TARGET OPERATION (TO) GAME: TARGETING AT ATTRIBUTION THEORY IN TEACHING SPEAKING

Riza Weganofa (Corresponding Author)

Departement of English Education and Study Program, Kanjuruhan University of Malang

Jl. S Supriyadi 48 Malang, East Java, Indonesia

Phone: (+62)85731800310   E-mail: riza.weganofa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT Attribution theory derives from psychology in language teaching. This theory believes that success or failure in language teaching might be upon four main sets of attribution: ability, effort, luck, and task difficulty. Some L_2 learners, specifically non-English department students find difficulty in speaking due to either they view themselves as incapable in learning English, they do not push themselves hard enough to learn English, or they perceive that the task given is too difficult to be completed. Target Operation (TO) Game is proposed to accommodate the problems that later, determines the success or failure of learning speaking. This research provides some examples of tasks of TO Game, descriptive results of the four sets of attribution, and the outcome of the implementation of the game.

Keywords: attribution theory, Target Operation (TO) Game, speaking

Introduction

Attribution theory was first introduced by Bernard Weiner (in Williams and Burden, 1997:104) who has been concerned with the reasons that people attribute to their perceived successes and failures in academic achievement. This theory was previously taken from social psychologist Fritz

Heider's idea who believed that it was how people perceived events rather than the events that influenced behavior. Understanding what attributions that learners bring towards language learning is important for teachers because this affects learners' future success or failure in language learning. As Ashgari (2001:239) explains that understanding attribution theory can raise awareness in both language teachers and learners about avoidance of wrong, stable, and uncontrollable attributions which may cause negative attitudes toward learning English.

Another flourishing study was conducted by Asghari in 2012. He studied whether there is any association between learners' personality traits and their set of attributions in learning English as a foreign language. He concluded that emotions correlated positively with agreeableness and conscientiousness, while it correlated negatively with neuroticism. Self-image is related to all personality factors except for openness to experience. Intrinsic motivation correlates with extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Conscientiousness correlated with all sub-constructs of attribution theory: emotions, self-image, intrinsic motivation and language policy. On the other hand, none of these four factors correlated with openness to experience.

Speaking is one of English skills which is needed to be mastered by students. The ability to speak in English is not only critical for English department students but also for non-English department students. This ability covers both fluency and accuracy in speaking which is then highlighted by Brown (2007:324) to be important goals to pursue in Communicative Language Teaching.

Teachers can give various tasks for speaking performance grading from the simple task through more complicated ones. Teachers might have

put great efforts to bring real-life communication contexts into classroom. In real-life communication students should probably be able to produce elision words, contractions, reduced vowels, pauses, corrections, and also colloquial language in order not to be too bookies. In fact, some classrooms are still in old-fashion of learning situation. Dralo (2011) reveals that the foreign language class has been depicted by many as having interaction that is too rote and automatic, too controlled and with too much parroting, with the teacher being viewed as a drill sergeant. This current study wishes to draw the students' attitude towards learning speaking after joining Target Operation (TO) game.

Subject of the Study

There were 29 students majoring in various fields of study, such as information technology, management, and communication voluntarily participating in the study. They were taking ESP: Speaking 1 in University of Muhammadiyah Malang which was offered as one of compulsory subjects in the first semester. They were both male and female students ranging from 18 to 20 years old.

Instrument

The researcher developed a questionnaire about students' perceived beliefs on ability, effort, luck, and task difficulty after completing the game. In addition, the researcher also asked about students' current attitudes towards learning English after experiencing the game. There were 25 statements with scale 4 for strongly agree, 3 for agree, 2 for neutral, 1 for disagree, and 0 for strongly disagree. The raw data later was summed up and interpreted. Table 1 was used to interpret the score.

Table 1. Range Score and Interpretation

Dimension	Range Score	Interpretation
Ability	435 – 580	Positive
	290 – 434	Neutral
	0 – 289	Negative
Effort	435 – 580	Positive
	290 – 434	Neutral
	0 – 289	Negative
Luck	0 – 289	Positive
	290 – 434	Neutral
	435 – 580	Negative
Task difficulty	435 – 580	Positive
	290 – 434	Neutral
	0 – 289	Negative
Outcome	435 – 580	Positive
	290 – 434	Neutral
	0 – 289	Negative

The higher the total score from the raw data, the more students perceived themselves positively as owning the ability to complete the game. Also, the higher the total score, the more students perceived themselves as authoritative to do the tasks. Adversely, the lesser the total score gained for luck dimension, the better the students viewed themselves. Meanwhile, the last category is students' attitude towards the game. The higher gained score, the better attitude towards learning English is posed by the game.

What is Attribution Theory

Attribution Theory was introduced by Bernard Weiner (in Williams & Burden, 1997:104) who has been concerned with the reasons that people

attribute to their perceived successes and failures in academic situation. Weiner brings together locus of causality, which accounts for whether people see themselves or others as the cause of their actions (ibid., 128), locus of control, which involves whether students are in control of their own learning of a language, and stability, that is whether these factors are stable or it can be changed.

Locus of control is rooted in social learning theory (Nejabati, 2014: 188) in which made it possible to distinguish between elements that people felt were within their control or not (Williams & Burden, 1997:105). Nejabati (2014:188), further, gives an example as a student who has a poor performance in a foreign language program may ascribe his failure to the difficulty of language, the attitude of the foreign language instructor, inadequacy on teaching method adopted by the instructor. She investigated the effect of locus of control training on EFL students' reading comprehension. She concluded that being able to use locus of control training improved students' reading proficiency.

There were four dimensions in attribution theory: (a) ability, (b) effort, which are factors arise from inside/internal students, (c) luck and (d) perceived difficulty of task, which are arise from external students. Different combinations will possibly give different outcomes. If a student, for example, believes that s/he lack the ability to speak English and s/he see this as a stable internal factor beyond her/his control, then s/he will be unlikely to make much effort to improve.

What is Target Operation (TO) Game

The aim of teaching speaking for non English department students is equipping students to be able to use English in communication; TO game

offers a good alternative technique to rehearse this. The idea of TO game arose from one of the researcher's favorite reality shows in Korea, Running Man. The fact that this reality show is so famous inspired the researcher to adapt it into language teaching and learning. This game requires students to work cooperatively and collaboratively to complete all tasks. Students will get a greater chance to practice their speaking ability.

TO game consists of several tasks in which groups of students require to perform several speaking skills, such as negotiating, persuading, vocabulary building, fluency and accuracy. In delivering this game, teachers should consider three important aspects: tasks, grouping, and time planning.

The tasks given to the students should not mainly focus on the accuracy. This game is an outdoor game in which students will interact with not only among the groups but also the society – *people who are not directly participating in the game* –. Although the setting in which this research taken was non-native English environment, the students have to communicate in English and negotiate the meaning in English. This will persuade the students to create their own ideas and ways to deliver their intended messages to the society. Albert and Kormos (in Fahim, 20011:9) call these attributes as originality and creative fluency. Originality is defined as the ability to produce unusual idea; meanwhile the latter as the ability to produce a large number of idea. Further, they argue that these attributes are of paramount importance as far as learners' task performance is concerned.

TO game does not stand by itself rather it functions as learning strategies in which students have an opportunity to test hypotheses, rehearse rules and knowledge, and practice it. The tasks given in this game are an accumulation of several skills that have been learned in the classroom setting during the semester. This game supports learning strategies proposed by

Williams and Burden (1997:145) such as, ability to assess situation, to plan, to select appropriate skills, to sequence them, to co-ordinate them, to assess their effectiveness and to revise the plan when necessary. In other words, this game allows students to monitor their cognitive process.

The second thing that teachers should consider is grouping. Teachers are, of course, familiar with pairs, small-groups, or class-group activities. TO game offers another kind of cooperative activity. The team members were selected randomly that no one felt more superior to others. This leads to equal participation chance for all members. The subjects were apparently mature enough that they would not only bother their personal goals. As Dornyei (2003:157) suggests having the students select specific, short-term goals and emphasize on goal completion deadlines to promote group's goal-orientedness.

The last thing to be considered is time planning. This game is designed for communication strategy and social strategy. Communication strategy is defined as conscious processes used by students to convey a message that is both meaningful and informative for the listener when they don't have all the language they need (Cohen & Weaver, 2005:34). The students, for example, might use gesture, coin words, code-mix with L1 or paraphrase words to keep the conversations run smoothly. Meanwhile social strategy involves students' choices to interact with other students and society, such as asking questions to clarify social roles and relationships, asking for an explanation or verification, and cooperating with others in order to complete tasks (ibid., 35). This strategy is important for students to see English not only as a medium to accomplish a formal education but also to communicate with others. Students, for example, learn how to start a conversation with other people who have different cultures.

In order to attain those purposes, teachers need a good time planning. It is absolutely true that allowing students to have a preparation helps them in learning as Fahim (2011:5) argues that planning provides students not only with opportunities to enhance their performance of a task, but also with a context in which they can focus their attention on new structures, resulting in the development of their interlanguage competence. Planning or pre-task, in this game, occurs during the semester in the classroom-setting for this game is a rehearsal and enrichment program. It is the task of the teacher to plan and design the tasks and prepare the properties. However, once the game has been started, the teacher acts as facilitator and the students own the authority of the game. In other words, it is the students who are active and draw the dice of the game.

Examples of Tasks in Target Operation (TO) Game

The tasks given function as enrichment tasks rather than bring a new knowledge for the students. The topic for each task has been discussed during the semester in the classroom setting. Topics given for the students should meet the students' needs. Furthermore, the number of tasks in this game will depend on the coverage of the syllabus and the length of time provided. For the purpose of this study, there are five tasks given to five groups of students. For this study, the tasks point out both on fluency and accuracy.

TO Task A, for example, required the students to perform their vocabulary mastery in doing Phrazzle Me game. The students should make a grammatically good sentence with some given vocabulary cards. Each group had seven vocabulary cards with different point in each card ranging from 1 up to 4. The students were also provided with some blank cards to write down their words. They had to make a sentence at least with 15 points or use all seven cards. Despite this game focuses more on accuracy, it reminds the

students that in speaking they need to be able to produce sound and meaningful sentences.

In TO Task B, the task required the students to perform their interpersonal skill. The task was matched with students' major. For example, the students need to describe how to make a partition in the laptop. This kind of task enables the students to communicate in meaningful way because they have been familiar with technical terms used in the monolog.

In addition, TO Task C required the students to produce a short description about their dreamed gadget. TO Task B is about simple present tense, in this task students need to describe the gadget using future tense. In order to make it more challenging, after the students completing this task, they had to make a dance cover of JKT 48's song. They needed to invite people around them (who did not participate directly in the game) to be their audiences. This challenge allows students to communicate in purposeful and authentic way although they might not always get positive responses because the environment where this game occurred was non English speaking country. This is possibly what Albert and Kormus (in Fahim, 2011:9) called as creative fluency. Students need to modify their language, mix with gestures, use pauses or slower their speaking rates to deliver their intended message.

Next, TO Task D necessitated the students to communicate with the society in a meaningful way. Given the condition that many little accidents happened by careless bikers in the campus, the students should give some suggestions to them. This authentic task allows students to consider that learning English is not limited by classroom walls and the assistance of the teacher. The fact that in completing this task, students should be able to

negotiate meanings and be aware of unplanned responses, this task offers real-life communication context.

The last task required the students to identify several impacts of social media and propose solutions. This task is considered as an easy task because the topic deals with teenager's life, thus, students will be able to produce more sentences.

The first two teams who arrive at the meeting point will be able to join the last game, Tongue Twister game. The challenge is each team should pronounce the correct sentence in front of the participants of the game within less than one minute. A team who finishes it first will be the winner.

Result

There are four dimensions of attribution theory that will be addressed after the subjects completed the game.

The first dimension is ability. The total score from the distributed questionnaire was 439 which later was interpreted as positive. From the result, it was revealed that there were four students whose score were in neutral position and none of the them were in negative position.

Next, the score for effort dimension was 467. This score was interpreted as positive. None of the subjects who were in neutral position, furthermore there were six out of 29 students who were in strongly agree position.

The third dimension is luck. The total score for it was 189 which was interpreted as negative with five subjects who viewed themselves as it was a matter of luck that they could complete the tasks. Interestingly, there were six students who were strongly disagree with that statement.

The last dimension is perceived difficulty of task. There were five statements asking the subjects whether the tasks were difficult or easy. It was

revealed that the level of difficulty of tasks in TO game was neutral for the total score was 367. None of the subjects viewed the game as too difficult.

Further, it was revealed from the questionnaire that most of the subjects viewed the game positively. There were six students who were strongly agree that the game encouraged them to speak more in English and 14 students who were agree with the statement. Also, none of the students viewed the game either boring or discourage them to study English.

Discussion

This part explains how TO game addresses the four dimensions in attribution theory and later affects students' success or failure towards language learning, especially in learning speaking.

It was revealed that students viewed TO game positively and this led to positive outcome towards learning speaking. This can be rooted from several reasons. The first reason, TO game offers a challenging activity which arouses students' intrinsic motivation. One of characteristics that an activity can be called challenging is that it must provide goals such that goal attainment is uncertain (Snow & Farr, 1987:231) and one technique to do this is by having different level of difficulty. They argue that motivation will be maximal when uncertainty is maximal. In other words, an activity, from its beginning, should not give the atmosphere of certainty or uncertainty towards attaining goals. In order that students could continue to the next task in TO game, they should get approval from the society to whom they communicate with. This leads students to think of a wide range of continuum of possibility and impossibility. It is possible that a person to whom they interacted with approved their answers or they needed to find another people. Further, students perceived difficulty of the tasks in TO game as neutral. It means most of the students did not view all tasks as too difficult or too easy.

The second possible reason is all students perceived that they contributed to the success of completing the tasks. This is rather different from a whole-class activity in which particular students will probably dominate the talks. TO game supports Dornyei's and Murphey's (2003:23) statement that extracurricular activities usually offer a greater variety of positive roles for students to take than the rather restricted environment of the language classroom, and thus allow students to show themselves to the best of their abilities. The result of the questionnaire showed that students perceived themselves to have positive ability and gave their best efforts to do the tasks. None of them perceived themselves negatively in contributing solving the problems.

The third reason is students perceived themselves to have ultimate control of the success in completing the tasks. Each team adjusted differently in accomplishing the tasks. In certain task which was considered as easy tasks students spent lesser time than more difficult ones.

As the result, TO game offers a creative activity in teaching speaking. Creativity can be viewed as a property of people (who we are), processes (what we do) or product (what we make) Fisher (in Richards, 2013:3). Therefore, Richards (2013:3) mentions several dimensions of creativity: the ability to solve problems in original and valuable ways, seeing new meanings and relationships in things and making connections, having original and imaginative thoughts and ideas about something, using the imagination and past experience to create new learning possibilities. Tasks assigned to the students in TO game support these dimensions. Students required connecting their learning experiences in the previous classrooms to solve problems using their original thoughts. They subconsciously make relationships among different skills in order to make real-life communication. Tasks which are not

superficial and a space provided by the game for each student to experience the learning personally suggest a creative learning environment as Dralo (2012: 290) addressed in his study.

This current study supports Pishghadam's and Zabihi's (2011:8) research in which effort attribution took higher responsibility for the success of completing the tasks. This can be explained by the fact that the tasks were designed for enrichment program that students might have brainstormed in the classroom. This current study differs from previous studies in the condition that the subjects were non-English department students with different challenges.

Conclusion

This study has tried to give an explicit example of creative activity which addresses attribution theory and later draw the students' attitudes towards learning speaking. Students in this study perceived themselves as having the ability to complete the tasks. Also, they perceived their successes in doing the tasks because they have pushed themselves hard enough. They did not think that their successes come from either external sources, such as teachers or peers or their luck. The perceived difficulty of tasks were in neutral position which pointed out that most of the students viewed the tasks were not in extreme way; neither was too difficult nor too easy. Among four dimensions of attribution theory (ability, effort, luck, and perceived task difficulty), effort attribution took higher responsibility for the success of completing the tasks.

It was revealed that students viewed TO game positively and this led to positive outcome towards learning speaking. This can be rooted from several reasons. The first reason, TO game offers a challenging activity

which arouses students' intrinsic motivation. The second possible reason is all students perceived that they contributed to the success of completing the tasks and the last reason is students perceived themselves to have ultimate control of the success. As the result, TO game offers a creative activity in teaching speaking.

It is suggested that teachers to adapt the tasks to meet students' and curricula' needs. Also, future researchers are suggested to use more than one instrument to gather data. Other examples of activities addressing attribution theory will be beneficial to understand how students perceive success and failure in learning a language.

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