THE USE OF TASK COMPLEXITY IN SPOKEN PERFORMANCE BY THE 10TH STUDENTS OF SMAN 2 PADANG CERMIN[1]

By

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Abstract: The research aims to investigate the effect of four types of task complexity manipulated the number of elements and prior knowledge on students' spoken performance in terms of CAF and to eleborate the students' perceptions. This research uses quantitative method. The istruments are four types of monolog tasks and questionnaires. The data take form a students' utterances and perceptions. The subjects are 33 students of tenth grade in SMAN 2 Padang Cermin. The result shows that simple or complex task generated more fluency on students' spoken performance since manipulating with prior knowledge. This research also finds out that prior knowledge is crucial for the students to do the task easily, successfully, and confidently. Besides, prior knowledge also arises the students' interest, motivation and learning opportunity. The finding suggests that task complexity which is manipulated along the number of elements and prior knowledge can be used to increase the students' spoken performance.

Keywords: CAF, speaking, students' perceptions, task complexit.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi efek dari empat tugas task complexity yang dimanipulasi oleh sejumlah element dan latar belakang pengetahuan pada kemampuan berbicara siswa dalam CAF dan untuk mengelaborasi persepsi siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif. Instruments yang digunakan yaitu empat tugas monolog dan kuesioner. Data diambil dari ucapan dan persepsi siswa. Subjek penelitiannya 33 siswa kelas X SMAN 2 Padang Cermin. Hasilnya menunjukan bahwa tugas sederhana atau rumit menghasilkan kemampuan siswa yang lancar dalam berbicara selama tugas tersebut dimanipulasi dengan latar belakang pengetahuan. Penelitian ini juga menghasilkan bahwa latar belakang pengetahuan penting bagi siswa untuk mengerjakan tugas dengan mudah, berhasil, dan percaya diri. Selain itu, latar belakang pengetahuan juga meningkatkan ketertarikan, motivasi dan kesempatan belajar siswa. Penemuan ini menyarankan bahwa task complexity yang dimanipulasi sejumlah elemen dan latar belakang pengetahuan bisa digunakan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara siswa.

Kata Kunci : Berbicara , CAF, persepsi siswa, task complexity.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching (Kayi, 2006: 1). English teaching and learning is explaining grammatical rules, memorizing vocabulary and dialog, reading and translating the text. In this case, students are not motivated to master the speaking skill.One alternate approach, which needs to be implemented for enhancing the students' speaking skill by English teachers, is task-based approaches.A task-based approach to focus on form is quite feasible for the EFL situation (Fotos, 1998:306). It is expected that the implementation of this approach in speaking class would change the condition happened in the class wheresome students dominate the opportunity of talking over the other ones.

In Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Robinson (2001b: 30) proposed the Triadic ComponentialFramework composed of three aspects, those are; task complexity (cognitive factors), task conditions (interactive factors), and task difficulty (learner factors).Robinson (2001a: 287), distinguishes task complexity (the task dependent and proactively manipulable cognitive demands of tasks) from task difficulty (dependent on learner factors such as aptitude, confidence, motivation, etc) and task conditions (the interactive demands of tasks), arguing that these influences on task performance and learning are different in kind, and have not been sufficiently distinguished in previous approaches to conceptualizing the options in, and consuquences of, sequencing tasks from the syllabus designer's perspective. In addition (Robinson, 2001a: 287) argues that task complexity should be the sole basis for making prospective sequencing decisions since most learner factors implicated in decisions about task difficulty can only diagnosed in situ and in process, so cannot be anticipated in advance of implementation of syllabus and therefore can be of no use to prospective materials and syllabus designer.

The task is divided into two dimensions; those are resource-directing and resource-depleting/dispersing dimension.The resource-directing includes three variables, that is, +/- here and now, +/- few elements, +/- reasoning demands. Whereas, the resource-depleting consists of +/- planning, +/- single task, and +/- prior knowledge variables. Based on the TCF (Robinson, 2001b: 30) describes task complexity as consisting of a number of dimensions which can be manipulated during task design. The dimensions are represented by +/- component which may be present or absent (though they may also be thought of as continua, along which there is relatively more, versus relatively less of a component such as planning time, or prior knowledge, etc).

As previously described above the resource-directing dimension of task includes three components: the number of elements, reasoning demand, and here and now/there and then. Among these three components, the manipulation of a number of elements is regarded to be more inclusive than the other two components (reasoning demand), and (here and now/there

and then). This is because tasks which are manipulated according to the number of are expected to involve the other two components of the resource-directing dimension, namely, giving reasons and using present or past references (Mahpul, 2014: 32).

The number of elements (+/- few elements) was manipulated with prior knowledge (+/- prior knowledge). Robinson (2001a: 312) states that +/- prior knowledge receives considerable support from previous research both within and out-side (see for example, Anderson, 1981; Britten and Tresser, 1982; Joseph and Dwyer, 1984) the field of SLA. There is evidence that prior knowledge of formal and content schemata both facilitate L2 reading (e.g., Carrel, 1987), and that prior knowledge of the role of the listener makes speaking tasks easier (G. Brown, 1995; G. Brown et al., 1984; Yule and MacDonald, 1990.

As indicated, in TBLT research complexity, accuracy, and fluency are regarded as the manifestations of learners' language performance (Mahpul, 2014: 39). With regard to task effects on language production, the outcome measures are often classified in terms of accuracy, fluency, and complexity of learner language (Robinson, 2001a: 306). Research on fluency, accuracy, and complexity in second (L2) and foreign language learners' production has a long tradition in the SLA field since it is assumed that their measures can reveal the level of learner's proficiency in target language. Their indicators are usually used for observing differences in learners' written and oral discourse over time, which permits to evaluate language

development in terms of each of the above mentioned language aspects.

Many studies have concerned with the implementation of Task-Based Language Teaching especially in task complexity in terms of complexity accuracy, and complexity. Most of them focused on trying out the Cognition Hypothesis proposed by Robinson. For example: Gilabert, (2007) did the simultaneous manipulation of task complexity along planning time and +/- here-and-now: effects on L2 oral production.. Besides, some other researchers (for examples: Gilabert, 2007b; Kuiken and Vedder, 2007; Crespo, 2011; Salimi, Dadaspour, and Asadollahfam, 2011; Shahreza, Dabaghi, and Kassaian, 2011;Soleimani and Rezazadeh, 2013; and Cho, 2015 have manipulated task on resouce-directing. In contrast, Mehrang and Rahimpour (2010) just focused on manipulating task complexity in resource depleting dimension.

Motivated by the previous studies above, the current research had two purposes that might be gaps. . The first objective was manipulating +/- few elements (few and many elements) and +/- prior knowledge (prior knowledge and no prior knowledge) on task complexity, which was designed into four types of task, resulted different spoken performance statisticallyin term of CAF. The second objective was eleborating the students' perception of the four types of task complexity in spoken performance. The four types were designed inmonologic form.

METHODS

This researh used a quantitative approach. It was conducted onJanuary 9th 2017 in the academic year of 2016/2017. It was held in SMAN 2 Padang CerminPesawaran. The population was tenth grade students, one class which consisted of 33 students was choosen as sample of the reserach. It was choosen randomly based on the consideration that all of classes have the same ability in speaking.

To collect the data the researcher used two instruments. The first instrment was four different types of monologic tasks with different level of task complexity. After that, the researcher analyzed ithe students' utterance in term of CAF. The last instrument was questionnairee. There were four questionnaires in this reserach. The questions of questionnairee were classyfied on the six characters (difficulty, stress, confidence, interest, motivation, and learning opportunity).Those categories were coded by using thematic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to see themeansof CAF from four levels of task, the researcher calculated it by using ANOVA as in this below:

Table 4.1 Means of CAF for the Four levels of Task

Task/Measure	Task 1 (+ Few Elements, + Prior Knowledge)	Task 2 (+ Few Elements, - Prior Knowledge)	Task 3 (- Few Elements, + Prior Knowledge)	Task 4 (- Few Elements, - Prior Knowledge)	Max psbl	Min psbl
Complexity						
Syntactic: AS-Units	1.03	.9976	1.06	1.21	1.21	.9976
Lexical: percentage of Lexical Words to a Total Number of Words	60.65	50.85	61.71	29.40	61.71	29.40
Accuracy						
Percentage of Error-Free Clauses	36.98	34.26	26.48	29.40	36.98	26.48
Fluency						
Speech Rate B	109.13	99.28	109.57	103.35	109.57	99.28

The table showed that in the complexity there was a variance of task measure score; in syntactic complexity; many elements, no prior knowledge (task 4) had the highest score. It was followed by many elements (task 3) in the second position, few elements, prior knowledge (task 1) in the third position and few elements, no prior knowledge (task 2) was in the last position. Meanwhile, in lexical complexity many elements, prior knowledge (task 3) had the highest score. It was followed by few element, prior knowledge (task 1) in the second position, few elements, no prior knowledge (task 2) in the third

position, and many elements, no prior knowledge (task 4) for the last position.

Due to the result of the study in syntactic complexity, it was found that complex task − few elements, - prior knowledge) had the highest syntactic complexity. From this result, it is suggested that the students produces more syntactics complexity if they are given the task which has many elements such as in task 4 (many elements, no prior knowledge) and task 3 (many elements, prior knowledge) than when they perform the task which has few element such as in task 1 (few element, prior knowledge) and task 2 (few elements, no prior knowledge). It means that students produces syntactic complexity when they are given many instructions (complex task). It was because more students got instructions the more they produced many utterences. When they produced words, there would be many clauses which could be analyzed.

This result is in line with G. Brown et al. (1984) in Robinson (2001a: 298) who claims that tasks of each type can be made more complex by increasing the amount of information on tasks, i.e., that tasks with many elements, relationships and characters are harder than those with fewer elements, relationships and characters. Robinson (2001: 35) argues that complex monologic tasks should elicit less fluent, but more accurate and complex production, relative to simpler task when complexity is manipulated along the resource-directing dimensions identified in Triadic Componential Frameworkwhich make increasing functional demands on the language user (i.e. +/- here-and-now, +/- few

elements, +/- no reasoning demands). Aditionally, increasing monologic task complexity along +/- planning time, +/- prior knowledge, or +/- single task dimensions leads to a depletion of attentional and memory resources.

While for the result of lexical complexity, the first position is task 3 (many elements, prior knowledge). The second position is task 1 (few elements,prior knowledge). Task 2 (few elements, no prior knowledge) is in the third position. The last position is task 4 (many elements, no prior knowledge). In this measure, the students generated more lexical complexity and has more lexical words. When they perform the task which has prior knowledge such as in Task 3 (many elements, prior knowledge) and in Task 1 (few elements,prior knowledge) than when they perform the task which has no prior knowledge such as in Task 2 (few elements, no prior knowledge) and in Task 4 (many elements, no prior knowledge).

Refering to accuracy measures, it can be seen on the pattern of Error-Free AS-Units in four versions of tasks is shown in table 4.1. It shows that the highest score is few elements, prior knowledge (Task 1), and then the second position is few elements, no prior knowledge (Task 2), after that it is followed by many elements, no prior knowlege (Task 4) and then the last position is many elements, no prior knowledge (Task 3).

From this result, it is suggested that the students will produce more accuracy if they are given the task which has few elements as seen the Task 1 (few elements, prior knowledge) and the Task 2 (few elements, no prior

knowledge) than the task which has many elements such as Task 4 (many elements, no prior knowledge) and Task 3 (many elements, prior knowledge).

While for Fluency measure, the highest position is many elements, prior knowledge (Task 3), the second position is few elements, prior knowledge (Task 1). After that, in the next position is many elements, no prior knowledge (Task 4), and the lowest score is few elements, no prior knowledge (Task 2). Based on the result of fluency above, the students generated more fluency when they perform the task which has prior knowledge that is in task 3 (many elements, prior knowledge) and in Task 1 (few elements, prior knowledge) than

when they perform the task which has no prior knowledge such as in Task 2 (few elements, no prior knowledge) and Task 4 (many elements, no prior knowledge). Skehan (1998) in Mahpul (2014: 89) argues that learners will perform a task with which they are familiar more easily.

In measuring the effect of the four levels of task complexity on CAF, Repeated Measures of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used. Multivariate analysis was used to examine the main effects from the four levels of the tasks. It was done by using Wilks' Lambda which is in line to Pallant (2007) in Mahpul (2014: 80). These results are reported in the table below:

Table 4.5 Students' Agreement and Disagreement about the Complexity of Four Task Types

No	Category	Task 1			
		+		-	
		The Number of Students	Percentage	The Number of Students	Percentage
1	Difficulty	29	88	4	12
2	Relaxed/Stress	20	61	13	39
3	Confident	21	64	12	36
4	Interest	28	85	5	15
5	Motivation	27	82	6	18
6	Learning Opportunities	31	94	2	6
No	Category	Task 2			
		+		-	
1	Difficulty	3	9	30	91
2	Relaxed/Stress	5	15	28	85
3	Confident	3	9	30	91
4	Interest	19	58	14	42
5	Motivation	21	64	12	36
6	Learning Opportunities	28	85	5	15
	Category	Task 3			
		+		-	
1	Difficulty	27	82	6	18
2	Relaxed/Stress	17	52	16	48
3	Confident	22	67	11	33
4	Interest	28	85	5	15
5	Motivation	24	73	9	27
6	Learning Opportunities	30	91	3	9
No	Category	Task 4			

		+		-	
1	Difficulty	8	24	25	76
2	Relaxed/Stress	7	21	26	79
3	Confident	7	21	26	79
4	Interest	24	73	9	27
5	Motivation	24	73	9	27
6	Learning Opportunities	29	88	14	12

From the table above, it can be seen generally, the Few and Many Elements with no prior knowledge task (Task 2 and 4) were perceived as more difficult, stressful and unconfident than the Few and Many Elements with Prior Knowledge tasks (Task 1 and 3). It means that Few and Many Elements with Prior Knowledge are easy, relaxed, and successfull. In contrast, the students' degree of interest, and motivation did not necessarily decrease when the tasks were no prior knowledege. While, for another degree, the result shows that for all tasks are interesting, good motivation, and learning opportunities.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

With reference to the results and discussions of the current research, the use of task complexity simultaneously manipulated by increasing and decreasing resource-directing (-/+ number of elements) and resource-depleting (-/+ prior knowledge) in spoken performance in terms of complexity (lexical and syntactic complexity), accuracy, and fluency by the tenth grade students of SMAN 2 Padang Cermin was partly in line with Cognition Hypothesis.

The result of two complexities (syntactics complexity and lexical complexity) of this research were different. The students' syntactics complexity increased if the tasks were complex (many elements). In this case, -/+ prior knowledge did not give contribution. While students' lexical complexity increased if the task designed from prior knowledge (-/+ few elements with prior knowledge). In accuracy, the number of elements became the factor in increasing students' accuracy if the tasks were only few elements.Furthermore, prior knowledge became the first factor that support students' fluency in spoken performance. As long as the students have prior knowledge, they were fluent in doing the tasks whether it was few elements or many elements task. Therefore, prior knowledge gave the big influence in increasing the students fluency in spoken performance.

Meanwhile, the students perceptions of the four types of tasks complexity were taken based on the six character(difficulty, stress, confidence, interest, motivation, and learning opportunity). This results showed that familiarity or background knowledge became the main reason for the students to do the task easily, successful, and confident. Additionaly, prior knowledge or familiarity gave good effect for students' interest, motivation and learning opportunity.

The current research suggests to English teachers who want to design task complexity on students' spoken performance. In getting the better result for the students' spoken performance, the task that can make

the students produce accurate spoken performance should contain few elements to discuss and simple instruction by giving the pictures related to the tasks. In producing more fluent spoken performance ofthe students, the tasks had better design on prior knowledge by supporting the familiarity aspect of the task. Additionally, it will be better to develop the familiarity in all cognetive familiarity. Besides, the familiarity with the topic, other types of familiarity can be considered for the next research in detail.

Students' perceptions are useful in order to see the reason or problem, which is related to the task complexity in spoken performance. In this case, teacher should pay more attention to understand all aspect that can increase or decrease students' spoken performance. The questionnaire used can be specified on the characters (difficulty, stress, confidence, interest, motivation, and learning opportunity). It is better to add the category to be asked for example asking the opinion to the students about the use of monolog task in spoken performance.

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