

Impromptu Speech on Facts: Roles of Reading and Group Discussions as Pre-Tasks

Aida A.Rahman & Faizah Mohd Nor
Language Academy, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
Johor, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Many researchers agree that discussion on factual issues help to train the graduates to speak their ideas creatively and critically. Speaking on factual issues, nevertheless, is intricate especially when it is conducted in second language. Theories in Second Language Acquisition reveals that providing inputs from reading and group discussion may help the speakers improve their speaking skills. This study explains how reading and group discussion as pre-tasks facilitate the development of content and language for impromptu speech on facts. In this study, eighteen undergraduates were assigned to speak on facts in impromptu speeches. The eighteen students were divided into three groups; participated in three different pre-tasks: reading (R), group discussion (GD) and reading supplemented by group discussion (RSGD). The pretest and posttest speeches were assessed by two raters, recorded and transcribed. The speeches were analyzed qualitatively; focusing on the content (ideas and organizations) and language development (meaning potentials at word, clause, phrase and sentence levels). The analysis of the pre-test and post-test impromptu speeches' transcriptions was congruent with the scores analysis. Overall findings indicated that respondents participated in group discussion (GD and RSGD) showed greater improvements; and all the pre-tasks contribute to the development of content more than the development on language. Though overall findings indicate that RSGD showed the greatest improvement, it was noteworthy that GD improved more in language aspect.

Keywords: Impromptu speech; facts; pre-task; reading; group discussion; second language acquisition

INTRODUCTION

This research investigated how reading, group discussion and reading supplemented by group discussion as pre-tasks facilitate second language learners' impromptu speeches on facts as the target task.

Krashen's (1981,1982, 1985) highlighted on the role of 'input' in 'language acquisition'. Krashen's established Input Hypothesis has lead to vast research on input in L2 acquisition: Ellis (1985) studied on the role of input in natural setting; Sharwood-Smith, (1993) looked into input enhancement; and Gass & Selinker (1994) explored input processing. This study extended the research on the the role of inputs in natural setting, highlighting 'reading and group discussion tasks' as the inputs and 'ability to speak on facts in English spontaneously' as the output.

It is widely accepted that 'input' does facilitate the process of 'output' but in what ways does 'input' facilitate 'output'? By implementing Task-Based Learning and Teaching (TBLT), this study intends to analyze how reading and group discussion tasks as inputs help Malaysian students, at Higher Learning Institution, in preparing them to talk about facts spontaneously (output). Ability to talk about facts spontaneously helps them to function well at workplace and in society, locally and globally. The scopes of the analysis are the contents (ideas and organization) and language (at word and clause, phrase or sentence level) of the speeches.

BACKGROUND

Realizing the important roles of human resources in developing a country, The Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia (2007), has announced that soft skills elements should be emphasized in the undergraduate syllabus.

One of the issues raised in soft skill competency is the deficiency of communication skills related to thinking and language proficiency amongst Malaysian graduates. Azami Zaharim et al. (2009) found that Asian employers agreed that ability to communicate effectively is one of the top employability requirements for new professionals. With English language status as world lingua franca, the ability to communicate effectively in English language has been given an attention. An employee who is proficient in English Language will be able to represent an organization in international business deals. Making business deals are challenging as the employees need to respond to any issue raised wisely spontaneously. This is a big challenge to English language educators.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A language teaching approach which put emphasis on the interdependence of language, thinking ability and contents could, conceivably, provide the ways for the English language teachers to address the issue of competent communicator. Thiyagarajah (2003) suggested that language lessons ought to focus on cognitive skills which will enable learners to think critically and creatively.

Perhaps, letting students talk about facts in class could be one interesting relevant task for an adult learner (future professionals) that simulates a real-life activity. This is because a real-life professional conversation has always lingered around facts. Possibly, the best reason to choose facts as the topics for oral task is to get the students engaged with the world so that the students could develop their global competency. Therefore, an impromptu speaking task on facts may help to prepare students to be more globally competent speakers who are able “to communicate effectively across linguistic boundaries” (Brustein, 2003, p.2). However, to be able to connect facts to all areas of life has become a great challenge to many students. It involves the students’ ability to think critically. The students’ incapability to talk about facts spontaneously signals that they need to be trained to speak freely about facts.

Most research in second language acquisition concerned with input and learning (Krashen, 1985; Ellis, 1985). It is undeniable that inputs play important roles in language education. Therefore, researches on roles of inputs provide educators some insights for the betterment of second language teaching and learning.

On discussing facts, perhaps, the best preparatory task is reading on facts itself. Before the students are able to speak and write in a foreign language, they need enough information on the topic discussed and vocabulary of the target language. Therefore, not only those who have problems in articulation should be given some inputs and assistance, but also those who are fluent but lack of knowledge on that particular issue. Reading is the best resource for information. Through reading, one could get ideas on an issue as well as the important vocabulary needed to discuss the issue.

Some second language (L2) learners find it difficult to read in the target language. This is because, in order to comprehend the ideas written in the article read, L2 learners need to be able to negotiate the meaning. For these L2 learners who have difficulties in reading second language texts, reading as an input strategy might not be as effective as to others who are able to read materials written in the second language. These students need help in clarifying the meanings and understanding the article. While reading and discussing, students will gain inputs in both, content and language.

From this viewpoint, this study intend to analyze in what way do reading and group discussion help to improve the students’ speaking ability on facts particularly in the speech content and language used.

RESEARCH QUESTION

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does reading as pre-task facilitate content and language development in second language learners’ impromptu speeches on facts?
2. How does group discussion as pre-task facilitate content and language development in second language learners’ impromptu speeches on facts?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study would give an insight to teachers who plan to teach speaking skills. This is especially when the teachers intend to challenge the students with factual topics. In addition, it will help to raise the students’ awareness on the importance of discussing and reading on facts to facilitate the students to function effectively at workplace and in society globally.

THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of conducting impromptu speech activities on facts in classroom is to train language learners to speak spontaneously on any factual issues. In reality, anybody especially professionals are exposed to discussion on current issues or any issues that require them to state facts. Most of the time, speakers of any language were not given times to prepare responses to any issue during conversation – casual or formal. Hence, impromptu speech task could be considered as simulated task of the real speaking task.

The theoretical framework underlying the implementation of impromptu speech task as simulated task of the real speaking task is called Task Based Learning and Teaching (TBLT). The task defined in TBLT is real-world tasks that involve the use of target language for communication to accomplish the objective (Norris, *et al.*, 1998; Willis, 1996). To achieve the outcomes, it is suggested that other complete tasks to be carried out prior to the target task (Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1996 and Ellis, 2003). This task in a task phase is named as Pre-Task

Phase of a Work Plan. Current study implemented one of the pre-task recommended by Ellis (2003): The non-task preparation activities which are centered on reducing the cognitive or the linguistic demands placed on the learner – reading and group discussion.

The objective of this research is to analyze how reading and group discussion as pre-tasks facilitate the impromptu speech development in content and language aspects. To measure the improvements, several components in language assessment of a task should be considered. There are two different approaches in language assessment of a task used: task-based approach and construct-based approach (Bachman, 2002). As this study looks into the students’ ability to talk about facts in impromptu or the task accomplishment, it is the researcher’s contention that the task-based approach of language assessment is the best approach to be employed. In identifying the students’ competency in delivering impromptu speeches on facts, two components were analyzed: content and language. Researchers who view task-performance ability infer language as a tool to accomplish real-life tasks (Skehan 1996; Norris *et al.* 1998). Thus, language in this study is perceived as a tool that facilitates the accomplishment of the impromptu speech task. Since language is perceived as a tool, the potential of language assessed should be the meaning potential (Hasan, 1996).

The model of ‘Task-based’ language assessment predictors about future performance as ‘real world’ tasks adopted from Bachman L.F (2002, p. 457) was shown in Figure 1.

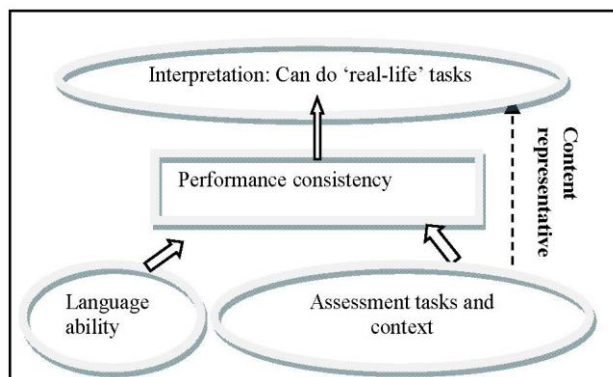


Figure 1 Bachman’s ‘Task-based’ predictors about future performance as ‘real world’ tasks

In the light of the above theories, this study proposed a conceptual framework adapted from Bachman’s (2002) ‘Task-based’ language assessment predictors about future performance as ‘real world’ tasks. For current study, the language ability component was assessed with focus on meaning potential at word, clause, phrase or sentence level (Halliday (1973) in Hasan, 1996); while for the assessment task and context, this study focused only on the sufficiency and organizations of main ideas, supporting ideas and arguments in content. Figure 2 indicates the current study conceptual framework.

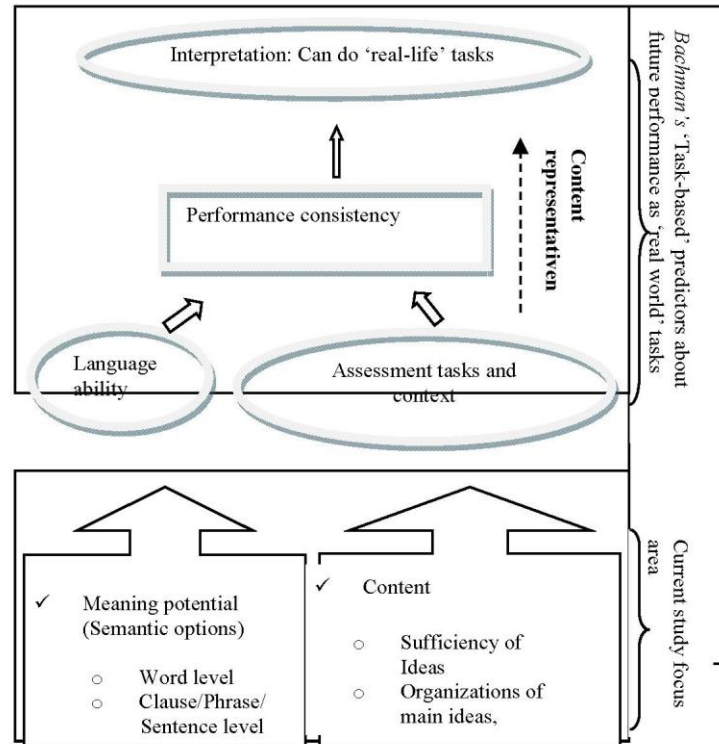


Figure 2 Current study conceptual framework

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out using the qualitative method. The qualitative data were quantified to present the overall scores of the pre-test and post-test. The respondents' pre-test speeches' scores were compared with the post-test speeches scores to determine the overall speeches improvements, language improvements and content improvements after the pre-tasks were implemented. Statistical trend found by quantifying the data were used only to verify the improvement in respondents' impromptu speeches' delivery. Once the improvements were verified, the respondents' speeches' transcriptions were analyzed in-depth. The qualitative analysis of the speeches transcriptions focused on how the speeches' language and content improved after the pre-tasks were implemented. The contributions of reading and group discussion as preparatory tasks for impromptu speech were also analyzed to explain and to compare the effectiveness of both tasks in the speakers' language and content development. The explanations of how the speeches' language and content improved were presented in qualitative themes. In the progress of content aspect, focus was given to the development and the organization of ideas (main and supporting) while in the progress of language aspect, the scope was the perfection at word level (vocabulary) and phrases or clauses or sentence level.

To compare the language and content outcome differences of implementing reading and group discussion tasks prior to impromptu speech task (as the target task), three groups of respondents were identified. Each group was assigned different tasks: Group A did only reading as pre-task; group B did group discussion as pre-tasks while group C did reading and group discussion as pre-tasks. Data collected from Group A explained how reading alone prepared the speakers in language and content for impromptu speech on factual topics whereas data collected from Group B explained how group discussion alone prepared the speakers in language and content for impromptu speech on factual topics Data collected from Group C explained how by implementing both pre-tasks, reading and group discussion prepared the speakers in language and content for impromptu speech on factual topics Data collection involved a total of 18 respondents (6 respondents from each group). The work plan is exemplified in Table A below.

Table A Tasks work plan for whole-class participants

Group	Treatments (Pre-tasks)	Task
Class A	Reading	Impromptu speech
Class B	Group Discussion	Impromptu speech
Class C	Reading Supplemented by Discussion	Impromptu speech

Respondents identified presented the impromptu speech twice: during the pre-test and the post-test. Topics given for the assessment were related to the issue of 'globalization' which include 'internet', 'travelling and tourism', 'pollution', 'skills', 'free trade' and 'globalization'. Their impromptu speech presentations were audio-taped, assessed and transcribed. The speeches were then, assessed by two raters. The average scores (of both raters) were presented as final scores. Final scores for each speech were calculated using Microsoft Excel and the means for the overall scores were presented. Three variables were assessed, namely the speeches' contents, language of the speech and overall performance. Rubric for the assessment was adapted from *Effective Public Speaking* by Schaller, K. (2002) and *2009 Student Level Impromptu Speech Competition Scoring Rubric* from The Ohio Future Education Association (OFEA).

This study focused on the content and language of the speech. There were four criteria used to assess the content of the impromptu speech which were the ability to narrow topic appropriately for audience and occasion, the ability to communicate thesis or specific purpose appropriately for audience and occasion, the appropriateness of material chosen and the appropriateness of speech organization to the topic assigned. On language part, holistic assessment was applied taking word choice, coherence, tones and grammar aspects into account.

The respondents were not informed the topic they were assigned to. They were given the topic three minutes before the impromptu speech task. Their impromptu speech presentations were audio-taped and assessed by two raters. Marks were given and recorded.

The work plan was designed based on the framework for designing task-based lessons suggested by Ellis (2003). In the pre-task phase, emphasis was put on both cognitive and linguistic factors. These were achieved through non-task preparation activities such as reading activity and group discussion activity

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Pre-test and Post-test Impromptu Speeches Average Score Comparison

Table B shows the pre-test and post-test average scores for all the three groups: Reading (R), Group Discussion (GD) and Reading Supplemented by Group Discussion (RSGD). The scores analysis verified that reading and group discussion pre-task activities help to improve the learners' impromptu speech presentations.

Table B Pre-test and post-test average score comparison

Pre-test-Post-test Average Score Comparison									
GROUP	PRE-TEST			POST-TEST			SCORE DIFFERENCES		
	Content %	Language %	Overall %	Content %	Language %	Overall %	Content %	Language %	Overall %
R	45.	45.	45.	55.	50.	55.	9.75	5.00	9.27
	83	83	83	58	83	10			
GD	45.	50.	47.	66.	61.	64.	20.92	11.67	16.70
	83	00	72	75	67	42			
RSGD	43.	49.	46.	68.	57.	63.	24.32	8.33	17.03
	75	17	22	07	50	25			

Overall, the group that carried out reading supplemented by group discussion as pre-task (RSGD) improved by 17.03 percent, followed by group discussion (GD) 16.7 percent and reading (R) 9.27 percent.

Assessment on the speeches' contents indicates RSGD improvement leads with its score 24.32 percent followed by GD with 20.92 percent and R with the least improvement score, 9.75 percent. The assessment for language competency, however, shows a slight difference with GD improving the most with the score of 11.67 percent followed by RSGD, 8.33 percent and R with the least improvement score, 5.00 percent. Undoubtedly, inputs from Reading and Group Discussion facilitate the content and language development of speeches. This is verified by the current research's pre-test and post-test scores of the respondents' impromptu speeches, which have proven that reading and group discussion do have impact on learners' content and language development in delivering impromptu speech on facts.

In this study, the researcher explored how inputs in natural setting (the three pre-tasks) enhance the development of content and language of the respondents' impromptu speeches on facts. The following findings are presented to describe how reading, group discussion and reading supplemented by group discussion facilitate the content and language development of the impromptu speech.

The findings show that, as a whole, group discussion as pre-task contributes more to the development of content and language of the impromptu speech compared to reading. Discussions help students to make some clarification and modification of inputs on both, content and language. While discussing, they will focus on incomprehensible and semi-comprehensible information. Hence, students will explore deeper ramifications of the issue. On the other hand, Reading shows the least improvement on content and language, probably because the inputs received are not challenged by others. The overall scores for both pre-test and post-test impromptu speeches in this study indicate that students who did group discussion as pre-task and reading supplemented by group discussion improve significantly compared to those who did reading as pre-task alone with the overall score differences 7.43 percent and 7.76 percent respectively.

The findings also showed respondents of all three groups improve more on content compared to language. This is because, while discussing facts, the respondents' attention is focused on the meaning - they analyzed and synthesized ideas (not the words or the syntax) presented in the text by selecting main cues, shaping them and producing right guesses.

The highlight of current findings is the difference in language scores improvement among the respondents who participated in group discussion without prior reading as pre-task (GD). It was anticipated that students who did both, reading and group discussion (RSGD), improve more overall. The findings indicate that overall RSGDs improved 0.33 percent more than GDs; and improve 3.4 percent more on speech content compared to GDs. In contrast, GDs (who were not instructed to read before discussing the issues) show that they improve more on language with the score difference of 3.34 percent compared to the RSGD. This finding revealed that when the respondents discussed an issue without prior reading assignment, they also focused on their language production.

The following qualitative findings that disclose the analysis of the impromptu speeches' transcriptions explained the interesting key features of current research findings in detail.

Language Skills Are Improved through Group Discussion Task Compared to Reading Task

The analysis below indicates the improvement on language made by GDs after the group discussion input. There were two levels of language analysis carried out: Improvement at word level and improvement at clause, phrase or sentence level. The analysis of the impromptu speeches among GDs shows that the respondents' language improves at both levels.

i. Word Level.

GD1 and RSGD1 were given the same topic for their pre-test and post-test speech: How Can We Benefit from Globalization? In his pre-test speech introduction GD1 defined Globalization as the world without border.

GD1's pre-test speech:

"Globalization is a..you know the, what you call it? Globalization is a process to be..process to ..ah..at the world without border which means the ..um..we can ...okay."

In his post-test speech, GD1 defined Globalization as the world without boundaries.

GD1's post-test speech:

"Okay..mm..what is Globalization? Globalization is in simple word is world without boundaries. In a contact of ..err.what you call it?....Okay, mm..there's a some benefit that you can get from globalization."

The difference in both definitions was the use of the word 'boundaries' and 'border'. The introduction improved when GD1 used the word 'boundaries' as it is a more suitable word of choice compared to 'border'. According to Oxforddictionary.com (2011); boundaries mean lines that mark limit of an area. It may also be defined as limits of an abstract, a subject or sphere of activity. The word 'border' however is used to define geographic boundaries such as line separating two countries, administrative division or other areas. Since the context of 'globalization' refers to abstracts, subjects and spheres of activity, the word 'boundaries' is the more appropriate choice.

If GD1 managed to use the word 'boundaries' instead of 'border' in his post-test speech, RSGD1 did not even mention the word 'boundaries' nor 'borders' in his introduction.

The analysis of all RSGDs impromptu speeches' transcriptions revealed that RSGDs language improvement was only at word level. It was discovered that RSGDs managed to use proper expressions and sufficient vocabulary in their impromptu speeches after the pre-task.

R5 and RSGD 5 both talked on the same topic for their post-test speech – 'Do We Need to Master English language?' Both R5 and RSGD5 mentioned the same point: English Language as global communication tool. R5 (who was assigned to only read in pre-task activity) referred 'communication' as 'community'; probably referred 'all walks of life' as 'chart', which are marked as [error - word choice] in his speech transcribed. R5 also use the modal 'must' together with 'should' which was grammatically incorrect.

R5:

"English is used to .. community [error - word choice]with others. I said that because in here..like in Johor, there are many foreigners that work in ...in Johor. So, we should must [error - redundancy] speak English because it was responsibility for us to get known others people from different age and the chart[error - word choice]."

In contrast, RSGD5 (who did reading and group discussion as pre-task activity) managed to use proper expressions to discuss on the function of English language as world communication vehicle. Words such as 'communicate', 'negotiate', 'translator' and 'translate' signified the variety of word choices related to the issue.

RSGD5' post-test speech:

"Besides that, when we go tourism to other country, like Korea or Japan, we don't know how to speak their country language, then we need use the English to communicate with other. And using the English we can negotiate the price with the salesman when we go tourism and we no need the translator to translate our language to other country language if we master in English language."

RSGD5's ability to use proper vocabularies and expressions after the reading supplemented by group discussion pre-task was observed in her post-test speech. RSGD5 was not able to use proper expressions to discuss on *the Advantages of Internet* in her pre-test speech. For instance,

the term 'information system' was inappropriately used to relate with 'information searching'. Another mistake made by RSGD5 was the use of the phrasal verb 'to know' in the expression '*to know the information*' instead of 'to search' or 'to browse' which are commonly use in describing issues related to internet.

RSGD5' pre-test speech:

"Through the internet, we can search some information on that like semester one we learn the information system. Many information we can't find in the book so we need internet to know the information."

RSGD5's improvement on language, however, was limited to word choices and vocabularies. Overall, she made few grammatical mistakes before and after reading and group discussion pre-tasks.

Grammatical mistakes in RSGD5' pre-test speech:

"Besides that, although search internet will attack some virus but you also can prevent virus by downloaded antivirus software on the internet."

Grammatical mistakes in RSGD5' post-test speech:

"And \surd using the English \surd we can negotiate the price \surd with the salesman when we go tourism and we no need the translator to translate our language to other country language if we master in English language. [The symbol \surd indicated word omission"]

According to Laufer (2003), more words are acquired through tasks such as group discussion than reading. Even though RSGD1 discussed the issue he read, the impact was different from GD1 who did not read assigned topics before the discussion task. RSGD1 read on the assigned topics to gain more information-both input on content and input on language. However, the constant focus of reading is construction of meaning. Readers depict deeply on conceptual and linguistic competence and are more selective of the cues available (Goodman, 1998). This especially happened when readers read factual texts as factual texts are written to convey meanings (New South Wales Department of School Education Curriculum Directorate, 1997). Focus on forms (language) was only on useful terms and vocabulary needed to convey the meaning of the message. Readers would not acquire language by reading but they would only gain language input instead.

ii. Clause, Phrase and Sentence Level.

The following is an evidence to show that students who discussed the facts without prior reading activity improved more on sentence structure. GD5 was given a topic on 'the Advantages of Internet' for his pre-test speech and 'Do We Need to Master English Language' for his post-test speech. In his pre-test speech, it was evident that GD5 had problems with his sentence structure. His idea of getting information on other countries is made easy by internet was not constructed well.

GD5's pre-test speech:

"We can know other country very easy on the fingertip just press the key."

Probably GD5 should say:

We can find information on other countries easily by only pressing the keys.

Or:

"Information on other countries is at our fingertip."

Although there were some grammatical mistakes in his post-test speech, overall, GD5's sentence construction improved.

GD5's post-test speech:

"English Language is international language. In all over the world, the people use the English to communicate with each other. For example if we go to other country, we do not speak Malay but we speak English to ask something to communicate."

The role of input in second language acquisition has been a concern of many researchers. The most controversial theory, probably, is Krashen's Input Hypothesis. According to Krashen (1985), when input is comprehensible, learners will acquire the target language and automatically be acquainted with the grammatical knowledge of the language. However, Gass and Selinker (1994) argued that 'comprehensible input' is different from 'comprehended input'. 'Comprehensible input' is controlled by the input provider while 'comprehended input' is controlled by the learner since only the learner has the authority to allow input internalization to happen to him or herself. This is what Gass and Selinker proposed as the difference between 'input' and 'intake'.

While Krashen (1985) proposed for possibilities of acquiring second language through only comprehensible input, Gass and Selinker (1994) proposed a model for second language acquisition which highlighted five levels of conversion: Input, followed by apperceived input, comprehended input, intake, integration and output. Input is referred to language data exposed to the learners whether or not they pass through to the learners (Gass and Selinker, 1994). If the initial data pass through the learners, the learners will reach the first stage of conversion called 'apperceived input' where some parts of the language is noticed despite the fact that at the 'apperceived level', the learners are not necessarily grammatically competent. According to Gass and Selinker (1994), four factors enabling the language input to be noticed are frequency, affect, prior knowledge and attention.

Since participants in both groups, GD and RSGD, have same level of prior knowledge of English language (all of them were selected among students who scored Band three in Malaysian University English Test) and are motivated to participate in the group discussion (since they realized that the pre-task was carried out to help them be more prepared for their impromptu speech later), probably, what makes participants for GD improved more on language compared to RSGD participants is the factor of different levels of prior content knowledge on facts, number of times they have heard about the issue and the language forms, and the attention they gave to the issue and the language forms. These factors of differences, however, are interrelated factors that explain the findings of this study.

As the GD1 and GD5 did not read the issue, they did not have input in content as well as input in language. Hence, to enable them to explain to their group members during the discussion, they need to reconstruct their language until they arrived at the correct form of their utterances. Wray (2010) claimed that adult second language learners learn by formulating the language. They analyze their content inputs into words- not analyzing the word itself. The more the respondents had to struggle to utilize the words to convey their message, the closer they are to acquiring the language. This is because, GD1 and GD5 need to give more attention to the language forms they heard and constructed while explaining different prior content knowledge they had to each other.

On the other hand, RSGD1 who read before the discussion did not have to struggle as much as the respondents who did not read prior to the discussion. Since RSGD1's group members also read on the same issue, the counterparts were able to clarify and modify the message on their own. Without having to synthesize his previous knowledge and new knowledge in language while explaining and shaping his ideas and arguments, the RSGD1's language input remains as input or perhaps has reached at the apperceived input level whereas, GD1 and GD5 had probably begun to move or had already moved from apperceived input level to comprehended input level.

Reading Supplemented by Group Discussion Tasks Improve Content of Speech.

i. Content Elaboration

Although RSGD1 did not mention the word 'boundaries' nor 'borders' in his introduction, RSGD1 managed to clarify the meaning of 'world without boundaries' which GD1 failed to do in his post-test speech. The meaning of the word 'boundaries' in RSGD1's speech was illustrated by the idea of 'entrepreneurial connectivity and intervention of social, education, economy, politic and technology'.

RSGD1's pre-test speech:

"Good morning. Today my topic is Globalization. Okay, the benefit what we gain is...ah...will standardize the segments like accounting."

RSGD1's post-test speech:

"Today I was giving a topic about the benefit of Globalization. Globalization is the mean the entrepreneur connectivity and intervention of social, education, economy, politic, technological and a lot."

Unlike RSGD1, GD1 could not accurately expand his definition of 'globalization before and after the pre-task activity. It was observed that GD1 hesitated when he tried to explain further what he meant by 'world without border' (in his pre-test speech) and 'world without boundaries' (in his post-test speech).

GD1's Pre-test speech:

"...the world without border which means the ..um..we can ...okay."

GD1's Post-test speech:

“Globalization is in simple word is world without boundaries. In a contact of ..err.what you call it?....Okay, mm..”

Findings of this research revealed that L2 learners who read and discussed facts (RSGDs) improved more on content compared to L2 learners who discussed facts without being given any input from reading (GDs).

ii. Content Organization

R5 and R6 participate in only reading as pre-task, whereas RSGD5 and RSGD6 participate in reading and group discussion as pre-task. R5 and RSGD5 talked about ‘The Advantages of Internet’ during the pre-test and ‘The Needs to Master English Language’ during the post-test. Both R5 and RSGD5 highlighted the same point when they talked about ‘The Needs to Master English Language’ which is the importance of mastering English Language for study purposes.

The findings show that R5 (who only read the related article) had some ideas related to the importance of mastering English Language but failed to justify the point highlighted. RSGD5 (who read and discussed the issue in groups) was able to justify the points highlighted more convincingly than R5.

R5:

“We also must should master one English. This is for our study..eh..this is because we have learnt English since we are born and we should have to master English because ... we have taught in English...for me, since I was in primary school. And many our material learning are also in English. Our books, our teachers, our lecturers are also from other countries.”

RSGD5:

“It is because English is wisely (widely) spoken and it has often be refer to as a work (world) language, the lingua francai (lingua franca) of the modern error (era) and many books, magazines and information in our world now mostly in the English. If we find the information in the internet and we don't know the English, it's more hard to us to understand all the article in English. Besides that, now many primary school, secondary school and university...widely use..widely encourage students to use English because many subject also teach in English. So, that the students can more understand about the English.”

R5 stated that ‘we should master English Language for the study purposes’. He then continued by merely listing the reasons. The reasons were, ‘we have learnt English Language for so many years’, ‘learning materials mostly are written in English’ and ‘the teachers are from foreign countries’. RSGD5, in contrast, justified her points by explaining the reasons. Her first point was, ‘English Language has become the lingua franca’. Therefore ‘all the source of information is written in English’. She then explained, as the result of ‘not knowing English language’, students would face ‘difficulty in understanding the articles they read’. She further elaborated by highlighting the implication in education- ‘schools widely encourage students to use English’. She continued to explain why students are encouraged to use English: ‘The lessons are mostly delivered in English, so if the students use English, they will understand the lessons better.’

Not only were R5's ideas not justified, but the contents were also disorganized. Out of a sudden, R5 introduced the idea of note taking for study purposes. This idea however, was left unexplained. R5 then continued with his second point on working purposes.

R5:

“So, we should must speak English because it was responsibility for us to get known others people from different age and the chart. It is easy for us to get some more notes or some materials for our subject that we have study [error 1- incoherent ideas]. And the second point is we need to master English because this is for our work, for our working purpose. Many place that, we need ..ah..that we want to work like to have, want like to get a very good or masters in English.”

Other examples were the post-test speeches by R6 and RSGD6. R6 and RSGD6 were assigned the topic ‘Do You Agree that Tourism Brings More Harm than Good?’ for their post-test speech. R6 and RSGD6 took different stands: R6 agreed with the statement while RSGD6 disagreed with the statement. Both R6 and RSGD6 brought up the same idea, trading, as one of their main points.

R6:

“Other than that, some of the tourist also visit this country for illegal business..ah..such as being a drug dealer or weapon dealer to Malaysian gangster. This is very dangerous to Malaysian people.”

RSGD6:

“So the second point is the trading. When tourism so the foreigners and our people from our country can go to their country and do the trading. So, when we go to other country like more improve more advanced country, so their country can have more advanced technology and more, more..O.advanced company so we can go there and learn how they work or improve their company. By doing so we can gain knowledge from them and then we can come back and improve our coun...aa...our company by using the knowledge.”

R6 had an interesting idea when he mentioned the deals between Malaysian gangsters and foreign gangsters. However, R6 did not explain how the deals could be dangerous to Malaysia. RSGD6, on the other hand, explained what Malaysians can do (learn from others) when they visit more advanced countries and more advanced companies. He also explained what Malaysians should do (apply the knowledge gained) after they visit the more advanced countries and the more advanced companies, when they return to Malaysia.

The findings revealed that both students RSGD5 and RSGD6, who were allowed to discuss what they read, were able to elaborate their ideas more deliberately compared to R5 and R6 who did not discuss what they read with others. Perhaps, when the learners participated in group discussion, the learners' confidence was enhanced. Given the chances to negotiate - defending and justifying their arguments during the group discussion activity, RSGDs gained more confidence in explaining the facts to the audience.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

As findings of this study indicated, students would be able to talk about facts if students were given adequate inputs on content and language. Reading on facts is compulsory as it provides clearer understanding of the issues. Facts are heavy with facts and to know facts, one should read. It is recommended that language educators expose their students with factual texts for their reading materials. Since the content is loaded with so much information, the reading session should be backed up with discussion session in which students will be given chances to sort the information, to clarify the ambiguity and enhance understanding.

According to current study detailed analysis of the speeches transcriptions, students improved in language aspect when they were assigned to discuss on facts without being given related articles to read prior to the discussion task. Since the students have different background knowledge, extra efforts (including carefully selected word choices; cautiously organized sentence structures; and logically thought-out and organized ideas) were demanded from the students to make the sharing session more meaningful. In fact, it was the process (of carefully selecting word choices; cautiously organizing sentences structure; and logically thinking and arranging ideas) that helps the students to acquire the language. Hence, for language classes, if the teaching and learning objective is to develop the learners' language skills, teachers could carry out a group discussion activity without giving the students reading materials prior to the discussion. Besides, discussing on facts spontaneously will provide rooms for more negotiations to happen. This is because; the students will be more careful at presenting the facts and will try hard to present the facts convincingly.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrated that the analysis of pre-test and post-test impromptu speeches transcriptions of respondents in all three groups (R, GD and RSGD) were congruent with the analysis of pre-test and post-test impromptu speeches scores. As anticipated, both reading and group discussion as pre-tasks facilitate impromptu speeches on facts. However, the findings of this study revealed that respondents who participate in group discussion perform better in impromptu speech on facts than respondents who only read related articles. Overall, respondents of all three groups showed improvement more on content compared to language. Nonetheless, the findings indicated that learners learn language better when they were not given content inputs from reading prior to the group discussion task. The reason for this interesting finding was that learners were forced to explain their points and justifications repeatedly until both parties gain a mutual understanding in order to convince the other participants in the discussion. Enforcement factors encourage them to monitor their language, hence made them notice the more accurate utterances.

REFERENCES

- Azami Zaharim, Yuzainee Md Yusoff, Mohd Zaidi Omar, Azah Mohamed, Norhamidi Mohamad. 2009. *Engineering Employability Skills Required by Employers in Asia*. Proceedings of the 6th WSEAS International Conference in Engineering Education Retrieved on 16 September 2011.
- Bachman, L. F. 2002. Some Reflections on Task-Based Language Performance Assessment. *Language Testing*. 19(4): 453–476
- Brustein, W. 2003. cited in Hunter, W. D. 2004. *Got Global Competence*. Retrieved March 2010 from www.nafsa.org/_/File/_/go_global_competency.pdf.
- Ellis, R. 1985 in Ellis, R. 1997. *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. 2003. *Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 499–511.
- Foster, P. & Skehan, P. 1996. The Influence of Planning on Performance in Task-Based Learning. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*. 18(3): 299–324.
- Gass, S., & Selinker, L. 1994. *Second Language Acquisition: An Introductory Course*. Hilldale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Goodman, K. 1998. *Book Chapter 1 The Reading Process, Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hasan, R. 1996. Semantic Networks: A Tool for the Analysis of Meaning. In Carmel Cloran, David Butt & Geoff Williams, eds. *Ways of Saying, Ways of Meaning: Selected papers of Ruqaiya Hasan*. London: Cassell.
- Krashen, S. D. 1985 in Krashen, S. D. 1987. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Lauffer, B. 2003. *Vocabulary Acquisition in a Second Language: Do Learners Really Acquire Most Vocabulary by Reading? Some Empirical Evidence*. Canadian Modern Language Review/ La Revue canadienne des langues vivantes. Volume 59, Number 4 June 2003.567–587.
- Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education. 2007. *National Higher Education Action Plan 2007–2010*. Putra Jaya: Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education.
- New South Wales Department of School Education Curriculum Directorate, 1997 retrieved from http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/primary/english/assets/pdf/reading/teach_read.pdf.
- Norris, J. M., Brown, J. D., Hudson, T. and Yoshioka, J. 1998. *Designing second language performance assessments*. (Vol. SLTCC Technical Report #18).
- Sharwood-Smith, M. 1993. *Input enhancement in instructed SLA* in Ying, Hongguang (1995), *What Sort of Input is Needed for Intake*. *IRAL*, v33 n3 p175-94 Aug 1995.
- Skehan, P. 1996. A Framework for the Implementation of Task-Based Instruction. *Applied Linguistics*. 17: 38–62.
- Schaller, K. 2002. *Principles of Effective Public Speaking: Student Workbook*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Student Level Impromptu Speech Competition Scoring Rubric (2009) retrieved from education.ohio.gov/.../Teaching/...Ohio/.../2014-Impromptu-Speech.doc.aspx.
- Thiyagarajah, P. M. 2003. *Learning English in Malaysian Rural Secondary Schools: Difficulties, Learning Styles & Strategies and Motivation*. Retrieved December 2010 from <http://lc03.commongroundconferences.com/ProposalSystem/Presentations/P000844.html>.
- Willis, J. 1996. *A Framework for Task-based Learning*. Harlow: Longman