

# The Use of Task-Based Language Instruction in Teaching Multigrade Elementary Students on English Private Course

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**Abstract:** *There are some ways to broaden learner's ability in acquiring English nowadays. In formal school, the students commonly learn English with their classmate in the same level of grade. Nevertheless, by any circumstance, studying English in formal school should be committed within various grades of students, which can be called as multigrade class. It should be underlined that those studies are applied in formal school of rural area. However, in fact, multigrade class may happen in informal educational institution such as English course. This study is conducted to know whether or not there is a significant effect of teaching multigrade primary level students in regular class of an English private course to the progres of the students' speaking performance by using Task-based Language Instruction. Therefore, the focus of the students' competence is the fluency of their speaking and behavior during teaching learning activities.*

**Keywords:** *Task-based language instruction, multigrade elementary students, English private course.*

## INTRODUCTION

Considered as a *lingua franca*, English is used in many countries around the world (Crystal, 2003:6). English plays an important role in many aspects of life, such as business, tourism, education, technology and the international relationship. In educational area, English is taught as second or foreign language by countries where English is not their mother-tongue including Indonesia. Therefore, in Indonesia, English can be found at elementary up to secondary level school as one of subject should be taught. In formal school, students commonly learn English with their classmate in the same level of grade. Nevertheless, by any circumstance, studying English in formal school should be committed within various grade of students, which can be called as multigrade class.

Miller (1999:1) defines multigrade class as a class in which students of two or more adjacent grade levels are taught in one classroom by one teacher for most of the day. It is obviously hard to be imagined that a teacher teaches grade one, two, and three concurrently. Futhermore, Miller (1999) compiles several quantitative and qualitative researches of multigrade and multiage class which are done by several researchers (Rule, 1983; Stone 1987; Veenman, 1995; Mason and Burns, 1995). The following table shows the researchers and their findings.

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Table 1. The Researchers and Their Findings

<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Research Place</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Multi-grade Range</b>	<b>Subjects/Achievements</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Rule	1983	Primary schools at Arizona, U.S.	Grades 3-6	Two consecutive grade levels	Reading and Mathematics	The multigrade classes did not appear to affect reading and mathematics achievement negatively
Stone	1987	Primary schools at U.S.	Grades 2-3	Two consecutive grade levels	Mathematics, Reading, Language, Science, and Social Studies	No significant differences between the multigrade students and the single-grade students in overall achievement
Veenman	1995	Primary schools at U.S.	Not Specifically Stated	Not Specifically Stated	Not Specifically Stated	There were no consistent differences in student achievement between multigrade and single-grade classes.
Mason and Burns	1995	Primary schools at California, U.S.	Not specifically stated		Not specifically stated	major administrative constraints prevent many principals from purposeful placement of students in multigrade classes

Researcher	Year	Research Place	Participants	Multi-grade Range	Subjects/Achievements	Findings
Kral	1995	Primary schools at Denmark	Grade 2, 4, 6	Two-three different levels	Mathematics, Reading, Language.	No systematic differences were found between the combination and single-grade class
Miller	1999	Peru, Sri Lanka, Vietnam	50-150 students	Two-five different levels	Multisubject	Multigrade class in those countries established because of forcefulness factors

It can be assumed that most of studies found that multigrade class can be run as well as single-grade class even though more or less it is needed extra efforts of the teacher to organize them. After all, the studies are not matter of experiment only but also based on reality face on third world country (Peru, Sri Lanka, Vietnam) that makes multigrade class should be established due of administrative, economy, and population factors.

It should be underlined that those studies are applied in formal school of rural area. However, in fact, multigrade class may happen on informal educational institution such as English course. Commonly, regular English course classroom is seated by limited number of students around five to twelve. They ought to be selected based on placement test or according to adjacent level of graders. However, certain condition enables multigrade class is created as example the courses only have several students but they are in various level of grades while the time and opportunity of teaching is limited to a single class only. Does it enable to be committed at the English course as well as the formal school at previous researches at the primary schools dealing with its positive and negative findings?

By means of that, this study is arranged to know whether or not there is a significant effect of teaching multigrade primary students in regular class of English course to the students' progression of speaking performance. The method used is *Task-based Language Instruction*, and the competence of students would be noticed is in the fluency of speaking and behavior during teaching learning activities.

The participants of this study are elementary students who belong to young learners. Brown (2007:2) states that there are learner characteristics factor considering second language acquisition. This also behaved on elementary students as young learners. Furthermore, Scott and Ytreberg (1990:1) distinguish young learners into two main groups, five to seven years old (later will be called as group A) and eight to ten years old (later will be called as group B). The following are the characteristics and competence that commonly possessed by them (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990:2).

Table 2. The Characteristics and Competence That Commonly Possessed By Scott and Ytreberg

Group A	Group B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be able to talk about what they are doing</li> <li>- Be able to tell what have they done or heard</li> <li>- Be able to plan activities</li> <li>- Be able to argue for something</li> <li>- Be able to tell what and why they think</li> <li>- Be able to use logical reasoning (in certain circumstance)</li> <li>- Be able to use vivid imaginations</li> <li>- Be able to understand direct human interaction</li> <li>- be able to understand that they are bond by rules eventhough do not have idea of their meaning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Be able to decide their views of the world.</li> <li>-Be able to rely on the spoken word to convey and understand meaning.</li> <li>- Be able to make some decisions about their own learning.</li> <li>- Be able to distinguish what they like and don't like doing.</li> <li>- Be able to develop sense of fairness</li> <li>- Be able to work with others and learn from others.</li> <li>- Becomes more criticize/ask questions all the time</li> </ul>

By means of those all, Scott and Ytreberg (1990:5) add some concept should be implemented in teaching young learners:

- a) Words are not enough; which means teachers do not rely on the spoken word only. Most activities for young learners should include movement and involve the senses.
- b) Play with the language; let they talk to themselves. Teacher should make up rhymes, sing songs, tell stories. Experiment with words and sounds: "Let's go – pets go", "Blue eyes – blue pies". It is very natural stage of foreign language learning.
- c) Language as language; most eight to ten year olds already have the awareness of language. The spoken word is often accompanied by other clues to meaning – facial expression, movement, etc. Teacher should make full use of these clues.
- d) Variety in the classroom; since concentration and attention spans are short, variety is a must – variety of activity, pace, organization, voice.
- e) Routines; children benefit from knowing the rules and being familiar with the situation. Teacher should have systems, have routines, organize and plan the lesson. Use familiar situations, familiar activities.
- f) Cooperation not competition; teacher should avoid distributing reward and prizing to make them compete one to another. Other forms of encouragement are more effective. Group the children whenever possible.
- g) Grammar; children have an amazing ability to absorb the language through play and other activities which they find enjoyable. How good they are in a foreign language is not dependent on whether they have learnt the grammar rules or not. In practice, teachers should note the structures, functions, and grammar items which they want the students to learn as well as those they already know, but the actual teaching should only include the barest minimum of grammar taught as grammar, and then for the older children only.
- h) Assessment; even though formal assessment may not be a compulsory part of work, it is always useful for the teacher to make regular notes about each child's progress.

Considering those all, teaching multigrade students possibly will not runs well unless the students listen to the teacher instruction. It needs something that make students are busy and focus on what will be learnt and achieve later. Therefore, task-based learning instruction is attempted in this study. Seyyedi (2012) defines task-based as a kind of instruction in which language learners are engaged in meaningful, goal-oriented communication to solve problems, complete projects, and reach decisions. It can be inferred that task-based language instruction is a kind of language teaching which emphasizes on doing task as main unit of planning and implementation of teaching. It is supported by Ellis' (2009) statement that task-based language instruction has attracted increasing attention from researchers and teachers. Richard (2006, in Suaidin, 2014) states that there are two types of task in this approach, pedagogical task and real world task. Pedagogical task is designed to encourage students' competence of language skills, vocabularies, and grammar but only matter specifically at classroom activities. In other side, real world task is task concerning the use of language in real world authentically.

The task given in this study is referring to speaking skill. Unfortunately, there is no established curriculum of English subject for elementary students so that the materials are adjusted to the skill will be achieved in the course only. Brown (2004:141) identifies five types of speaking performance that are *imitative*, *intensive*, *responsive*, *interactive*, and *extensive*. Imitative is the ability to simply parrot back (imitate) a word or phrase or possibly a sentence. As regards to intensive that understood as the production of short stretches of oral language designed to demonstrate competence in a narrow band of grammatical, phrasal, lexical, or phonological relationships. The following two types are responsive and interactive. Responsive as assessment task defines as interaction and test comprehension but at somewhat limited level of very short conversations, standard greetings and small talk, simple request and comments, and the like, while interactive speaking differ in the length and complexity of the interaction, which sometimes includes multiple exchange and/or multiple participants. Interactive can be distinguished into two forms of transactional language or interpersonal exchanges. The latest is extensive or called as monologue which oral production tasks include speeches, oral presentations, and story-telling.

Considering those types of speaking performance, the material used in this study are in the level of elementary students possibly fit in. They are imitative, intensive, and responsive.

## **METHODS**

### **I. Participants**

The participants of the study are eleven multigrade elementary school students from an English private course in Jember. The students are grouped into one class. They obviously have different ages, personalities, and background of knowledge. This following table is their personal data.

Table 3. The Personal Data

No.	Name	Gender	Grade/age	Personalities	Specific notes
1.	KL	Female	1st/6	Fussy, overacting, exaggerating, having short span of concentration	High achiever student
2.	AF	Male	1st/6	Fussy, moody, disturber, boasting, grousing, spoiled, having short span of concentration	Medium achiever student
3.	SS	Female	2nd/7	Grousing, dependent, having short span of concentration	Low achiever student
4.	RN	Female	2nd/7	Passive, bashful.	High achiever student
5.	IB	Male	3rd/8	Hyperactive, ignorant, having short span of concentration	High achiever student
6.	KM	Female	4th/10	Obedient, quiet, less confident	High achiever student
7.	QN	Female	4th/9	Obedient, quiet, passive.	High achiever student
8.	DY	Female	6th/11	Active, curious, competitive-like, childish.	High achiever student
9.	DN	Male	6th/11	Passive, dependent.	Low achiever student
10.	DD	Female	6th/11	Active, curious, competitive-like.	High achiever student
11.	IN	Female	6th/11	Active, curious, persistent.	High achiever student

The participants are considered as a representative of group A and group B of young learners, in spite of some students has reach age 11, they are still closely related to group B students' characteristics.

## II. Material and Procedure

This study were undertaken for three months while teaching learning activities are committed twice a week, 90 minutes for each meeting. The teaching learning activities is lead by an English teacher (writer's cohort) while the writer himself as an observer. In the process, the participants are taught based on combination of pedagogical and real-world tasks. In each meeting, a theme is delivered once but the tasks for each level of grade are treated differently. The following is the table of material of course activities within eight weeks:

Table 4. The Material of Course Activities Within Eight Weeks

Meeting	Theme	Description	Task Given per grade
1.	Hello, how are you!	Expression of greeting, requesting, parting	Grade 1-4: Immitative + Responsive Grade 6: Responsive
2.	Let's Sing together!	Alphabet song Good morning song	Grade 1-4: Immitative + Intensive Grade 6: Immitative + Responsive
3.	What is your hobby?	Asking about their own hobby	Grade 1-4: Immitative + Intensive Grade 6: Intensive + Responsive
4.	My Pets	Asking and encouraging students about animals they pet	Grade 1-4: Immitative + Responsive Grade 6: Responsive
5.	The Movie: The Grasshopper and The Ants	Understanding the vocabularies and speech acts on the movie	Grade 1-4: Immitative + Responsive Grade 6: Responsive
6.	Rainy Season	Describing things in rainy season and how to overcome it	Grade 1: Immitative Grade 2: Immitative Grade 3: Immitative + Intensive Grade 4: Immitative + Intensive Grade 6: Responsive
7.	Let's Sing together!	Baa Baa Black Sheep Twinkle- twinkle Little Star	Grade 1-4: Immitative + Intensive Grade 6: Immitative + Responsive
8.	Do you like vegetables?	Expression of requesting, vocabularies of various kind of vegetables.	Grade 1-4: Immitative + Responsive Grade 6: Responsive
9.	Human Personalities	Describing things of human personalities	Grade 1: Immitative Grade 2: Immitative Grade 3: Immitative + Intensive Grade 4: Immitative + Intensive Grade 6: Responsive
10.	Human Disease	Describing things of human disease	Grade 1-4: Immitative + Responsive Grade 6: Responsive
11.	Let's Sing together!	The Wheels on the Bus	Grade 1-4: Immitative + Intensive Grade 6: Immitative + Responsive
12.	Try Out	Speaking practice	Grade 1-4 and 6 different speaking assessment

## RESULT

In order to ascertain the outcome of instructional strategy implementation, the results are showed based on each student's behavior and speaking performance. This following table are presented as the results of the study.

Table 5. Presented as The Results of The Study

No.	Name	Gender	Grade/age	Behavior during teaching-learning activities in on-going three months	Speaking performance in on-going three months
1.	KL	Female	1st/6	-Still be fussy but little bit aware of time to talk or to listen. -More sociable. -Understand about others' necessity.	-Fluently to utter some vocabularies of things, colour, number, profession. -Can responding some expression of greeting.
2.	AF	Male	1st/6	-Still be fussy and keep teacher extra work to keep an eye on him. -His disturbance is diminished by the exposure of teachers' prohibition. -Not as moody as before.	-More fluent of uttering some vocabularies of things, animals, colour, number, profession. -Can responding some expression of greeting, parting.
3.	SS	Female	2nd/7	-Asking more than others because of her difficulty of comprehension. -Interest on material of song and it's a bit effective to cover her speaking performance	-Can responding some expression of greeting. -Still need a lot of practices to utter some vocabularies, but she is able to recall that by given clues.
4.	RN	Female	2nd/7	-More sociable. -Encouraged to speak up but not in loud voice.	-Fluent of uttering some vocabularies of things, flora and fauna, colour, number, profession. -Can responding some expression of greeting, request, parting.
5.	IB	Male	3rd/8	-Still be hyperactive and keep teacher extra work to keep an eye on	-Fluent of uttering some vocabularies of things, flora and fauna, colour,



No.	Name	Gender	Grade/age	Behavior during teaching-learning activities in on-going three months	Speaking performance in on-going three months
				him. -His disturbance is diminished by the exposure of teachers' prohibition.	number, profession; -Can make and respond some expression of greeting, request, parting. -Able to utter simple phrases.
6.	KM	Female	4th/9	-Still obedient, calm. -Be more active involving teaching-learning process. -Be more confidence.	-Fluent of uttering some vocabularies of things, flora and fauna, colour, number, profession. -Can make and respond some expression of greeting, request, parting. -Able to make simple phrases and sentences.
7.	QN	Female	4th/9	-Still obedient, calm. -Be more active involving teaching-learning process.	-Fluent of uttering some vocabularies of things, flora and fauna, colour, number, profession. -Can make and respond some expression of greeting, request, parting. -Able to utter simple phrases and sentences.
8.	DY	Female	6th/11	-Becomes more lively, -Actively involving teaching-learning process. -Trustful to lead lower grade students focus on study.	-Able to utter plenty of vocabularies precisely; -Can make and respond some expression of greeting, request, offering, parting. -Can practice small talk/simple conversation. -Able to utter complex phrases and sentences.
9.	DN	Male	6th/11	-Becomes more active. -His dependent is diminished.	-Able to utter plenty of vocabularies. precisely, but less than others 6 graders. -Can make and respond

No.	Name	Gender	Grade/age	Behavior during teaching-learning activities in on-going three months	Speaking performance in on-going three months
					some expression of greeting, request, offering, parting. -Can practice small talk/simple conversation, but less fluent than others 6 graders. -Able to utter complex phrases and sentences.
10.	DD	Female	6th/11	-Becomes more lively. -Actively involved in teaching-learning process. -Trustful to lead lower grade students focus on study.	-Able to utter plenty of vocabularies precisely. -Can make and respond some expression of greeting, request, offering, parting. -Can practice small talk/simple conversation. -Able to utter complex phrases and sentences.
11.	IN	Female	6th/12	-Active, lively, keep on curious, persistent. -Trustful to lead lower grade students focus on study.	-Able to utter plenty of vocabularies precisely. -Can make and respond some expression of greeting, request, offering, parting. -Can practice small talk/simple conversation. -Able to utter complex phrases and sentences.

## DISCUSSION

This study found that the students of multigrade class can be formed well-enough as well as single-grade class, nevertheless it is unavoidable that in the process of teaching learning activities there is many obstacles, such as lower grade students who sulking, quarelling, so teacher had to do extra effort to keep the teaching learning process is on the proper track. This is also indicates that applying Task-based Language Instruction is effective to be implemented on multigrade class with limited number of participants because the different result possibly emerges when there are more participants and more various

grades of students. The participants' inner competence is also the thing which should be considered for further study as for the various combination of participants of this study are two low achiever students, one student as medium achiever while the rest considering as high achiever students. Finally, it is stated that there is a significant effect of teaching multigrade primary students in regular class of English course to the students' progression of speaking performance.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the data gathered by the researcher, it can be concluded that there is a significant effect of teaching multigrade primary level students in regular class of an English private course to the progress of the students' speaking performance by using *Task-based Language Instruction*.

### SUGGESTION

The result of this research is hopefully beneficial for the English teachers especially for those who teach multigrade primary level students at English private course. They may do various ways or designs to enrich the finding in the implementation of *Task-based Language Instruction*.

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