

Using a communicative task to correct -ed ending pronunciation mistakes for non-English major students in a class at Hai Phong University

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Abstract: *This paper presents the results of an action research entitled 'Using a communicative task to correct -ed ending pronunciation mistakes for non-English major students in a class at Hai Phong University'. The mistakes are collected from 31 non-English majored students at the first semester in a class of Hai Phong university. The paper aims to answer two research questions: i) What are the students' mistakes in pronouncing the -ed ending? and ii) What effects does the communicative task make when being used in correcting the students' English -ed ending pronunciation mistakes? The results shows that the majority of the students made several kinds of mistakes in pronouncing -ed ending, including pronouncing /t/ and /d/ like Vietnamese sounds; dropping the -ed ending sounds and replacing the right pronunciation with other cases of -ed pronunciation, and the communicative task made good effects in correcting them. Suggestions were given basing on these findings.*

Keywords: *Communicative task; pronouncing -ed ending; English -ed ending pronunciation mistakes*

1. Introduction

In the communicative language teaching approach, tasks are widely used to improve many students' language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing... In my opinion, communicative tasks, which have become more and more familiar with both students and teachers nowadays, may be useful to help improve pronunciation because of their advantages to students. 'tasks are a useful instrument to direct learners' cognitive resources to phonetic forms during real-world activities' (Salaberry & López- Ortega, 1998).

The need of improving the students' English "ed" ending pronunciation at Hai Phong University and the advantages of using tasks in language teaching motivated me to do the research on: "Using a communicative task to correct "ed" ending pronunciation mistakes for non-English major students at Hai Phong University". This research aims at investigating English -ed ending pronunciation mistakes made by the first-year non-English majored students in a class at Hai Phong university and justifying the effect of using communicative tasks on correcting the students' English -ed ending pronunciation mistakes. With the above purposes, the research is conducted to answer the following questions: i) What were the students' mistakes in pronouncing English -ed ending? and ii)

What effects did the communicative task make when being used in correcting the students' English -ed ending pronunciation mistakes?

2. Content

2.1. Review literature on Task-based learning

**Definition of tasks*

A review of literature reveals a wide range of definitions of task. Firstly, according to Long (1985, p.89), a task is "a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward". As Nunan (1989) comments, it is the sort of characterization which might be offered by a learner, if asked why he is learning the language. Richards, Platt and Weber (1985) gave another definition, task is regarded as "an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language" (Richard, Platt and Weber, 1985, p.289). According to Breen (1987), is "any structured language learning endeavor which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task" The authors share a common point of view on tasks which suggest that tasks are concerned with communicative language use. In other words, they refer to undertakings in which the learners comprehend, produce and interact in the target language in the contexts in which they are focused on meaning rather than form.

**Task components*

The introduction of task components given by Nunan (1989) will be the focus of the current research. According to him, a task should include six components: goal, input, activities, teacher, learner, settings.

**The framework of task-based language teaching*

The framework of task-based teaching used in this study based on the procedures of task-based language teaching by Willis (1996) which consists of three stages: At the first stage - Pre-task, teachers play an important role because they will provide necessary background, knowledge and procedure, help students get familiar with the topic and the task. At the second stage, there are three small phases which are task phase, planning phase and report phase. In the task phase, students will carry out the task, in pairs or in groups, while teachers are supervisors and monitors helping students complete the task. Before coming to the report phase in which learners are required to present the results of their task phase work to the whole class, they have to be sure that they have had a good preparation by the planning phase. In planning phase, students will prepare for the report and rehearse what they will say. The language focus stage includes two small phases: analysis and practice. This is the stage in which language knowledge will be revised or taught and activities are designed to help students practice what they have learnt through the task.

2.2. The study

**Participants*

The participants of the study totally consist of 40 students in a first year class from Mathematics Department of Haiphong University. 9 students were absent in one of the tests so the main participants of the action research are 31 among the above students.

**Data collection procedures*

During the research program, the students were asked to attend two oral tests. The first test was conducted after the students had learned the lesson of -ed ending pronunciation in the book as usual to check their mistakes, and the second test was done after applying communicative tasks to correct these mistakes. The students' pronunciation in two tests were video recorded and then their pronunciations were observed and their mistakes were found. The comparison between the students' -ed ending pronunciation in the two tests was made so as to reveal any improvement that the students made

between the two tests. See the tests at the appendixes.

The contents of the tests were taken from the contents of the lesson consisting of pronunciation of six words with "ed" ending: worked, visited, joined, asked, walked, arrived. In the first test, the students were asked to read the words individually. After that, the students were corrected, then guided to make a dialogue with the words, then they practice the dialogue and being corrected again. After that, the second tests were carried out, in this tests, the students were asked to talk in the dialogue again. (see appendixes)

2.3. Findings and discussion

** The students' mistakes in pronouncing -ed ending*

It was found that the students' correct pronunciation in the pretest was about half of the total pronunciation of -ed ending tested. A large number of the students made one or more mistakes in pronouncing the words with "ed" ending tested. It showed that the students' ability in pronouncing -ed ending was still poor. The result showed that pronouncing "ed" ending as /t/ and /d/ is more difficult for the students to pronounce correctly than the one of /id/. The most common mistake is "ed" ending was not pronounced; the least common mistake is "ed" ending was changed into another sound and another common mistake is "ed" ending was pronounced like Vietnamese sounds that have the same spelling. It is necessary for the teacher and students to pay more attention to correcting these errors. These findings were used as the base for the teacher and the students to take action to improve the students' pronunciation of "ed" ending in the next steps of the research.

** The improvement of the students' -ed ending pronunciation performance in the posttest*

The comparison between the numbers of the students' mistakes in the pretest and posttest, has shown that there are significant decreases in most of the numbers of the students' mistakes in every aspect. In general, the total number of the mistakes in the posttest decreases by 53.7%, compared with that in the pretest. In terms of types of mistakes, there are decreases in the total numbers of all types of mistakes. The highest fall of these numbers is 93.7% and the lowest one is 23%. In terms of -ed ending pronunciation mistakes in each word, there are decreases (about 50% to 100%) in the total numbers of mistakes in most of the six words. Only

one word of six ones tested has a slightly increased number of –ed ending pronunciation mistakes with only one more mistakes was made. These results proved that using the communicative task brought high effectiveness in correcting the students' –ed ending pronunciation mistakes.

However, there are still the students who failed to correct their mistakes. It was shown in the research that about 20% of 93 mistakes in the pretest doesn't change after the correction; about 16% of 93 mistakes in the pretest is corrected with other mistakes; and about 9 new mistakes were made in the posttest though the sounds had been pronounced correctly in the pretest.

It was confirmed that using the communicative task brought a high effect in correcting the students' –ed ending pronunciation mistakes in the in-class lesson, nevertheless, the students, who still made mistakes, need further practice inside or outside class and they need continue to correct their mistakes with other methods if the communicative task doesn't work well with their cases. The teacher should take notice of these problems to apply more activities combined with the communicative tasks to improve the effect of correcting –ed ending pronunciation mistakes, or find out the other ways to help the students correct the mistakes more effectively.

*Recommendations

Firstly, it is highly recommended that the communicative tasks should be used when the teachers find some pronunciation problems of many students in class because of their effectiveness and a lot of advantages. Secondly, communicative tasks should be used appropriately and combined with other activities as mentioned in the findings and discussion.

3. Conclusion

The study provided an insight into the pronunciation mistakes of –ed ending sounds of the first year students in a class of Haiphong University. The study showed that the students' ability in pronouncing –ed ending was still poor after studying the literature and do the small exercises in the book. A large number of the students made one or more mistakes in pronouncing the words with “ed” ending tested. The most common mistake is “ed” ending was not pronounced. Another common mistake is “ed” ending was pronounced like Vietnamese sounds that have the same spelling. The least common mistake is “ed” ending was changed into another sound.

Besides, it is easier for the students to pronounce “ed” ending as /id/ correctly than as /t/ and /d/.

The study also justified the effectiveness of the communicative task in improving the students' –ed ending pronunciation by comparing the students' –ed ending pronunciation in the pretests and posttests. The results of the research showed that there was a certain improvement regarding the –ed ending pronunciation of the participants. It was confirmed that using the communicative task brought a high effect in correcting the students' –ed ending pronunciation mistakes in the in-class lesson. Besides, further ways of correcting the mistakes is still necessary for the students who have not corrected all their mistakes completely.

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