Students’ Response on Information-Gap Task in Improving Speaking Skill

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Abstract

This descriptive qualitative research was conducted to discover the students’ response towards the implementation of Information-Gap Task in improving speaking skill at SMA Tunas Bangsa, South West Aceh. The subject of this research was 32 students of class IX chosen through purposive sampling technique. The data were collected through questionnaire items which was adapted from the formula of Taylor-powell and Bahous, et al. The result of this research showed that most students gave positive response toward the implementation of Information-Gap Task and they agree that Information-Gap Task can help, motivate and attract them in improving speaking skill. Only a few of them do not enjoy the speaking practice through Information-Gap Task. In brief, the implementation of Information-Gap Task by the teacher improves students’ speaking skill and helps students to cope with their speaking problem.

Keywords: Speaking skill, information-gap task, students’ response

1. INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that to become the part of international community, every country is required to have a proficient human resource in mastering English. Therefore, the education system of Indonesia makes English as one of the main national examination subjects along with Mathematics and Bahasa Indonesia. Expecting to be a proper language for students in preparing their future, English is positioned in the Group A-subjects alongside with Religion Education, Mathematic, Indonesian Language, History of Indonesia and Citizenship Education (Permendikbud, 2014).

The purpose of English education in Indonesia is to make students able to communicate in both spoken and written English. It means students should have a good speaking competence. This competence can be used as the most useful communication skill which is required in many work fields in their future career. Although the newest curriculum arranged by government is way easier to apply,
but it still is not easy for teachers to make students quickly understand and speak English in their daily life.

Various approaches, methods, and techniques in teaching English have been practiced by many teachers at high schools, in order to expedite the students in receiving English as a foreign language. In connection with these approaches, methods and techniques to make students have a good skill in English, it is required an approach which not only demands the students to be more communicative, but they also need to practice their skill in using texts which are frequently used for variety of situations and places in the real world. Task-based learning is the answer. One of task-based learning forms is Information-Gap Task. Basically, Information-Gap Task has three phases of work. They are pre-task, main task and post task where all forms of tasks emphasize on how to use the language rather than how to know about the language. Information-Gap Task contributes to motivate the students in the class to actually effort for the new vocabularies, expressing a conversation as the real events and issuing new ideas in teaching and learning.

Based on reseachers’ observation, Information-Gap Task has been applied for more than eight years by the teacher, which means there are absolutely several reasons emerged from the teacher’s certainty on applying this approach for such that long time. Information-Gap Task is believed as the right task to force students’ enthusiastic to speak not only in group but also in front of the class. It becomes a measurement for the teacher when most students see the good impact and this task helps them in English language acquisition. Information-Gap Task that is designed to move in a real-world task where teachers do not manipulate task to be easily filled and answered by students, students are required to think critically, complete information and practice speaking and discussing independently. A head with the positive feedback from the students for Information-Gap Task, it forces the senior high school teachers to think further in developing a wide variety of tasks required in the scope of Information-Gap Task. It is a very workable approach for students to feel the real atmosphere of learning English.

According to Penny (2002), Information-gap Task makes students actively contribute in the process of learning. It can be the key in increasing students’ motivation to learn English much more enthusiastically. On other hand, Watamni & Gholami (2012) made a research about the effect of implementing Information-Gap Tasks on EFL learners’ speaking ability in Iran. The result showed that the implementation of Information-Gap Tasks is increasing students’ speaking ability. Furthermore, Mihye (2014) had a brief study on Information-Gap Task in order to know the response of Korean ELF learners toward the speaking task. Mihye did a deep research in Hankuk University and she found that the application of Information-Gap Task in English class can motivate students to be more interested in speaking performance. The positive response toward Information-Gap Task on students’ classroom satisfaction, in this case speaking task, showed that it helped students a lot of engagements in English as a foreign language. Then, there are many task-based techniques that could be improved by teacher to make students confident in performing speaking skill.

The responses of students toward the implementation of Information-Gap Task are the main focus of this research. We are interested to take this title as a deep research because the application of Information-Gap Task can help many other teachers to cope with students’ speaking difficulties in the future. In other hand, this
research needs the students’ views about the application of Information-Gap Task because it can help teachers determined how far the students consider an approach improves their English language skills. Due to the students’ success in receiving English especially in improving speaking skill, then it should be students’ right to show their response on what they have learned and how well they have progressed on Information-Gap Task applied by teacher. Therefore, this research intends to fill in this gap and formulates the research question on what are the students’ responses toward the implementation of Information-Gap Task in improving speaking skill?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Understanding of Information-Gap Task

Many scholars have defined information gap, the following section includes some definitions presented by some of them. According to Harmer (2003, p. 85), information-gap is as a key to the enhancement of communicative purpose and the desire to communicate. Besides, information-gap is the example of teaching-learning activities that encourages critical thinking skills and teamwork.

Swain, Skehan, & Bygate (2013, p. 94) views information gap as “a basic concept in contemporary methodology” then he goes on to elaborate more on information gap: When one student talks to another, we feel that it is important that new information should be transmitted across the ‘gap’ between them. Larsen-Freeman (2000) claims an information gap exists when one person in an exchange knows something that the other person does not know. According to Harmer (2003, p. 349) information-gap activity is when one student has to talk to partner in order to solve a puzzle, draw a picture (describe and draw), put things in the right order (describe and arrange), or find similarities and differences between picture. Grounded on several researchers says about Information-Gap Task, it can be concluded that Information-Gap Task is one of task types which demands two or more students to change information they have, in order to complete them by oral communication based on worksheet or teacher’s instruction.

2.2 The Phases of Information-Gap Task

The aim of the pre-task phase is expected to prepare students’ awareness and performance in completing task, in order to make the achievement of the materials acquisition. (Lee, 2000 &Dornyei, 2001, as cited in Ellis 2004, p. 81) describes the importance of ‘framing’ the task to be performed and suggests that one way of doing this is to provide an advance organizer of what the students will be required to do and the nature of the outcome they will arrive at. In Information-Gap Task, pre-task phase provides time for the teacher to frame the activity (e.g. establishing the outcome of the task), gives the planning time for the students and a warming up like brainstorming and other activities to make the students ready to study.

According to Nunan (1989, p. 124) the during task activities are (a) a student or a group of students are given a task, (b) the information they need is split into two parts, no students has enough information to be able to do it alone, (c) the students start to ask each other to get the complete information about what they are talking about and come to a decision together, and (d) they use oral communication by speak to their friends in order to find out the information and to share their ideas.

According to Ellis (2009, p. 14) there are several activities in post-task phase, such as learner report the final result of the task in front of the class, the teacher
makes a consciousness raising task to make students do better in the next meeting and if there is time remains, the task can be repeated.

2.3 The Students’ Roles in Information-Gap Task

According to Nunan (2004, p. 65), there are some activities must be done by students in order to complete the phases of Information-Gap Task; (1) The student is a passive recipient of the outside stimuli, (2) the student is an interactor and negotiator who are capable of giving as well as taking, (3) the student is a listener and performer who have a little control over the content of learning, (4) the students are involved in a process of personal growth, (5) the students are involved in a social activity, and the social and interpersonal roles of the student cannot be divorced from psychological learning process and (6) the learner must take responsibility for his or her own learning, developing autonomy and skills in learning-how-to-learn.

As Ellis (2004, p. 5) conducted, one of the goals of task-based research is to establish whether the predictions made by designers are actually work out. Obviously, by knowing their response on every student-centred task, all of education elements will do a lot of better innovations in the future. Ellis (2012, p. 151) said, one way to make students want to show their progress in English skill is by completing task given in the class. Then, in other hand it becomes the role of teacher to support the learning process by giving the effective approaches and noticing the enhancement of students’ ability through task.

Therefore, Information-Gap Task also gives contribution in developing students’ skill, especially in speaking skill. According to the syllabus of curriculum 2013 for Class X, XI and XII of Senior High School/Madrasah Aliyah, there are some materials that require students’ speaking activities in first semester. For instance, the material of ‘introduce self’ which requires students’ participation in all aspects of lesson plan such as; (1) In observing activities, the students need to join the interaction in teaching learning process mentioned subjects, (2) in questioning, students ask the differences of introduce self between Indonesian and English language, (3) in exploring, students use the topic of introduce self as the task of asking and answering questions made by each other’s pair or small group, (4) in communicating, the participation of the students to introduce their selves inside or outside the classroom conversation and (5) in associating, students participate to make a good order of introduce self while they speak. Furthermore, the students’ participation in speaking activities also applies for other learning materials of English subject like conditional sentences, factual report, songs, even kinds of texts. For example, the students use the correct language feature to read narrative text to the class and the students participate to retell the narrative stories in front of the class, etc.

In sum, the students’ participation in the class becomes the sensible way to determine whether the methods or approaches a teacher applied in the classroom are appropriate or not. Students’ participation deeply has a proper contribution for developing students’ proficiency in mastering English skill.

2.4 The Advantages and Disadvantages of Information-Gap Task

In these several years, there are so many approaches, methods and techniques have been applied by educators in purpose to enhance EFL learners’ motivation and
capability in learning English. In line with their efforts, Information-Gap Task also contributes to help ELF learners in mastering English easily. As writer has elaborated in chapter I, there is no approach, method, or technique that will actually become the best way to teach English. Information-Gap Task also has several advantages and disadvantages of its implementation as follows:

Harmer (2003, p. 85) claims that Information gap is as a key to the enhancement of communicative purpose and the desire to communicate. It supports by Scrivener (2005, p. 53) says that by creating classroom activities that include such information gaps, we can provide activities that mimic this reason for communication and this may be more motivating and useful to language learners than speaking without any real reason for doing so. Furthermore, by point of view of Fata, et al. (2016), it has been found that small-group; two-way information gap tasks seem to be particularly appropriate for stimulating such language. Again, Harmer (2003) emphasizes that if in the classroom we want to create the same kind of information-gap if we are to encourage real communication.

There are some advantages of Information-Gap Task concluded by the researcher. Information-Gap Task can increase students speaking time. During the task, the students are provided time to speak with their classmates in order to achieve the goal whiles the teacher facilitates them with time. Then, it can increase students’ motivation, because every students has essential information to change, there is no students that do not need to speak. They have responsibility to complete the task, whether in pair, group or whole class so it makes a dynamic interaction and motivates students to speak as important person. Finally, it can encourage critical thinking skills and teamwork, during information-gap, students must often exercise to analyze and categorize the data missing, collecting and collaborate with their classmate to achieve the activity’s objective.

There is no perfection towards the use of whether it’s an approach, method or technique in teaching learning process. Although there are many positive feedbacks over its use, yet Information-Gap Task understandably also has some critiques to be considered. Septiana, et al. (2016) mentioned that such group works in Information-gap activity do not always complete the learners’ ability to communicate in the target language. It means that, not all group participants will complete their ability in speaking English, because there are always some students in group which hold as the main speaker.

Gani, et al. (2015) pointed out that the Information-Gap Task helps learners to appreciate that they use the target language to communicate without the direct intervention of the teacher. The researcher sees the sentence “without direct intervention of the teacher” as the weakness of Information-Gap Task because it’s limiting the teachers part as active role. Teacher only has passive role when the students do their job to complete the information given. During the task, the teacher cannot freely interrupt the grammar errors done by students but at the final phase of activity.

3. METHODS

A research method that applied in this study is qualitative. Qualitative research is generated by words not by numbers to collect data; it is suitable with the objective of this research which requires the accurate data of students’ response. This research method aims the easiest way to understand students’ experience and attitude toward Information–gap Task. Dealing with the research design, the
researcher used a descriptive design. Alwasilah (2011, p. 48) stated that the descriptive design is used to describe the characteristics of the researched objects. Here, it is accomplished to analyze students’ point of view toward the application of the approaches used in this case Information-Gap Task.

Regarding the use of method in this study, the researchers used questionnaire. The respondents are given the questionnaire to 32 students in class IX of SMA Tunas Bangsa for one meeting. It took 20 minutes for the students to answer the questionnaire before they had break time. Questionnaire items were adapted from Bahous (2011) whose research has the same aim as the researchers. She conducted a research about students’ perspective toward the motivation on EFL classroom in Lebanon. The questionnaire items consisted of 15 question items which transferred to the students in Indonesian Language to make it easier to be fulfilled by students. Questionnaire items contained 15 questions with two alternative options “yes-no” items Taylor & Powell (1998, p. 68). To analyze the data, the researcher collected the data from the questionnaire items which have been answered by the students. Next, they were analyzed by using the formula as suggested by Sudijono (2010, p. 43).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
4.1 Findings

The following table presents the result of data from 15 questionnaire items given to the students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Do you enjoy the use of Information-Gap Task in teaching-learning process so far?</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do Information-Gap Tasks make your learning process more effective?</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do Information-Gap Tasks facilitate you in improving your speaking skill?</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Can Information-Gap Task stimulate you to improve your speaking skill?</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Can Information-Gap Tasks ease your learning process?</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Can Information-Gap Tasks motivate you to speak English?</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Can Information-Gap Task attract your attention to learn speaking skill?</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Can Information-Gap Tasks make you more focused in improving speaking skills?</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Is the Information-Gap Task very important for you to practice speaking skills?</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Do you feel happy when the teacher is present and teaches speaking by using Information-Gap Task?</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Do you listen to the lessons attentively during learning activities that use Information-Gap Task?</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Do you ask any questions during the learning processes that use Information-Gap Task?</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Is any lesson taught by using Information-Gap Task helpful to enhance your speaking skill?</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Do you make task-based activity as the easiest method to practice your speaking skill?</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Do you think that Information-Gap Task deserves to be continued as the way to improve speaking skills?</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the questionnaire item number 1, the table shows all 32 students (100%) of class IX enjoy the learning process that uses Information-Gap Task as the activity in speaking class. Answering the questionnaire item number 2, the result shows that 94% students agree that Information-Gap Tasks make their learning process more
effective. Yet, 6% students said “no” as the answer. Furthermore, only 2 (6%) students answered that Information-Gap Tasks cannot facilitate them, but the other 30 (94%) students feel Information-Gap Tasks facilitate them in improving their speaking skill. The table shows that 97% students were stimulated to improve their speaking ability. It means 31 students answered “yes” and only 1 student (3 %) answered the question by answering “no”.

The fact is Information-Gap Task not only be a stimulation but also can ease the students in improving their speaking skill. It is proven by the result of the questionnaire. There are 31 of 32 students (97%) chose “yes” and only 1 student (3%) chose “no” as the answer. Nonetheless, for the questionnaire item number 6, the result shows 100% students’ response is “yes”. It means all students agree that Information-Gap Tasks motivate them to speak English and encourage them to improve their speaking skill. The seventh question reveals that 29 students were attracted by Information-Gap Task that achieved 91%, but 3 of 32 students were not attracted by the use of information –gap task that achieved 9% of the percentage. The questionnaire also wanted to find out he question item number 8 with the result there are 30 students (94%) agree that they can be more focus by using Information-Gap Task and 2 students (6%) cannot be more focus by using it.

Then, the result shows that 97% of 100% students agree that Information-Gap Task is very important for them to practice speaking skill. Only 3% students said “no” as the answer. According to the table, it can be seen that all students responded the question item number 10 by choosing “yes” which means 100% students feel happy by the teacher’s presence and the lesson of information-gap activity. The next questionnaire item discovered that 100% students listened to the lessons attentively during learning activities that use Information-Gap Task. It means 32 students answered “yes” for this questionnaire item. The fact is the students asked questions during the learning processes that use Information-Gap Task. It is proven by the result of the questionnaire. There are 28 of 32 students (88%) chose “yes” and 4 students (12%) chose “no” as the answer. 97% students agree that Information-Gap Task is helpful to enhance them to speak English and encourage them to improve their speaking skill. The result of 3% means 1 student disagrees to choose “yes” as the answer. Furthermore, the result shows that exactly 30 students (94%) make task-based method as their easiest way to practice speaking skill and followed by 2 students (6%) who do not make it their easiest method in practicing speaking skill. However, the students responded questionnaire item number 15 very positively, 31 of 32 students (97%) think that Information-Gap Tasks will be the good way to improve their speaking skill, and only 1 student (3%) does not think so.

4.2 Discussion

It can be seen from the research findings that most of students have positive response toward the implementation of Information-Gap Task in improving their speaking skill. This statement refers simply to the result of the students’ good answers toward the fifteen questions provided in questionnaire. The IX grade students of Tunas Bangsa Senior High School are very interested in performing their work using information-gap activity. In addition, this application becomes a good way to make successful learning objectives and creates a student-centered learning. This task is very important to be applied to reduce students’ difficulty in speaking English.
5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The instrument used in this study is questionnaire. Most of the students gave positive response toward the 15 different questions that measure the implementation of Information-Gap Task in improving their speaking skill. To sum up, the teacher applied a good application of Information-Gap Task during teaching learning process. Despitefully, most of students said that Information-Gap Task helps, eases, and attracts them in learning speaking skill. In other hand, there are very few amounts of students disagree that the implementation of Information-Gap Task can motivate, ease or attract them in improving their speaking skill.

Furthermore, the majority of student enjoys speaking class and agrees that Information-Gap Task deserves to be continued as one way to practice speaking skill. Apart from the fact that different students have different way to teach, Information-Gap Task is suggested to apply by the teachers that have problem with students’ speaking difficulty. It is worth try because base on the research result the level of success is high. This study can be conducted by other researcher with similar settings. Hopefully, the future research of the implementation of Information-Gap Task will be developed and more specific.

REFERENCES


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