The Impact of Task-Oriented vs Question-Oriented Responses to Listening Exercises on Speaking Ability of Iranian Pre-University Students

Hossein Vossoughi, Professor
University for Teacher Education
Mahan Attar, M. A.
Ministry of Education, Tuyserkan District

چکیدهٔ فارسی

در زبان خارجی، مهارتِ صحبت کردن برای اکثر دانشجویان پیش دانشگاهی کاری مشکل و تقریباً دست‌نیافتنی است. با این وجود، بسیاری از زبان‌آموزان آرزوی دستیابی به آن را دارند. برخی از متخصصان روش تدریس، مثل: **سلسه مورسیا** (۱۹۹۱)، **ریورز و تمبرلی** (۱۹۷۸) پیشنهاد کرده‌اند که پاسخ‌های مبتنی بر task برای تمرینات شنیداری خیلی مؤثر است؛ زیرا زبان‌آموز را بیش‌تر به‌طور تکلمی درگیر یادگیری زبان می‌کند. بنابر نظر خانم **سلسه مورسیا**، یکی از انواع **تمرینات عملی** (tasks) عبارت است از: شنیدن تعاملی (interactive listening) و تبادل معنا از طریق روندهای سؤال و جواب.

بررسی حاضر، تلاشی برای مقایسهٔ دو مدل مذکور است: یکی پاسخ مبتنی بر تمرین عملی (task) و دیگری مدل سؤال وجواب.

برای اجرای این منظور، دوازده قطعهٔ شنیداری متفاوت به‌کار برده شده است تا برای تمرینات دانشجویان فرصتی فراهم آورد. نتایج حاصله نشان داده‌اند: بین دانشجویانی که به مدل مبتنی بر تمرین‌های عملی (tasks) پاسخ داده‌اند، با دانشجویانی که با مدل پرسش/ پاسخ کار کرده‌اند، تفاوت معنی‌داری وجود دارد و دانشجویان نوع نخست، در یادگیری شنیداری موفقیت بیش‌تری حاصل کرده‌اند.

واژگان کلیدی: تمرینات عملی، پاسخ مبتنی بر سؤال و جواب، زبان ارتباطی

Abstract

Speaking skill is an obstacle for many pre- university students. Many of them have long dreamt of it in their language learning. Some methodologists such as Celce- Murcia, (1991) and, Rivers and Temperly (1978) have suggested the task-oriented response to listening exercises in order to involve the learners in language learning more communicatively. According to Celce- Murcia, one of the tasks is interactive listening and negotiation of meaning through questioning/ answering routines.

The present study is an attempt to compare two models (task-oriented response and question- oriented response models). To achieve the purpose of the study, twelve different listening passages were used to give opportunities for questioning/answering. The results indicated that there were statistically significant difference between the students whose responses to listening exercises were task- oriented and those whose responses were question-oriented.

Key Words: task-oriented response, question-oriented response, communication language

Introduction

Since 1970, which was a period of research into the nature of inter-language and of the errors committed by learners, a wave of interest along with focus on communicative language teaching arose which led to some recent developments in language teaching called "proficiency movement". It also caused the promotion in "functional or communicative ability." The language teachers thus focused on the communicative effectiveness and the ways of helping students attain fluency in communication. Here, we should not ***ignore*** the importance of listening as an essential skill for successful conversation. For a language learner to be a proficient partner in any conversation, she/ he needs to be skillful at both speaking and listening, so in order to make the students be more competent in communicative skills of language, course designers have devoted most of their time to generating exercises on teaching listening and speaking in tandem.

As Celce- Murcia (1991) points out: "There are two basic types of students reponses in listening exercises: 1) The question-oriented response model. 2) The task- oriented response model. In ***question- oriented response model*** students are ***asked*** to listen to an oral text, then answer a series of factual comprehension questions on the content. In ***task- oriented response model*** students make use of the information provided in the spoken text, not as an end in itself but as a resource to use." (p. 83)

Purpose of the Study

In this study the researchers decided to apply the two types of responses in order to discover whether or not the task- oriented response type would create a different result in the student's speaking ability. The researchers' belief was that if the effectiveness of the task- oriented response model can be proved, this kind of activity can serve as a useful supplementary material to course books in order to create a situation in the language classroom which closely simulate authentic communication. To achieve the purpose of this study, the following research question was proposed: "Do the

Iranian pre- university students achieve more ability in speaking through the task- oriented responses or through the question- oriented responses of listening exercises?"

In order to take the safe side in the research and to find proper response to the question, the following null hypothesis was formulated:

"There is no difference between task-oriented responses and question- orineted responses to listening exercises in developing the speaking ability of Iranian pre- university students."

Method

The design of this study follows an experimental design which contains three characteristics: 1) experimental and control groups, 2) random selection of the groups, and 3) a pretest- post test administration.

Subjects

To accomplish the task, more than 90 students participated in the pretest of the study. The students were selected from among the students of a female pre- university school. Finally 60 subjects were selected on the basis of the pretest and randomly divided into two groups: 30 in experimental group and 30 in control group.

Instrumentation

As it was mentioned before, in order to estimate the general knowledge of the subjects prior to the study, a validated Nelson test was administered to the whole number of the subjects and; then a speaking test (talking about pictures) which was developed by the researchers was managed. The researchers provided 12 pictures and each subject in speaking test selected randomly two pictures out of twelve ones and talked about them. In order to prove the validity of speaking test, correlation between speaking pre-test, final scores and Nelson test scores was estimated.

Both groups had 12 twenty- minute sessions of instruction in a period of four weeks. The control group responded to listening exercises through multiple choice, fill in the blank and true/false qeustions while the experimental-group class responded to listening exercises based on tasks. (for example questions to get repetition of information, questions to get verification, questions to get clarification and elaboration.)

Then both groups took speaking and Nelosn post test. The aim of speaking test was to estimate the speaking skill categories of grammar, vocabulary, fluency and pro-nunciation, and the aim of Nelson test was to estimate the validity of speaking test. In order to prove the validity of speaking test, correlation between speaking post test final scores and Nelson test scores was estimated.

Instructional materials

The materials used for both groups in the 12 sessions were 12 listening passages selceted out of the pre- university English course book. The selected short listening passages were about issues such as, how a mouse helps a lion, how we can keep a glass from cracking, how penguins live, how a frog eats, etc.

In addition to the above mentioned materials, there were also some cards and pictures designed by the researchers to help the subjects, both in experimental and control groups, understand the passages better.

Data Analysis

After the data were gathered, the means of control group and the experimental group were compared with each other through t-test to

assess the null hypothesis which assumed there is no difference between task-oriented responses and question- oriented responses to listening exercises in developing the speaking ability of Iranian pre- university students. Then the scores obtained from pretest and post test of each of the control and experimental group were compared with each other from match t-test to observe if there has been any significant improvment in speaking ability of the students in the experimental group.

The results of this experiment is shown in the following tables. The first analysis deals with the comparison of the two means of the pretest of the control and experimental group for **speaking** and Nelson tests. As it is shown in the following table the t-critical is higher than t-value and we can conclude that the difference between the two groups is not significant and they are almost at the same level of speaking ability. The result is also the same for the Nelson test.

Table. 1

The data derived from the Nelson pretest

	N	M	SD	T
Control group	30	10.7	.96	
				1
Experimental group	30	10.5	.93	
D. F.=58	P=.05	t-critical= 2.000		

Table. 2

The data derived from the speaking pretest

	N	M	SD	T
Control group	30	8.91	2.85	
				0.14
Experimental group	30	8.78	2.58	
D. F.=58	P=.05	t-critical= 2.000		

The second analysis contains the data obtained from the **speaking** and Nelson post test scores of the two groups. In this analysis the two means of the two groups after the instruction were compared through t-test. As it is illustrated in the following tables, the t-value for both speaking and Nelson is higher than the t-critical and we are quite safe in rejecting the null hypothesis that assumes *"There is no difference between task-oriented responses and question- oriented responses to listening exercises in developing the speaking ability of Iranian pre-university students."*

Table. 3

The data derived from the Nelson post test

	N	M	SD	T
Control group	30	11.43	1.58	
				4.04
Experimental group	30	13.25	2.06	
D. F.=58	P=.05	t-critical= 2.000		

Table. 4

The data derived from the speaking post test

	N	M	SD	T
Control group	30	11.22	2.81	
				4.21
Experimental group	30	13.75	1.77	
D. F.=58	P=.05	t-critical= 2.000		

The aim of the third analysis is to compare the two means of control group on pretest and post test for Nelson and **speaking** seperately. The obtained t-value from match t-test is higer than t-critical and this means that there is significant difference between the scores of the control group for Nelson and **speaking** on pretest and post test.

Table. 5

The data derived from the pretest and post test of Nelson test for control group

	N	M	SD	T
Pretest	30	10.7	.96	
				2.43
Post test	30	11.43	1.58	
D. F.=29	P=.05	t-critical= 2.045		

Table. 6

The data derived from the pretest and post test of speaking for control group

	N	M	SD	T
Pretest	30	8.88	2.85	
				2.43
Post test	30	11.31	2.81	
D. F.=29	P=.05	t-critical= 2.045		

Table. 7

The data derived from the pretest and post test of Nelson test for experimental group

	N	M	SD	T
Pretest	30	10.5	.93	
				7.2
Post test	30	13.25	2.06	
D. F.=29	P=.05	t-critical= 2.045		

Table. 8

The data derived from the pretest and post test of speaking test for experimental group

	N	M	SD	T
Pretest	30	8.78	2.58	
				8.8
Post test	30	13.75	1.77	
D. F.=29	P=.05	t-critical= 2.045		

In analysis 4, the data obtained on **speaking** and Nelson pretest and post test of experimental group is discussed. The data obtained in this comparision through match t-test shows that the t-value is higher than t-critical and this means that there is significant difference between the scores of the experimental group for Nelson and **speaking** on pretest and post test, but this difference for the experimental group is much higher than the control group, as shown below:

So the null hypothesis was rejected and it was proved that task-oriented responses to listening exercises is more effective than question- oriented responses in developing the pre-university students speaking ability.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research evolved from the common observation that many Iranian pre-

university students are unsuccessful in speaking ability. Also their responses to listening exercises are question oriented. Since they don't have opportunities to use the language in meaningful communication with native speakers, it is necessary to provide them opportunities to speak. So the task-orieted responses to listening exercises were applied and compared in an experimental group with the question oriented responses in a control group. A null hypothesis was proposed and the rejection of which would prove the effectiveness of task oriented responses in improving the speaking ability.

The answer to research question of "Will Iranian pre- university students achieve more ability in speaking through task oriented or question oriented of listening exercises?" is that, task oriented responses to listening exercises increase speaking ability and the students are not only able to respond to controlled listening comprehension questions, but also able to increase their speaking ability.

So the results of this research, not only emphasize a useful way of teaching listening comprehension, but also can be an effective method to improve the students speaking ability.

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