

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Summary of the Study

The objectives of this study were to implement lessons using task-based activities to promote speaking-listening skills of the undergraduate students at Chiang Mai University and to compare their speaking-listening skills before and after using task-based learning activities. The subjects of this study were 13 undergraduate students who took course 001310 (Oral Expression II) section 4 during the first semester of the academic year 2003. The lesson plan evaluation form and reflection writing were used to find answers to the first objective of this study which was to assess the effectiveness of the twelve task-based lessons in promoting speaking-listening skills. Oral presentations and interviews were used to answer the second objective which was to assess the students' speaking- listening skills before and after using task-based learning activities. The data obtained were analyzed by using SPSS for Windows. The statistics used were arithmetic mean and standard deviation.

The results showed that all 12 lesson plans were effective after implementation. Overall, the pre and post interview scores were not widely different. However, students' speaking-listening skills were improved in categories of fluency, accuracy and comprehensibility after using task-based learning activities. Furthermore, the students' reflections revealed that they gained confidence through their readiness in performing the tasks. Regarding the course objective for course 001310 (Oral Expression II), the result also showed the objective was achieved as well.

5.2 Discussion of Results

5.2.1 The results of task-based lesson plan implementation

In Chapter IV, analysis of the students' and the instructor's lesson plan evaluation showed that all twelve lessons were effective according to the mean score interval in Chapter III. From the lesson plan evaluation, the instructor found the pre tests given before beginning the pre-task stage to be essential for providing enough background information for students. From the researcher's experience in teaching and during final exams in the last few years, students commented that more preparation was needed before

beginning the lesson. Therefore, pre tests given before starting the pre-task stage of each lesson provided sufficient information for students to have enough confidence to perform tasks in the task cycle stage. As claimed by Foster (1999), students could improve in the areas of complexity, accuracy and fluency if they were provided with sufficient time to plan their tasks.

The content and activities designed for course 001310 (Oral Expression II) by the English Department at Chiang Mai University were appropriate except for lesson 12 Reporting. This activity caused some difficulties for the students during the task cycle stage. In order to finish the task cycle stage and continue to the language focus stage, the instructor had to improvise with a new activity that was related to the theme. Instead of talking about the assigned pictures, students were asked to assume the role of news announcer. This new activity gave them the opportunity to use their background knowledge and apply what they had learned from previous lessons to perform a new task.

For the language focus stage, the students had opportunities to talk in detail about their experiences during the task cycle stage. This discussion made it possible for students to share their problems and

possible solutions with their peers. For a course with mixed levels of students' abilities, this gave them a chance to exchange ideas and learn from each other. As a result, students had the opportunity to apply critical thinking skills in making decision and solving problems.

Besides giving pre tests before the pre-task stage, another activity which was added to Willis's task-based framework was the opportunities for the instructor and the students to write down reflections at the end of each lesson. For the instructor, this provided the opportunity to focus more closely on the teaching techniques in each stage of Willis's task-based framework. The results showed that giving a pre test before beginning the pre-task stage of each lesson was beneficial for students. The pre tests confirmed the students' previous knowledge on the topic that they were about to study and also helped clarify any previous misunderstandings. It was at this stage that the instructor was able to provide more information for the students to better prepare them for the task cycle stage and to improve activities for future courses. This was in agreement with Foster's (1999) claim that if learners were provided with sufficient time to plan their tasks, they would improve in the areas of complexity, accuracy and fluency.

For the language focus stage, the students were able to review what they learned in class and write down their own solutions to their problems. This helped promote the students' learning process and also gave the instructor the opportunity to re teach any grammatical points that were still troublesome for students. The details of the students' reflections showed some improvements because the majority of the students had fewer problems in the later lessons.

For the students, reflection writing gave them the opportunities to reconfirm what they learned by writing down details about the content, activity and possible adjustments, and their problems and solution (see Appendix O). All students agreed that the pre tests in the pre-task cycle gave them more confidence to perform the tasks and engage in group work activities. They considered the content for each lesson to be generally applicable in daily life. As for activities, the majority of the students also agreed that the activities for each lesson were appropriate. Some also made suggestions of how they thought some activities could be improved. For the language focus stage, all students had the opportunities to do self-assessment and find solutions to their problems with the help of reinforcement and cooperation in class from peers. This also helped increase students' social skills.

Regarding students' speaking-listening skills, the average oral presentation scores did not increase. Even though there was no significant increase in the scores, the students' mean score intervals were between very good (4.50-5.00) and good (3.50-4.49). In the students' reflection writings, they mentioned that they gained readiness before performing the tasks as their confidence increased while performing each task. This gave students the opportunities to be more proficient in their speaking-listening skills by being provided sufficient practice in class.

Although students were satisfied with the content and activities designed by the English Department for course 001310 (Oral Expression II), they agreed that the stages of pre-task and language focus helped them prepare for future tasks. Besides the two stages from Willis's task-based framework, added activities such as pre tests and reflection writing also helped them increase confidence in using the English Language in group activities. As a result, students not only improved their speaking-listening skills but also strengthened their social skills essential for daily life.

5.2.2 The results of students' speaking-listening skills

In general, the results of pre-interview and post interview were not radically different. Although the pre-interview scores were quite high from the beginning, post interview results showed that students improved in their speaking-listening skills in either categories of fluency, accuracy and comprehensibility (see Appendix Q).

From students' reflection writing, it showed that all students benefited from task-based learning lessons adapted from Willis's task-based framework. Through this framework, students were given more opportunities to be better prepared by doing a pre test before the pre-task stage of each lesson. This provided enough patterns for them to use in the task cycle stage and served as a review to reinforce their previous knowledge.

The task cycle stage gave students a chance to learn new patterns and share previous knowledge. As a result, they were able to choose patterns they felt comfortable using and plan which strategy to use to best complete the tasks with their peers.

The language focus stage provided opportunities for students to discuss and share their knowledge, problems and solutions after the

task cycle stage. It was at this stage that students conducted self-assessment within their group. Furthermore, students found that reflection writing on their performances after the language focus stage of each lesson helped them prepare for future situations that might arise in daily life.

In conclusion, both the instructor and students agreed that in general, the content and activities designed for course 001310 (Oral Expression II) by the English Department at Chiang Mai University were appropriate and practical for future usage. Moreover, before beginning the pre-task stage, pre tests should be given to better prepare students for the task cycle stage.

Another adjustment that should be made was to provide enough time in the language focus stage for group discussion among peers. With sufficient time, students will be able to discuss problems they encountered in the task cycle stage, come up with possible solutions and do reflection writing to reconfirm their understandings. From students' comments during final exam interviews, reflection writing has helped them improve their speaking-listening skills. Through their reflections, they were able to recognize their mistakes and

discover solutions to those mistakes. As a result, students gained more confidence in using the target language. Because of this, they will move towards self-directed learning which is appropriate for higher level study.

In order to move towards self-directed learning, students will need problem solving skills as well as self-assessment. During the language focus stage, they had the opportunities to put these two skills into practice. In addition, having had the opportunities to write down reflections of the problems they encountered during each stage and coming up with their own solutions to those problems, students became more aware of their speaking-listening abilities. Once students have more confidence, they will likely be more motivated to continue their development towards becoming learner-centered and hopefully improve their speaking-listening abilities in the future.

5.3 Recommendation

Based on this study, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations:

5.3.1 Recommendations to the teacher

5.3.1.1 Pre-task stage

For a course with different level students, it is recommended that enough preparation will be provided for all students so that they will be prepared and receive reinforcement of previous knowledge. This can be achieved through implementing pre tests before moving into the pre-task stage.

5.3.1.2 Task cycle stage

Students of different levels should be put in the same group so they have the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences. From this study, there were times when higher level students learned new patterns from lower level students. It is hoped that in doing so, the diversity of the group will help students learn to cooperate and in turn improve their speaking-listening skills as well as their social skills.

5.3.1.3 Language focus stage

At this last stage, students should be given sufficient time to focus on the whole experience of going through the process of task-based learning. It is important that students receive a chance to share

their experience through discussions with their peers. By doing this, they will move towards self-directed learning which is appropriate for higher level study. In order to accomplish this, students will need problem solving skills as well as self-assessment which were provided in the language focus stage. In addition, having had the opportunity to write down reflections of the problems they encountered during each stage and come up with their own solutions to those problems could help improve their speaking-listening abilities in the future.

5.2 Recommendations for teaching and learning

For higher level study, critical thinking skills (which involve other important skills such as problem solving and decision making skills) should be included in current English courses. As for course 001310 (Oral Expression II), students of all level could benefit from the five stages presented in this study. Each stage would play an important part in preparing students for the lesson, providing opportunities for them to choose their strategies, apply patterns they felt comfortable using and learn from their peers through reflections.

5.3 Recommendations for future studies

There should be development of English lessons based on task-based learning for average and lower level students to see whether task-based learning activities will help them improve their speaking-listening skills. Once students of all levels are competent in their communication skills, they will become resourceful members to the working force and to society as a whole.

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