Factors Influencing Task-Based Learning Motivation in English for Presentation Course among Thai Undergraduates

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Engaging students in active learning environments like task-based presentations can be challenging, as several factors influence their motivation. The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors influencing motivation in task-based learning in the English for Presentation course. Thirty undergraduate students who enrolled in the English for Presentation course in the second semester of the 2022 academic year at a university in Bangkok, Thailand, were purposively selected as the participants for the study. The research instrument was the minute paper that students were asked to write about their thoughts and feelings in response to the presented task, which required them to work independently, in pairs, and in groups. The study revealed that students' intrinsic motivation, English proficiency, task relevance, instructor support, and task variety were the factors that influenced their motivation in task-based learning in the English for Presentation course. The study found that the intrinsic motivation of the students was the most significant factor in the English for Presentation course after considering each factor. The findings of this study are valuable to all stakeholders in the learning and teaching process in order to create successful strategies, raise motivation, and promote positive attitudes about English learning and teaching in Thai context.

Keywords: task-based learning, motivation, English for presentation, factors, EFL

INTRODUCTION

One of the most common English learning and teaching methods found in Thailand is the teacher-centered approach. This method had led to several difficulties in the Thai EFL context, in which considered English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom since teachers served as the center of the learning and teaching process rather than the students (Chanaroke & Niemprapan, 2020). The three problems in English language learning and teaching in Thai context that often come to light when using the teacher-centered approaches are as follows: Firstly, according to Noom-ura (2013), teachers generally employ a lecture-style approach to English teaching in Thai classrooms, with students supposed to be passive learners. As a result, students can feel disconnected, unmotivated, and shy about speaking English, and lack responsibility for the learning process. Secondly, individual rather than group work is emphasized in many Thai classrooms, indicating a limit to the possibilities for student interaction in English language learning process. This can have a negative impact on students' motivation and English learning outcomes since it limits students' opportunity to practice English language skills and causes overwhelming anxiety (Bruner et al., 2015). Thirdly, Teechayawong (2018) indicated another problem in the English language in Thai context that learner autonomy is generally undervalued, where students are instead expected to passively follow the teacher's directions. They may lose interest in their studies and be less likely to make an effort to improve their English language and performance. These three common problems are calling attention to the need for an alteration of the English language learning and teaching approach in the Thai context, from the teacher-centered approach towards a more student-centered approach, which is important for students'

interests, needs, and skills. As well as the student-centered approach's emphasis on student engagement, autonomy, and motivation, the foundation of a student-centered approach is that students are more able to be engaged and motivated in learning to gain the learning outcomes that they expect to achieve and apply to their own lives (Schreurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014). Besides, to increase the learners' motivation, sufficient time for practice, opportunity to use English, and size of classes should be considered (Dunifa, 2023).

There are several methods that focus on the students' interests, needs, and skills in the English language learning and teaching process, for instance. Firstly, problem-based learning, or PBL, is defined as a method of learning in which students are presented with problems or challenges that they must use knowledge and skills to synthesize and solve by themselves. (Kök & Duman, 2023). Secondly, Nata and Tungsirivat (2017) suggested that one of the appropriate approaches for the learning and teaching process in the Thai context is the active learning approach, which focuses on doing the tasks rather than just sitting back and taking in information from teachers or textbooks. Students in an active learning environment are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process through a variety of activities such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Thirdly, Garrison and Vaughan (2008 as cited in Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019) defined the blended-learning approach as the development of a combination between the traditional classroom and the online classroom, and it is another suitable approach to English language learning and teaching process in order to develop the students' English language skills and promote students' motivation. Moreover, Sholeh et al. (2020) investigated the efficacy of task-based learning (TBL), concluding that it has the potential to improve students' English language skills in the EFL classroom by giving them opportunities to use real-life English in meaningful contexts. Similarly, Pham and Do (2021) found that task-based instruction helped improve the learners' productive skills, like speaking skills, but it was needed for students to get involved in the classroom activities.

English for Presentation is a course that allows students to complete the intended objective by presenting presentations to classmates on their interests. Script writing, presentation visual aid development, oral presenting, and other activities are included in the presentation course; particularly, role-play is a significant teaching method of improving learners' speaking performance (Mulyadi et al., 2021). All of the responsibilities for preparing for the presentation are in the form of authentic tasks that students experienced. Students have opportunities to learn how to complete challenges, and it is the instructors' responsibility to offer suggestions or assistance to students (Celik, 2017). These achievable encounters are able to assist students enhance their English language skills and critical thinking. As a result, TBL is designed so that students can attempt to accomplish the learning outcome.

In the Thai context, there were a small number of studies that investigated the effectiveness of TBL in different ways, such as TBL in speaking and reading English. The previous studies are as follows: 1) Kanoksilapatham and Suranakkharin (2019) conducted a study to investigate the completion of the tour guide task in English and the students' attitude toward the use of TBL to improve the speaking English skills of Grade 4 students in a school in Thailand. The findings showed that the use of TBL satisfied the completion of the task and a positive students' attitude toward the task. 2) Chooma (2014) investigated how to enhance the reading English skills of undergraduate students at a university in Thailand by using TBL, as well as the students' attitudes toward TBL. The result showed that the TBL approach was a significant way to increase the reading English proficiency of the undergraduate students, which was determined by using achievement tests, and that the students' attitude toward the TBL was positive simultaneously.

TBL had been considered an effective teaching and learning approach in previous research conducted in Thailand. However, there were a limited amount of research looking for motivating factors that impact TBL, particularly at the university level in Thailand. As a result, the researcher attempts to

figure out the factors that impact motivation in TBL among Thai university students. The findings of this study are valuable to all stakeholders in the learning and teaching process in order to create successful strategies, raise motivation, and promote positive attitudes about English learning and teaching in Thai context.

Literature Review

Task-Based Learning or TBL

Task-based learning is a learning and teaching approach that focuses on student-centeredness. TBL is widely applied in various areas, especially in English language learning and teaching. TBL is an approach to pedagogy that exposes students to the practical use of different language abilities in authentic circumstances. The TBL approach to English language learning and teaching aims to improve the students' proficiency, promote the students' motivation in the learning process, and apply the knowledge to an authentic situation by focusing on the tasks or assignments. Task-based learning was first introduced to education around the mid-1970s and played a significant role in the English language learning and teaching process (Sammuda, Bygate & Van den Brander, 2018 as cited in Wongdaeng, 2020). The essential point of the TBL was the clear understanding of the task or assignment that the teacher assigned to the student. Willis (1996), a famous scholar in English language teaching, defined the definition of the term "task" as "the activities where target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome" (p. 23). Another definition of the term "task" from Nunan (2004 as cited in Ulla & Perales, 2021), suggested that task is the learning and teaching activities that use the students' engagement in comprehending, manipulating, producing, and interacting using the target language. From these two definitions, the task is one of the most important elements in achieving the learning outcome. In addition, Ellis (2003 as cited in Wu el al., 2020) informed that a task is not just a simple or any activity in the classroom, but it is important that the task be related to the student's needs, interests, and skills. As well, in order to achieve the learning outcome, the task must also relate to authentic communication.

According to the TBL framework, one of the most important aspects of task-based learning in English instruction is that it enhances the students' self-confidence by offering them various opportunities to use English in class without being concerned too much about the mistake of using English. (Willis & Willis, 2011 as cited in Viriya, 2018). According to Willis (1996), the TBL framework divides the task into three main phases of language learning and teaching: 1) pre-task, 2) task cycle, and 3) language emphasis.

1) Pre-task: instructors present and clarify the task to students in clear and understandable detail.

2) Task cycle: instructors provide tasks to students, and students then have the opportunity to accomplish the tasks based on their English capacity, with the teachers' suggestions and support. During this stage, students' English language skills improve and their motivation grows.

3) Language emphasis: There are two components to this stage in order to concentrate on the English language in TBL: analysis and practice.

English General Education and English Presentation Courses in Thai context

An oral presentation is defined as practice of sharing information with an individual or a group, typically in formal settings such as events, speeches, or discussions. Within the realm of education, the English presentation course is a comprehensive program aimed at equipping students with the essential skills required for creating and delivering effective presentations. This program covers various aspects, including presentation design, the use of visual aids, non-verbal communication, and the development of individual presentation abilities. To achieve the course objectives, students are

expected to create their own presentations, and instructors assess their performance through feedback to help them improve.

The need to enhance students' English language proficiency makes the inclusion of a presentation course essential to improve their ability to communicate effectively in English. One particularly valuable course in this context is "Project Presentation Skills in English." This course is designed to enhance professional skills by teaching students how to design effective presentations, use visual aids, utilize body language and signposting techniques, and improve their English-speaking abilities. Students also get the opportunity to refine their presentation skills through projects centered around the use of English for communication. In line with the course goals, instructors regularly evaluate students' presentation abilities by providing constructive feedback, with the intention of encouraging improvement in future oral presentations (Ginkel et al., 2015).

Within the Thai educational, Sukitkanaporn and Phoocharoensil (2014) showed that the English presentation course has significant importance, as it provides students with the valuable chance to engage with authentic English as an element of communication. The presentation course is often offered as a general education or optional course at many institutions of higher learning. This implies that students from various academic disciplines have the opportunity to enroll in the course with the intention of enhancing their presentation abilities. Nevertheless, the presentation course is a compulsory course in the English major curriculum. In the domain of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), students encounter a multitude of problems within the context of the presentation course. Thai students not only exhibit a pessimistic disposition towards the English course, but they also harbor apprehension about committing errors during public presentations. Those errors concerned fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation (Tareen et al, 2023). Hence, it is important for the teacher to encourage students to express their capabilities during presentations through the use of constructive criticism aimed at enhancing their progress and growth.

METHOD

Participants and Sampling

The 28 participants of the study were drawn from the 124 undergraduate students who enrolled in the "English for Presentation" course during the second semester of the 2021 academic year at a university in Bangkok, Thailand. A purposive sampling technique was employed. The selection process ensured a diverse representation, allowing for an in-depth understanding of different student experiences. Students were approached during the initial weeks of the semester and informed about the study. Those who showed interest were provided with more details, ensuring they understood the study's aims and their role as participants. However, from the aforementioned purposes made the total number of 28 students participated in the study.

Setting and Context

The study's background was integral to understanding the participants' experiences and motivations. The "English for Presentation" course served as the focal point, offering an environment where students grappled with and navigated the challenges and rewards of learning presentation skills in a foreign language.

The "English for Presentation" course is designed to equip students with the necessary skills and techniques for effective presentations in English. The curriculum includes various components such as crafting compelling narratives, designing visual aids, enhancing verbal delivery, handling Q&A sessions, and more. Given the global importance of English as a lingua franca, this course is pivotal in preparing students for professional or academic scenarios where they might be required to present in English.

The sessions were conducted in a classroom setting within the university in Bangkok, Thailand. The classroom environment typically fosters interaction between the students and the instructor, allowing for immediate feedback, group discussions, practical presentations, and peer evaluations. This dynamic environment is crucial in shaping students' experiences and responses to task-based learning.

The instructor's role is central in the course, not just as a deliverer of content but also as a motivator, guide, and feedback provider. The data suggests that instructor support – in terms of teaching style, personal characteristics, and feedback mechanisms – plays a significant role in shaping students' motivations and experiences in the course.

Given the interactive nature of the course, students' participation, group dynamics, peer interactions, and relationships are essential contextual elements. The course likely had a mix of individual, pair, and group tasks, necessitating student collaboration and influencing their learning experiences.

The context of this course is further enriched by its relevance to students' broader academic and professional aspirations. As the data suggests, students found tasks like presenting on future careers particularly relevant, emphasizing the course's practical importance in their academic journey and future job prospects.

Instruments

The minute paper is a versatile and valuable tool for educators to gauge student understanding, gather feedback, and encourage student reflection. In the context of this study, the minute paper was adapted to gather qualitative insights into the experiences and motivations of the participants. Here's an in-depth look into this instrument:

Minute papers are short, open-ended questions typically administered at the end of a class session. Their purpose is to quickly capture students' understanding, reactions, questions, or feelings about the day's material or teaching approach. In the context of this study, they were used to understand the intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting student motivation and experiences within the "English for Presentation" course.

The minute papers in this study likely contained prompts tailored to extract students' feelings, experiences, and feedback about the course. For example, questions could have ranged from "What did you find most enjoyable in today's session?" to "How do you feel about the tasks assigned to you?" The open-ended nature of these questions allowed students to express freely, providing rich qualitative data.

Given their name, minute papers are designed to be brief, allowing students to spend just a few minutes jotting down their responses. They were probably distributed at the end of selected classes, ensuring that feedback was fresh and immediate. The sporadic administration also meant that a range of experiences throughout the course was captured, offering a more holistic view.

Minute papers are beneficial for several reasons (Angelo & Cross, 1993): 1) Immediate Feedback: They provide educators with almost instantaneous feedback on their teaching methods, the content's clarity, and overall student sentiment. 2) Encourages Student Reflection: By asking students to pen down their thoughts, minute papers foster deeper reflection on the learning process. 3) Anonymity: If administered anonymously, minute papers can yield honest and candid responses from students, as they might not fear repercussions for critical feedback.

Data Collection

Students were asked to complete the minute papers during the course sessions, ensuring real-time feedback on their experiences. The collection was done periodically, every 4 weeks for three times, totalling 16 weeks, to capture diverse perspectives throughout the duration of the course, allowing for

an in-depth understanding of student experiences and motivations as the course progressed. The 3-times of data collection were from individual work, pair work, and group work.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained from the minute papers was subjected to thematic analysis. This involved a) Coding the Data: Each response from the minute papers was read and assigned codes based on its content; b) Identification of Themes: After coding, patterns and recurring themes within the responses were identified. Themes such as the student's internal drive, English language proficiency, relevance of tasks, instructor support, and task variety emerged from the data; c) Theme Elaboration: Each identified theme was then explored in depth. For instance, under the theme of "enjoyment and engagement," individual student responses expressing their personal enjoyment and challenges in the course were analyzed. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of each theme from the students' perspective.

FINDINGS

The results of the data analysis were provided and analyzed in this part with the intention of making an impact on an understanding of the factors that motivate students to engage in task-based learning within the context of the undergraduate student who enrolled in the English for Presentation course in the second semester of the 2022 academic year at a university in Bangkok, Thailand. The qualitative data collected from the students through the use of minute papers was analyzed into various thematic areas, such as the student's internal drive, English language proficiency, relevance of tasks, instructor support, and task variety. Themes were identified by coding the data and examining patterns and recurring themes within the responses.

The first theme identified in the data analysis was enjoyment and engagement, which refers to the students' internal drive to learn the English language. A majority of the participants in this study reported that they were motivated to participate in the English for Presentation course due to their personal enjoyment of the learning process. For instance, participants S1, S3, S5, S7, S9, and S10 expressed that they enjoyed, understood the contents, and felt freedom in the presentation course. Participants S7, S19, and S20 expressed that although they experienced anxiety while giving presentations in front of the class, they felt a sense of enjoyment in completing the tasks assigned in the course. Participants S18 and S28 reported feeling positive during each presentation in the English language and not feeling pressured when they gave the presentation in front of the classroom.

The second theme was that instructor support, such as teaching style, personal characteristics, and feedback and guidance on task performance, may enhance students' confidence and motivation. A lot of students mentioned the name of the instructor in their minute paper that the instructor had so much support to their learning that they felt more confident in giving presentations. For instance, participants S1, S3, S5, and S8 praised the instructors' engaging, concise, and content-comprehensible teaching methods, which were not boring or terrifying. S3 also reported that the classroom instructor was pleasant. Consequently, they felt confident delivering the presentation in class. S16 stated that they disliked giving presentations in front of others due to nervousness, but their instructor always gave them encouragement and positive feedback, which increased their confidence. In addition, the age of the instructor had a significant impact on the students' motivation, as they perceived the adolescent instructor to be more approachable and to have a greater capacity for mutual understanding (S26).

The third element was task relevance, which refers to tasks that students must do are relevant to their needs and aspirations, such as improving presentation skills that would be valuable in their potential future jobs or interests. Tasks viewed as useful and practical could increase motivation. Several participants expressed their desire to deliver a presentation on the topic of traveling because it was

relevant to their interests and was not too difficult for them (S5, S7, S9, S11, and S14). S13 indicated that they were interested in giving the presentation on "Future Career" because they were about to graduate.

The fourth theme was English Language Proficiency, which refers to the effect that students' English proficiency can have on their motivation for engaging in presentation tasks. If the tasks are too complicated, students may feel overwhelmed, which can contribute to a loss of motivation. In contrast, if the tasks are too simple, students may lose interest and motivation. A participant stated that they had no prior knowledge of English presentations and that they considered their English proficiency was very low; as a result, their work, including script writing and oral presentation (S2), was affected. Similar to S21, they stated that one of the obstacles in the English for Presentation course was their lack of understanding and comprehension of presentation-related vocabulary. Therefore, they felt anxiety and were afraid to use language in front of others during the presentation. S3 also mentioned that English listening skills were a major issue, as when they attempted to understand the presentations of others, they became stressed when they struggled to understand the English presentation.

Last but not least, task variety or variation in task types, such as individual, pair, and group tasks, can provide students with different learning experiences, preventing boredom and increasing motivation. Participants S4, S6, and S10 preferred to do the assignment in groups because they thought the group assignments were easier to complete, preventing boredom and increasing motivation. Participants S4, S6, and S10 preferred to do the assignment in groups because they thought the group assignments were easier to complete. However, they preferred to arrange the group members on their own because they would like to work with their circle friends (S10). Another opinion from S20 and S23 was that they felt more comfortable sharing ideas when they worked in a close friendship group. From all the opinions, it can be inferred that group work with close friends was a factor in improving motivation in English for the presentation course.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings from the research can have significant implications for classroom practices, especially within the context of language instruction and task-based learning. Here are some implications based on the research results:

1. Incorporate Student Preferences: Given that students were motivated by personal enjoyment, instructors should consider including topics and tasks that resonate with students' interests and experiences. For instance, allowing students to choose their presentation topics can lead to greater engagement.

2. Positive Learning Environment: Creating an environment where students feel relaxed and free to express themselves can boost their internal motivation. Instructors should consider using humor, interactive activities, and varied teaching methods to keep lessons engaging.

3. Real-world Connections: Making lessons and tasks relevant to real-world scenarios, like career aspirations, can enhance motivation. Instructors could incorporate tasks that mirror real-life challenges, such as job interview presentations or pitches.

4. Tailored Difficulty Levels: The findings suggest that the difficulty level of tasks, relative to a student's proficiency, can influence motivation. Instructors should aim to offer tasks that are neither too easy nor too hard. This can be achieved through differentiated instruction, where tasks are tailored based on individual student needs.

5. Student Autonomy: The research indicates that students preferred choosing their group members. Allowing such autonomy can foster a sense of ownership and boost motivation. Instructors can occasionally let students form their own groups or pairs for certain tasks.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study investigated the factors that influence the impact of task-based learning on motivation among Thai university undergraduates enrolled in an English for Presentation course. The findings indicated that enjoyment and engagement, instructor support, task relevance, English language proficiency, and task variety are significant factors influencing students' motivation in the English for Presentation course.

The students' internal drive to learn and enjoy the English language was identified as the primary motivator for participating in the course. The instructor's teaching style, personal characteristics, feedback, and guidance on task performance were perceived as key factors in enhancing students' confidence and motivation.

Future research in task-based learning could fruitfully explore two promising avenues: understanding the role of task characteristics in optimizing student motivation, and leveraging the potential of technology-enhanced tasks and online platforms to promote and sustain engagement. One is unpacking the Motivational Power of Tasks. This line of inquiry would delve into the specific features of tasks that ignite student motivation. We could examine how factors like complexity, choice, and relevance to individual interests influence motivation across different proficiency levels. Such insights would empower educators to design tasks that cater to diverse learners and maximize their engagement. The other one is harnessing the Power of Technology: The rise of advanced technology presents another exciting opportunity. Here, research could explore the effectiveness of technology-enhanced tasks and online learning platforms in sustaining motivation within task-based environments. Evaluating tools like collaborative platforms, interactive exercises, and personalized feedback systems could pave the way for innovative instructional strategies that boost student engagement and motivation.

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