TASK-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING; THE IMPLEMENTATION IN TEACHING READING

Husni Mubarok, Nina Sofiana
English Education Department
UNISNU
Jepara, Indonesia
husni@unisnu.ac.id

Abstract
This paper was aimed at elaborating the implementation of task-based language learning in teaching reading. Most students were weak in studying reading because of some reasons; teacher’s misunderstanding about the nature of teaching which triggered the teacher to use traditional teaching method, no teaching model used which could emerge students’ interest in learning reading, and lack of guidance from teachers. Classroom action research was used in this research in which the data were collected from observation, interview, questionnaire and test. The subject of the study was eight grade students of junior high school in Jepara Municipality. The result showed that TBLL could improve students’ skill in reading. The improvement could be seen from the improvement of students’ enthusiasm in doing the activities, participating both class and task, and students’ positive attitude. Besides that, the improvement could also be showed from students’ average score which increased in every meeting.

Keywords: task, task-based language learning, reading

Introduction
Learning is simply defined as a process of gaining knowledge. People understand it as a process of transferring knowledge in a school, and it happens when teacher and students interact in a classroom. Teacher is the center of education. His/ her multi-roles as the controller, prompter, participant, resource, and tutor are believed to determine the successful learning process (Harmer, 2007:108). But in the real process of teaching, there are still found many teachers do not play their roles effectively. This is proved by the students’ responses in learning. Often we find many students having passive class participation, getting low mark, hating some subject lessons, etc. Those are not only the impact of not becoming the ideal teacher in playing the roles, but it is also related to how the teaching is done or called methodology. This is in line with what stated by Brown (2000:15) that any considerations involved in “how to teach” is called methodology. In language teaching, many methodologies are offered by experts. One of the methodology is offered by Harmer (2007:63), it was task-based learning (TBL).

Task-based learning (TBL) is also called Task-Based Instruction (Harmer, 2007:71) or sometimes called as task-based language learning. According to Nurdiyanto, S, & Pitasari (2015:229), TBL is a teaching method which gives many tasks to students. Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) or Task-based Instruction (TBI) focuses on using authentic language and asking students to do meaningful task in the target language (Khaneghah, Laya Farhangi, 2016:223). Harmer (2007:71) added that task-based learning is performing meaning tasks in the learning process. Jane Willis (1996:25) explained that the feature of TBL is absolving the students to choose whatever language forms they intend to present, based on their ability, in order to fulfill the task goal.
There is a correlation between Task-based learning and communicative language teaching (CLT). Task-Based Language teaching (TBLT) is developed from communicative approaches (Hadi, 2016:34; Nunan, 2004:1) which focus on communication and interaction in the target language. Task-based instruction is an approach within umbrella of communicative language teaching (CLT) which focuses on meaning communication rather than grammatical forms to begin learning (Hadi, 2016:32).

In Task-based language teaching, tasks are essential in the learning activities. Task was simply defined as a piece of translation from a literary source (Znean, 2009:749), but in language learning, the task which is given are like producing a work, doing presentations and dramatic performances. Znean (2009:749) next states that giving tasks is essential in learning activity. Long (1985) in Nunan (1989:5) defined that task is a piece of work which is given for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward. In Pedagogical perspective, Nunan (1989:6) proposes a definition of a task as an activity or action as the result of processing or understanding language. Moreover, Jane Willis (1996:23) says that a task is an activity which uses the target language for a communicative purpose to achieve an outcome as there is correlation between Task-based language and communicative language teaching.

Listening and reading belongs to receptive skills while productive skills include speaking and writing. This is as stated by Bhatt, (2016:634) that receptive skills refer to understanding language through reading and listening. Furthermore, Mundhe (2015:1) explains more clearly that reading and listening are receptive skills used in receiving information while speaking and writing are productive skills used for producing and extending information.

Teaching reading becomes the focus study in this article. This considers a fact that the reading skill is mostly neglected by students which further impact in their learning process. Then, it could be practiced in the real communication. Al-Jawi (2010:3-4) mentioned four reasons for learning both listening and reading skills: 1) for maintaining good social relations 2) for entertainment 3) for obtaining information necessary for day-to-day living 4) for academic purposes. This is quite clear that lack understanding of receptive skills can influence the daily communication process.

Al-Jawi (2010:15-16) stated some sub-skills of reading which can specify information from a text and response to the text in reading. Those sub-skills are basic word, phrase and sentence recognition. A variety of text types will enrich students' vocabulary and language structure. Furthermore, this also helps students in applying reading skills for different purposes.

Teacher as the learning facilitator will play a big roles in the learning process. Related to teaching receptive skills, teacher should have strategies to improve the students’ mindset in learning, dig up motivations and engage them to be active learners for reaching the final goals. The job of teacher in teaching receptive skills is to stimulate students to get in touch with the knowledge (Harmer, 2007:271). This can be done by giving them various clues of a text or topic to be read and listened, giving a few words or phrases from the text, and asking them predicting its content, Harmer (2007:271) further explained.

There are three basic stages in TBL; pre task, task cycle, and language focus. Harmer (2007:71) described the activity in each stage simply while Jane Willis (1996:39) explained clearly about those stages. In Pre-task, teacher is wished to introduce the topic of learning and the task. The stage is continued.
by task cycle. In Task cycle, students do the task in pairs or groups in the early activity. Afterwards, they prepare to report what they discovered and the cycle task is ended by reporting or presenting the work. The last stage is language focus. There are two main activities in this stage; analysis and practice. In analysis activity, students can do discussion on specific features of a text or transcript of a recording. While in the practice activity, teacher practices some new words, phrases or pattern, after or during the analysis.

Methodology
The research design of this study was classroom action research. It was used to elaborate students’ problem in teaching receptive skills, measure students’ achievement in each cycles and find students’ improvement in participating teaching and learning process during the study conducted. Classroom action research in school setting is defined as a systematic approach to improve teaching practices (Pelton, 2010:1) and it was increasingly significant in language education (Nunan, 2002:17). It can be seen that action research is designed to bridge the gap between research and practice (Someck in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007:227).

The object of this study was one of state junior high school in Jepara Municipality. This study used one class at eighth grade as subject of the research which consisted of 37 students. This study was consisted two cycles. In each cycles consisted of two meetings. Before the implementation of task-based teaching, preliminary study was done to find students’ problems. It used observation and interview as method of data collection.

In cycle activities, the data were collected through observation, questionnaire, and test. Interview was used to elaborate students’ problem from teacher’s perspective. Observation was used to know the implementation of task-based teaching and students’ participation during teaching and learning process. Questionnaire was used to find students’ response toward the implementation of TBLL. It consisted of three indicators; activities, participation, and attitude. Test was used to measure students’ improvement during the cycles.

Finding and Discussion
Based on the preliminary study conducted before cycles it was found that many students had difficulties in reading comprehension and did not learn easily Basic English vocabulary. Students had less time in reading class without having enough participation in class discussion. Students also did not have appropriate chance to use their language effectively in class teaching. Besides that, there was no group work in the form of discussion activities in reading class. This made student felt bored. The English teacher seldom implemented various strategies in reading class, while she liked to implement monotonous or conventional teaching strategies. This was proved by students’ average score during the implementation of the strategy which reached 73.50. Although the score was higher than the minimum criterion score, it was still too small increasing.

Through the interview which was conducted before cycles, it could be deduced that 1) most of students had less participation in reading class. Their study time in class teaching was spent only for finding some words in dictionary that they did not know the meaning. 2) In facilitating the problem, she explained the meaning of single word from the text. This made teaching time in class flew quickly. 3) The English teacher played important role and so dominant in reading class. Every single word or phrase, that students did not know the meaning, was translated and explained by the English teacher. 4) Although most students were
enthusiasm in learning reading, the English teacher was difficult in implementing various strategies because of the characteristic of students.

The result from preliminary study was used to design lesson plan for each cycle. The activities in each cycle were based on three sequences activities; pre-task, task cycle, and language focus.

In pre-task activities, the teacher introduced topic and task. She helped students to understand the topic of the material and the task. Before that, she explained the learning goal of teaching and learning process. The English teacher did brainstorming activity to build students’ idea of the material. This would make students have life experience appearing to be basic knowledge of students. Students did pre-task activities based on the topic given by the teacher. The teacher gave time to students to prepare the task given by reading part of the text and how to do the task.

In task cycle, there were three stages, namely task, planning, and report stage. The task stage is done by students in pairs. The English teacher gave students chance to use their language to express whatever students want to say. It could be done by discussing the questions of the text with their pair. In this activity, the teacher could play a role as controller or facilitator in helping students to understand the material and task. The teacher was not allowed to give intervention to students’ answer.

In planning stage, students are asked to present their report briefly in front of class about the task they got. Before students present their report in front of class, they should make draft what they wanted to report. In this phase, the English teacher played a role as advisor on students’ language and helper on correcting students’ mistake in using English. Because students are asked to present their report in front of class, the teacher would focus on students’ fluency and accuracy for spoken report and clarity, organization, and accuracy for written report.

In report stage, the teacher asked students to come forward to present the result of discussion in pairs (task given), so that every students (in pair) could compare the findings. Because of the limitation of teaching time in class, only a few of students in pair could present the result, while the other students took a note by giving comment or extra points to the group. In this stage, the English teacher gave comment and correction in written form. It could not be released publicly.

The last cycle in task-based teaching was language focus. In this cycle, the English teacher would focus on building students’ language on the text by asking them to find the word or topic which related to the material and to find the word in simple past tense. Then the English teacher conducted practice activities based on the word had been discussed by asking students to match the word with its synonym, find meaning, make into past tense form, and do sentence completion.

After all activities were done in the cycle of action, the researchers and English teacher observed and did reflection toward the data found during the implementation of the strategy. It was used re-design the next activities in next meeting and cycle. The discussion covered the strengths and weaknesses, students participation, activities, behavior, and score which were got in every meeting.

During the implementation of task-based language learning, the observation was done collaboratively between the English teacher and researchers to find out students’ activities, participation, and attitude. Firstly, students’ activities varied on each learning
session such as opening, core, and closing session. In opening session, students did pre-task activities which could be a brainstorming phase to build students’ schemata before learning was begun. In core session, students’ activities were in the form of task, planning, and report phases and language focus. In closing phase, students got a summary toward the material delivered and explanation what would be done in next meeting.

Secondly, students’ participation in whole learning time in class also improved. This was proved by the interest of students in following the learning process conveyed by teachers enthusiastically. Students who previously indicated to have weakness in reading were assisted by students with good reading ability that became his partner. Students could use the target language (English) in discussing the material and presenting their report to whole class although there were a few mistake and error done by students.

Thirdly, students’ attitude also improved toward the implementation of task-based language learning. It was showed that students had positive attitude during class teaching. They did not complain about the learning process which they got.

The observation was clarified to students in the form of distributing questionnaire dealing the implementation of TBLL as the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 01. Students’ Response Toward TBLL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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<td>Attitude</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree

In the implementation of TBLL, student did different activities which were not dominated by the teacher. Monotonous teaching strategy could be eliminated so that students did various learning activities. The various activities done by students could help them in learning reading and add students’ participation session during TBLL implementation. This result also supported by students’ enhancement of average score in reading. The activities, designed by the teacher, were in sequence. Most students agreed that TBLL was done in sequence starting. It could build students’ understanding about the material and task step-by-step.

Students’ participation during teaching and learning process could be divided into two categories, class and task participation. In class participation, students follow teacher’s explanation and instruction toward the material given. It was proven by students’ response that 53.80% students could join and participate in class teaching. While 50.16% of students’ response showed that they did the task given by the teacher.
Form the table above it was found that attitudes toward learning was not only directed to teachers, but also directed to the objectives to be achieved and task given. Students' attitudes towards learning reading would be realized in the form of feelings of pleasure or displeasure of the attitude component. Such attitudes would influence the process and learning outcomes which were achieved.

Students' improvement in learning reading could be seen from the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ average score</th>
<th>Cycle 1 Meeting 1</th>
<th>Cycle 2 Meeting 2</th>
<th>Cycle 2 Meeting 3</th>
<th>Cycle 2 Meeting 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75.56</td>
<td>75.87</td>
<td>76.35</td>
<td>77.25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

From the table above it could be elaborated that there was an increase on students' average score at each meeting. It indicated that the implementation of TBLL could help students to improve their cognitive skills in reading. This increasing occurred because the task given by the teacher was not entirely the task of individual students but students were given the opportunity to have discussions with their pair. If students find vocabulary or phrases that were difficult to understand, they would discuss it first with their pair. So the students were more interested in completing the task.

Conclusion

Based on the description above, it could be concluded that TBLL could be implemented through three main cycles, namely pre-task, task, and language focus where each cycle consisted of several activities. Student's response toward the implementation of TBLL was positive on aspects of activity, participation and attitude. The student's response was also in line with the student's achievement in learning reading which was indicated by the average score that rose in every meeting.

References


