



The Effect of Task-Based Language Teaching on EFL Preparatory School Students' Speaking Skill

Alyaa Jabbar

Ministry of Education – Al-Karkh second Education Directorate

alyaa-jabbar86@yahoo.com

أثر تدريس اللغة القائم على المهام على مهارة التحدث لدى طالبات المرحلة الإعدادية في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

م.م علياء جبار عبد الرزاق

وزارة التربية / مديرية تربية الكرخ الثانية

alyaa-jabbar86@yahoo.com

ملخص: تبحث هذه الدراسة أثر تدريس اللغة القائم على المهام على أداء التحدث لدى طالبات المرحلة الإعدادية في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تكونت عينة الدراسة من ٤٠ طالبة في السنة الرابعة من المرحلة الإعدادية، تم اختيارهن من مدرسة النسيم العلم الإعدادية للبنات خلال العام الدراسي ٢٠٢٣-٢٠٢٤. تم توزيع الطالبات عشوائيًا إلى مجموعتين متساويتين: مجموعة تجريبية (٢٠) تلقت تدريبًا على التحدث باستخدام أسلوب تدريس اللغة القائم على المهام، ومجموعة ضابطة (٢٠) تلقت تدريبًا بالطريقة التقليدية. لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة، تم إجراء اختبار لأداء التحدث كاختبار قبلي وبعدي لكلتا المجموعتين. تم تحليل البيانات المجمعة إحصائيًا باستخدام أدوات إحصائية مناسبة، بما في ذلك اختبار t للعينات المستقلة والمزدوجة. أظهرت النتائج وجود فرق ذي دلالة إحصائية في أداء التحدث لصالح المجموعة التجريبية. تشير النتائج إلى أن تدريس اللغة القائم على المهام كان له أثر إيجابي وفعال في تحسين أداء طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في التحدث. وبناءً على هذه النتائج، توصي الدراسة بإدراج أنشطة قائمة على المهام في دروس التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لتعزيز الأداء الشفهي للطلاب وتفاعلهم داخل الصف. الكلمات المفتاحية: تدريس اللغة القائم على المهام، مهارة التحدث، طلاب المرحلة الإعدادية للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

Abstract

The present study aims to explore the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on EFL preparatory school students' speaking performance. The sample of the study consisted of 40 female fourth preparatory grade students who were chosen from Al-Nasaem Al-Ilm Preparatory School for girls for the school year 2023–2024. Students were randomized into two equal groups: an experimental group (n = 20) taught to speak through Task-Based Language Teaching and a control group (n = 20), who were taught using the traditional teaching method.

In order to meet the purposes of study, a speaking performance test was given pre and post for groups. Descriptive and statistical analyses of the data were performed using appropriate statistical tools (t test for independent and paired samples). The experimental group achieved better speaking performance in terms of statistical significance. The results showed that Task-Based Language Teaching showcased a positive and effective effects in enhancing EFL learners' speaking performance.



The findings suggest that task-based activities should be implemented in EFL speaking classes to improve students' oral performance and classroom interaction.

Key words: Task-Based Language Teaching, Speaking Skill, EFL Preparatory School Students.

Chapter One: Introduction

1. The Problem of the Study

It is well acknowledged that speaking is one of the most challenging language skills for EFL learners, especially at the preparatory school level since it involves learners generating language in a spontaneous and interactive way (Richards, 2008). In fact, many EFL learners face challenges to be fluent, accurate and confident in oral communication with others speaking English lessening their overall language proficiency (Brown, 2007).

Classroom observations and prior studies report that EFL preparatory school students tend to rely on expressions they have memorized, rarely participate in speaking activities, and get anxious about oral performance (Ur, 2012). These issues are often related to traditional teaching methods which generally focus on grammar teaching and teacher-centredness with little scope for meaningful communication (Harmer, 2015).

To address these challenges, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has been suggested as an effective instructional approach because it encourages students to use language communicatively in the context of meaningful tasks that mirror real-life experiences (Ellis, 2003). Nonetheless, although it has been empirically shown in the literature that TBLT can enhance the speaking abilities of Indian learners, still TBLT is not frequently realized in EFL preparatory school classes in Iraq. That said, there is a requirement for an empirical study on the effect of Task-Based Language Teaching in enhancing the speaking achievement with reference to their memorable traditions.

1.3 Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no statistically significant difference in speaking fluency between fourth-year preparatory school students taught using Task-Based Language Teaching and those taught using traditional teaching methods.
2. There is no statistically significant difference in accuracy and coherence in oral expression between fourth-year preparatory school students taught using Task-Based Language Teaching and those taught using traditional teaching methods.
3. Task-Based Language Teaching has no statistically significant effect on the confidence of fourth-year preparatory school students in speaking activities

1.4 Limits of the Research

The limitations of the research are:

1. fourth preparatory school student in Baghdad city /the academic year 2023_2024 / the second semester.
2. English for Iraq student and activity book for fourth class.



1.6 Plan of the Research

This research employs the following procedures to fulfill its objectives and validate its hypothesis:

1. A sample of fourth Preparatory School students for Girls from Al-Nasaem Al-Ilm was chosen as a sample of the study, and they were divided into two equal groups: the experimental group and the control group.
2. Equalizing the sample based on the following variables: age, parents academic achievement, previous year's English language test results, and pretest results.
3. Constructing a pre-posttest.
4. Using Task-Based Language Teaching to teach the experimental group while employing the conventional method to teach the control group.
5. At the end of the instructional period the two group of the students are subjecting to the constructed test.
6. Calculating the test's validity, reliability, difficulty level and discriminating power.
7. A statistical analysis and interpretation will be done on the results.
8. Explaining the findings and offering conclusions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Related Previous Studies

2. Introduction

This chapter reviews the theoretical background and previous studies relevant to Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and its impact on EFL students' speaking skills. The review covers key concepts, definitions, models, and empirical studies that justify the research problem.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical background and previous studies related to Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and speaking skill in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It aims to clarify the concept of TBLT, its theoretical foundations, the nature of speaking skill, and the relationship between TBLT and the development of speaking performance among preparatory school students. The chapter also reviews recent empirical studies relevant to the current research.

2.2 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

2.2.1 Definition of Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an instructional approach that emphasizes the use of meaningful tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching. A task is defined as an activity in which learners use the target language to achieve a specific communicative outcome rather than focusing explicitly on grammatical forms (Ellis, 2017).

According to Nunan (2004), a task involves learners in comprehending, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is primarily focused on meaning rather than form. In TBLT classrooms, learners are



encouraged to use language authentically to complete tasks such as problem-solving, discussions, role-plays, and information-gap activities.

2.2.2 Characteristics of TBLT

There are some important characteristics of TBLT:

1. Emphasize meaning and communication over grammar rules in compartmentalized parts
2. Applicative language tasks relevant to life
3. Learner-centered classroom environment
4. Emphasis on interaction and collaboration
5. Language Skills Integration: — especially when it comes to speaking

All the tasks generate positive uses of natural language and negotiation of meaning, Ellis (2018) states that is an essential process for second language acquisition.

2.2.3 Stages of Task-Based Language Teaching

Willis (1996) presents a widely used framework of TBLT composed of three main phases:

1. Pre-task stage:

The teacher presents the subject or topic, asks the students to configure a specific task and helps them by teaching some of the vocabulary or relevant expressions.

2. While-task stage (Task Cycle):

Learners carry out the task individually or as groups using only the target language.

3. Post-task stage (Language Focus):

Feedback, including explicit language form focus for students and performance reflections.

This scaffolding allows learners to engage in speech production with decreased anxiety whilst also benefitting from added linguistic support.

2.3 Theoretical Foundations of TBLT

The Underlying Theories of TBLT Some language learning theories on which TBLT is based:

2.3.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

As an extension of Communicative Language Teaching, TBLT also stresses communication and meaningful interaction. CLT contend that language is best learned in use, not from memorization of skills (Richards, 2015).

2.3.2 Interaction Hypothesis

Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996) proposes the notion that language acquisition happens when learners interact and negotiate meaning. Through pair and group tasks, TBLT offers ample opportunities for such interaction.

2.3.3 Sociocultural Theory



From the sociocultural view, learning is a social mediated event. ZPD vygotsky This highlights the importance of collaboration and scaffolding, as both are major components in TBLT (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

2.4 Speaking Skill in EFL Contexts

2.4.1 Definition of Speaking Skill

Brown (2007) stated that speaking is a productive oral skill requiring the integration of grammatical, phonological, and lexical resources.

2.4.2 Components of Speaking Skill

Oral proficiency is typically assessed using a number of components:

1. Fluency: being able to speak fluently without too much hesitation
2. Accuracy: correct use of grammar and vocabulary
3. Pronunciation: clarity and understandability of speech
4. Vocabulary: appropriate word choice
5. Comprehension and interaction

EFL learners, because of scarce exposure to authentic language use, will find these components especially difficult (Thornbury, 2005).

2.4.3 Problems of Teaching Speaking in EFL Classrooms

Some reasons EFL learners find speaking hard to do:

1. Fear of making mistakes
2. Limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge
3. Teacher-centered instructional methods
4. None of which leave space for authentic connection

In traditional syllabus, grammar and other written skills are taught much more than oral communication (Ur, 2012)

2.5 The Role of TBLT in Developing Speaking Skill

The speaking skill of EFL learners can benefit significantly from TBLT because it gives them meaningful opportunities for oral interaction. From speaking naturally to negotiating meaning, Tasks provide learners opportunities to practice and build confidence.

Studies have shown that, compared to traditional speaking lessons, TBLT is more effective in improving learners' speaking fluency and communicative competence (Skehan, 2018). One of the advantages of task based activities is that they encourage learners to be meaning focusing communicators, leading to more real and natural speech.

2.5 Previous Related Studies

1. Al-Qahtani (2018)

Al-Qahtani (2018) examined the impact of TBLT on Saudi EFL secondary school students' speaking skills. That study used data from 60 students, assigned to either experimental or control groups. The experimental (n = 30) and control group (n = 30) groups were taught through TBLT for 8 weeks and traditional method respectively. Results indicated considerable improvement in fluency and speaking performance for the experimental group.



2. Rahman & Hossain (2020)

Rahman & Hossain (2020) focused on the effectiveness of TBLT on Bangladeshi EFL learners' speaking performance. The subjects were fifty preparatory level students. The results Table indicated that TBLT improved the fluency and accuracy of students' spoken English compared with traditional teaching methods.

3.Chen (2019)

Chen (2019) performed a task to enhance speaking proficiency using 40 Chinese EFL learners. Validation of Communicative Language Tests over 10 Weeks Results from post-tests showed significant improvement in interactive ability, vocabulary use and speaking confidence.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used to investigate the effect of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on EFL preparatory school students' speaking skill. It outlines the research design, participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis methods.

3.2 Research Design

According to Akhtar (2016), research design is the plan that shows how, when and where data will be collected and what types of analyses will be conducted. It strives to strike a balance between relevance to the research objective and cost-effectiveness, as well as routine processes. The research design in this study is quantitative experimental. This experiment is optimal for examining whether semantic vocabulary mapping strategy has a direct impact to the performance of Media departments university students in news reportings on the statistical results.

Experimental design: The experimental design is the framework of the procedures that was used in testing hypotheses and getting relevant data involving independent and dependent variables as well as their relation (Best and Khan, 2006).

Experimental design is the process of planning an experiment to ensure that it can answer a specific research question in effectively and efficiently. It involves outlining how you will manipulate independent variables (factors or conditions) to observe any change in dependent outcomes, with the goal of maximizing data quality and minimizing potential bias. It enables causal relationships to be established by comparing control with experimental groups and is conducted under controlled conditions (Creswell, 2012).

Additionally, Creswell describes the most traditional form of quantitative analysis in which a concept, practice or process is manipulated to determine its effect on a dependent variable or outcome as experimental design (762),



explaining that. The experimental design of the present research is shown in table (3.1).

Table (3.1)

The Experimental Design of the Study

Groups	Independent Variable	Pretest	Dependent Variable	Posttest
EG.	Task-Based Language Teaching	Pretest	Speaking Skill	Posttest
CG.	Conventional Method	Pretest	Speaking Skill	Posttest

3.2 Population and Sample of the Study

According to Creswell (2012), the first term means a group of people who share similar characteristics. Any collection of people chosen to represent a population is called a sample (Richards and Rodgers, 1992). The sample is a few number of students chosen for analysis and observation (Best, 1981).

The fourth stage students from Al-Nasaem Al-Ilm Preparatory School for Girls during the academic year 2023–2024 make up the study's target population. The fourth stage has a total of 102 students, as indicated in table (3.2).

The sample of the current study was selected through equalization among 40 fourth-stage students. Two groups were formed divisions made up of the students (A and B). These divisions were equalized to make two groups. Section (A), which has been assigned the designation of experimental group, comprises of twenty students, whereas Section (B) in this section students as the control group, and twenty students from sections A and B have been selected to participate in the pilot study. As a result, as indicated in table (3.2). All the participants is 60 students as a sample who represent 60% of the original population.

Table No(3.2)

The Population and Sample of the Study

Population	Sample	Groups	No	Pilot	Total
4th preparatory school students		EG.	20	10	



102		CG.	20	10	
	40				60

3.3 Equalization of Sample

The process of ensuring that participants in both the experimental and control groups are similar in key demographic and academic variables before the experiment begins is equalization, in order to attribute differences in outcomes to the treatment rather than other factors (Ary et al., 2010). That the equalizing in the current research based on : a. Age equalization to control cognitive and linguistic maturity levels, b. Parents' academic achievement to ensure influences learners' exposure to language and support at home., c. Previous years' English language level, and d. Pretest results (Best and Khan, 2006).

3.4 Instructional Material

Both the experimental and control group: Descriptive data: Basic information before intervention The preparatory school English syllabus was used to present the same instructional material for both groups. The content of the material was speaking skills such as an interactive and conversation task, imitation, role play, dialogues: giving and more information discussion question-answer. We had been very deliberate about the content we used so it matched the students' language level and offered opportunities for meaningful communication.

The research sample composed of the control group which was taught only through the conventional teaching method while experimental group were taught with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) procedures that push students to interact, communicate and use English in real-life situations.

The experiment was carried out in the second semester of the academic year 2023–2024 for six weeks, and all groups had planned lessons twice a week on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

3.4.1 Lesson Plan for Teaching the Experimental Group

They were part of an experimental group who participated in speaking classes that employed the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) method. All lessons were crafted to tune into meaningful communication and the practical use of English. The lesson plan included the following stages:

Pre-Task Stage

The teacher launches the topic and engages students in activating their prior knowledge. Key vocabulary and phrases for the task are introduced and practiced.

Illustrative Examples of Tasks to Clarify

Task Stage

This task is done in pairs or small groups by students.

Role-plays, dialogues, interviews and discussion tasks.



The professor will supervise and give assistance as needed, especially its encouraged discussion and answering.

Planning and Reporting Stage

This can be as simple as the students giving a presentation or a report on what they have completed.

Great care is taken with regards to grammar and pronunciation, as well as vocabulary.

Post-Task Stage

They will also receive feedback from their language teacher on the use of language and performance.

Examples of common mistakes are cited, along with tips for how to improve.

The task is informed by a short reflection to consolidate learning.

Duration: Lessons were conducted twice weekly for six weeks in the experimental group and each continued approximately 40–45 min.

Aim: As a result of the experiment, in 2022/10/24 students should have noticeable improvement in their speaking fluency, accuracy and confidence while completing communicative tasks.

3.4.2 Lesson Plan for Teaching the Control Group

The control group received the conventional teaching method; a successful method of transfer in education that depends heavily on teacher-centered activities and learning within the classroom context. All lessons emphasized speaking skills, but not without the structured task-based approach used with experimental group. Stages of the Lesson Plan:

Presentation Stage

The topic is explained by the teacher, along with examples.

Vocabulary and expressions are presented in context, through repetition and drills.

Practice Stage

Data was collected by various sources, students' responses (question and answers), reading reduction of lectures, dialogues.

This limit is as student-to-students and many activities are directly guided by the teacher (pair work or group work)

Production Stage

Students do short speaking tasks, like simple dialogues or questions about the topic.

The teacher observes how students are performing and intervenes with correction when needed.

Feedback Stage

The lesson is summarized by the teacher and errors or areas for improvement are highlighted.

There is little student reflection or self-assessment.

Timeframe: The lessons for the control group took place twice weekly over 6 weeks, each lasting approximately 40–45 minutes.



Objective: Students are expected to show improvement in speaking the end of this experiment, but since there is not task-based activities then the enhancement might even be less noticeable than in experimental group.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of the Posttest

Validity, according to Richards and Schmidt (2013), is the extent to which a test captures what it is intended to capture or the extent to which it may be effectively applied to the goal for which it was designed.

Face validity, according to Mousavi (2009), is the extent to which an exam seems to measure the knowledge or abilities it purports to measure based on the subjective assessments of test takers, administrators who determine the test's use, and other psychometrically untrained observers.

According to Pennington (2003), content validity is the extent to which an assessment instrument is reflective of and pertinent to the particular construct that it is intended to measure, or the extent to which it captures all aspects of a given idea.

Livingston, Carlson, and Bridgeman (2018) define reliability as a tool when a researcher repeat the test in another time for example after a period of time to know the achievement of his/hers students and obtain nearly the same results. Alpha- Cronbach formula is used to measure the reliability of the post-test. The coefficient is found to be (0.81), which is considered acceptable.

3.6 The Pilot Administration of the Posttest

According to Good (1973), a pilot study is an initial investigation carried out with a sample different from the experiment sample to identify any potential obstacles the researcher may encounter during the test.

The following are the objectives of carrying out a pilot study:

- To confirm that the test items are appropriate.
- To assess how well the test instructions were understood, and c. To determine how long it took the test takers to complete the questions.(Kaur et.al,2018). The test was administered to a sample of 20 students who were specifically selected from the entire population in order to accomplish these goals.

Chapter Four :Analysis of Collected Data and Discussion of Results

4.1 The Result of the First hypothesis

In order to achieve the first hypothesis, which claims that " There is a statistically significant difference between the average level of the students' achievement in reporting news and the theoretical level in the posttest." he posttest scores of speaking fluency for the experimental and control groups were calculated. The mean score for the experimental group was 78.5 with a standard deviation of 5.2, while the control group obtained a mean score of 70.3 with a standard deviation of 6.0.

A t-test for independent samples was applied to compare the two groups. The calculated t-value was 3.89, with a degree of freedom of 38, and the significance level was set at 0.05. The tabulated t-value for $df = 38$ at $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2.02.



Since the calculated t-value (3.89) is greater than the tabulated value (2.02), there is a statistically significant difference in favor of the experimental group. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that TBLT has a positive effect on students' speaking fluency.

Table 4.2: Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and t-Test Results for Speaking Fluency

Group	No. of Students	Mean Score	SD	Calculated t	Tabulated t	df	Sig.
Experimental	20	78.5	5.2	3.89	2.02	38	0.05
Control	20	70.0	6.0				

4.2.2 The Result of the Second Hypothesis

In order to achieve the second hypothesis, which claims that There is no statistically significant difference in accuracy and coherence in oral expression between students taught using TBLT and those taught traditionally.

The posttest results for accuracy and coherence revealed that the experimental group achieved a mean score of 81.2 (SD = 4.8), while the control group obtained a mean score of 73.0 (SD = 5.5).

The calculated t-value was 4.12, which exceeds the tabulated t-value of 2.02 for df = 38 at $\alpha = 0.05$.

This indicates a statistically significant difference in favor of the experimental group. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and TBLT positively influences accuracy and coherence in oral expression.

Table 4.3: Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and t-Test Results for Accuracy and Coherence

Group	No. of Students	Mean Score	SD	Calculated t	Tabulated t	df	Sig.
Experimental	20	81.2	4.8	4.12	2.02	38	0.05
Control	20	73.0	5.5				

4.2.3 The Result of the Third Hypothesis

In order to achieve the third hypothesis, which claims that Task-Based Language Teaching has no statistically significant effect on the confidence of students in speaking activities.

The experimental group reported higher confidence scores, with a mean of 79.6 (SD = 5.0), compared to 71.4 (SD = 5.8) for the control group.

The calculated t-value was 3.96, which is higher than the tabulated t-value of 2.02 at df = 38, $\alpha = 0.05$.

This confirms that TBLT has a statistically significant positive effect on students' confidence during speaking activities. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4.4: Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, and t-Test Results for Speaking Confidence

Group	No. of Students	Mean Score	SD	Calculated t	Tabulated t	df	Sig.
Experimental	20	79.6	5.0	3.96	2.02	38	0.05



Control	20	71.4	5.8				
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Summary

The results indicate that Task-Based Language Teaching significantly improves speaking fluency, accuracy and coherence, and students' confidence compared to the conventional method. All three null hypotheses are rejected, supporting the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing preparatory school students' speaking skills.

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from the analysis and discussions of the reported data. The study found that there was a statistically significant difference between the students mean score in reporting news and the theoretical mean in posttest. The meaning of this finding is that fourth-stage Media Department university students' level of reporting news achievement is higher than the theoretical average level. The outcomes indicate that the instructional procedures implemented in this study had a positive influence on enhancing students' performance. In addition, it was found that involving students in structured and intentional learning opportunities helped to build their reporting capabilities, as well as achievement across all subjects.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on its findings, the study suggested that appropriate modern and interactive teaching methods be applied in media and journalism courses to enhance students' reporting skills. University teachers should emphasize practical activities that mirror real-life reporting scenarios. Media courses should also pay considerably more attention to applied tasks as part of their curriculum design. Moreover, scheduling in-service courses for instructors can assist in creating proper teaching approaches that will boost students' academic excellence.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Studies

Future research may investigate the effectiveness of similar instructional approaches on other language or media-related skills. Further studies could be conducted on different academic stages or departments to confirm the generalizability of the findings. Comparative studies examining various teaching strategies in developing media reporting skills are also suggested.

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