Research Paper

Development of EFLrLerrt ers' gg ferenIiii nnd Ep ppppeee Writing Performance: Task-based Instruction vs. Project-based Instruction

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of task-based instruction (TBI) and project-based instruction (PBI) on the improvement of EFL learners' referential and expressive writing performance. To accomplish this objective, 60 students majoring in English translation participated in Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT), but out of them 50 students were selected as the members of a homogeneous sample. Then, they were assigned into two experimental groups. They were exposed to IELTS module task-based writing pre-test, treatment, and post-test, to assess the participants' writing performance. The participants in first experimental group received TBI to practice the referential and expressive types of writing, while those in the second group received PBI. The results showed that TBI and PBI affected the development of both referential and expressive writing among EFL learners. In addition, the results revealed that there was not any statistically significant difference between the effect of PBI and TBI on developing expressive and referential writings among EFL learners. The pedagogical implications of the study are discussed at the end of the paper.
Keywords: EFL Learners, Project-based Instruction, Task-based Instruction, Writing skill

هدف این مطالعه بررسی تأثیر آموزش مبتنی بر وظیفه (درسکار-محور) و آموزش مبتنی بر پروژه (پروژه - حور(.ر بهد.د لاکرد نوشتاری ارجاع ی و بیان ی زبن آموزان زبن انگی . ی است. . . اید قیاب ی .ه ای. لادف، 60 لاد .جوی ر ... مترجمی لانگ. ی. ر. .... .یین .طح .ریع .سو.د (OQPT) . . . کر .دلاما ا . ی. ...ا 50 داش .و لا عنون .عضای ی . نمون.لامگ. انخب شر.... .. سد . د . .ر ه آزمای ی ق .ار گرفت.. برای ارزیابی عملکرد نوشتاری شرکت کنندگان، مهارت نگارش ار .با . ی وبی.ی آنان ..ل ا . آموزش بر اساس بخش نگارش آزمون آیلس در قالب یک پس - آزمون سنجیده شد. شرکت کنن .ا . در گروه آزمایشی اول برای تمرین انواع نوشتار ارجاعی و بیانی آموزش درسکار-محر. و گر ه دوم آموزش پروژه- محور دریافت کردند. نتایج نشان داد که آم.زش درسکار- محور و آموزش پروژه- محور بر توسعه نوشتار ارجاعی و بیانی در بین زبان آموزان EFL تأثیر گذاشتند. علاوه بر این، نتایج نشان داد که تفاوت آماری معنی لا لالا لالا لا للا لا ..ر آملا لالارسکلا-لالالا خلا لا للخلا لالارلالا-لالاور لارلالالالالالالالالار هایلالای لالای لالاجالالالار زلان آموزان زبان انگلیسی وجود ندارد. مفاهیم آموزش یاین م .العه در پایان مقا.. مور. ب. . ق .ر گرفته است.

Introduction

Speaking is a productive necessary skill to communicate effectively in any language, especially when speakers are not using their native language. He adds that language learners often think the ability to speak a language is the *product* of language learning; but this skill is also an important part of the language learning *process*. It is worthwhile for students to know when they learn how to speak; they can use speaking to learn. In fact, a successful L2 speaker is one who is capable to act in all speaking situations appropriately.

O'Malley and Pierce (1996: 59) believe that speaking outside the classroom is the role of listening, meaning that in a foreign country, the students will hear the spoken language regularly and then without any conscious efforts they will imitate and perform their own utterances on the basis of what they have heard. This way, they will come at a stage where they can speak like people around them. In the mother country, SL students need to practice the language regularly inside the classroom through performing different activities. So, learners should be given ample practice in classroom at all levels to express themselves in situations where they can use spontaneous language. Practice activities may serve the learning/teaching goal of speaking proficiency. Richards and Lockhart (1996) define practice activities as tasks used to perform or learn a particular item or involve the use of a given model. For example, dialogues may be used to perform sentence patterns. Richards, Platt and Weber (1985: 289) state that "the use of variety of different tasks in language teaching is said to make language teaching more communicative […] since it provides a purpose for classroom activit." . T. sks, then, are also used to achieve communication beyond that of practicing the language itself. If we assume that speaking the SL is an essential part of language learning, teachers must provide activities that involve interaction between learners. Scrievener (2005: 152) makes the important point that "the aim of communicative activity in class is to get learners to use the language they are learning to interact in realistic and meaningful ways. Usually involving exchanges of information or opinio. " Among these activities are the following:

Communication games: teachers design such games to encourage and involve the students in a verbal interaction. Such activities include first, "Describe and Draw" in which one student describes a given picture and the other one draws it. Second, "Describe and Arrange"; one student describes a particular structure using oral language and the other reconstructs it without seeing the original one. Third, "Find the difference", two students have two similar pictures but with some differences, they must extract these differences through describing their pictures, i.e. without seeing each other's pictures. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) call these activities "information gap activities"; they define them as "the ability of one person to give information to another. An information gap is an activity where one student is provided with information that is kept from a partner."

Drama, simulations and role-plays: These three types of oral activities are very important. According to Bygate (1987), they are not performed for audiences, but the participants work together within an imaginary setting. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) say that such activities are more authentic because they provide a format for using the real-life conversation such as repetitions, interruptions, recitations, facial expressions and gestures. Students often engage in another identity in role-plays, drama and simulations activities, where their anxiety is reduced, motivation is increased and their language acquisition enhanced.

Discussion activities: these activities are often employed for advanced language learners. They can serve as the basis of spontaneous interaction. Lindsay and Knight (2006) point out that in such activities, students are supposed to give their opinions or receive others' opinions. They

can speak freely without being told what to say or not by the teacher. Actually, the students should be only informed what to talk about and given the enough time to structure what they wish to say. However, Thornbury (2005) says that many teachers agree that the best discussions are those that arise spontaneously either because one learner reports something personal or because the topic of the course book arises discussion.

Presentations and Talks: The best way to make students gain their self-confidence is through making them present oral works in front of their classmates (the focus of the current study). Thornbury (2005) asserts that the students act of standing up in front of their colleagues and speaking is an excellent preparation for authentic speaking. A prepared talk is when students make the presentation on a given topic of their choice, and this talk is not planned for an informal spontaneous conversation; it is more writing like.

This last point directly refers to the aim of the current study; that is, exploring the impact of giving class presentation on the learners' oral performance. Oral presentation is considered as one of the important EFL speaking activities, and it allows EFL/ESL students to practice English pronunciation; develop fluency; and practice critical thinking, invention, and drafting. Brooks and Wilson (2014) also maintain that oral presentations are student-centered classroom activities that provide learners with realistic language tasks helping them for future developments or careers. However, students may encounter problems while preparing and delivering presentations. Such problems may be related to their linguistic abilities (Morita, 2000). Furthermore, speech anxiety and limited presentation skills may be other problems that may lead to failures. Teachers may help learners cope with their anxiety by acknowledging them that being anxious is normal, and that most learners may feel worried and anxious while delivering their presentations. Besides, each time a student makes a presentation, his nervousness will decrease in front of the audience. Generally, providing opportunities to discuss and practice in a the quiet and safe the atmosphere, for instance by creating short oral presentation activities with discussion and feedback into class time might contribute to improving speaking skill and building self-confidence in communication and interacting fluently.

Based on what was mentioned above, efforts were made in the present study to find answer to the following research question:

RQ. Does EFL learners' class presentation lead to their speaking development?

Literature Review

Richards (2006) categorizes speech activities into three main divisions: *talk as interaction*, *talk as transaction*, and *talk as performance*. *Talk as interaction,* in his definition, is what normally means a 'conversation', which describes interactions with a social function; *Talk as transaction* is defined as a situation in which the focus is on what is said or done; and *talk as performance* is defined as a public talk, i.e., talk that gives information to audience (like class presentation), which is made of a recognizable format and is similar to written language rather than conversational language.

A number of empirical studies have examined EFL students' learning speaking. These studies have focused on EFL students studying in English speaking countries (For example, Ferris and Tagg, 1996; Morita, 2002; Cheng, Myles, and Curtis 2004; Kim, 2006). For example, Ferris (1998) investigated the views of tertiary ESL students at three different American tertiary institutions about their speaking skills, and found that the students were most concerned with oral presentations and whole class discussions, but they perceived little difficulty with small-group discussions. Cheng, Myles, and Curtis (2004) examined the consistency between the language

skills required for engagement with the demands of course work at the graduate level, and the skills that non-native English speaker students found difficult to master. Their findings suggested that many non-native English speaker students still needed continual targeted language support even after they were admitted into the graduate programs. Kim (2006) examined the views of East Asian international graduate students concerning required academic listening and speaking skill levels in their university courses and their own difficulties in meeting these expectations. Confirming Ferris 'findings, Kim's survey revealed that students were most concerned about leading class discussions and participating in whole-class debates.

Evans and Green (2007) investigated the language problems experienced by first-year Cantonese-speaking students at Hong Kong's largest English-medium university. Their findings revealed that a significant percentage of the students experienced difficulties when studying content subjects through the medium of English. Somewhat reverberating Hyland's (1997) findings, Evans and Green (2007) suggested that their subjects' problems centered on academic speaking (particularly grammar, fluency and pronunciation), and academic writing (particularly style, grammar and cohesion). To further illustrate the language-related challenges that first-year undergraduates faced when adjusting to the demands of English-medium higher education in Hong Kong, Evans and Morrison (2011) further focused on three students from different societal, educational and disciplinary backgrounds so as to illustrate and personalize their first-year language experience at a science and engineering university. Relying on the use of qualitative research method, i.e., semi-structured interview, their investigation revealed that the students experienced four particular problems during the crucial first year at university: understanding technical vocabulary, comprehending class presentation, achieving an appropriate academic style and meeting institutional and disciplinary requirements.

Gan (2012) in a study explored the most important obstacles that the learners faced when speaking in the language class and established the following items as the most important ones:

1. Grammar as a Stumbling Block,
2. Imperfectly Learned Pronunciation and Intonation
3. Inadequate Opportunities to Speak English in Class (the focus of the current study)
4. Lack of a Focus on Language Improvement in the Curriculum
5. Input-Poor Environment Outside Class

Dekdouk (2013) focused on role of oral presentations in enhancing 80 EFL students' communicative competence in Ouargla University. The questionnaire results reported that oral presentations had a positive role in improving the participants' communicative competence. Fraioui (2016) examined the relationship between oral presentation strategy and speaking proficiency of 60 EFL students at Biskra University. Based on a questionnaire and an observation checklist, it was concluded that oral presentations assisted the participants improve their speaking. Another study of Farabi, Hassanvand, and Gorjian (2017) explored the impact of guided oral presentation and free oral presentation on 60 Iranian pre-intermediate students' speaking. Utilizing a pre-post speaking test, the study reported that guided oral presentations had a positive effect on the students' speaking. Likewise, Sotoudehnama and Hashamdar (2016) investigated the effect of oral presentations and discussions on 44 Iranian EFL intermediate students. Results concluded that the learners who experienced oral presentation significantly outperformed the learners who experienced free discussions. Furthermore, Shimo (2011) evaluated 94 Japanese students' reaction to presentation assignments. A questionnaire results showed that the students favored simultaneous pair presentations. Additionally, Yahay & Kheirzadeh (2015) identified the impact of oral presentations on 35 Iranian EFL students'

speaking fluency and accuracy. Oral pre-post tests were administered to the participants, and data showed that oral presentations improved students' accuracy and fluency.

Generally, learning speaking among the EFL learners looks to be a hard and unsurmountable skill to master. It is hard both for the teacher and learners. Teachers need to be well aware of the useful strategies that can facilitate communication in the classroom situation. One of the obstacles to overcome is the reluctance of students to communicate during classroom activities. Learners' personality type, their goals of learning a second language, and their self-perceptions are supposed to be among some of the factors that influence students' second language speaking ability. The question that remains unanswered is why some individuals are more likely to communicate in a particular situation while others are not eager to do so. Another question is if collaboration among the learners in encouraging each other to speak is an effective strategy or no. Lack of the required context for the learners to become a part of the group and feel the social context for better learning is another clear problem of most language classes (Ahmadian and Tavakoli, 2011). What remains is whether class presentation is an effective way to enhance EFL learners speaking skill—the topic investigated in the present study.

Method

Design of the study

In this study, a quasi-experimental design was used to collect and analyze the collected quantitative data.

Participants

The population of the study initially consisted of 66 female EFL learners in Shokoh Language Institute, Bandar Abbas, Iran. To select and homogenize the appropriate participants for this study, Nelson Placement Test was administered and as a result, 50 students whose scores fell around the mean were selected as the pre-intermediate participants. They were randomly assigned to two equal experimental (EG) and control groups (CG).

Instrumentation

For the purposes of this study, two instruments were used to collect the needed data. First, Nelson Placement Test was used to homogenize the participants. This test contains 80 multiple choice items on grammar and vocabulary. Second, a speaking test was administered to examine the speaking level of the participants before and after the treatment. So, this test was used both as pre-test and post-test.

Procedure

For the purposes of the study, the participants in the experimental group (EG) were required to come to the front, facing others present their lectures and answer the classmates' possible questions. The instructor assigned topics for each learner to prepare and give her 15-minute class presentation. The CG participants were instructed speaking traditionally without any resort to the use of class presentation. This procedure lasted ten weeks (20 sessions) for both groups. Three participants delivered their class presentations in session and all together, each learner had to deliver three class presentations during the term. Finally, the post-test was administered.

To make the scoring of speaking tests reliable, the researcher asked three independent scorers to rate the participants' speaking level. The total means score of the given scores by the

three raters built up the total mean for each participant's pretest and posttest. It is to be noted that the raters were recommended to use the holistic approach in scoring the speaking skill of the participants. In this approach, the overall performance of the learners become more important than the details and building blocks and components.

Results and Discussion

In order to discover any difference between the performances of the two groups from the pre- to post-test of speaking and to see if one of the groups had outperformed the other, paired sample *t*- test was run. The obtained results are presented in Tables 5 and 6 below. Tables 1 to 4 display the statistical data for the pre- and post-test scores of both control and experimental groups.

Table 1
Descriptive data on pre-test for control group

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	*Std*. Deviation
total mean score for pretest CG	25	8.00	17.66	14.5728	2.52265
Valid N (listwise)	25				

Based on the data in Table 1, the mean for 25 leaners in the CG is estimated to be 14.57 with the *SD* of 2.5 that shows the level of homogeneity of the scores of the participants for the pre-test.

Table 2
Descriptive data on post-test for control group

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	*Std.* Deviation
total mean score for posttest CG	25	11.66	17.00	14.9724	1.42421
Valid N (listwise)	25				

Table 2 presents the descriptive data on the post-test of CG. The mean is calculated to be 14. 97 with the *SD* of 1.442-- not much difference can be seen between the means of pre- and post-tests for the CG.

Table 3
Descriptive data on pre-test for experimental group

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
total mean score for pretest EG	25	13.00	18.66	15.4396	1.13676
Valid N (listwise)	25				

Table 3 demonstrates the pre-test data for the experimental group. As it is clear, the mean score for the pre-test of this group is calculated to be 15.43 with the *SD* of 1.1.

Table 4
Descriptive data on post-test for experimental group

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
total mean score for posttest EG	25	16.00	19.00	17.7064	.89914
Valid N (listwise)	25				

The data in table 4 presents the information about the post-test for EG. As it is clear, the mean for the post-test is calculated to be 17.7 that is much higher than that of the pre-test (15.4). Thus, the learners in the EG improved their speaking skill based on the difference between the mean score from the pre- to post-test.

Paired-sample *t*- tests
The following tables present the inferential data based on paired sample *t*- test for the pre- and post-test of each group and the degree of meaningfulness for each one.

Table 5
Paired sample statistics for CG

		Paired Differences			
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	total mean score for pretest CG - total mean score for posttest CG	.57701	-.844	24	.407

Table 5 above offers the t- test data for the CG. As it is clear, the t value is calculated to be -.844 at 24 degree of freedom and as a result the p value is estimated to be .407, that is much higher than .05. The equation does not show any meaningful relationship between the pre- and post-test results of the participants in the CG.

Table 6
paired sample statistics for EG

		Paired Differences			
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		Upper	*t*	*df*	*Sig*. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	total mean score for pretest EG - total mean score for posttest EG	-1.80038	-10.031	24	.000

The data in Table 6 presents the t- test value for the EG. As seen, the t- test value is estimated to be -10.03 at 24 degrees of freedom. The p value of the EG is estimated to be .000 that is lower than .05. The equation shows perfect meaningful relationship between the pre- and post-test for the EG speaking test.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned results of the study demonstrated the meaningful impact of class presentation on the participants' general speaking performance. It was shown that putting adequate emphasis on the role of the learners through providing them with the opportunity to do suitable activities and tasks can positivity affect their linguistic output- here enhancement of speaking ability. In fact, class presentation helps them to gradually overcome their shyness, anxiety and other inhibiting factors that may impede their learning speed. It can thus be predictable that providing the learners with more opportunities to perform their roles in the language class and at the same time reducing the role of the teacher can have positive impact on their speaking performance. In this way, the learners feel responsible for their own performance, feel independent, and are more motivated, although other learners may not have an active role. The focus is actually given to the role and performance of the learners as they try to appear as a lecturer.

Some previous studies on the similar topic have revealed the same results and achievements as those of the present study. They have examined the relationship between performance across a number of tasks and situations (Bandura, 1986). Although their correlational results do not necessarily demonstrate a causal relationship between speaking and performance, they do provide convergent evidence of a consistent association between the two variables. For example, the Nadia's (2013) study came to the conclusion that oral presentation is effective in developing EFL university students' speaking skills. Also, Yahay and Kheirzadeh (2015) showed that oral

presentations improve Iranian EFL students' accuracy and fluency in speaking. Farabi, Hassanvand, and Gorjian (2017) too reported that guided oral presentations have a positive effect on Iranian EFL pre-intermediate students' speaking.

The findings of this research have some implications for English language teachers. Among them, is the clear message for teachers as well as for educational administrators to make use of class presentation for two purposes: to improve the learners' speaking performance and to let them experience independence of action.

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