence they need in order to use a second language easily and effectively in the kinds of situations they meet outside the classroom, they need to experience how language is used as a tool for communication within it.

It was in this context that the researcher conducted this study. It aimed to improve the oral communication skills of the Grade 11 GAS students at Domalandan Center Integrated School in order to fully equip the learners in responding accordingly to different communication situations as reflected in the task-based activities.

INNOVATION, INTERVENTION, AND STRATEGY

Task-Based Activities as Alternative Instructional Teaching Method

Richards and Rodgers (2001) define task-based instruction as an approach in which communicative and meaningful tasks play central role and in which the process of using language appropriately carries more importance than the mere production of grammatically-correct language forms. It basically involves conveying meaning via language. It is in this vein that task-based instruction is viewed as a model of Communicative Language Teaching in terms of regarding real and meaningful communication as the primary feature of language learning.

In employing task-based instruction in Oral Communication class, tasks took the form of activities built around the use of real-life conversations with the aim of encouraging the students to use authentic and/or creative language. Communicative tasks done in Oral Communication class were based on five interaction situations: basic interactions, face-to-face informal interactions, telephone conversations, interviews, and service meetings. Foremost to these task types were role plays, brainstorming, ordering, and problem-solving. Central to the stated interaction situations was oral communication. This made it essential to build communicative interaction with their fellow-students in order to accomplish the given tasks.

The data in the table below show the topics and the corresponding weeks allotted for discussion of each in which the task-based strategy was employed.

OC11.4		
Types of Speeches		Task Type: Simulation
A. According to purpose	25 hours/ 5 weeks	
o Expository/Informative Speech		
o Persuasive Speech		Task/Activity: They deliver a speech in front of an audience.
o Entertainment Speech		
B. According to delivery		
o Reading from a manuscript		
o Memorized Speech		
o Impromptu Speech		
o Extemporaneous Speech		

ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aimed to assess the influence of task-based strategy in improving the Oral Communication Skills of Grade 11 GAS students at Domalandan Center Integrated School in the school year 2018 – 2019.

Specifically, it aimed to answer the following:

1. What is the level of Oral Communication skills of the Grade 11 GAS students before using task-based strategy?
2. What is the level of Oral Communication skills of the Grade 11 GAS students after using task-based strategy?
3. Is there a significant difference in the level of Oral Communication skills of Grade 11 GAS students before and after using task-based strategy?

ACTION RESEARCH METHODS

This section presents the research design, sources of data, data gathering method, ethical standards as well as the statistical treatment that shall be used in the analysis and treatment of the data.

Research Design

The quantitative research approach was employed in this study. Specifically, said research approach involves collecting and converting data into numerical form so that statistical calculations can be made and conclusions drawn. MacMillan and Schumacher (2010) notes that the design of quantitative research involves choosing subjects, data collection techniques (such as questionnaires, observations or interviews), and procedures for gathering data and implementing treatments. This research approach was appropriate for this study as its design was quasi- experimental. It analyzed data through statistics and had a single treatment group which was used to measure the effectiveness of the task-based strategy in improving the oral communication skills of the Grade11 GAS students.

Participants and/or other Sources of Data and Information

The Grade 11 General Academic Strand students enrolled in the subject, Oral Communication in Context during the First Semester in the school year 2018-2019 at DCIS, served as participants of the study. They were chosen as participants of the study as they were the only class handled by the researcher under the said subject. The respondents were in one intact class in order to prevent disruption to the normal teaching routine at the school.

Data Gathering Methods

The main data gathering instrument that was utilized in this study was the 50- item test questions. The teacher-made test questions administered in the pretest and posttest were duly validated by experts.

A pretest in Oral Communication in Context was administered to the Grade 11 GAS students at DCIS, results of which were analyzed to identify the learners' least mastered competencies and consequently address their oral communication skills alongside their academic performance. Specifically, task-based learning opportunities was used as a strategy in the teaching of types of speeches that were academically budgeted for discussion of 5 weeks. A posttest was administered to the respondents after teaching the said topic in Oral Communication in Context using the Task-Based Strategy. The results of the posttest were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools.

Data Analysis Plan

After the data were gathered, these were subjected to the corresponding statistical treatment to arrive at answers to the specific problems.

To answer sub-problem numbers 1 and 2, on the level of oral communication skills of the Grade 11 GAS students before and after using task-based strategy, the mean were computed.

To answer sub-problem number 3, the t-test was used as statistical tool to determine the significant difference on the mean scores of the respondents before and after the use of Task-Based Strategy in Oral Communication in Context.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND REFLECTION

Performance of the Students in Oral Communication in Context Before and After the Intervention

The Grade 11 Gas students' level of performance in Oral Communication in Context was assessed before and after their exposure to task-based strategy. The results of the said assessment are reflected in the foregoing tables.

Table 1 Level of Performance in Oral Communication of Grade 11 GAS Students Before Utilization of Task-based Strategy

	Frequency		Percentage
0-15	11		30.6
16-30	22		61.1
31-50	3		8.3
Total	36		100
Mean		21.6	
Standard Deviation		8.99	

Majority of the students (61.1%) performed satisfactorily in the given multiple test prior to the utilization of task-based strategy in Oral Communication in Context. Likewise, the data reveal that there were 11 students (30.6%) whose performance in the test was found poor. Only 3 students (8.3%) proved to be outstanding in terms of performance in the test before the exposure to scaffolding strategies.

The data in Table 1 apparently corroborate Ferris' (2009) view on the need for intervention such as utilization of communication strategies to address students' poor communication skills. It showed how the students fared poorly in the pretest where oral communication skills was concerned. Moreover, Mc Cabe (2012) suggests the use of pedagogic approaches such as task-based strategies to improve students' oral communication skills. Thus, task-based strategy was used by the researcher after the administration of the pretest in Oral Communication in Context, results of which proved to be satisfactory as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Performance of the students in Oral Communication in Context after exposure to task-based strategy

	Frequency		Percentage
0-15	0		0.0
16-30	1		2.8
31-50	35		97.2
Total	36		100
Mean		40.44	
Standard Deviation		5.78	

Results of the 50-item multiple choice test administered to the students after the utilization of task-based strategies turned out favorably as evidenced by the data in the table. The results of the posttest show that of the 36 total number of students in the said group 35 or 97.2% proved to be outstanding and only 1 or 2.8% was found satisfactory.

Task-based strategies made use of simulations which are reflected as oral communication activities in the curriculum guide. The provision of activities which capitalized if not optimized the speaking skills of the students enabled them to better handle tasks requiring such. The noteworthy performance of the students in the test affirmed the good there was to task-based strategies. It afforded the students the opportunity to perform better after their exposure to scaffolding strategies. The foregoing findings reflect similar results of studies conducted using interventions such as task-based strategies to improve students' communication skills and consequently their academic performance. Alejo (2010) concurred how task-based strategies led to improved communicative competence of students. All in all, the data in Table 2 underscore the close relationship between task-based strategy use and oral communication that shall provide support for the possibility that educators should enhance learners' communicative competence through strategies that target

different communication styles of the students.

Performance of the Students in Oral Communication Before and After Exposure to Task-Based Strategy

The students' performance in Oral Communication in Context was assessed after their exposure to the utilization of task-based strategies. Table 3 shows whether there was a difference on the performance of the Grade 11 GAS students before and after the utilization of task-based strategies.

Table 3 Difference on the level of Oral Communication Skills of the Grade 11 Students Before and After the Utilization of Task-based Strategy

N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig.
36	21.6	8.99		
36	40.44	5.78		
			-10.73	.00001

The data in the table indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in their mean scores before and after utilization and/or exposure to task-based strategy. This is because the computed *t*- value is -10.73 while the *p*– value is .00001 which means that the result is significant at p<.05. Thus, there is a significant difference in the performance of the students in Oral Communication in Context before and after the intervention or utilization of the innovation, the task-based strategy.

The change or increase in the rating after the use of task-based strategies show that their attitude towards the tasks and the implementation was both positive and encouraging. This was affirmed by the significant difference in the level of oral communication skills of the Grade 11 GAS students before and after the use of task-based strategy. From the results of the study, teachers handling English classes can take inspiration from the employment of task-based strategies that target the oral communication skills of the students. In so doing, the intervention not only addressed the low performance of the students in Oral Communication in Context. It also provided a medium where students can best develop if not enhance their oral communication skills.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate that students work best in instructional formats that best suit their learning styles. We, teachers, are then called to task to exploit the role of tasks in students' higher motivation in classroom language learning. Likewise, the results of the study calls on teachers, who are at the forefront of instruction, to develop alternative methods in aid of creating more effective learning environment.

ACTION PLAN

This section presents the course of action that the researcher had undertaken after the completion of the study. Specifically, it focused on the dissemination and utilization of the results of the study in the research locale and to the research community.

Date	Activity	Persons Involved	
January 22- 26-2019	Submission of the tight-copy of the research conducted to the Division Committee on Research.	Division Committee on Research	
January 29- February 2, 2019	Coordination with the School Head for the issuance of memorandum encouraging the SHS teachers to adopt the results of the study.		
		Principal, Teachers	
March 26-30, 2019	Getting feedbacks from the teachers who adopted the results of the study.	Oral Communication in Context Teachers	
April 2- 13, 2019	Writing reports on the adoption of the task-based strategy and submitting it to the committee on research.	Committee on Research	

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