

Effects of Using the Task-Based Approach on the Achievements of Year Five Pupils

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The present study aims at investigating the effect of the task-based approach on the achievement of fifth primary class pupils. In the light of this aim, two null hypotheses have been set. A sample of 100 pupils has been chosen from the fifth primary class in Al-Jamaa Primary School for boys and girls in the city of Mosul. The sample has been distributed equally into four groups and each consists of 25 pupils. The researchers prepared the main requirements of the study, specifying the teaching materials consisted of nine units, formulating behavioural objectives, preparing the daily lesson plans following two methods of teaching: viz. task-based approach and the traditional method. The researchers also designed an achievement test. The findings show that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of achievement due to the variables of the group and gender for the benefit of female pupils in the experimental group.

Keywords: *Task-Based Approach, formulating behavioural, hypotheses*

Introduction

“Language is the centre of human life” (Cook, 1996). It is argued that language learning is regarded as the cornerstone of human existence. According to Willis and Willis (2007) the most effective way to teach a language is by engaging learners in real language use in the classroom. This is done by designing tasks – discussions, problems, games, and so on – which requires learners to use the language for themselves. Task-based language education starts from the basic idea that students learn a language by performing tasks. A task is generally described as an activity in which people engage to attain an objective, and which involves the meaningful use of language.

According to **Larsen _Freeman (2000)** a task –based approach aims to provide learners with a natural context for language use. As learners work to complete a task, they have abundant opportunities to interact. Such interaction is thought to facilitate language acquisition as learners have to work to understand each other and to express their meaning.

Teaching English has always been concerned with developing the pupils' ability to communicate. It aims at making learners understand and use the language in its spoken and written forms within a particular cultural context, and to build up the pupils communicative competence so that they can use it in their future life (**Al- Mutawa and Al- Kailani, 1989**). According to **Davies and pearse (2002)** "real success in English teaching and learning is when the learners can actually communicate in English inside and outside the classroom. "

The Ministry of Education in Iraq has developed new English courses called "Iraq Opportunities" that begin from year third and is the first of a ten level course of young Iraqi learners of English. This new syllabuses supposed to meet the pupils needs and demands and incorporates recent development in the knowledge about the pedagogy of language. **Nunan (2002)** clarifies that challenge now is not to throw out well- established practices, as so often happened in the past, but to incorporate new ways of doing things into existing practice. In this sense, change will be evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

The other problem lies in the method followed in teaching English, which does not offer the due opportunity for interaction through English. Using the traditional method by the teachers of English may have unfavourable effects on the pupils' achievement in English. Therefore the researcher suggests applying TBA in teaching English for primary schools' pupils.

TBA for teaching language starts from the basic idea that students learn a language by performing tasks. A task is generally described as an activity in which people engage to attain an objective that involves the meaningful use of language (**Branden, 2007**). An enormous growth of interest in task-based language learning and teaching (henceforth TBA) has been seen in recent years. One of the reasons behind that may be it offers the possibility of combining "the best insights from communicative language teaching with an organised focus on language form and thus avoiding the drawbacks of more narrowly form-centred or communicative centred approaches. (**Swan, 2005**).

Accordingly, the current study is an attempt to find out another suitable way of teaching English to fifth grade primary school pupils and test its impact on the pupils' achievement in English. This can be summarised in the following questions:

1. Can TBA improve pupils' achievement in English?
2. Is there any impact of the sex variable on the achievement of pupils concerning TBA?

Aims of the Study

The present study investigates the impact of TBA on:

1. The achievement of fifth primary class pupils in English, with regards to the sex variable (male / female).
2. Enhancing the pupils, attitude toward learning English, with regards to the sex variable (male / female).

Hypotheses of the Study

In the light of the aims above, it is hypothesised that:

1. there is no significant statistical difference between mean scores in achievement test due to the variable of group.
2. there is no significant statistical difference between mean scores in achievement test due to the variable of gender.

Limits

This study is limited to:

1. Year five pupils in the primary schools in the city centre (left sector) of Mosul, during the second term of the academic year 2016-2017.
2. Iraqi opportunity Book 3 of Pupil's and activity Book for teaching English to year five pupils. These units are (16, 17,18,19,20,21,22,23, and, 24).

Value of the Study

The present study derives its significance from the currently remarkable role of English as an international language and a means of communication. It is hoped that using TBA in teaching English will enable pupils to understanding and master the foreign language. This study may bring new insights for teaching English as a foreign language.

The results of this study will be beneficial to guide teachers of English as a foreign language and foreign language learners in using a better and desirable method in teaching English in Iraq. It will also enhance pupil's performance to learn a foreign language.

The findings of this study will be beneficial to syllabus designers in making their selection, sequencing and grading on a more useful and practical basics to enhance pupils performance. Furthermore, the present study is hoped to provide other researchers with some reliable

instruments, procedure and experimental findings for future research. It will also pave the way for further investigation in the same topic.

Finally, by carrying out this study, the researcher hopes that TBA can receive more attention and enjoy more popularity among English language teachers at all levels in Iraq.

Definition of Basic Terms

Task Based Approach

- **Richards and Rodgers (2001)** defined task-based approach as “an approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching.”
- **Nunan (2001)** defined TBA as “a particular realization of communicative language teaching. Instead of beginning the process with lists of grammatical, functional-notional, and other items, the designer conducts a needs analysis which yields a list of the target tasks that the targeted learners will need to carry out in the ‘real-world’ outside the classroom.”
- **Lightbown and Spada (2006)** define TBA as "instruction in which classroom activities are tasks similar to those learners might engage in outside the second or foreign language classroom." But Task-Based Approach or Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) are the two names which are used more than the other names **(205)**.
- **Buyukkarci (2009)** define TBA as " an approach of language learning that involves doing a familiar task by using the target language TL" **(AL-Juheishy ,2010)**

The researchers defines TBA operationally an approach in which the fifth- grade pupils in the primary schools are learning English concentrating on meaning rather than form in carrying out a grouping of communicative tasks.

Achievement

- **Good (1973)** defines achievement as "knowledge attained or skills developed in the school subjects, usually designated by test scores or by marks assigned by teachers or by both."
- Achievement means something done successfully with effort and skill **(Oxford, 1985)**.
- **Smith (1994)** defines achievement as "the status of a student with respect to attained skills or knowledge as compared with other students or with school's adopted standard "
- **Davies (1999)** define it as "the mastery of what has been learnt, what has been taught or what is in the syllabus, textbook, materials, etc. " **(cited in AL-Juheishy ,2010)**.

The researchers defines achievement operationally as the result of what the pupils learn after learning English measured by the scores obtained through answering the test given at the end of the study.

Theoretical Background

The following part of the study will focus on the theoretical background of the variable of the study:

Task-Based Approach

In the 1970's, linguists (e.g., **Candlin**, 1976; **Widdowson**, 1978) saw the need for language teaching to focus on communicative proficiency rather than on merely mastery of structure. At that time, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was being promoted as the way forward in language teaching. This approach starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop learners' 'communicative competence', which, according to **Canale and Swain** (1980), refers to four dimensions: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence refers to the knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use language in ways appropriate to contexts of use, role relationships, and communicative purpose. Discourse competence refers to the ability to interpret message elements in terms of how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text. Strategic competence refers to the ability to use strategies to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence.

CLT aimed to (1) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and (2) develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language communication (**Richards and Rodgers**, 1986). As teachers began to develop communicative activities in the EFL classroom, researchers began to investigate and evaluate the effectiveness of those activities. **Howatt** (1984) distinguished between two major approaches to CLT: the weak version and the strong version.

The 'weak' version, which has become more or less standard practice in the years, stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching. The 'strong' version of communicative teaching, on the other hand, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of

stimulating the development of the language system itself. If the former ('weak version') could be described as 'learning to use' English, the latter ('strong version') entails 'using English to learn it' (**Howatt**, 1984).

The weak version of CLT, which means little more than an integration of grammatical and functional teaching, was advocated by some researchers, e.g., **Littlewood** (1981). He claims that one of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that 'it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language' (**Littlewood**, 1981). Hence, he developed a methodological framework which intends to build learners' communicative knowledge in a staged manner from pre-communicative activities to communicative activities (**Richards and Rodgers**, 1986).

On the other hand, the strong version of CLT, which aims to stimulate the development of language through use (i.e., using English to learn it), involving the use of tasks to focus learners on meaning rather than form, became more prevalent in the eighties. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) which focuses on teaching through tasks was developed at that time.

The Task-Based Learning

In contrast to the cycle of PPP, which begins with the presentation and practice of a small sample of language with the focus on a particular form, TBL provides a holistic language experience where learners naturally integrate four skills through tasks (**Willis**, 1996). In a framework for task-based learning, Willis (1996) proposes, with a rationale, the basic procedures for three phases of TBL: Pre-task, Task Cycle and Language Focus, as shown below:

At the Pre-task phase, the teacher introduces and defines the topic to the class, highlights useful topic-related words and phrases (but would not pre-teach new structures), and ensures the learners understand task instructions. The learners may hear a recording of a similar task being done, note down useful words and phrases from the recording or other pre-task activities, and spend a few minutes preparing for the task. This initial stage gives useful exposure to help the learners to recall relevant words and phrases and to recognise new ones.

Then, the Task Cycle, which consists of three components: task, planning and report, is central to the framework. It offers learners the chance to use whatever language they already know in order to carry out the task, and then to improve that language, under teacher guidance, while planning their reports of the task. Firstly, at the task stage, the learners are encouraged to do the task in pairs or small groups in order to use whatever language they can recall to fulfil the task outcome. This may be in response to reading a text or hearing a

recording. The teacher stands back and acts as monitor, but encourages the learners' attempts at communication in the target language, and comments briefly on context. Since the learners realise that they can achieve the goals without the teachers' direct support, their confidence and motivation will grow.

Moreover, based on the principle that 'output' (i.e., use of language) is likely to help stimulate 'intake' (i.e., acquisition of new forms) (Willis 1996), this stage, which emphasizes spontaneous, exploratory talk and confidence building, is vital to language acquisition for the learners.

Secondly, following the task stage, there is a planning stage, where the learners prepare to report to the whole class (orally or in writing) how they did the task, and what they decided or discovered. They draft and rehearse what they want to report to the class. The teacher acts as a language adviser, giving feedback and helping the learners to polish and correct their language. He/she ensures the purpose of the report is clear and encourages the learners to rehearse oral reports or organise written reports for a public presentation in the next stage.

Since the learners may have problems in using language forms and features, it is at the planning stage that a focus on form is natural and teacher advice and correction is likely to be of most use. It is also at the stage that emphasises clarity, organisation and accuracy (**Willis and Willis, 1996**).

Thirdly, at the report stage, the teacher selects some groups to present their oral or written reports to the task to the whole class. He/she simply acts as chairperson, briefly commenting on the content and form, and summing up at the end. He/she may play a recording of others doing the same task as post-task listening. The learners, at this report stage, listen to others doing the same task and compare the ways in which they did the task themselves. This stage gives a natural stimulus to improve their language. It encourages them to think about the form and meaning; accuracy and fluency when they present their reports in the target language. It also provides them with useful exposure in which they hear or read what other learners have done in the same task (**Willis, 1996; Willis and Willis, 1996**).

In addition, at the Task Cycle stage, exposure to language in use can be provided at different points, depending on the various types of tasks. It can be provided either before or during the task cycle where the learners may listen to recordings of other people doing the same/similar task, or read a text relevant to the task topic, and relate this to their own experience of doing the task (**Willis, 1996**).

The last phase in the framework, Language Focus, encourages the learners to focus their attention to forms of the language which they have already processed for meaning during the

task cycle. It consists of two components: analysis and practice. At the stage of analysis, the teacher picks up on language features from the report stage as consciousness-raising activities. Then, the learners do the activities to identify and process specific language features from the task text or transcript. Finally, the teacher reviews the analysis with the class. By the process of identification and generalisation, the learners' language knowledge is constructed and the specific language features become part of their internalised language system. Following the analysis stage, there is the final stage of the framework – the practice stage. At this final stage, the teacher conducts practice activities, based on the language analysis work, in order to build the learners' confidence and to help them to systematise their knowledge and broaden their understanding, so that they can carry on learning outside the classroom and after their language course (Willis, 1996; Willis and Willis, 1996).

The TBL framework, which interweaves Willis's (1996) four key conditions for language learning – exposure, use, motivation and instruction, provides learners with a natural progression from the holistic to the specific in their language learning.

Characteristics of a Task-Based Approach

Nunan (1991) outlines five characteristics of a task-based approach to language learning:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. The introduction of authentic texts (teaching materials) into the learning situation.
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language, but also on the learning process itself.
4. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom.

According to Ellis (2003) the Main Characteristics of TBL are the following:

- 'Natural' or 'naturalistic' use of language.
- Learners- centred rather than teacher controlled learning.
- Focus on form (attention to form occurs within the context of performing the task); intervention while retaining naturalness.
- Tasks serve as the means for achieving natural use of language.
- Traditional approaches are ineffective (**cited in Murad, 2009**).

Procedures of the Study

The current study has adopted the quasi-experimental design in terms of using two experimental groups and two control groups. These groups are chosen to intend from year five primary classes from two schools. The experimental group was taught using the task-based program (TBP) designed by the researcher and the control group is taught using the traditional method of teaching used by teachers of EFL at these schools. Both the experimental and the control groups have been pre-tested and post tested in their attitudes towards learning English and post tested in their achievement in English.

The population of the present study includes the fifth primary male and female pupils at the city of Mosul during the second term of the academic year 2016-2017. The total number of the schools is (352), (100) for boys, (128) for girls and (124) for boys and girls. The total number of the pupils is (19795); (10765) boys and (16772) girls.

After visiting a number of primary schools, the researcher selected intentionally Al-Jamaa primary school for boys: containing two fifth primary classes. Including (61) male pupils and Al-Jamaa primary school for girls: containing two fifth primary classes including (72) female pupils.

The four selected sections are nominated intentionally as an experimental groups (section A female and section B male), and control groups (section B female and section A male). The total number of pupils in the experimental groups (section B male) is (30), and (section A female) is (35). The total number of pupils in the control groups (section A male) is (31) and in (section B female) is (37). After excluding the repeaters and absent in each group, the total number of the whole sample subjects are (100), (25) in each group.

After selecting the four groups, the researcher did an equivalence between them depending on the information taken from the pupils and school records. This procedure includes equivalence in the following variables:

1. Pupil's age (measured in months).
2. Intelligence test scores.
3. Pupils' Achievement for the Preceding Year.
4. Pupils' achievement in English in mid-year examination.
5. The participants' scores in the pre-test of attitudes questionnaire.
- 6- Parents' educational attainment.

Four lessons a week have been allotted to teach each groups and the time allotted for each lesson was 40 minutes.

Prescribed teaching materials have been limited to the eight units from pupils' Book 3 for fifth class of the primary stage in Iraq opportunities, which is prescribed for teaching English to fifth year primary pupils. These units, i.e. units (16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24) have been specified according to the yearly plan which is prescribed in Teachers' Guide.

To achieve the aim of the study, the researchers prepared a lesson plan for teaching pupils according to two methods of teaching, i.e. TBA for the experimental groups and traditional method for the control groups. The two plans have been presented to a group of experts specialised in education and methodology. The experts accepted the plans and put forward some notes that have been considered by the researchers.

The Achievement Test

Verma and Bearel (1981) states an achievement test is an instrument designed to measure the extent to which a student has attained certain concepts or skills a given content area, usually as a result of specific teaching (**Verma and Bearel**, 1981).

Because of the lack of ready achievement test in English suitable for the curriculum of fifth primary grade pupils, the researcher conducted an achievement test. The written test consist of many types of questions and one was designed on the basis of (Multiple choice- items) because it can more effectively measure many of the simple learning outcomes measured by the short-answer item. Also, it can measure a variety of more complex outcomes in the knowledge, understanding and application (**Gronland**, 1981), read and match (i.e. match the words with pictures and match the colours with words), complete the words with missing letters, copy the words, true or false and find and write. In the current study, the written test included grammar, vocabulary and writing (handwriting, dictation, spelling).

The purpose of the achievement test was to assess the participants' achievement after the implementation of the instructional program in order to detect the effect of the program on the participants' achievement.

In order to verify the test items, regarding their correctness, generality and achievement and the desired cognitive levels, the researchers presented the test in its original design to a number of jurors adopting a rate agreeability of (80%) for the validity of the item. All jurors have agreed that the test is within the accepted standards of the pupils' knowledge of English at fifth grade.

The test was applied on a pilot sample that consisted of (100) male and female pupils from Qubat Al Sakhraa primary Schools (for boys and girls) and Abithar Al Ghafary primary

Schools for boys and girls who did not undergo such an experiment. The test was applied on 2&4 of January 2017. There was a re-test on the same sample after ten days. After computing correlation coefficient between the first application degrees of tests and the second application degrees by using Kuder Richardson formula (20), it seemed that reliability coefficient for the test is (0.82).

The pilot study of this study is carried out in order to help the researchers to:

1. Check the time that learners need to finish the test.
2. Make sure of the items difficulty and discrimination.

The time that all the learners look for answering the questions of the test ranges between 30-40 minutes. The average time was 35 minutes. It has been found that the level of items difficulty ranges from (0.35 to 0.65) for all the items of the test, which is regarded acceptable and satisfactory.

Discrimination of items was computed by subtracting the proportion of students' correct answers in the lower group from the proportion of correct answers in the upper group. In order to retain the items of higher discrimination, items of discrimination are deleted and the discriminatory index ranges from (0.33 to 0.65) for all items of the test.

This means that all the items of the test are acceptable in terms of discriminatory index. After conducting the test, a scoring scheme was made as follows:

1. Giving one score for the correct answer.
2. Giving zero for the wrong and blank answer.
3. Regarding the answers containing more than one answer as a false because they indicate that the pupils do not know the correct answer.
4. The researchers then counts the total grade for each pupil through collecting the grades of each correct answer.

The experiment started on the 18th of February 2017. Pupils in each group were taught nine units (16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23,24) from the Iraq opportunities, Pupil's Book 3, the prescribed textbook for fifth grade of the primary education stage. As mentioned earlier, the experimental groups were taught by the task-based approach while the control group was taught by the traditional method. The experiment lasted for eight weeks, and finished on the 17th of April, 2017.

On Sunday 20th of April, 2017, the achievement test was applied on the experimental and control groups. After applying the achievement test on a sample of (100) pupils, data have

been analysed by using the definite statistical means. Results are introduced according to the hypotheses of the study and then according to questions of the research.

Discussion of Results

The First Null Hypothesis

"There is no significant statistical difference between mean scores in achievement test due to the variable of method".

Its concerned with the results obtained from the achievement test. The pupils ' scores were analysed statistically to figure out whether or not the difference between the two EGs and two CGs are statistically significant. The mean scores of the total achievement test for the four groups were compared as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: ANOVA two ways test for pupils ' mean scores in the achievement test

Descriptive					
Groups	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	
EG.	Male	25	27.0800	4.63609	
	Female	25	36.6800	3.10537	
	Total	50	31.8800	6.22582	
CG.	Male	25	23.6000	5.75905	
	Female	25	23.2800	4.04681	
	Total	50	23.4400	4.92872	
Total/male		50	25.3400	5.46458	
Total/female		50	29.9800	7.65184	
ANOVA Results					
Source	Df.	Sum of Square	Mean	F calculated	F tabulated
Group	1	1780.840	1780.840	88.291	3.952 (0.05) (96.1)
Gender	1	538.240	538.240	26.685	
Group& Gender	1	615.040	615.040	30.493	
Error	96	1936.320	20.170		
Total	99	4870.440			

Table 1 shows that there is a statistical significant difference between the four groups in the mean scores of the achievement test, since the calculated F-value is higher than the F-tabulated one at (0.05) level of significance and 96, 1degrees of freedom. So, the first null hypothesis is rejected.

The results show that the experimental groups made significantly better gains in the achievement test. Since, the total mean scores for the experimental groups 31.8800 is higher than that of the control groups 23.4400. That is to say, the achievement of EG_s which have been taught according to TBA is higher than the CG_s which has been taught according to the traditional approach. This indicates the impact of the TBA in improving pupils' achievement.

The Second Null Hypothesis

"There is no significant statistical difference between mean scores in achievement test due to the variable of gender".

The mean scores of gender variable have been calculated and tested by using Shevee test. The results are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Pupils' Mean Scores in the achievement test concerning their gender

Gender	NO.	Mean	Sheveyh Calculated	Sheveyh Tabulated
Males	50	25.3400	8,895	3,952
Females	50	29.9800		

The Shevee calculated value (8,895), concerning the variable of gender, is significant since it is higher than the tabulated one (3.952). The significance is for the benefit of female pupils in the experimental group since their total mean score 29.9800 is higher than that of the others. Accordingly, the second null hypothesis is rejected.

Interpretation of the Results

A statistical significant difference has been found between EG_s and CG_s. The significance is for the benefit of EG_s. This indicates the impact of TBA on improving pupils' achievement in English. This might be due to the fact that TBA is a learning-centred method that uses balancing between focusing on meaning and form at the same time. Thus, the answer to the first research question (Can TBA improve pupils' achievement in English?) which is already addressed is (YES) TBA can improve pupils' achievement in English.

The pupils in the EGs which taught according to TBA showed superiority over the CGs. This might be due to the fact that pupils in EGs divided into small groups each group is consisted of five pupils; each pupil within his group responsible about completed the task and the cards which distributed among them within each lesson. Each card is consisted of one question include five items. Pupils within one group co-operate between them to answer the question and then the leader reads the answers in front of the class. These make pupils within one group an interactive, co-operative and more enjoyable.

The results concerning the variable of sex are also significant. The significance is for the benefit of female pupils in the experimental group. Thus, the answer to the second research question (Is there any impact of sex variable on the achievement of pupils concerning TBA?), which is already addressed is **YES**. There is impact of TBA concerning sex variable on the achievement of pupils for the benefit of female pupils.

Conclusion

The present study provides evidence for the effectiveness of using TBA in developing Fifth-primary pupil's achievement. These tasks can increase positive attitudes towards learning English. It is clear that the girls' achievement is improved more than the boys when classroom practice was organised as is the case in TBA.

The change in the teacher's role from an authoritarian to a discussion organiser, a facilitator and a language adviser allows students to share more responsibilities for their learning, express themselves freely and become the centre of the learning process. The use of 'tasks', which encourage thinking on the part of the learners with emphasis on the 'procedures' rather than on the 'content', enables pupils to learn the FL in a natural and realistic way.

Recommendations

On the basis of the above findings, a number of recommendations may be given:

1. The researchers recommend that EFL teachers use TBA in their teaching, since it develop Fifth-primary pupil's achievement in English.
2. Curriculum designers are recommended to include TBLT in the English textbooks. Well-designed activities and tasks should be included in the teachers' and students' books.
3. Researchers are recommended to conduct additional studies to investigate the influence of TBA on secondary level.
4. The teacher's guide must involve the steps of using TBA and the procedure of preparing them.
5. Time allowed for English language classes should be increased to let student practice a foreign language.



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