Impact of Integrating Task-Based Learning and Functional Approach to Empower Learners' Communicative Competence

Tri Minh Nguyen
Master Candidate, Edith Cowan University, Australia
Tringuyen.eling@gmail.com

Trang Xuan Phuong Dao
Ho Chi Minh University of Education, Vietnam
Trangdxp@hcmue.edu.vn

Abstract
Enhancing EFL learners' communicative competence is a time-taking process to reach certain levels of interacting with different communication participants. However, in the tertiary education in Vietnam, traditional teaching approach with the task-based learning does not thoroughly focus on the language use but on the strategies to perform the tasks. Hence, the functional approach has been applied to boost learners' awareness of their language delivery thanks to communicative functions and notions. The new mode of teaching concentrates on what communication participants desire to convey and why they make use of those speech acts. This paper aimed to explore the impact of the integration of task-based learning and the functional approach, and learners' perspective towards the implementation of such approach combination. With the application of the mixed method of qualitative and quantitative approaches, the data were collected via a pre-test and a post-test, survey, and 32 interviews with the participation of 100 students whose major is Business Administration at a university. The findings reveal that adding the functional approach to the existing teaching method could enhance students' overall speaking competence, especially their fluency and discourse management. Additionally, the application of the functional approach received positive feedback from the learners.

1. INTRODUCTION
1.1. Background statement

The popularization of world integration has led to the increasing significance of English to be utilized in the majority of sectors. The ultimate goal of language learning is to achieve sufficient communicative competence. Hence, the appropriateness of the language teaching approach is constantly controversial to some extent to discover the most effective teaching method. The recent decades have witnessed a transformation from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered one to strengthen the involvement of learners in language acquisition.

Communicative competence in English plays an important role in connecting individuals from different social and cultural backgrounds (Hymes, 1972). Learners frequently achieve linguistic competence to utilize grammatical structures and lexical resources in an accurate way (Barman, 2014). However, they have difficulties in applying these components into authentic interactions in high-frequency situations. Therefore, Hymes (1972) proposes the theory of communicative competence with the expansion of the success of encoding utterances in different contexts.

In addition, from a functional perspective, languages are dependent on semantic and pragmatic elements to allow conversational participants to successfully communicate with others in specific genres and discourses (Halliday, 1985). This, in other words, requires speakers to be aware of the extent to which their purposes of expressions can be reached. Language users regularly pay attention to the complication or formality of utterances due to the concerns of mistake commitments. This concept has entailed the revolution in linguistics with the increased focus on the aims rather than the norms of expressions (Sagvinon, 2002).

As a result, this transformation has spurred a notable interest among researchers as a pedagogical issue in English language teaching and learning. Language acquisition is not only to know or state the truth but also to reach purposeful expressions (Pallotti, 2010). Therefore, a functional approach is of importance in English language teaching in the interconnected world. It creates opportunities for learners to dominate the role in class while they are leading multiple tasks or assignments. This approach aims to signify the relationships between contexts and illocutions to strengthen the communicative competence in various conversational situations (Austin, 1962). One form of grammatical and lexical expression can indicate a huge number of functions in a single context. Contexts contribute to defining the significance of speakers and physical components in the conversation, which shapes the interactions between speakers. Moreover, culture is included in this view as a predominance to influence the expressions of people from different cultural backgrounds (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019; Cao, 2018).

In the context of Vietnam, the model of task-based learning plays a dominant role in the majority of tertiary courses, especially in the field of professionalism. This fact sheds a light for the researchers to investigate the possibility of integration between task-based learning and the functional approach to analyze the syntactic and semantic features in the field of linguistics for English professions (Ellis, 2018). In the major of Business Administration, task-based learning has shown significance in enhancing learners' competence to achieve the goal; however, the language use is not concentrated. Learner autonomy is the key factor in language learning during the process of cognition (Kurunasree, 2020; Nguyen, 2012). Furthermore, an insufficient volume of research has been conducted to investigate the impact of the functional approach in English language teaching of skills in Vietnamese context, especially in tertiary education (Cao, 2018). Hence, the integration is promising to maximize the learning effectiveness.

1.2. Statement of problem

In the context of Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Vietnam, learners of Business Administration are delivered the lessons in the majority of task-based learning with the coursebook entitled *Market Leader Pre-Intermediate Business English* (Cotton et al., 2012). In the period of high school, they commonly experienced the typically conventional teaching methods of lesson delivery that focused on grammatical structures, lexical resources, and reading exercises in the little presence of communication and interactions. Hence, when they started the university year, they struggled to a great extent to adapt to new learning styles of

speaking classes because of the limitations in communicative competence. The course is based on two main tasks of speaking inclusive of discussion and negotiation in various topics and contexts. It, therefore, requires certain discourse markers and functional expressions to achieve the expected learning outcomes of the course in general and the lessons in particular.

The model of the Task-based approach is applied throughout the courses in the faculty; however, the utterances cannot successfully be established to reach specific functions of each speech act. This also results in confusion for both speakers and hearers throughout the conversation. Briefly, it is integral to implement the combination of task-based learning and functional approach to handle the issue of the conventional teaching approach and enhance learners' communicative competence in a purposeful manner.

1.3. Aim and objectives of the study

The study aims to investigate the impact of the functional approach as an additional method in the presence of task-based learning on 100 first-year students majoring in Business Administration in speaking skills and learners' perspective towards the new mode of teaching at Nguyen Tat Thanh University.

The research objectives are as follows:
- To explore the impact of the combination between the task-based approach and the functional approach on learners' oral communicative competence in speaking classrooms of first-year students majoring in Business Administration at Nguyen Tat Thanh University.
- To investigate learners' perspectives towards the new implementations
- To provide more insights in the application of the functional approach as additional values in teaching speaking for teachers of similar teaching conditions.

1.4. Research questions and the significance of the study

In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives, the study addresses the following questions:

1.   What are the impacts of the combination of the task-based approach and the functional approach on English learners' oral communicative competence?
2.   What are the perspectives of learners towards the new implementation of methods?

The implementation is promising to provide a profound understanding of the effectiveness of the functional approach on learners' communicative competence at the tertiary level and learners' perspectives towards the impacts they encounter in speaking classrooms. Moreover, it will influence the encouragement of changes in more adaptive and flexible teaching methods.

1.5. The Scope of the study

The study specialized in the integration of the functional approach into the traditional TBA model to investigate the possibility of maximizing the oral communication effectiveness of Business Administration. It focused on investigating the improvements of five main criteria in speaking performance inclusive of lexical resource, grammatical structures, task achievement, pronunciation, and discourse management.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1. The significance of communicative competence in the glocalization

The concept of communicative competence was developed in the 1960s as the ability to communicate or react in an oral or written way. In the context of English language teaching, communicative competence is defined as the capacity to interpret, understand, and respond to

the interactions in social conversations (Hymes, 1972). It is necessary to memorize the chunks, language conventional norms, and social contexts of interactions to improvise the utterances. However, language learning is not only to remember but also to utilize (Savignon, 2002). Communicative competence is the involvement of speakers to deal with meanings in a specific setting. Speakers of English as a foreign or second language regularly make assumption of the success of their expressions that the hearers can fully understand what they have delivered and interpret the receptive utterances. This entails misunderstandings or confusions in communication due to the differences in speakers' abstract notions and previous knowledge. Thus, communicative competence demands the negotiation of meanings between speakers to reach a clear understandings (Ellis, 2003).

The term "glocalization" is the combination of globalization and localization to indicate that in English language acquisition, both global and local elements should be taken into account. It aims at adapting the universal language of English to apply in Vietnamese context for Vietnamese students in this study. This concept entails the considerations of foreign cultures in multicultural communication. Intercultural communication competence is deemed to be the ability to communicate with other speakers from various cultural backgrounds successfully (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019). It raises the issue that language learners are recommended to raise awareness of cultural differences to avoid misunderstandings in communication with foreigners.

However, in the study of the factors influencing learners' communicative competence, Oliver et al. (2005) find that teachers show their weaknesses in assessing learners' communicative competence, which prevents them from realizing their actual proficiency and the limitations for improvement. In another case study by Furko and Monos (2013), it was found that there was a lack of examples in pragmatic interactions to scaffold learners with adequate conditions to develop their performance. Hence, teaching methods are of importance to the success of language teaching. In English teaching as a second language, especially in Vietnam, the correction of L2 grammatical rules and the understandings of literal meanings are not sufficient for learners to deal with authentic interactions (Siskin, 2014). It is obligatory for L2 speakers to estimate and understand the possibility of interactions or expressions underlying in specific cultural settings to master communicative competence (Savigon, 2002).

Vietnamese classrooms at high school are still applying traditional approaches that concentrate on grammar and vocabulary. As a consequence, when learners begin their course at university, they are not in possession of the adequacy of skill in communication. Thus, the improvement of university students' communicative competence is undeniably crucial in the era of globalization.

2.2. The concept of the functional approach in ELT

A functional lesson is usually seen as the purposive and intentional design of language teaching that enhances learners to achieve certain goals when they use language (Thompson et al., 2020; White, 1988). The traditional teaching approach is based on rigid syllabus design of language teaching to attempt to deliver a huge volume of knowledge related to English including grammar and vocabulary with the low awareness of the reasons and targets of these teaching contents. Subsequently, learners perceive the lessons in a passive way, which is considerably beyond their level of cognition with the utilization of grammar-translation or audio-lingual methods. However, the functional approach aims at strengthening learners' understandings of their own utterances in communication via communicative functions of requests, compliments, or proposals (Richards, 2001).

In addition, language is considered as a vehicle to convey the functional meaning (Richards & Rogers, 2001). The view of functional approach puts emphasis on the importance of discourse in context to take social and cultural elements into consideration (Malinowski, 1923). The ultimate goal of language learning is to purposively expression personal opinions and interpret the partners' ideas in an appropriate way. The functions of meaning range from requests, compliments, apologies, agreements, or proposals that are adopted flexibly in particular genres (Imsa-ard, 2020). The diversity of social and cultural components contributes to modifying and shaping the way people interact with each other and their responses in different adjacency pairs with specific aims.

In the theory of systemic functional grammar, Halliday (1985) describes grammatical structures as the interpretation or figuration of grammar on grounds of configurations of functions in clauses or sentences. They are encoded semantically within the structural system of the grammatical constraints to work out the functional meanings of choices of words and norms (Crystal, 2003). The understanding of meaning is dependent on the way speakers opt for their words and orders of words with both denotations and connotations according to whether the comprehension is positive or negative.

Moreover, from the perspective of speech act theory, Austin (1962) proposes that language is not only used to indicate the truth or falseness but also to perform an act. The theory consists of three main acts in one expression: locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. Locutionary act is an act of saying or reporting an idea, which is wrongly assumed with the success of interpretation that language is to inform the facts. Illocutionary act is to perform an act in saying. This refers to the illocutionary force that occurs during the conversation to indicate the purposes of the speakers in producing the utterances such as to apology, to thank, or to compliment. The illocutionary acts allow speakers to connect phrases, sentences to their meanings (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Whereas, the last one as perlocutionary act is to perform an act by saying. The perlocutionary act is related to the effects that speakers' utterances have on the hearers' such as sadness or happiness. This theory sheds a light for the researcher to consider the role of acts to correctly interpret three terms of speech acts in reality. The pedagogical issue of English teaching is to discover the strategies to raise learners' awareness of producing and understanding the speech successfully. Hence, it is indispensable to analyze the needs of expression in advance of teaching grammatical rules and lexical items (Wilky, 1981). The functional approach is based on the purposes of certain expression; therefore, the need analysis is integral as it is influential on the choices of expressions. Additionally, the functional approach encourages learners' autonomy via self-assessment of the success of interactions, involvement in conversation, and their discourse management. Learners are the controllers of the class who decide the situation and orientation of discussion and negotiation (Hedge, 2000; Long, 2018). This is beneficial to maximize the roles of learners and switching their learning from passive to active mode, especially in Vietnamese classrooms where teachers frequently dominate the whole lessons in front of the class.

2.3. The Sequence in Task-Based Learning (TBA)

With the aim at enhancing meaningful interactions among language learners, task-based learning (TBA) has been applied as a practical branch of CLT to create particular contexts for language practice. Task-based learning is used interchangeably with task-based language teaching (TBLT) or task-based approach.

Figure 1
A Framework for task-based learning by Nunan (2005)
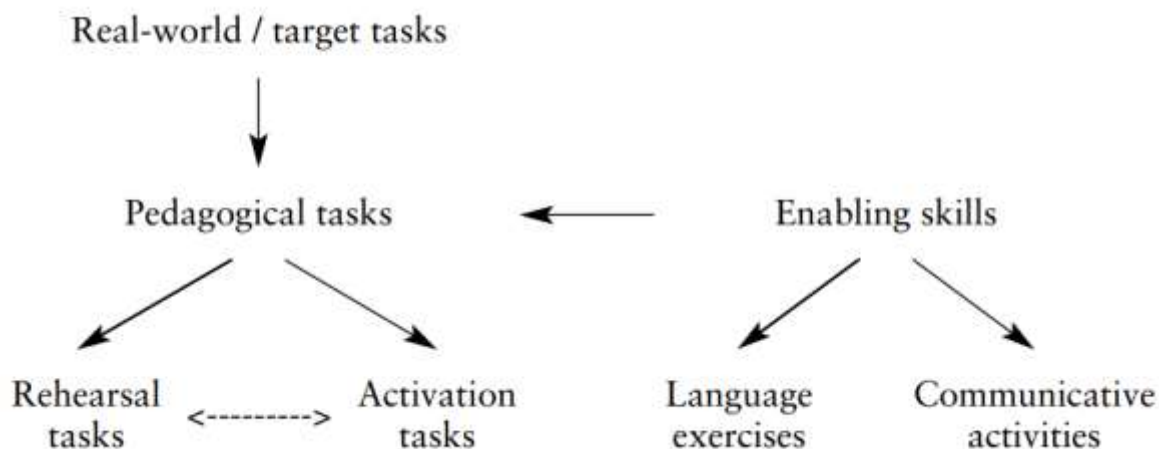
The task-based learning empowers learners' communicative competence via empirical exchange of ideas in certain task assignments. Learners are supposed to utilize functional expressions of the target language to achieve communicative purposes such as request, argument, refusal, and other speech acts. Language skills, hence, are strengthened in a purposeful manner in the presence of real-world and pedagogical tasks to achieve the expected learning outcome (Nunan, 2005).

Willis (1996) claims that TBA is deemed to go through three main stages of pre-task (before the task), task cycle (during the task), and language focus (post-task). In pre-task, learners are introduced to the goal and instructions of the tasks, useful expressions inclusive of lexical resources, and grammatical structures for idea exchange during the task. In the middle stage of the task cycle, learners perform the task collaboratively or cooperatively in pairs or groups to reach the completion of the assignment (Qu, 2014). A plan is also made to prepare for the report of the task. This step is followed by the report, peer and teacher corrections. Subsequently, the post-task refers to the analysis of teachers for the output content and practice of necessary language focus to empower language skills (Long, 2018; Siskin, 2014). This sequence is beneficial to achieve the illocutionary goal in a various teaching contexts.

3. METHODOLOGY
3.1. Setting and Participants

The study was conducted with an experimental design including t-test and surveys. The participants were 100 English language users who were Vietnamese and utilize English as a foreign language. They are first-year students majoring in Business Administration, and their language proficiency was at level B1 in Common European Framework for Reference.

All the factors regarding the ethical issues have been properly considered to ensure the obedience of research ethics. This study has received informed consent from all the subjects. The application of the study has obtained full permission from all the participants.

The students were divided into two classes: class A and class B described in the following table.

Table 3.2

Description of the Participants

Class	Male		Female		Total
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
A	23	46%	27	54%	50
B	18	36%	32	64%	50

3.2. Methods

The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was implemented in the study to investigate objective and subjective elements in the application of different teaching methods. The mixed approach is regarded to be in possession of higher levels of accuracy and reliability of data with the analysis of various factors that influence the results of the study (Denscombe, 2017).

3.3. Instruments

Test

Two kinds of tests were used at two stages: before and after the experiment process. These tests are called pre-test and post-test.

The pre-test and post-test were used to examine students' English-speaking competence in conducting conversations. These tests included one role-play situation and a set of 3 questions for the examinee to discuss with their partner. The students were marked following 5 criteria: Grammar, Vocabulary Range, Pronunciation, Fluency, and Discourse Management. Each criterion accounted for 2 marks, which added up to the total test score of 10 marks. The purpose of this test is to get the scores of the students as data for the research.

Survey

The questionnaire of 10 questions related to the learning experience during the experiment was delivered to research participants to investigate their perspectives towards the role of functional approach in English speaking class. Furthermore, they are used to collect more information about the two classes' current situation of learning English speaking.

The format of the questionnaire was of a typical five-level Likert item. That means, each question item required the subjects to indicate his or her response by choosing one out of five Likert answers, namely "totally disagree", "disagree", "neither disagree nor agree", "agree", and "totally agree". A pilot study was also conducted to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire and the figure calculated via Cronbach's Alpha was 0.872 which was higher than 0.7 to prove the applicability of the instrument.

Interview

An interview of 15 to 20 minutes was employed to assess and identify the possible explanations of the data collected from the survey. Another purpose of the interview was to investigate further concerns from research participants and identify any problems arising during the research if any.

3.4. Design and procedure

The procedure for conducting the research consisted of three-stages: pre-experiment, while-experiment, and post-experiment. In the pre-experiment stage, participants took the pre-test. In the next stage, they had a fifteen-week course of 45 hours of Speaking training during which class B was taught with task-based approach while the teaching method for class A was a combination of both task-based and functional approaches. Both classes studied the same content of English lessons for Business including such topics as companies, conflicts in the workplace, meetings, stress, plans, marketing, sales, and entertainment with the same instructor. After 15 weeks, students took the post-test and completed the questionnaire. In addition, 32 participants were asked to participate in the interview for the collection of in-depth data.

3.5. Statistical Analysis

Students' scores for both groups were calculated to find out the means and standard deviations (SD). Then, a comparison between the means and SD of the two groups was conducted. After that, an independent sample t-test was run in order to prove whether these sets of means were statistically significant or not.

First of all, the researcher chose a two-tailed t-test and set the p-value at 0.05 as evidence of direction in the means comparison was unclear (Brown, 2001, p. 151). Next, the value of the t-test observed for the difference in means for two classes was calculated following the formula below:

= t-test observed for the difference in means for 2 groups

M = mean; SD = standard deviation; N = number of participants

A = Class A; B = Class B

Thirdly, the t value was compared with its critical value in the table *Critical values of t* (Brown, 2001, p.152) so as to find out whether the statistical significance in means difference exists. Then, the t-test template designed by Del Siegle on Excel was used to calculate the p-value and double-check the t value done manually with the formula above.

In addition, the results of questionnaires delivered to students at the end of the experiment were calculated to find out the percentage of the answers chosen. Then, the researcher based on the percentage of each option to analyse their perspectives towards the application of functional approach in the classroom.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

T-test results

Table 1.1

Results of Pre-Test Score with t values and p values

	Class A		Class B			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t-value	P
Grammar	.96	.22	.94	.19	.48	.63
Vocabulary	.99	.28	1.03	.31	-0.68	.49
Pronunciation	1.08	.36	1.04	.36	.56	.58
Fluency	1.05	.27	1.05	.29	0	1
Discourse Management	.83	.24	.84	.24	-0.21	.83
Total score	4.91	.97	4.9	1.01	.05	.96

As demonstrated in Table 1.1, the means of class A were marginally higher than those of class B in the criteria of Grammar and Pronunciation, with 0.96 and 1.08 compared to 0.94 and 1.04. The opposite pattern is recorded for the criteria of Vocabulary and Discourse Management where class A showed the means of 0.99 and 0.83 respectively, slightly lower than the means of class B with figures being 1.03 and 0.84. In terms of Fluency, the means were equally represented for both classes at the level of 1.05. It is noticeable that the standard deviations of both groups were rather small in general, ranging from 0.19 to 0.36. Therefore, the researcher could conclude that the grades of both groups were all close to the mean for all criteria. Moreover, the difference between the standard deviation of both groups in each criterion was insignificant, indicating the similarity in the dispersion of both sets of scores. Accordingly, the total score of the test for both groups revealed similar means (4.91 for class A and 4.9 for class B) and standard deviation (0.97 for class A and 1.01 for class B).

From the comparison of means and standard deviations, both classes were considered at the same level. More evidence for this was collected via t-test showing the results of the absolute t value in each criterion ranging from -0.68 to 0 and that for the total score is 0.5 which were smaller than the critical value of 1.9845 (with df = 98, $p \leq 0.05$, and two-tailed significance). In addition to the t-values, the p values were also higher than the set p-value of 0.05. Therefore, it is concluded that there was no statistical difference between the two classes with regard to the scores of their speaking test in general and the scores of each criterion in particular.

Table 1.2

Results of Post-Test Score with t values and p values

	Class A	Class B

|	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t-value	P
Grammar	1.1	.36	1.17	.31	-1.03	.31
Vocabulary	1.4	.40	1.35	.41	.61	.55
Pronunciation	1.17	.33	1.1	.35	1.03	.31
Fluency	1.28	.33	1.13	.26	2.55	0.01
Discourse Management	1.39	.41	.94	.31	6.19	0
Total score	6.34	1.1	5.69	1.07	3	.003

In the Post-Test, it is observed that the absolute t of the total score of both classes was 3 which was higher than the critical t value of 1.9845, and the p-value was also smaller than the set p-value of 0.05. This means that there was a statistical difference between the two sets of the score. A closer look at the means of the total score revealed a value of 6.34 in class A, which was approximately 0.65 points higher than the figure of class B. Meanwhile, standard deviations of both classes remained similar at 1.1 for class A and 1.07 for class B. This leads to the conclusion that class A generally achieved better results than class B.

Although the total scores of class A were higher, statistical differences were not witnessed in all assessment criteria. To be specific, t values of the scores of both classes in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation were -1.03, 0.61, and 1.03 separately, which were all higher than 1.9845. Figures of p values for these criteria also ranged from 0.31 to 0.55, higher than the cut-off level of 0.05. This means that the significant difference between the two sets of scores did not exist in these categories. In contrast, the criteria of fluency and discourse management saw evidence of both t values (6.19 and 3) and p values (0 and 0.003) showing strong acceptance of the statistic condition for the difference between the scores of two classes to exist. To conclude, students in class A tended to perform better than their counterparts in class B in terms of fluency and discourse management, which accounted for the better test results in general. In other words, the functional approach was proved to be effective in enhancing students' speaking competence.

Questionnaire and interview results

Figure 2

Students' perspectives towards teaching methods
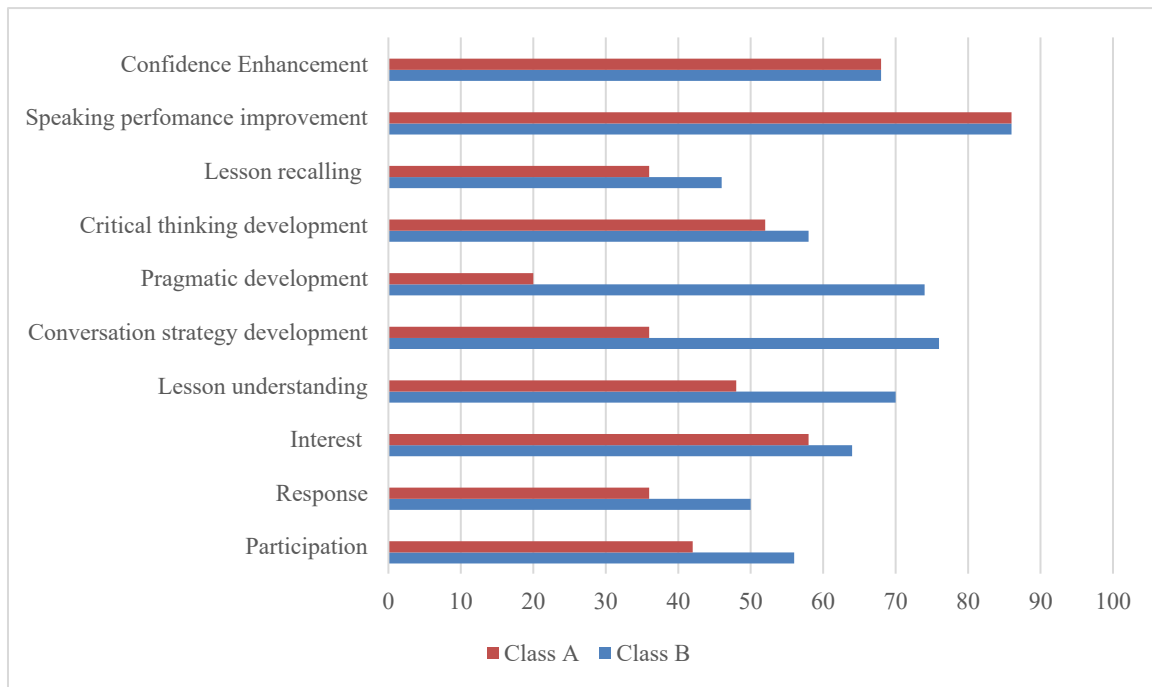
The results of the questionnaires were collected and the rate of answers belonging to the "agree" and "totally agree" categories were sorted and presented in the bar chart. It is obviously seen from the chart that students in class A generally had more positive opinions about the teaching method they received compared to their peers in class B. To be specific, while both classes expressed an equal rate of agreement that their speaking performance was improved (86%) and confidence was enhanced (68%) after the course, other categories showed a dominance of agreement rate from class A. For example, students in class A revealed a level of participation and interest in the lesson as well as their response in class with more or less than ten percent higher than those in class B. This was also true when it comes to how the teaching methods helped students to understand the lesson, recall the lesson, and develop critical thinking skills. It is noticeable that the gap was particularly large in the rate of response regarding pragmatic development with 74 percent of students in class A showing positive feedback, nearly four times the rate of those in class B. A similar pattern was demonstrated in conversation strategy development where there were more than twice as many total "agree" and "totally agree" responses from class A as from class B (76% vs. 36%).

The results of the survey were further investigated via interviews with students. They thought that the functional approach was a good way to scaffold the lesson, giving them the preliminary background of the language needed for communication, the context of the conversation, and the purpose of speaking. Therefore, they could catch the lesson better and feel well-prepared and confident to participate in classroom practice. Moreover, the majority of interviewees felt that during the time the teacher taught them with a functional approach, they had opportunities to analyze the situation, participants, level of formality, and goals of communication. As a result, they were able to use their analytical and critical thinking skills. Most importantly, the functional exponents learned helped them to control their role in the conversation better. For instance, instead of creating meaningless pauses or sometimes

conversation breakdown, they might use the expressions such as "well, let me see" or "that's an interesting question" to show hesitation or to allocate time for idea generation. They also admitted the training of tactics in speaking such as expressing polite agreeing or disagreeing, interrupting, giving opinions allowed them to use language more smoothly and achieve what they want from the conversation more easily. However, some believed that the range of exponents for a particular function might make them confused and the first step to practice such expressions made them feel like rote-learning or childlike repetition.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings above were reasonably understandable as the focus on the functional approach during the lessons in class A gave opportunities for students in this class to get familiar with the functions employed in the conversations. Functions often lend themselves naturally to specific grammatical patterns or common expressions which become a tool in communication enabling students to extend their stretches of language with little hesitation, maintain the flow of speech, and reduce repetition. Moreover, students who learned with a functional approach could use their hesitations and pauses effectively for idea searches or error corrections, thereby keeping conversations natural and enhancing interaction.

Furthermore, thanks to the functional approach, students were able to gain an understanding of the context and the purpose of speaking to achieve communication goals. Different sociolinguistic circumstances were taken into account, and social roles, participants' psychological attitudes, location, time, behavior, subject matter were all addressed. As a result, students could elaborate ideas more coherently, show more control of organizational patterns, and produce clearer, smoothly flowing speech. In other words, they can manage discourse more effectively when equipped with real and appropriate language for communication.

Throughout the history of research, previous studies emphasized the effectiveness of the functional approach to second language instruction with statistical evidence (e.g. Harley, 1989; Lund, 1997; Day and Shapson, 2001; Mohan & Beckett, 2003; O'Halloran, 2003; and North, 2005; Martin, 2011). The results gained from this study added more support to the assumption that the functional approach played a contributive role in boosting language acquisition, especially in speaking the target language. Additionally, the functional approach allowed learners to use their cognitive skills to analyze aspects related to communication and to make a decision on which exponents to use appropriately. This adds to raising learners' awareness of the sociolinguistic factors, which play a significant role in building an individual's linguistic competence. However, the application of the functional approach in the current study did not show a clear impact on learners' improvement in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, which is quite different from some researchers' findings (Ismal & Amed 2013, Martin, 2011). Nevertheless, this is understandable due to the difference in experiment design where previous studies compared a functional approach with a different teaching method, whereas the current study investigated the effect of adding a functional approach to an existing teaching method.

6.   Pedagogical Implications and Limitations

The application of the functional approach is not limited to the notional-functional syllabus, yet it can be added to any ready-designed speaking courses as a support to help students scaffold their learning. As the merit of the functional approach is to incorporate form, function, meaning, and the speaker's appropriate choice of words in conversations, it is extremely appropriate for the university level where students need to use interrelated skills in learning the language. Their functional analysis of the language has shed light on many language aspects that the second language teachers and learners must be aware of such as grammatical subsystem, psychological factors, and sociological influences. Accordingly, the brain needs to work to find out why and how language is used to convey meaning and achieve communication purposes, which is actually a cognitive process useful for young people.

Moreover, in the process of learning with a functional approach, learners can activate their background knowledge about social and cultural impacts. They can also understand why languages are used flexibly to suit the context of speaking and how language is effectively used to achieve the speaker's purpose. This is very important to university learners, especially ESL learners, who study English to use the language appropriately during their communicative interactions in a variety of real-world situations in their future workplace. In a broader sense, competence in English might be either an assistant or an obstacle in the journey to success. If the student fails to communicate appropriately in face-to-face meetings, phone calls, or presentations, they may lose a contract, a promotion opportunity, or even their well-paid jobs. Therefore, the functional approach prepares learners for real-world language, so learning becomes practical, meaningful, and motivational.

Another plus point to consider applying a functional approach to teaching speaking is that it provides input for learners to advance to a higher level of learning activities. With sufficient language exponents provided by the teachers or textbooks, learners are able to learn according to their level and need, thus giving them more control of their learning and boost learner-centered focus. Hence, incorporating a functional approach to the existing teaching methodology to assist both language learning inside the vicinity of the classroom and language use outside the circle of the classroom.

7. CONCLUSION

In the light of the results gained from the previous research in the field of teaching methodology, the functional approach proves to be effective in second language instructions of grammar, four language skills, and discourse analysis. In a similar way, the current study concludes that the incorporation of a functional approach into the existing teaching method generates enormous merits to learners' speaking performance. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to employ this approach to make their lessons more effective. With a functional approach, instructors are able to help learners to develop their language in a holistic manner, to gain comprehensive knowledge about the target language, and confidently use the language for real-world communication. Additionally, at the university level, students should be encouraged to develop their language through the exploration and analysis of authentic discourse. Applying critical thinking and analytic skills into finding out what the context of the discourse is and how language functions in such a situation to achieve speakers' goals should

be the focus of second language instructions at this level. This enhances students' engagement in the lesson and boosts their interest in language learning.

Furthermore, instructors should realize that the functional approach paves the way for student-centeredness as students control their learning process and have choices about language use. Accordingly, the actual language use via interactive practice such as role-plays, information gap, presentation, and discussions become valuable facilitation for learners to build and improve their communicative competence. Last but not least, this approach equipped students with real language to deal with real communication situations, thereby preparing students for their actual language use outside the classroom and for their future careers.

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