



NEGOTIATING TASKS

IN LISTENING AND SPEAKING CLASSES

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Introduction

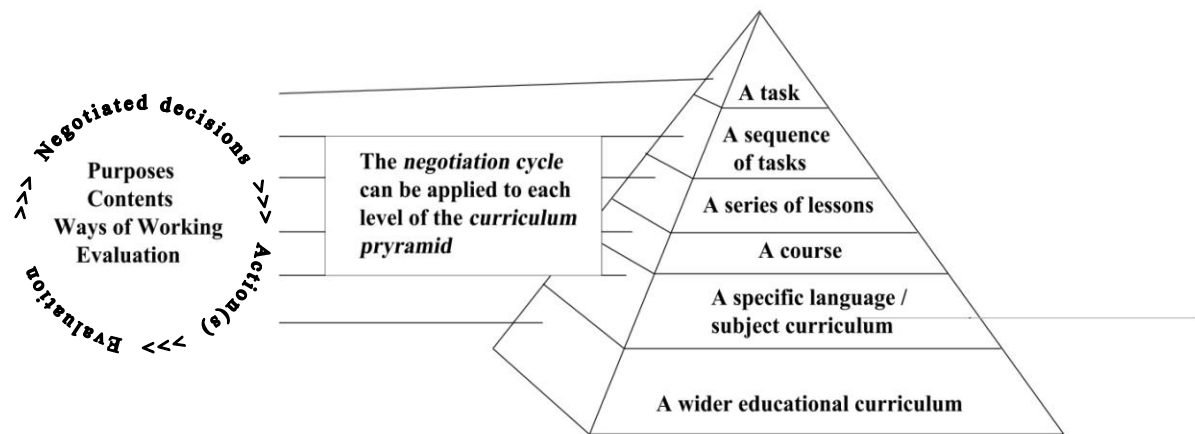
Syllabus negotiation, or procedural negotiation, refers to “discussion between all members of the classroom to decide how learning and teaching are to be organized” (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000, p. 1)

Some benefits:

- creating a facilitative and authentic environment for learners’ language development
- increasing learners’ motivation & commitment
- developing their autonomous learning capacity

Literature Review

A framework for procedural negotiation



A process syllabus
(Breen & Littlejohn, 2000, p. 38)



Literature Review

Contextual factors

A pre-set syllabus

Time constraints

Large class size & learner diversity

Cultural factors

→ “‘local features’, which may prove to have positive and exploitable features” (Holliday and Cooke, 1982, pp. 136-7, as quoted in Tudor, 1996, p. 133)



Literature Review

Tasks and syllabus negotiation

task as a key unit in the syllabus

task and learner-centeredness

“making negotiation available at the higher levels of the pyramid [...] can offer initial experience for both teachers and students in managing shared decision-making, without jeopardizing the structure of the course as a whole” (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000, p. 287).



Research Design

The research aimed to investigate the feasibility of task negotiation in a listening and speaking class.

Research questions:

- (1) What are the effects of task negotiation on the teaching and learning of listening and speaking?
- (2) What are the students' reactions towards the application of task negotiation to listening and speaking teaching and learning?



Research Design

Subjects:

- mid April 2008 – late June 2008, Thu Duc Campus of USSH, HCMC
- first-year full-time students in 2 classes at DELL
- Listening-Speaking 4 Module of the Language Study 4 Course
- textbook: Mosaic 2 Listening/ Speaking 4th edition (by Jami Hanreddy & Elizabeth Whalley, 2004, The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., New York) (Units 4-12)



Research Design

Treatment:

- experimental group (37): task negotiation
- control group (40): taught according to the syllabus imposed by DELL with a few adjustments made by the teacher



Research Design

Instruments:

- Listening and Speaking tests
- Course-evaluation questionnaire
 - 15 closed questions
 - 4 open questions
- Interviews: evaluation of task negotiation
 - 10 experimental students
- Documents: collected in the experimental group.

Results

Post-tests

the *t*-test for independent samples: $\alpha = 0.05$

- o **Listening:**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	1.726	.193	.841	70	.403	1.21	1.441

→ There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the two groups in the listening post-test.

Results

Post-tests

the *t*-test for independent samples: $\alpha = 0.05$

- o **Speaking:**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	.044	.834	1.375	70	.174	.3404	.24760

→ There is no significant difference in the mean scores of the two groups in the speaking post-test.

Results

Questionnaire

➤ **Responses to closed questions:**

Question 7: students' overall evaluation of the tasks

Responses	Experimental group		Control group	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1 – very bad	0	0.0	0	0.0
2	0	0.0	3	8.1
3 – average	5	14.3	11	29.7
4	19	54.3	20	54.1
5 – very good	11	31.4	3	8.1
Total	35	100.0	37	100.0

Results

Questionnaire

➤ **Responses to closed questions:**

Question 8: student-student interaction

Responses	Experimental group		Control group	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1 – very little	0	0.0	0	0.0
2	0	0.0	5	13.5
3 – normally	19	54.3	24	64.9
4	11	31.4	6	16.2
5 – a great deal	5	14.3	2	5.4
Total	35	100.0	37	100.0

Results

Questionnaire

➤ **Responses to closed questions:**

Question 9: teacher-student interaction

Responses	Experimental group		Control group	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1 – very little	0	0.0	2	5.4
2	10	28.6	13	35.1
3 – normally	14	40.0	16	43.2
4	9	25.7	5	13.5
5 – a great deal	2	5.7	1	2.7
Total	35	100.0	37	100.0

Results



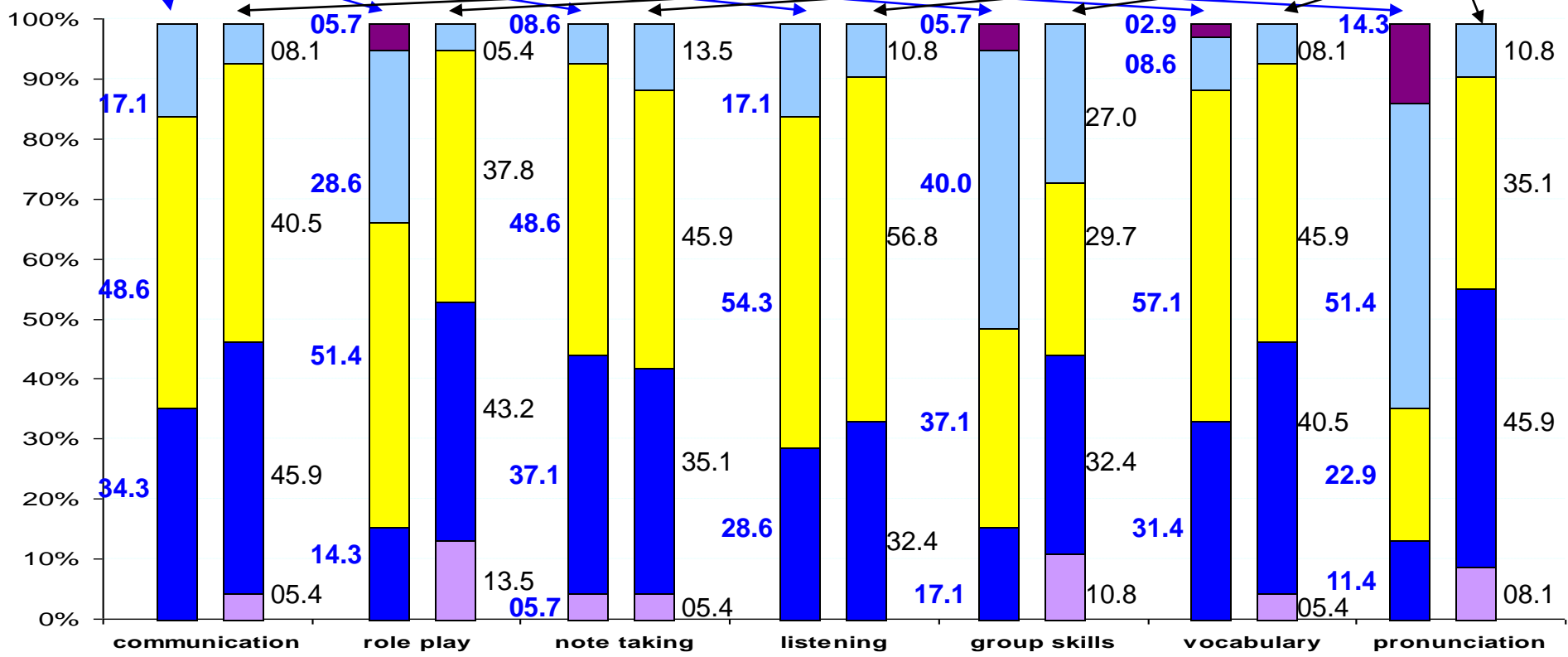
Questionnaire

- **Responses to closed questions:**

Question 11: students' perceptions of what they learned

Experimental group

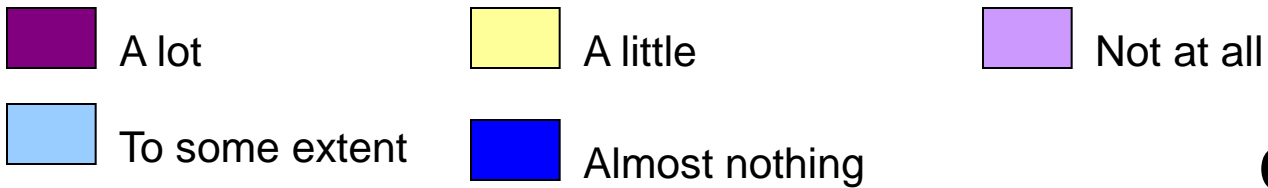
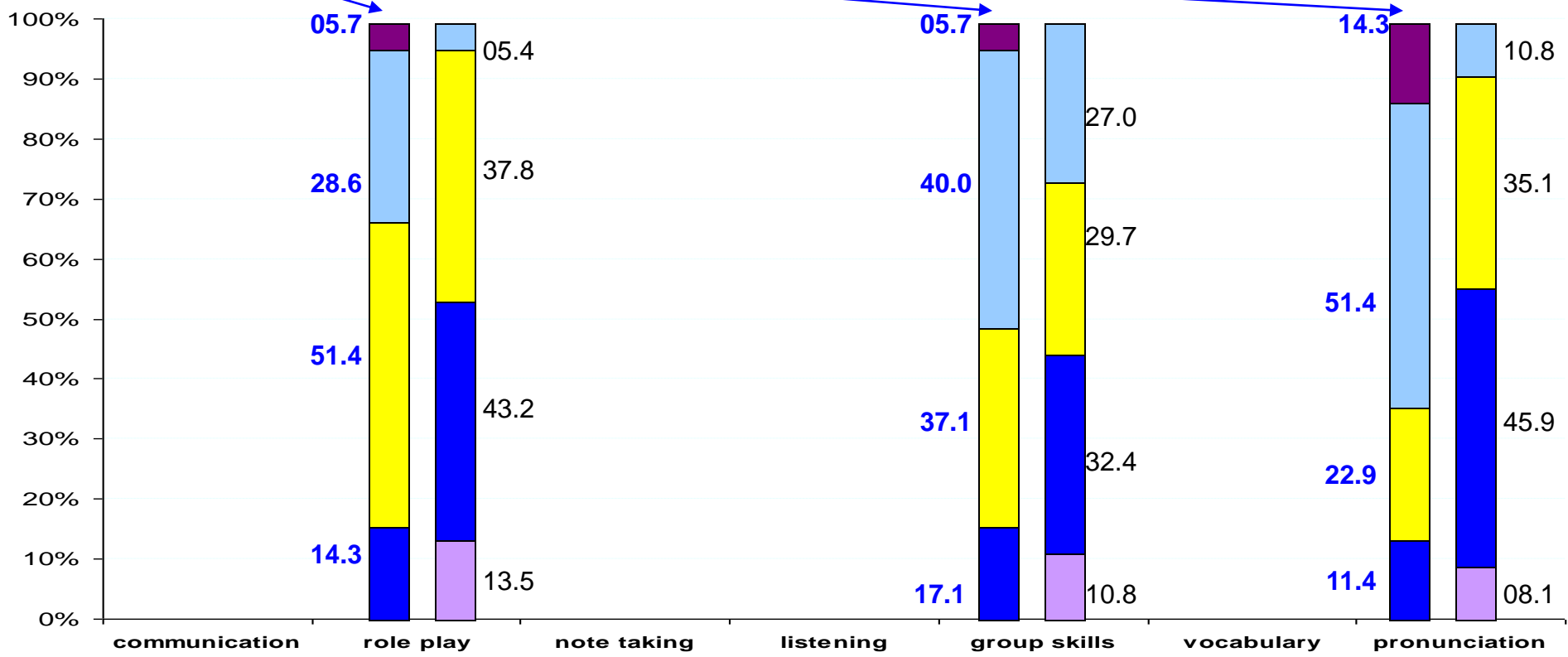
Control group



Question 11

Experimental group

Control group



Question 11

Results

Questionnaire

➤ **Responses to closed questions:**

Question 14: students' assessment of their increased interest in studying listening and speaking

Responses	Experimental group		Control group	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1 – not at all	0	0.0	1	2.7
2	1	2.9	3	8.1
3 – a little	7	20.0	18	48.6
4	22	62.9	8	21.6
5 – a lot	5	14.3	7	18.9
Total	35	100.0	37	100.0

Results



Questionnaire

➤ **Responses to open questions:**

Control group:

- General comments
- Mixed feeling

Experimental group:

- Detailed reports of the benefits gained from the module
- Greater satisfaction with the learning content and form

Results



Interviews

- Benefits: better accommodation of students' needs; increased motivation, autonomy, self-confidence; development of a good relationship, etc.
- Drawbacks: time factor and learner diversity
- Difficulties: unfamiliarity with task negotiation, the use of English in negotiation, the difficulty of coming to a consensus.
- Suggestions: smaller class, a gradual approach, occasional use of L1

Results



Documents

Benefits:

- encouraging the students' different contributions to their own learning
- tapping their already-present commitment
- releasing their creative power



Discussion

1. Post-test analysis:

unable to conclude which mode of working was more or less effective than the other

3 points to consider:

- It takes time to improve aural/oral skills.
- Procedural negotiation is not “‘an approach’ or a particular ‘method’ which can be claimed to directly enhance the learning of a language” (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000, pp. 294-5).
- Procedural negotiation entails needs-analysis, learner training, discussion, etc. → it takes time for changes to take place.



Discussion

2. Analysis of the questionnaire, interviews and documents:

task negotiation achieved a wider range of learning outcomes → a positive impact on students' learning effectiveness in the long run

3. Experimental group's positive comments in the questionnaire and interviews:

enthusiastic acceptance of task negotiation



Discussion

4. Control group's responses in the questionnaire:
a mixed reaction to the syllabus content and methodology
5. Experimental students' comments in the interviews:
some problems with task negotiation → a realistic part of negotiated work



Implications

1. offering learners the opportunities to use their knowledge and sense of responsibility
2. starting negotiation on a small scale and gradually extending the scope
3. equipping learners with some appropriate learning strategies



Implications

4. using small groups as an essential organizational pattern in the classroom
5. allowing the occasional use of learners' native language

the ultimate goal of negotiated work: to contribute to "*learner*, rather than *language*, development" (Allright, 2000, p. 8)



Conclusion

The adoption of negotiated modes of working serves “to complement and enrich the teacher’s difficult task of enabling language learning” (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000, p. 295).



Thank you for listening!



Comments and Q&A

