INVESTIGATING TEACHER'S CHALLENGES IN DESIGNING TMTBLT MATERIALS IN THE SPEAKING CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This study investigates the challenges teacher's face when designing materials for Technology-mediated Task-based Language Teaching (TMTBLT) in speaking classroom. Using a narrative inquiry approach, interviews with a teacher revealed three key challenges: challenges in creating engaging tasks, challenges in designing language needs, and challenges in determining the complexity of tasks. The findings emphasize the importance of teacher creativity, adaptability, and ongoing needs assessment for successful TMTBLT implementation. This research contributes to understanding teacher challenges in TMTBLT material preparation and suggests future research directions in exploring broader TMTBLT applications and the role of teacher training programs in overcoming these challenges.

Keywords: Technology-Mediated Task-Based Language Teaching; Teacher's challenges; Speaking Skill

INTRODUCTION

Enhancing student engagement and fostering effective learning in diverse classrooms are key challenges faced by educators today. Study found by Chong & Reinders (2020) stated that it is still important to find the challenges that teacher face in desgining TMTBLT materials due to the study still limit and has a few information that research regarding the challenges. Despite the potential of TMTBLT, implementing it in speaking instruction presents unique challenges, particularly when designing effective materials. A well-designed lesson plan should not be a burden for teachers. Overly complex or difficult plans can actually hinder a teacher's performance in the classroom. Recognizing the importance of speaking skills in communication and language learning, teachers should encourage students by emphasizing that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process and by providing them with the motivation they need to actively participate (Miftakh et al., 2023). To encourage active participation in speaking English, teachers can make their materials more enjoyable and engaging for students (Fortuna et al., 2021). While alternative ways to practice speaking exist, such as television programs, social media platforms, and books (Albino, 2017) these may not provide sufficient opportunities for structured practice or driven to diverse student needs. Additionally, EFL learners often lack confidence or awareness in practicing spoken English, especially in unsupportive environments (Albino, 2017).

Therefore, teachers must be creative in design the materials that integrate technology, which has another challenge here. To integrate technology-mediated and task-oriented language instruction in a classroom with students from diverse educational backgrounds. TMTBLT is one of the approaches in language teaching that has a positive contribution to learning speaking skills (Albino, 2017; Chen, 2019;Chong & Reinders, 2020). However, as previously mentioned, there is an immediate requirement for an effective language-learning approach that considers

both technology utilization and the four essential language competencies. In this context, Technology-mediated Task-based Language Teaching (TMTBLT) emerges as a promising novel framework aimed at enhancing students' speaking abilities by integrating technology and tasks. TMTBLT is founded on two principles: (a) recognizing that ongoing changes in learning and language usage are driven by technological advancements, thereby generating fresh demands for language education; and (b) acknowledging the necessity for suitable curricula and instructional approaches that genuinely and proficiently integrate tasks and technology (Smith & González-Lloret, 2021)

In the past five years, much research has explored the integration of technology into task-based language teaching (TBTL). A study by Butarbutar, (2021) highlighted the crucial role that policymakers, teachers, and learners all hold in successful technology-mediated TBTL, emphasizing the need for collaboration. This study also identified factors influencing student difficulties in TMTBLT. It is evident that teachers hold a crucial role as material designers for the success of TMTBLT in speaking classrooms. A study by Chong & Reinders, (2020) identified several themes, such as the characteristics of technology-mediated TBLT, its affordances and limitations, and the factors affecting its effectiveness. This study also recommended further research from the perspectives of learners, teachers, and other stakeholders for the successful implementation of TMTBLT. Additionally, it suggested further exploration of teacher challenges in designing TMTBLT materials for speaking classrooms. Study by Salam et al., (2023) the authors believe that fostering interaction and engagement in virtual classrooms requires a two-pronged approach. First, teachers should utilize adaptable textbooks. Second, they should modify materials to create appropriate tasks. This allows them to observe how students use language alongside available resources for communication. Lastly, study by Bashori et al., (2022) found that using websites resulted in positive improvements for students, especially reducing speaking anxiety. Their findings highlighted increased learner enjoyment in the foreign language classroom and improvements in vocabulary knowledge and speaking skills, particularly pronunciation.

A limitation identified in previous studies is that the crucial role of teachers as material designers for successful TMTBLT in the speaking classroom has not been fully explored. This study directly addresses the question: What are the challenges teachers face in designing technology-mediated and task-based language teaching (TMTBLT) for speaking classrooms and how to overcome them?

While research has documented the benefits of TMTBLT for developing speaking skills (Smith & González-Lloret, 2021) a gap exists in our understanding of challenges teachers face when designing these tasks. While the core principles of TMTBLT, such as real-world communication and fostering student reflection, are valuable (Smith & González-Lloret, 2018) translating these principles into engaging technology-mediated tasks that discover to diverse student needs is not easy. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the challenges teachers encounter when designing TMTBLT materials in speaking classroom. By gaining a deeper understanding of these obstacles, we can develop strategies and support systems to empower teachers and help them unlock the full potential of TMTBLT in their speaking classrooms.

METHOD

This research employed a narrative inquiry approach to explore the challenges of designing materials in TMTBLT for speaking classroom. Utilizing Daiute's (2014) practical design, the study collected and analyzed biographical narratives to gain deeper insight into this phenomenon. The research participant was a teacher from an English language course institution in Karawang, Indonesia that has been experienced for 6 years. The institution

recommended the teacher and class to ensure access to a suitable learning environment and appropriate teacher's experiences. The researcher employed the semi-structured interviews, that adapted from González-Lloret and Ortega (2014), were conducted with the teacher. These interviews utilized open-ended questions to encourage in-depth responses. To ensure a rigorous and valid analysis, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage thematic analysis process was adopted. The initial stage involved data familiarization, where the researcher immersed themselves in the transcripts and audio recordings from the interviews. This was followed by a coding stage, where themes and patterns were identified within the data. Refined themes were then developed and reviewed before being presented in the final analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study investigated the challenges faced by teachers when designing materials for technology-mediated task-based language teaching (TMTBLT) speaking classrooms. Previous research by Chong & Reinders, (2020) investigated the characteristics, affordances, limitations, and factors affecting the effectiveness of TMTBLT. While they acknowledged the importance of considering teacher challenges in designing materials. This gap is addressed by research question of this study. The research employed teacher interviews to gather data. Three key themes emerged regarding these challenges: (a) challenges in creating engaging tasks, (b) challenges in designing for language needs, and (c) challenges in determining task complexity.

A. Challenges in creating engaging tasks

In this institution, students should practice to speak English during class and have encountered several teaching methods. Therefore, it is challenging for teachers to always find new and interesting methods and materials that engage students in class. This is evident in the following sentences from a teacher's statement:

T stated:

> *One of the main challenges I face when designing class materials is creating fresh and engaging content that is relevant to students' needs and that they look forward to..*

Based on the teacher's statements, one of the key challenges in designing class materials involves creating fresh and engaging content. This content needs to be relevant to students' needs and address what they find appealing in English speaking. The underlined sentences point to a crucial finding: the challenge arises from the classroom environment itself. Students may become disengaged with traditional materials, making it difficult to keep them motivated.

T stated:

> *…to address this challenge, I employ the ATM (Observe, Imitate, and Modify) approach, drawing inspiration from various sources. Additionally, incorporating technology into my teaching has been particularly beneficial. I often use tools like Word Wall, Bamboozle, or quizzes to enhance student engagement…*

To overcome this challenge, the teacher implements a creative approach. They employ the "Observe, Imitate, and Modify" (ATM) strategy, drawing inspiration from the

methods used by other teachers. Additionally, they leverage technology by incorporating media tools like Word Wall, Bamboozle, or quizzes. By using the ATM approach, the teacher can stay up-to-date on effective teaching practices. Observing successful strategies from colleagues allows them to experiment and adapt those methods to fit their own classroom dynamics. Additionally, technology can play a vital role in enhancing student engagement. Interactive tools like quizzes and games can make learning more enjoyable and stimulating for students.

B. Challenges in designing for language needs

When designing materials for the speaking classroom, teachers must consider the language needs of their students. These needs encompass students' abilities in pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and comprehension while completing tasks. Interviews with teachers revealed a challenge in determining students' specific language needs. This is evident in the following excerpt from a teacher's interview:

T stated:

> *...in addition, another challenge I face is selecting appropriate vocabulary and language for both brainstorming sessions and tasks ...*

Unlike traditional speaking exercises, the dynamic nature of TMTBLT, influenced by technology and the flow of conversation, makes it challenging to predict students' specific language needs at any given moment. This difficulty is further compounded by the presence of students with diverse levels of proficiency in areas like vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation.

T stated:

> *...the students in this class generally possess similar language abilities, as they have undergone a placement test prior to entering the class....*

Based on the highlighted statement above to navigate this challenge, teachers can employ a multi-pronged approach to needs assessment. This may involve administering placement tests (either paper-based or online) to gauge students' baseline language skills. Additionally, conducting interviews with students allows for a more personalized understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Finally, incorporating classroom observations throughout the semester provides valuable insights into students' language use in real-time speaking contexts.

T stated:

> *...to gauge students' preferences, direct observation of their classroom interactions and discussions can be employed...*

However, the very nature of TMTBLT presents a potential advantage in addressing needs assessment. The collaborative and interactive environment fostered by technology allows teachers to gather valuable data on student language skills even without conducting targeted interviews. By observing how students utilize language during brainstorming sessions and task completion, teachers can identify areas where additional support may be needed. This observed data, coupled with an understanding of prior learning, provides a solid foundation for placing students at appropriate levels within the TMTBLT framework. While this approach may not be as in-depth as a dedicated needs interview, it

offers a more dynamic and adaptable way to design language focus that caters to the evolving needs of students within the TMTBLT speaking classroom.

C. Challenges in determining the complexity of a task

One of the final challenges teachers encounter in TMTBLT speaking classrooms with varying student abilities stems from the need to cater to a diverse range of needs. This is particularly true when students haven't completed a placement test, as highlighted in the following teacher excerpt:

T stated:

> *...additionally, I must carefully consider how to design tasks that are not overly challenging for students with lower abilities compared to their peers, while also ensuring that no single student receives excessive attention. This is a rather complex challenge.*

This quote exemplifies the teacher's struggle to design tasks that are engaging for higher-level students without becoming overwhelming for those with lower proficiency. The teacher's concern regarding excessive individual attention further emphasizes the complexity of managing a classroom with a student who hasn't completed the placement test.

T stated:

> *...the student would receive additional hours to catch up on missed material...*

As highlighted earlier, the teacher's statement a key challenge in TMTBLT speaking classrooms with varying student abilities: ensuring all students receive adequate support. One approach to tackle this challenge is through targeted interventions. In this specific case, the teacher recognized the lower-proficiency student's need and provided them with additional class time to bridge the gap in their language skills compared to their peers. However, this targeted support likely needs to be ongoing.

To ensure the student's continued progress and cater to the evolving needs of all students within the class, teachers can leverage long-term observation. By closely monitoring student participation and performance throughout TMTBLT speaking activities, the teacher can gain valuable insights into individual understanding. This allows for adjustments to the complexity of tasks based on observed progress. This way, the teacher can ensure all students are appropriately challenged without feeling overwhelmed, fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

Discussion

This section the researcher discusses other related theories and previous research regarding teachers' challenges and how to overcome them in speaking classrooms. The section is also divided into three main points: challenges in creating engaging tasks, challenges in designing for language needs, and challenges in determining the complexity of tasks.

A. Challenges in creating engaging tasks

The study highlights the challenge of consistently developing fresh and engaging materials. Students accustomed to traditional methods may become disengaged. The

teacher in this study addresses this by employing the ATM (Observe, Imitate, and Modify) approach, drawing inspiration from colleagues, and incorporating technology tools like Word Wall and Bamboozle. This approach emphasizes staying up-to-date on effective teaching practices and leveraging technology to enhance student engagement. These findings resonate with previous studies by Putri, (2023) and Albino (2017) which found that students perceive technology as a positive factor in language learning and can increase their confidence and motivation. Furthermore, a study found by Bashori et al., (2022) learning with the use of technology could help students' enjoyment in the foreign language classrooms during speaking, and the improvement of speaking skills.

B. Challenges in creating engaging tasks

Determining students' language needs presents another challenge. TMTBLT's dynamic nature, influenced by technology and the flow of conversation, makes it difficult to predict precise needs at any given moment. Furthermore, classrooms often have students with diverse proficiency levels. The interviewed teacher addressed this by employing a multi-pronged approach: placement tests, student interviews, and classroom observations. This strategy aligns with the recommendations of Nget et al., (2020) who emphasize the importance of a needs assessment to improve student speaking skills. However, TMTBLT itself offers an advantage in needs assessment. The collaborative and interactive environment allows teachers to gather valuable data on student language skills by observing their interactions during brainstorming and task completion. This observed data, coupled with an understanding of prior learning, provides a foundation for placing students within the TMTBLT framework.

C. Challenges in determining the complexity of tasks

Catering to students with varying abilities presents a final challenge, particularly when placement tests haven't been completed. The teacher in this study struggled to design tasks that were engaging for higher-level students without overwhelming those with lower proficiency. This echoes the findings of Chen & Lin, (2018) where many teachers expressed a lack of confidence in their TBLT abilities. The solution employed by the interviewed teacher involved targeted interventions, such as providing additional class time for a lower-proficiency student. However, ongoing support is likely needed. Long-term observation of student participation and performance throughout TMTBLT activities can provide valuable insights into individual understanding. This allows for adjustments to the complexity of tasks based on observed progress, ensuring all students are appropriately challenged without feeling overwhelmed.

This study contributes to the understanding of teacher challenges in TMTBLT material preparation. The findings highlight the importance of creativity, adaptability, and ongoing needs assessment to ensure engaging and effective learning experiences for students with varying abilities. Future research could explore a wider range of TMTBLT implementations and the impact of different teacher training programs on addressing these challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study delved into the challenges teachers face when crafting materials for TMTBLT speaking instruction. Through a narrative inquiry approach by teacher interviews, three main themes emerged. First, keeping students engaged with fresh and interesting materials proved

challenges. The teacher addressed this by using a creative approach, incorporating technology, and staying inspired by colleagues' practices. Second, pinpointing students' language needs in the dynamic TMTBLT environment was another challenges. The teacher employed a multi-pronged approach of testing, interviews, and classroom observations to tackle this challenge. Interestingly, the collaborative nature of TMTBLT itself offered an advantage. By observing student interactions during tasks, the teacher could gather valuable data on language skills, informing student placement within the TMTBLT framework. Finally, seeing to students with varying abilities, especially when placement testing was not conducted, presented a challenge. The teacher addressed this by providing targeted interventions and ongoing observation to adjust task complexity based on individual progress. This study contributes to our understanding of teacher challenges in TMTBLT material preparation by highlighting the importance of creativity, adaptability, and ongoing needs assessment to create engaging and effective learning experiences for students with diverse abilities. Future research could explore a wider range of TMTBLT implementations and the impact of different teacher training programs in overcoming these challenges.

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