

Designing Task-Based English Speaking Materials for the Staff of *Bank Mandiri* Yogyakarta

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Abstract

Most of the staff of Bank Mandiri in Yogyakarta have some difficulties to communicate with the foreign customers, which hinder the process of the service. Therefore, this study attempted to develop English speaking materials for the staff of Bank Mandiri in Yogyakarta using the principles of task-based learning. The writer adapted Kemp's instructional design model (1977) comprising eight flexible, interdependent steps. Those steps, subsequently, were put under the umbrella of Borg & Gall's (1986) Research and Development (R&D) method. Due to time and resource limitations, only three out of ten steps of the R&D model were employed, which were: (1) Research and information collecting, (2) Planning and (3) Developing preliminary form of product. To acquire required information for developing the materials, the writer distributed needs analysis questionnaire to twenty staff of Bank Mandiri, Yogyakarta. The designed materials covered eight units. Each unit consisted of five sections, namely "Do You Remember?", "Prepare Yourself!", "Can You Do These?", "Let's Learn!", and "It's Time to Write". It was expected that the materials could improve the speaking skill of the staff of Bank Mandiri Yogyakarta.

Keywords: task-based learning, speaking, design

Introduction

As a developing country, Indonesia is expanding many fields of work to an international scale, which automatically forces companies to keep up with the demands. Thus, many companies are now trying to increase their staff's competence in English. Banks are also the ones that demand their staff to be more competent in English. The ability to master English is crucial for the bank staff because they deal with the customers directly.

Most of the staff of *Bank Mandiri* Yogyakarta have some difficulties to communicate with the foreign customers who visit the bank. These difficulties hinder the process of the service. Based on that, it is clear that English speaking ability is needed and is important for them in order to provide the best service to the customers.

Considering the fact that they have very limited time to study English because of their work, it can be concluded that it will be very difficult for them to learn English from the basic level. Therefore, the most appropriate materials for them are the materials that are practical and applicable to their working situation. This

emergence of English learning needs in the working fields prompts the writer to design English learning materials based on the needs and interests in the target situation which the learners experience.

This study is important because it aims to present appropriate materials to help the staff of *Bank Mandiri* Yogyakarta in particular to improve their English speaking ability. By providing the materials which are practical and applicable to their working field, they will be able to communicate with foreign customers well and provide qualified service to them. They will not have to learn English from the basic level, which is highly impossible due to their heavy working hours, to fulfill the increasing demands of having good English competence.

Literature Review

Speaking

Speaking is one of the four basic skills, along with listening, reading and writing. Speaking and writing are classified as active or productive skills whereas listening and reading are considered as passive or receptive skills. Nunan (2003) states that in learning a language, speaking can be considered as the hardest skill to be learnt among all skills for two reasons. First, the person whom we are talking to is waiting for our response right then. Second, we cannot edit and revise what we wish to say, as we can do in writing skill. The writer needs to know the characteristics of speaking in order to be able to select appropriate activities to improve speaking ability.

There are five principles for teaching speaking as stated by Nunan (2003, pp. 54-56): (a) be aware of the differences between second language and foreign language learning contexts; (b) give learners practice with both fluency and accuracy; (c) provide opportunities for learners to talk by using group work or pair work, and limiting teacher talk; (d) plan speaking tasks that involve negotiation for meaning; (e) design classroom activities that involve guidance and practice in both transactional and interactional speaking. Having understood the principles for teaching speaking, the writer can now design suitable activities by taking the principles for teaching speaking into consideration.

Task-Based Learning

Task based learning is an approach which uses tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching (Richard and Rodgers, 2001). Task based learning perceives language as a mean of making meaning, so it is taught best when it is used to transmit messages, not when explicitly taught for conscious learning (Krashen & Terrel, 1983). The main characteristic of task based learning lies in the experiential learning where the learner's past experience becomes the starting point in learning, while their personal experience when doing the tasks becomes the central point of learning (Nunan, 2004).

In task based learning, tasks are central in immersing learners in a meaningful communication using the target language, which in consequence, promotes learning. Nunan (1989) defines tasks as activities which can stand alone as fundamental units and which require comprehending, manipulating, or interacting in authentic language, while the attention is principally paid to meanings rather

than to forms. Tasks provide the necessary exposure and also opportunities of language use needed for acquiring the target language because the tasks are normally done in pairs or in groups. Exposure happens when they listen to the teacher's instruction, to their friends' speaking, and also when they have to read handouts to complete the tasks. Learners are expected to make sense of the input received in exposure either consciously or unconsciously. When learners notice the language features and internalize them in their language system, learning is promoted. Tasks will also encourage learners to learn communicative competences like giving opinion, interrupting, and presenting their results to the whole class. Learners will acquire the language faster and more efficiently when they have to communicate (Willis, 1996).

There are two kinds of syllabus design that are appropriate for task-based materials according to Nunan (2004). The first one is theme-based syllabus, where the contents are organized into topics. Themes will provide context for doing the tasks and learning the language in a meaningful way. The second one is task-based syllabus, where the contents are organized based on the task difficulty. Understanding the principles and beliefs of task-based learning helps the writer to know how the ideal task based teaching-learning activities should be done.

The framework of Task-Based Learning consists of three phases: pre-task, task cycle and language focus. Pre-task phase introduces the class to the learning topic. Here, topic-related words and phrases are activated. Teacher should help learners recall and activate words and phrases that will be useful both during the task and outside the classroom. Introduce words and phrases that they are unlikely to know. This phase also facilitates learners to explore and be familiar with the topic language by doing activities such as classifying words and phrases, matching, brainstorming or mind mapping. The point of this phase is to boost students' confidence in handling the task, and give them something to fall back on. Task cycle phase is where the learners start working in small groups or in pairs to achieve the goals of the task. Teachers should encourage learners to work independently and to communicate on their own to achieve the set goals by keeping minimum interference on learners' work. Therefore, there is often little concern for grammatical accuracy. Language focus phase allows a closer study of some of the specific features such as unfamiliar words, structures, or pronunciation that naturally occur in the task cycle. By this point, the learners will have already worked with the language and processed it for meaning, so they are ready to focus on the specific language forms that carry that meaning. Thus, the study of this form is clearly contextualized through the task itself. After reviewing the features, learners then practice what has been discussed during the language analysis activities to improve their language form. This final phase, which includes analysis and practice components, fulfils the fourth desirable extra condition for learning. The elements of task based learning are illustrated in the following figure.

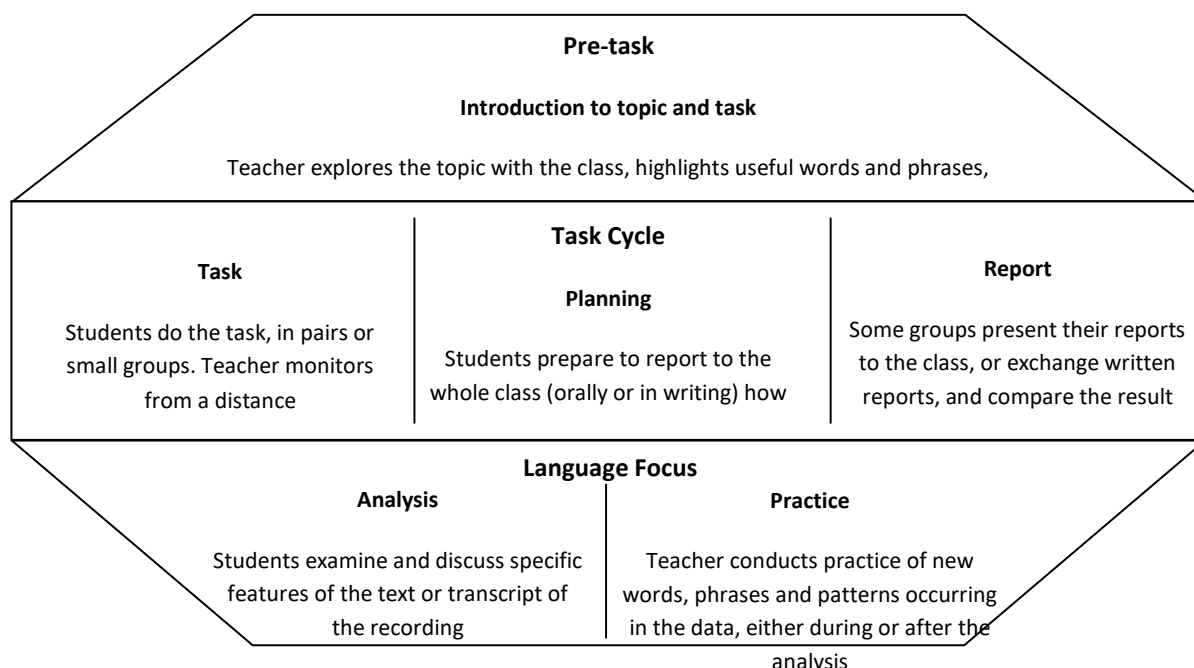


Figure 1: Willis's Task-based Learning Framework (Willis, 1996: 38)

Method

The method used was Educational Research and Development (R & D) method. It was a process used to develop and validate educational products (Borg, 1983). According to Borg and Gall (1983), the goal of R & D is to develop the research knowledge and incorporating it into a product that combines educational research and educational practice rather than discover new knowledge or to answer specific questions about practical problems. There are ten major steps in the R & D cycle; they are Research and Information Collecting, Planning, Developing Preliminary Form of Product, Preliminary Field Testing, Main Product Revision, Main Field Testing, Operational Product Revision, Operational Field Testing, Final Product Revision and Dissemination and Implementation (Borg and Gall, 1983). Due to the limitation of time and capacity, the writer decided to employ only the former three steps out of the ten major steps.

Instrument used in this study was needs analysis questionnaire that was distributed during the research and information collecting step. The needs analysis questionnaire aimed to collect information on learners' characteristics, whose results would serve as the basis for developing the materials. Therefore, needs analysis questionnaire covered areas such as the needs, capabilities, interests, academic factors, learning styles and learning conditions of the learners. The needs analysis questionnaire was distributed to twenty staff of *Bank Mandiri* Yogyakarta. Since the needs analysis questionnaire used multiple choice questions, the data were presented and analyzed through frequency distribution, which is a systematic arrangement of individual measures from the lowest to the highest response (Ary et. al., 2002). From each question, the data were sorted based on the frequency of the responses. As most people find it easier to understand data in percentage than in raw frequencies (Brown & Rodgers, 2002),

the data were converted into percentage. The results of the questionnaires would help the writer determine the learning topics and activities that suit the learners' needs and wants, in order to make the designed materials interesting and motivating.

Findings and Discussion

Research and Information Collecting

By distributing needs analysis questionnaires, the writer collected the necessary information for developing the materials. The gathered information consisted of data concerning learners' characteristics.

Most of the learners have had their Bachelor Degree. The results of the questionnaires indicated that learners' learning motivation was very high. All the staff of *Bank Mandiri* Yogyakarta considered that English is important. Most of them had a conversation in English to interact with the foreign customers in *Bank Mandiri*. The learners stated that 1% to 5% of their customers are foreigners. Although English is important, the mastery of English was not considered as a must for them, because it did not influence their status, salary and promotion. However, since their job description is to serve the customers well, they considered speaking as the most important skill to learn. The writer classified the participants into Pre-Intermediate level students because most of the participants had already learnt English at school, so they had known the basic knowledge of English. Most of the participants stated that games were their favorite media in learning English because games provided both fun and the essential experiences of using the target language that they should have. Through games, they also feel challenged to accomplish the goals. Learners chose Greetings and Introduction, Handling Complaints, Numbers, Telephone Conversation, Describing Location, Explaining New Services, Using Bank's Facilities and Making Appointments as the topics to learn English.

From the questionnaires, the writer found that eleven of them had learned English by joining an English course. From those who had joined an English course before, seven of them were in the Pre Intermediate level. Most of them took a course more than two years ago. Therefore, 14 participants stated that they only had passive English ability. All of the participants found that they had difficulties in communicating using English. The first difficulty was that they did not know how to respond correctly to certain expressions. They knew what they wanted to say, but they could not find the English word. The second difficulty was that they did not know the meaning of the sentences spoken by the foreign customers. They did not know what the foreigners were asking or saying because they were not familiar with the words used by the foreigners. The first and the second difficulties were strongly influenced by the third difficulty where the participants did not know what English vocabulary to produce. They were lack of vocabulary related to their working world, and that was why they could not understand and respond correctly to what the foreign customers said. The participants also stated that they could not produce correct English sentences. The last difficulty was that they did not know how to say the words that they wanted to say.

Planning

Obtaining the necessary data, the writer then developed the framework of the materials to be designed, which consisted of stating goals, topics and general purposes, specifying learning indicators and organizing subject contents.

The goal of the designed materials was to improve the Speaking skill of the staff of *Bank Mandiri* Yogyakarta. There were eight topics selected by the participants, which were related to their needs. The writer organized the topics based on the level of difficulty of each topic, and then the writer set the general purposes and specified the learning indicators in Table 1.

Table 1: Learning Topics, General Purposes and Learning Indicators

Topics	General Purposes	Learning Indicators
Greetings and Introduction	• The learners know how to greet others. • The learners know how to introduce themselves. • The learners know how to introduce others.	At the end of the lesson, the learners are able to: 1. Identify greetings expressions in the conversation. 2. Mention greetings expressions in the conversation. 3. Greet others using the appropriate expressions. 4. Respond to formal or informal greetings. 5. Mention some useful expressions that are used in introducing themselves. 6. Introduce themselves and others using the appropriate expressions. 7. Respond to others' introduction using the appropriate expressions.
Numbers	• The learners know how to read numbers • The learners know how to ask for specific information	At the end of the lesson, the learners are able to: 1. Say the numbers correctly. 2. Mention vocabulary used in asking specific information related to numbers. 3. Mention useful expressions used in asking specific information related to numbers. 4. Use useful vocabulary used in asking specific information related to numbers correctly. 5. Use useful expressions used in asking specific information related to numbers correctly.
Telephoning Conversation	• The learners know how to make a polite call • The learners know how to respond politely to a telephone call	At the end of the lesson, the learners are able to: 1. Mention the vocabulary related to telephoning conversation. 2. Mention the expressions used to make a polite telephone call. 3. Use good spoken English correctly in making a polite telephone call. 4. Use good spoken English correctly in answering a polite telephone call.

Making Appointments	• The learners know how to make an appointment	At the end of the lesson, the learners are able to: 1. Mention the vocabulary used in making an appointment. 2. Mention the expressions used to make an appointment. 3. Use appropriate vocabulary correctly in making an appointment. 4. Use appropriate expressions politely in making an appointment.
Describing Location	• The learners know how to describe the locations inside the building. • The learners know how to give directions to the locations inside the building.	At the end of the lesson, the learners are able to: 1. Mention the vocabulary used to describe location and give direction inside the building. 2. Mention the expressions used to describe location and give direction inside the building. 3. Describe the location of a certain place inside the building using proper vocabulary and expressions. 4. Give direction to a certain place inside the building using proper vocabulary and expressions.
Introducing New Services	• The learners know how to promote new services.	At the end of the lesson, the learners are able to: 1. Mention the vocabulary related to promoting new services. 2. Mention the expressions used to promote new services. 3. Use useful vocabulary to promote new service. 4. Promote new facilities using appropriate expressions.
Explaining Bank Facilities	• The learners know how to explain procedures	At the end of the lesson, the learners are able to: 1. Mention the vocabulary related to describing procedures. 2. Mention the expressions used to explain procedures. 3. Use good spoken English on useful vocabulary to explain procedures. 4. Use good spoken English to explain the procedures using appropriate expressions.
Handling Complaints	• The learners know how to handle complaints • The learners understand how to offer solutions	At the end of the lesson, the learners are able to: 1. Mention some useful vocabulary for apologizing politely. 2. Mention some useful expressions for apologizing politely. 3. Use the useful vocabulary to apologize politely in conversation. 4. Use the useful expressions to apologize politely in conversation. 5. Mention some useful vocabulary for offering

		solutions politely. 6. Mention some useful expressions for offering solutions politely. 7. Use useful vocabulary in offering solutions politely. 8. Use useful expressions in offering solutions politely.
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Developing Preliminary Form of Product

Having stated the goals, general purposes, learning topics and learning indicators, the writer classified and arranged the learning topics to be developed. Each topic would be developed into the materials for one meeting. The designed materials contained eight meetings. The classification and arrangement of the learning topics into units can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: The Organization of Subject Contents

Unit	Unit Name	Subject Contents
1	Meeting New People	• Greet others • Introducing yourself • Introducing others
2	Dealing with Numbers	• Read numbers correctly • Asking for specific information related to numbers
3	How to Survive on the Phone	• Make a polite telephone call • Respond politely to a telephone call
4	Perfect Time to Meet	• Making appointments
5	Where are They?	• Describing locations inside buildings • Giving directions to places inside buildings
6	Have You Known This?	• Promoting new services
7	How Do They Work?	• Explaining procedures
8	Good Complaint Handlers	• Apologizing • Giving advice

The writer designed the learning materials based on the results of research and information collecting and the principles of the task-based learning. Teaching/learning resources and tasks for each learning topic were selected according to their suitability with the attainment of goals, general purposes, and learning indicators. Adapting the concept of pre-task, task-cycle, and language focus in task based learning framework (Willis, 1996), the writer designed that the materials for every meeting would consist of five main phases: Do You Remember?; Don't Stop Now!; Can You Do These?; Let's Learn!; and It's Time to Write. These five phases are actually the modification of the three-phase task based learning framework, in which the pre-task phase is prolonged and developed into two phases: 'Do You Remember?' and 'Don't Stop Now!'. A new phase, 'It's Time to Write', is also added. The first section, **Do You Remember?**, was designed to introduce the learners with the context and to relate learners' personal experience to the topic. This section serves as the pre-task phase in Willis' task based learning framework whose aim was to prepare learners for the

main task. The second section, **Prepare Yourself!**, provided useful expressions, vocabulary and exercises to prepare learners for key language items to do the main task(s). This section serves as the extension of the pre-task phase in Willis' task based learning framework. **Can You Do These?**, the third section, gave learners opportunities to produce and learn the language while accomplishing the task(s). Similar with the Willis' task-cycle phase, this section served as the main tasks of the lesson. The fourth, **Let's Learn!**, provided the recommended grammatical aspects related to the topic that would be necessary for the learners to understand. This section resembled Willis' language focus phase. Finally, **It's Time to Write** encouraged learners to reflect their learning experience in a journal. This additional section served as a home assignment encouraging learners to think, reflect, and evaluate what they had learned.

Such modifications were made considering that the majority of the learners were beginner to pre-intermediate learners of English with very limited vocabulary, as suggested by the findings of research and information collecting. Willis (1996) suggests that the task based learning framework should be adapted if applied for beginner learners, with more emphasis should be given on the exposure. The initial focus of the lesson should be more on letting learners gain confidence, while the public use of language is temporarily reduced, as argued by Willis (1996). One result of this would be a longer pre-task phase and a shorter task cycle, in which the planning and report stage are either very short or totally omitted. It was feared that if the pre-task phase was not prolonged, students would not be ready for the task-cycle phase, considering their language abilities are insufficient to cope with the tasks. Consequently, it might happen that during the discussion many learners would choose to keep silent as they do not know what and how to speak, while the smaller-in-number, more advanced learners would be dominating the discussion. By providing more activities using the pre-task phase, it is expected that students will be better prepared with the language items they would encounter when accomplishing the task cycle later. The teaching learning resources of the designed materials were taken from teaching reference books and on-line materials. There were various kinds of tasks used in the teaching learning activities. Most of them, however, have one similarity – they should be done collaboratively. Since the task based learning is meant to be used with English as the language of classroom instruction, pair works and group works would be helpful in engaging learners in meaningful communication and bridging the proficiency gap among learners.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this study attempts to develop English speaking materials for the staff of Bank Mandiri in Yogyakarta using the principles of task-based learning. In order to do that, the writer adopted the first three steps out of ten steps of Borg & Gall's R & D cycle, namely: Research and Information Collecting, Planning and Developing Preliminary Form of Product. Adapting Willis' framework of task-based learning, the materials of each meeting was divided into five sections. The first section, **Do You Remember?**, was designed to introduce the learners with the context and to relate learners' personal experience to the

topic. The second section, **Prepare Yourself!**, provided useful expressions, vocabulary and exercises to prepare learners for key language items to do the main task(s). **Can You Do These?**, the third section, gave learners opportunities to produce and learn the language while accomplishing the task(s). The fourth, **Let's Learn!**, provided the recommended grammatical aspects related to the topic that would be necessary for the learners to understand. Finally, **It's Time to Write** encouraged learners to reflect their learning experience in a journal.

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