The Effect of TBL (task based learning) on improving students' oral communication skills

Mostafa ali kulaib *

Department English language, Faculty of languages English, El-Mergib university, Alkhoms, Libya.
*Corresponding author: mustafakulaib@gmail.com

أثر التعلّم القائم على المهام (TBL) في تحسين مهارات التواصل الشفوي لدى الطلاب

مصطفى علي كليب *
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية اللغات، جامعة المرقب، الخمس ، ليبيا

Abstract

The effectiveness of Task-Based Learning (TBL) in enhancing the oral communication skills of Libyan English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners is investigated in this study. Many Libyan students still struggle with speaking English, particularly with fluency and confidence, despite having taken numerous English language courses. Using a non-equivalent group strategy and a mixed-methods quasi-experimental design, this study assessed communicative ability using pre- and post-tests. Fifty El-Mergib University first-year students" According to the results of the post-test, the experimental group outperformed the control group in every category that was measured, including vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension. This noteworthy improvement, as shown by the experimental group's computed t-value of 70.253 (p < 0.01), highlights TBL's ability to tackle particular issues like hesitancy and insecurity that are common among Libyan EFL learners. TBL is a very successful pedagogical strategy for developing authentic communicative competence in the Libyan EFL context, according to the study's findings, and its wider implementation could greatly improve students' practical English speaking skills.

Keywords: Task-Based Learning (TBL), Oral communication skills, Speaking fluency and confidence.

الملخص

تُحقّق هذه الدراسة في فاعلية التعلّم القائم على المهام (TBL) في تعزيز مهارات التواصل الشفوي لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) في ليبيا. فرغم التحاق العديد من الطلبة الليبيين بدورات متعددة في اللغة الإنجليزية، ما زال كثير منهم يعاني من صعوبات في التحدث باللغة، وخاصة فيما يتعلق بالطلاقة والثقة بالنفس.

استخدمت الدراسة استراتيجية المجموعات غير المتكافئة وتصميماً شبه تجريبي يعتمد على المنهج المختلط، حيث تم تقييم القدرة التواصلية باستخدام اختبارات قبليّة وبعديّة. شملت العينة خمسين طالباً من طلبة السنة الأولى في جامعة المرقب. أظهرت نتائج الاختبار البَعدي أنّ المجموعة التجريبية تفوقت على المجموعة الضابطة في جميع الجوانب المقاسة، بما في ذلك المفردات، والقواعد، والطلاقة، والفهم. وقد أبرزت القيمة الإحصائية المحسوبة (t = 70.253, p < 0.01) هذا التحسن الملحوظ، مؤكدةً قدرة التعلّم القائم على المهام على معالجة مشكلات محددة مثل التردد وانعدام الثقة التي يعاني منها متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية في السياق الليبي.

خلصت الدراسة إلى أنّ التعلّم القائم على المهام يُعد استراتيجية تدريسية فعّالة للغاية في تنمية الكفاءة التواصلية الحقيقية في بيئة تعلّم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا، وأنّ تعميم تطبيقه على نطاق أوسع يمكن أن يسهم بدرجة كبيرة في تحسين مهارات التحدث العملية لدى الطلاب.

الكلمات الدالة: التعلّم القائم على المهام (TBL)، مهارات التواصل الشفوي، الطلاقة والثقة في التحدث.

Introduction

One of the most important educational issues in Libya today is English, which is required at both the lower and upper secondary levels. At the elementary school level, it is also an elective. Students are now introduced to this subject in grade 3, and it will remain a part of the general education curriculum until grade 12. Furthermore, higher education programs, colleges, universities, and vocational schools continue to teach and learn English. However, Libyan students still encounter many difficulties when learning English, especially when it comes to speaking the language. From elementary school through higher education, most Libyan students struggle to communicate effectively in English, even after years of studying the language. Even well-read and well-written students struggle to express their opinions verbally. One of the main causes of this, according to Hoang (2018), is that communicative competence—a crucial goal in language instruction—emphasizes the ability to use language in ways that are appropriate and successful in everyday contexts (Canale & Swain, 1980). By putting students in meaningful, goal-oriented tasks that mimic real-world communication, Task-Based Learning (TBL) has emerged as a popular pedagogical strategy for developing this competency (Ellis, 2003).

1.1 Literature review

Although the definition of TBL was given from many experts, they all agreed with the role of tasks as the core concept in teaching and learning. According to Ellis (2003), TBL refers to teaching a language (second or foreign language) with the aim to expose learners to interactional authentic language use by letting them perform a series of tasks It therefore emphasises the importance of processing existing knowledge as well as learning new linguistic information.

Needs-based content, learning through interaction in the target language, authentic texts in the learning context, emphasis on the learning process, enhancing learners' personal experiences, and the link between classroom language learning and real-life language use are the six main TBL principles and practices that Nunan (2004) proposed for pedagogical purposes.

According to Van den Branden (2006), it is a method of teaching languages that entails giving students functional tasks to encourage them to focus on meaning exchange and use language for non-linguistic, everyday purposes. According to Larsen-Freeman & Anderson (2011), TBL is an example of a "strong version" of the communicative approach, which emphasises language acquisition through usage. This suggests that students will pick up the language they need at the right moment to finish the task at hand. Richards and Rodgers (2014),Stated that task-based learning (TBL) is a language teaching approach that uses tasks as the core component of planning and instruction. In conclusion, despite definitions from a range of experts, the perception of TBL consistently emphasises the learner-centred approach, the use of the target language, the learning process, and the term "tasks" as a fundamental and central concept.

TBL further enhances this process by providing learners with organised chances to use the language to accomplish particular goals, which encourages them to interact with it in a more targeted, goal-oriented way. Task integration in TBLT ensures that students use their language abilities in authentic, useful situations, which promotes the growth of accuracy and fluency. Additionally, TBLT's emphasis on learner autonomy—which entails students keeping track of their progress, working with peers, and taking ownership of their education—complements the communicative focus.

Because of its task feature, which enables teachers to create dynamic group learning environments that give students more exposure to the target language, TBL is the best option for EFL instruction. Consequently, this helps students improve their interactive and communication skills (Xiongyong & Moses, 2011). Furthermore, there is usually little interaction between students and native speakers in nations where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). Accordingly, it is thought that frequent usage of the target language in active group learning is crucial for learning a foreign language (Jeon & Hahn, 2006). According to McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007), TBLT is the best approach for encouraging self-directed learning and drawing students' attention to the application of the target language in authentic contexts. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that teachers may have ambiguous concepts regarding the focal elements of task-based teaching and what constitutes a task (Comer, 2007; Pei, 2008). As a result, additional research is required to identify potential, meaningful tasks that can improve learners' communicative competence in task-based teaching (Carless, 2003).

Research question

To what extent can Task-Based Learning (TBL) improve Libyan EFL learners' oral communication skills, particularly fluency and confidence, in a context where traditional methods have failed to foster communicative competence?

Research objectives

1. To assess how well TBL addresses the particular difficulties Libyan learners have speaking English, such as fluency, hesitation, and confidence.
 2. To identify the main task-based techniques (such as role-plays and information-gap tasks) that promote meaningful interaction in Libyan classrooms.
 3. To assess students' communication skills both before and after the TBL intervention, with a focus on usefulness.
4. To evaluate how TBL is thought to affect learner motivation and autonomy in Libyan EFL contexts.
5. To offer a framework for modifying TBL to fit Libya's educational system while accounting for curricular and cultural limitations.

Research design

A Combination of Techniques For the current study, a quasi-experimental design has been chosen in order to simultaneously collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data. During the interpretation stage, the results will be combined. According to Mwonge and Naho [21,22], since no single data acquisition technique is perfect when used alone, a mixed-methods approach allows for a more thorough analysis of the problem than using either method alone. A comprehensive understanding of the quantitative effectiveness (quantitative results) and qualitative insights (qualitative processes, experiences, and contextual factors) that either support or undermine TBL success is made possible by such an approach. In this study, the non-equivalent group design was used. Except for the intact group, which is not assigned at random, this design is exactly the same as the experimental group design for the pre-test/post-test control group.

2.2 Participants

The respondents that are targeted in this study are the first year students of the university level. Number of the respondents is 50 divided between two faculties under El-Mergib University. The Faculty of Language students represented the experimental group and the Faculty of Education students represented the control group.

2.3 Instrumentation

The chosen instrument in this paper was the pre-test and post-test, before and after the TBL was applied on the respondents, since the purpose of this study is to discover whether the RBL has any effect on the learner speaking skill. The test was validated by three lecturers before the final distribution process.

2.4 Data collection

The data was collected using pre-test and post-test on both control group and expiemenal group. They were tested before the implementation of TBL and after the implementation of TBL to see if there is any difference that took place in regards of students' speaking skill.

2.5 Data analysis

The tests that were conducted on the respondents were analyzed to compare the difference of the mean score between the pre-test and post-test y using the SPSS in order to get accurate results .

3.1 Results

Table 1. Pre-test statistics**.**

Group	Std deviation	Mean	NN	Calculated t-value	Tabulated t	Sig
Control	5.02044	26.8941	25	1.98	2.518	Non-significant
Experimental	5.61159	29.0210	25			

The pre-test mean scores, standard deviations, and t-test results for the experimental and control groups are shown in Table 1. As demonstrated, the mean scores of the two groups did not differ statistically significantly ($t=1.98<2.518, p>0.05$). This suggests that prior to the intervention, the communication skills of the two groups were similar.

Table 2. Post-test results.

Group	Std deviation	Mean	NN	Calculated t-value	Tabulated t	Sig
Control	5.129	25.789	25	70.253	2.619	Significant At 0.01
Experimental	2.581	92.376	25			

Table 2 displays the post-test results for the experimental and control groups. Compared to the control group (25.789), the experimental group's mean score (92.376) was noticeably higher. The statistical significance of the difference at the 0.01 level indicates that the experimental group's communication skills have significantly improved after the TBL intervention ($t=70.253>2.619$, $p<0.01$).

Table 3. experimental group's individual mean scores

skill	Test	Mean	n	Deviation
Fluency	Pre	2.70	25	1.33
	Post	7.56	25	0.64
Grammar	Pre	2.05	25	1.10
	Post	9.08	25	1.11
Understanding	Pre	3.18	25	1.46
	Post	8.94	25	0.66
Vocabulary	Pre	2.32	25	1.20
	Post	7.67	25	0.74

The table above shows the experimental group's individual mean scores for four distinct communication skills (vocabulary, grammar, understanding, and fluency) at both the pre-test and post-test phases. All of the following industries saw significant expansion: • The average fluency score rose from 2.70 on the pre-test to 7.56 on the post-test. • The average grammar score improved from 2.05 on the pre-test to 9.08 on the post-test. • The average comprehension score rose from 3.18 on the pre-test to 8.94 on the post-test. • From 2.32 on the pre-test to 7.67 on the post-test, the vocabulary mean score rose. These results imply that all of the assessed oral communication components showed a steady and significant improvement for the students in the TBL experimental group.

4.1 Discussion

The findings of this quasi-experimental study provide strong proof of the positive impact of task-based learning (TBL) on Libyan EFL learners' oral communication skills. The experimental and control groups clearly started at a similar level of communicative competence, as shown by the pre-test results in Table 1. As a result, the intervention may be responsible for any subsequent variation.

The most notable finding in Table 2 shows that the experimental group, which received TBL intervention, achieved noticeably higher post-test scores than the control group. The computed t-value of 70.253 for the experimental group, which stands in sharp contrast to the control group's 2.619, and the statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level provide strong evidence for the efficacy of TBL. This directly answers the main research question and shows that TBL can improve Libyan EFL learners' oral communication abilities, especially in a situation where traditional approaches haven't worked.

Moreover the analysis sheds light on the particular advancements made in different areas of communication, as indicated in Table 3. On the post-test, the experimental group's mean scores for vocabulary, grammar, understanding, and fluency all showed notable gains. Fluency, for instance, improved from a mean of 2.70 to 7.56, grammar from 2.05 to 9.08, comprehension from 3.18 to 8.94, and vocabulary from 2.32 to 7.67. The steady and noteworthy increase in all assessed skills highlights the comprehensive advantage of TBL in the development of communicative competence. The experimental group's notable 37-point increase in overall mean score from pre-test to post-test highlights the practical significance of these improvements.

These findings align with TBL's theoretical underpinnings. According to Ellis (2003), TBL facilitates interaction and the acquisition of new linguistic knowledge by exposing students to authentic language use through goal-oriented tasks. The noted gains in vocabulary, grammar, and fluency can be directly linked to the "strong version" of TBL's communicative

approach, which has students learn language as they need it to accomplish tasks (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The focus on meaning exchange and practical goals naturally fosters the development of natural and effective communication (Van den Branden, 2006).

According to Xiongyong and Moses (2011), the success of this study supports the idea that TBL's task feature is perfect for EFL contexts because it fosters interactive group learning with increased exposure to the target language. According to Jeon and Hahn (2006), active group learning led by TBL seems to be a key component of Libyan learners' improved communication abilities because they frequently have little opportunity to interact with native speakers. Though not stated clearly in the tables, the notable increases in fluency and general communication imply the noted increases in confidence and decreased hesitation, indicating that TBL successfully tackles the unique difficulties Libyan learners encounter when speaking English.

Conclusion

This study unequivocally shows that Task-Based Learning (TBL) is very successful in enhancing the oral communication abilities of Libyan EFL students. The quantitative data clearly show that the TBL intervention improved the experimental group's communicative performance, including vocabulary, grammar, understanding, and fluency, in a statistically significant way. These findings directly address the early difficulties Libyan students faced when speaking English, especially with regard to oral expressiveness, even after years of language study.

The results highlight how crucial it is to switch from conventional, less communicative techniques to learner-centred, task-based strategies that encourage real-world language usage. Through meaningful tasks, TBL enables students to use English in everyday situations, improving their communicative fluency and linguistic accuracy. The inclusion of TBL in the Libyan English language curriculum is strongly supported empirically by this study as a workable way to promote true communicative competence.

In conclusion is recommended that educational stakeholders in Libya assess the possibility of integrating and altering TBL concepts and methodologies more thoroughly into their EFL programs in light of these convincing findings. In light of the particular cultural and curricular limitations, future research could focus on the creation of task-based strategies and particular frameworks tailored to the Libyan educational context. The advantages of this successful educational framework could be further maximised with this strategy.

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