

THE EFFECT OF USING TASK - BASED LEARNING IN TEACHING ENGLISH ON THE ORAL PERFORMANCE OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract_ This study aimed at investigating the effect of a task – based learning program in teaching English on the secondary school students' oral English performance. To achieve this objective, a task based program was constructed to teach two units from the second year secondary school textbook. An oral performance test accompanied by an assessment rubric was administered. Two groups of the second year secondary students were selected for experimentation. Twenty three students representing the experimental group studied two units utilizing the task based program while twenty one students representing the control group studied the same units following the Teacher's Guide. Data were analyzed. results revealed that there were statistically significant differences between mean scores of the experimental and the control group subjects in both one way monologue and two way dialogue tests favoring the experimental group. Results also showed statistically significant differences between mean scores of the experimental group subjects in one way monologue and two way dialogue tests favoring the one way monologue test. These results supports the effectiveness of utilizing task based learning in teaching English as a foreign language.

Keywords: Teaching English, Task based learning, Oral English performance.

I. Introduction

Speaking, perhaps, is the most important language skill because from which skills such as dialogues, lecturing, presentation, radio talks, TV programs erupt. Thus, if language is a tool of expressing all purposes, the speaking skill is concerned with all these purposes such as expressing feelings, sensations, ideas, and beliefs. This skill is so important that we do many of our actions through it. It is true that most language activities are done orally.

Since speech is the most important language activity, Allah Almighty has described to us the Holy Book as "eloquent speech" when He said: " Allah has sent down the best of narrations: a Scripture consistent and paired. The skins of those who reverence their Lord shiver from it, then their skins and their hearts soften up to the remembrance of Allah. Such is Allah's guidance; He guides with it whomever He wills. But whomever Allah leaves astray, for him there is no guide. (Zumar / 23).

Arabic literature is also full of many quotations that support the importance of speech. An Arabic Poet said that "a man's tongue is half of him and the heart is the other half, what left was the flesh and blood. In Arab literature, politicians, wise people, scientists, writers, and educators paid great attention to this skill and made it a headline of a chivalry man, and the glory of his countenance and his

accompany. An Arabic wise saying goes "The person is hidden under his tongue". It is a shame for a person to have a pretty face but has no sound tongue (speech)".

The speaking skill, when it is mastered, helps individuals promote their feelings of self esteem and realization as they feel happy when they realize that their messages have gone through. The speaking skill is also considered the most important tool to get information and knowledge. How often our students like and tend to the lecturer or teacher who speaks fluently and accurately with her/his students.

The difficulty of teaching the speaking skill in L1 does not greatly differ from teaching it as a foreign language. In spite of the importance of this skill in the program of teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi public schools, the teaching /learning programs still stress reading and writing at the expense of listening and speaking. Even, the assessment and evaluation techniques in schools do not have listening or speaking tests. Students, in turn, pay more attention to reading and writing. They disregard the oral skills. It is not an exaggeration if we say that students do not even pay attention to the correct pronunciation of the vocabulary they learn with the excuse that they can spell and write it correctly. On the other hand, teachers neither have the aptitude nor the readiness to conduct or administer such oral tests. They either find them difficult to conduct or administer or they are in the dark about the various techniques of oral testing. Similarly, research that has dealt with language learning in Arab countries has not a considerable amount of studies that dealt with the speaking skill because of the same difficulty.

Because of lack of concentration on the speaking skill in the teaching /learning program, it has become natural to note the inability of students to express themselves orally. This is similar to the case of native speakers of Arabic we meet in our daily life or watch on TV programs. In spite of the fact that they have had a high level of education, they find difficulty to express themselves in their own language. Thus, they disappoint their audience and sometimes they do not gain their appreciation.

Why are students suffer from expressing themselves orally? In addition to the disregard of this skill in the teaching/learning program of teaching English as a foreign language, there are many other reasons. Poor self-confidence, lack of ideas, inability to arrange ideas, poor vocabulary, poor structure, lack of oral practice, shyness, are

some of the hindrances of communicating orally.

To help both teachers and students to practice the speaking skill in their teaching/learning program, they need to be convinced with the importance of the speaking skill as well as to practice this skill in a way far from the traditional methods that compel students to practice the language they do not like in the way they do not like either. In other words, both teachers and students need to teach and learn, respectively, out of the pattern.

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In Saudi Arabia, nowadays, English is important for many Saudis. Many Saudis travel to foreign countries for study, for work, for business, and for entertainment. Many college graduates who work for different companies are often required to speak English. A great deal of information in different fields is available on the internet. Most information on the internet is in English, so if Saudi people want to take advantage of the many resources on the internet, they need to be able to communicate in English. The question is: does the program of teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi public schools in general and at the secondary stage in particular help students to cope with these different uses of English?

There are many arguments that explain the low achievement levels of Saudi students in achieving

communicative competence in the English language they are taught in schools (AL- Jarf, 2009; Almainan, 2005; Alsamadani, 2010; Alseweed, 2009). In other words, the teaching of English language falls short of fulfilling its goals. Even after the learners finish their secondary studies, they still have not the confidence of using English in communication. Their output in the language is limited to writing answers for some texts and producing grammatically correct sentences. Using the language communicatively, as Taylor [1] states, involves ideas, emotions, feelings, appropriateness and adaptability. Swain [2] also confirms that the most tenable argument suggests that the philosophy, assumptions and traditional classroom methodologies employed in language arts education have failed because they have been prescriptive and corrective and have focused too much on language structure rather than on communicative competence. In other words, the main purpose of the language teaching course, i.e., developing communication skills, is unfortunately, overlooked.

Influenced by the social and cognitive sciences, there is a new vision of teaching and learning which has emerged to cope with the challenges of education in modern age. Corbett and Kearns [3] state that "the educational system is gradually adopting a greater focus on learning rather than on teaching and the developments of learning theory have changed the perception of the learner and our understanding of learning". Similarly, as it is assured by Duckworth, [4], cognitive and constructivist perspectives on learning emphasize the importance of understanding the learner's perspective, and how learners' interpret information. Constructivists, in particular believe that knowledge does not exist outside of the human mind. The role of instructor moves from the transmission of information to helping students build bridges by linking new ideas to prior knowledge and experiences. The learning paradigm embodies a constructivist view of learning, and from this perspective the instructor's role is quite different. Although constructivist instruction is not away from criticism, yet it encompasses strategies that "ideally include active engagement of learners in authentic contexts and activities, instruction that is personally relevant to the learner, opportunities for collaboration and engagement in communities of practice, time for reflection, potential for creativity and instructional strategies including nurturing the birth of new knowledge; modeling; coaching; articulation; and exploration" [5].

Real life experiences have also proved that human beings learn well when they are involved in the activities they are interested in. Students are not away from such real experiences. Students do not learn by attending classes where teachers fill in their minds with information while they are taking notes, but by becoming involved in the

content to be learned. Prensky [6] echoing the views of Dewey [7] and Lindeman [8] among others, asserts that people learning by doing and experience is the basis of all learning. The link between learning and experience is a recurring theme in learning theories.

Task-based learning is a natural extension of the constructivist and situated approaches to learning. The essence of task-based learning is to actively engage learners in authentic learning activities and to put learners in the kinds of situations in which they need to use these skills. One of the best ways to understand something is to get ones hands on it and actually experiment with it. Teachers of English should keep their students on task for as much class time as possible, actively involved in using English in both oral and written activities. As educators, we know that the more students participate in the learning process, the more they learn. And the more our students use the foreign language, the more they retain and improve their language skills. Lee [9] states that task based instruction provides comprehensible input and promotes communicative interaction among the learners using the target language.

II. The Problem of the Study

Learning to speak a foreign language is not an easy process. Both foreign language teachers and learners find speaking the most difficult language skills; therefore this skill is frequently neglected or poorly practiced in the English language classroom. Teachers of English tend to stress drilling patterns, reading texts and writing tasks but rarely have their students involved in speaking activities. Learning to speak English is more effectively achieved by speaking than by listening or reading.

In most Arab countries, and Saudi Arabia is one of them, English language teaching and learning follow the traditional grammar translation method in all levels of general education. In language classrooms, the focus is on grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary, translation of texts and doing written exercises. Classes are taught in the native language with little active use of English language.

Some researchers place the possibilities of teaching speaking successfully upon the teaching techniques. There are many strategies that can be used by teachers in EFL contexts to help learners develop their speaking skills. Shumin [10] suggests that learners should develop short, interactional exchanges in which they are required to make short utterances. It will make them able to become more engaged in small talk in the target language. Interviews, debates and problem-solving are very effective techniques in developing speaking skills especially if they are conducted correctly by teachers. Such techniques can prepare learners for real life communication in an EFL environment.

Essentially, cooperative learning represents a shift in educational paradigm from teacher-centered approach to a more student-centered learning in small group. It creates excellent opportunities for students to engage in problem solving with the help of their group members [11].

Some other researchers place the improvement of the speaking skill upon the learning environment. Samur [12] states that teaching English communicatively needs a social context and platform where students can share and co-construct their knowledge just like the idea of “communities of practice” or as Gee [13] describes “affinity groups”. Cooperative learning is also believed to be a learning process which is most effective when students are actively involved in sharing their ideas and work cooperatively and helpfully to complete academic tasks [14].

Having the above discussions at hand and based on the researcher's visits to some EFL secondary school classrooms, it has become apparent that the techniques utilized in teaching English as a foreign language are competitive and test driven. Students are encouraged to learn what will come in exams. Learning for its own sake, or sharing one's knowledge with others in the class has no place in the English language classroom. It has also been noticed that the majority of the students in the classrooms are passive recipients and they rarely take the initiative for participation. Thus, a new shift is required to meet all these requirements. To help teachers shift from the traditional techniques of TEFL and to help students to be active participants rather than passive recipients, task-based approach has been widely adopted since approximately twenty years ago [15,16,17,18,19,20,21].

Thus, the problem of the study is concentrated on the fact that secondary school students are inept in the speaking skill and suffer from the ability to express themselves orally in English. Thus, the need for language teaching that encourages learners to use the language communicatively is needed. Teaching English should encourage learners to participate actively in the language activities. Learning English should be more self-directed rather than teacher directed. It is hypothesized, accordingly, that incorporating some task based language learning techniques in teaching the first secondary course units may improve and promote the students oral performance in English.

3. Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following question:

- What is the effect of a task based language learning program in teaching English as a foreign language on the secondary students' oral English performance?

Three sub questions stemmed from this question:

1. What is he effect of a task based language learning program in teaching English as a foreign language on

the secondary students' oral English performance in a one-way monologue represented in speech making overall test?

2. What is the effect of a task based language learning program in teaching English as a foreign language on the secondary students' oral English performance in a two-way dialogue represented in a live face to interview?
3. Is there any statistically significant difference between mean scores of the experimental group subjects on the post testing of their oral performance in the one – way monologue and the two way dialogue tests?
4. Hypotheses of the Study

To answer the questions of the study, it was hypothesized that:

1. There are no statistically significant differences between mean scores of the experimental group subjects on the post-testing of their oral performance in the one-way monologue test.
2. There are no statistically significant differences between mean scores of the experimental group subjects on the post-testing of their oral performance in the two-way dialogue test.
3. There are no statistically significant differences between mean scores of the experimental group subjects on the post testing of their oral performance in the one – way monologue and the two way dialogue tests.
5. Limitations of the Study

This research was limited to two units from "English for Saudi Arabia" series taught to two second year secondary school classes at the second semester of the academic year (2012/2013) in Abha city were selected. These two units were incorporated with the task based techniques taught to the experimental group.

6. Materials utilized in the Study

1. A Teacher's Guide.
2. A Student Activity Book.

7. Tools of the Study

An oral performance test divided into a one-way monologue test and a two-way dialogue test accompanied by an assessment rubric developed by the researcher.

8. Definition of terms

The language task:

Wills [22] defines the language task as "a classroom undertakingwhere the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome".

Ellis [18] defines the instructional task as "some kind of activity designed to engage the learner in using the language communicatively or reflectively in order to arrive at an outcome other than that of learning a specified feature of the

L2.

Nunan [23] defines a language task as " a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing the grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form".

In this research, the language task is a classroom activity based on an idea or a grammatical form in the second grade preparatory textbook with the intention of having the students unconsciously involved in language communication about the task and in which the student's attention is focused on meaning rather than on the grammatical form.

Task -Based learning:

It is a method of instruction in the field of language acquisition and learning. It focuses on the students doing meaningful tasks using the target language. Assessment is primarily based on task outcome (i.e.: the appropriate completion of tasks) rather than simply accuracy of language forms. This makes TBLL especially popular for developing target language fluency and student confidence [24].

Nunan [23] defines a task based language learning as " an approach which seeks to allow students to work somewhat at their own pace and within their own level and area of interest to process and restructure their inter language. It moves away from a prescribed developmental sequence and introduces learner freedom and autonomy into the learning process. The teacher's role is also modified to that of helper".

Oral performance:

The researcher defines oral performance as ' the ability to provide information and give explanations orally to the topics and subjects studied in the secondary school English textbook with acceptable degree of fluency and accuracy'.

Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature

First: Theoretical Framework:

1. Task Based Learning

As early as the 1970s, the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach became popular among second and foreign language acquisition researchers and teachers [25]. During the 1980s, "task" replaced the term "communicative activity." The task-based language teaching (TBLT) became a new teaching method that has been broadly adopted in language classroom. As with content-based instruction, the task-based approach aimed to provide learners with a natural context for language use. As learners work to complete a task, they have abundant opportunity to interact with each other as well as the teacher and the content. Such interaction is thought to facilitate language acquisition, as learners have

to work to understand each other and to express their own meaning. By so doing, they have to check to see if they have comprehended correctly. In addition, at times, they have to seek clarification from other students or their instructor.

By interacting with others, students have an opportunity to listen to language which may be beyond their present ability, but which may be assimilated into their knowledge of the target language for use at a later time. As Candlin [26] notes, "The central purpose we are concerned with is language learning, and task present this in the form of a problem-solving negotiation between knowledge that the learner holds and new knowledge."

Task-based language learning (TBLL), is also known as activity based language learning (ABLL) or Task-based instruction (TBI). Over the past two decades, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has gained considerable momentum in the field of language education. It focuses on the use of authentic language, and to students doing meaningful tasks using the target language (English). Assessment is primarily based on task outcome (i.e. the appropriate completion of tasks) rather than simply accuracy of language forms. This makes TBLL especially popular for developing target language fluency and student confidence.

The main advantages of TBL are that language is used for a genuine purpose meaning that real communication should take place, and that at the stage where the learners are preparing their report for the whole class, they are forced to consider language form in general rather than concentrating on a single form (as in the PPP model). Whereas the aim of the PPP model is to lead from accuracy to fluency, the aim of TBL is to integrate all four skills and to move from fluency to accuracy plus fluency. The range of tasks available (reading texts, listening texts, problem-solving, role-plays, questionnaires, etc) offers a great deal of flexibility in this model and should lead to more motivating activities for the learners.

Learners who are used to a more traditional approach based on a grammatical syllabus may find it difficult to come to terms with the apparent randomness of TBL, but if TBL is integrated with a systematic approach to grammar and lexis, the outcome can be a comprehensive, all-round approach that can be adapted to meet the needs of all learners.

In TBL an activity in which students are given a list of words to use cannot be considered as a genuine task. Nor can a normal role play if it does not contain a problem-solving element or where students are not given a goal to reach. In many role plays students simply act out their restricted role. For instance, a role play where students have to act out roles as company directors but must come to an agreement or find the right solution within the given time limit can be considered a genuine task

in TBL.

Willis [22] presents six categories of tasks and their outcomes. They are as follows:

- a. Listing
 - Brainstorming
 - fact-finding

Outcome:

- Completed list or draft mind map.

- b. Ordering and sorting

- categorizing
- classifying
- sequencing
- ranking

Outcome:

Set of information ordered and sorted according to specified criteria.

- c. Comparing

- matching
- finding similarities
- finding differences

Outcome:

Could be items appropriately matched or assembled, or the identification of similarities and/or differences.

- d. Problem solving

- reasoning
- decision making
- analyzing real situations
- analyzing hypothetical situations
- Outcome:
 - Solutions to the problem, which can then be evaluated.

- e. Sharing personal experiences

- narrating
- describing
- exploring and explaining attitudes, opinions, reactions

Outcome:

Largely social.

- f. Creative Tasks

- brainstorming
- fact-finding
- ordering and sorting
- comparing
- problem solving and many others

Outcome:

End product which can be appreciated by a wider audience.

In a Task Based Language Learning (TBLL) lesson assessment is primarily based on task outcome that is on the appropriate completion of tasks, rather than on accuracy of language forms. It is widely acknowledged that TBLL as a method of instruction encourages language fluency and increases students' confidence.

In order to achieve optimum conditions for language learning when using task based instruction, Willis [27] recommends that teachers should break task based language learning into three sections: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. The first of these is the pre-task stage, during which the teacher introduces and defines the topic and the learners engage in activities that either help them to recall words and phrases that will be useful during the performance of the main task or to learn new words and phrases that are essential to the task. This stage is followed by what Willis calls the "task cycle". Here the learners perform the task (typically a reading or listening exercise or a problem-solving exercise) in pairs or small groups. They then prepare a report for the whole class on how they did the task and what conclusions they reached. Finally, they present their findings to the class in spoken or written form. The final stage is the language focus stage, during which specific language features from the task and highlighted and worked on. Feedback on the learners' performance at the reporting stage may also be appropriate at this point.

2. Oral Performance:

Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information [28]. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving. However, speech is not always unpredictable. Language functions (or patterns) that tend to recur in certain discourse situations (e.g., declining an invitation or requesting time off from work), can be identified and charted [29]. Speaking requires that learners not only know how to produce specific points of language such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary (linguistic competence), but also that they understand when, why, and in what ways to produce language (sociolinguistic competence). Finally, speech has its own skills, structures, and conventions different from written language [29,30,31]. A good speaker synthesizes this array of skills and knowledge to succeed in a given speech act.

A speaker's skills and speech habits have an impact on the success of any exchange [32]. Speakers must be able to anticipate and then produce the expected patterns of specific discourse situations. They must also manage discrete elements such as turn-taking, rephrasing, providing feedback, or redirecting [29]. The learner must also choose the correct vocabulary to describe the item sought, rephrase or emphasize words to clarify the description if the clerk does not understand, and use appropriate facial expressions to indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the service. Other skills and knowledge that instruction might address

include the following: producing the sounds, stress patterns, rhythmic structures, and intonations of the language; using grammar structures accurately; assessing characteristics of the target audience, including shared knowledge or shared points of reference, status and power relations of participants, interest levels, or differences in perspectives; selecting vocabulary that is understandable and appropriate for the audience, the topic being discussed, and the setting in which the speech act occurs; applying strategies to enhance comprehensibility, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, or checking for listener comprehension; using gestures or body language; and paying attention to the success of the interaction and adjusting components of speech such as vocabulary, rate of speech, and complexity of grammar structures to maximize listener comprehension and involvement [28].

The difficulty of teaching the English oral performance lies in the fact that communicating in English has many purposes. Unless teachers and learners become familiar with the different purposes of oral communication, oral performance cannot take place.

3. Task Based Language Learning and Oral Performance:

Contrary to the traditional techniques of teaching English as a foreign language, task based learning evolves in the communicative framework of teaching English. Task based learning as confirmed by many [33,17,18,15,30,19,10,16] gives teachers an opportunity to provide students with tasks that help them use the language communicatively and unconsciously. These activities are done in cooperative learning structures that have their impact on the students' oral fluency.

Task-based language learning (TBLL) promotes negotiation of meaning using 'meaning-focused' and 'communicative' task completion activities [34,35] and gives students the chance to practice language extensively within a meaningful context, engaging students in the 'authentic,' pragmatic, and contextual production of language (Doughty & Long), where language production is not the aim but 'the vehicle for attending task goals' (Willis, p.25). Negotiation of meaning and language production through negotiated interaction and meaningful task-completion activities facilitate language acquisition and promote second language learning [36]. Richard and Rodgers [37] explain the reason why task based learning helps students to use the language and to promote their speaking skill. Carless sees that in task based learning students are active participants, monitors, risk takers and innovators.

In task based learning, the teacher instructs the class in a way that no one is allowed to take a dominant part in the task. Everyone are given the opportunity to participate and speak. Students cooperate and they encourage each other and

the teacher does not frequently interrupt the flow of the speaking activity in order to correct mistakes. The main concern is developing students' motivation to speak and increasing fluency and ease of expression.

Second: Review of Literature

Much literature has been documented to support the value of task based language learning techniques in language learning and teaching.

Carless [38] analyzed the suitability of task-based teaching for Hong Kong secondary schools. The research method for the study involved semi-structured interviews with 11 secondary school teachers and 10 teacher educators based on purposive sampling. Carless concluded that the use of task based activities showed significant results in teaching the oral skills as well as reading and writing.

Mann [39] in a study entitled "A Task-Based Approach to the Development of the Oral Skills of International Law Students" provided an account of a study which set out to explore methodological issues associated with the development of oral skills on a Bar Vocational Course at the University of the West of England, Bristol, UK. The study involved overseas law students who were exposed to traditional teaching approaches involving teacher-led drills and exercises and to a task-based approach which placed an emphasis on message conveyance and learner-owned language. The study indicated that the task-based approach was capable of providing learners with great benefits in terms of language skills.

Torky [40] conducted a study with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of a task- based instruction program in developing the English language speaking skills of Egyptian secondary stage students. The study provides evidence for the effectiveness of using communicative interactive tasks in developing first year secondary students' speaking skills. These tasks can increase their motivation and positive attitudes towards learning to speak. Moreover, they help them take risks. As a result, students' ability to speak fluently and correctly increases.

In Thailand, McDonough [41] conducted a study entitled " Teachers' and Learners' Reactions to a Task-Based EFL Course in Thailand" in which he demonstrated that although many studies have described the L2 learning opportunities created by individual tasks, considerably less research has investigated task-based syllabi and courses. This case study investigated teachers' and learners' reactions to a task-based EFL course at a Thai university. A team of Thai EFL teachers created the syllabus, which was pilot tested and revised before being introduced university wide. For this study, the teachers' and learners' impressions about the course over a 12-month period were collected during the pilot testing and revision phases. Their reactions were

identified using a qualitative analysis of oral and written data elicited through (a) task evaluations, (b) learning notebooks, (c) observations, (d) course evaluations, and (e) interviews. The findings indicated that, despite initial reservations, the task based course encouraged learners to become more independent and addressed their real world academic needs.

Bantis [42] in a study entitled " Using Task Based Writing Instruction to Provide Differentiated Instruction for English Language Learners" investigated the impact of task based writing instruction (TBWI) on English language acquisition and differentiated instruction for minority language students during the Independent Work Time instructional component of the Open Court Reading program. One teacher and 10 third grade students (8-9 years old) participated in this mixed methods study. TBWI was a platform for communicative language teaching. Together they recast the students' written inter language embedded within the writing samples into standard English. The study took place after school, 45 minutes per day for one month, resulting in 35 transcribed writing conferences, writing samples, and interviews. Results indicated that TBWI proved to be a useful vehicle for differentiated instruction, constructivist pedagogy, and principles of second language acquisition to address the diverse needs of second language learners.

Takimoto [43] conducted a study involving 60 Japanese learners of English investigated the effects of various kinds of form-focused instruction on learners' ability to comprehend and produce polite requests in English. Each treatment group received one of the following: (a) deductive instruction; (b) inductive instruction with problem-solving tasks; or (c) inductive instruction with structured input tasks. These tasks all involved explicit input-based instruction and were intended to test for differences in deductive versus inductive treatments. Treatment group performance was compared with that of a control group on a range of input- and output-based pretests, posttests, and follow-up tests. The results indicate that the three treatment groups performed significantly better than the control group, suggesting that in this study explicit input-based instruction was effective both deductively and inductively for learners' comprehension and production of English polite requests. There was also some indication that inductive treatment may be superior in the longer term.

Huang [44] conducted a study with the aim of investigating the effect of using task based principles in teaching grammar on adult learners' grammar learning. Huang experimented with ten principles outlined by Ellis [18]. Taken together, these principles are guidelines that help provide appropriate conditions for adult second language learners. Although they are open to discussion and argument,

these principles offer teachers direction for teaching grammar to adult learners. Results revealed that, in light of the 10 instructed learning principles summarized by Ellis [18], Willis' task-based learning framework offers a promising grammar-teaching approach to adult second language learners. Different from the well-known form-focused approach of PPP (Presentation ÷ Practice ÷ Production), this framework encourages a holistic use of language by focusing predominantly on meaning and then offering learners opportunities to focus on form. Although this framework is not the only way to teach grammar to adult learners, tasks designed using this framework provide the kind of opportunities and practices that fulfill many of the 10 principles of instructed learning.

Aliakbari and Jamalvandi [45] investigated the effectiveness of using role-play as a praised technique in task based language teaching (TBLT) in boosting EFL learners' speaking skill. Following the termination of the study, the findings indicated for a positive effect of TBLT-based role-play technique on the candidates' speaking skill. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has proved itself beneficial and effective in bringing about real situations of language use to take place and in satisfying communicative needs of learners while the former methods were unable to meet actual demands of learners to communicate in the target settings. Accordingly, it has been duly embraced by practitioners and material developers simply because it specially pays serious and real attention to oral abilities.

Hasan [46] explored the effect of incorporating task – based learning in teaching the methodology course on the English oral performance and speaking confidence perception of the general diploma students at the college of education. To achieve this objective, a checklist of the English oral performance skills was defined. An oral performance test accompanied by an assessment rubric as well as a speaking confidence perception inventory were administered. Two groups of the general diploma students were selected for experimentation. Twenty one students representing the experimental group studied the methodology course while incorporating task based learning techniques. Eighteen students representing the control group studied the same course content using the lecture technique. Data were analyzed. A correlation analysis between variables indicated that there were statistically significant differences between mean scores of the experimental and the control group subjects in both the oral performance test and the speaking confidence perception inventory, favoring the experimental group. These results supports the effectiveness of incorporating task based learning in teaching English as a foreign language.

Kurkgöz [47] investigated designing and implementing a speaking course in which face-to-face instruction informed by the principles of Task-Based Learning is blended with the use of technology, the video, for the first-year student teachers of English in Turkish higher education. The study consisted of three hours of task based classroom instruction, complemented with one hour of additional class time, which was devoted to viewing and evaluating students' video recorded speaking tasks, assigned as homework. A mixed research method was used to collect data from multiple sources: recordings of a pre-and post-course speaking task, analysis of the video-recordings of students' speaking tasks, informal interviews with the students, and a written end-of-year course evaluation survey. Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data revealed that students made noticeable improvement in their oral communication skills, and they were positive in their perceptions of integrating technology in the lesson.

Hu (2013) conducted a study in order to identify in service language teachers' responses and perceptions about using task based teaching in their classrooms. Thirty public school English teachers were recruited in Beijing across school levels. Through participants interviews and classroom observations, the researcher tried to find out how Chinese teachers of English at different levels of teaching respond to using task based teaching. Results revealed that teachers actively accepted using task based teaching in their classes. Furthermore, those who actively used task based teaching demonstrated different instructional foci in terms of task selection and task implementation.

From the previously mentioned survey of the studies dealt with task based learning (TBL) , it has become evident that TBL is a different way to teach English. It can help the student by placing him/her in a situation like in the real world. A situation where oral communication is essential for doing a specific task. Task based learning has the advantage of getting the student to use her/his skills at her current level. TBL is concerned with learner and not teacher activity and it lies on the teacher to produce and supply different tasks which will give the learner the opportunity to experiment spontaneously, individually and originally with the foreign language.

Instrumentation

To achieve the objectives of the research, a task-based program for teaching two units in the second year secondary stage course book as well as an oral performance test which was used to assess the second year secondary students' oral performance in English were constructed.

1.The task based program utilized in the study:

The program objectives were clearly set up. The program included a Teacher’s Guide and a Student Activity Book. The Teacher’s Guide aimed at providing teachers of English information and instructions for teaching the units selected using task-based techniques. That is, this Guide included the objectives of each lesson, the activities to be used in teaching each unit, flexible teaching guidelines, and evaluation exercises as well as suggested answers to certain exercises. The Student Activity Book included the two units which were selected and restructured according to the activity-based learning techniques. The program was submitted to a jury of university faculty, English supervisors and English teachers to judge its appropriateness and objective pertinence before experimentation.

There are various designs that have been proposed for a task-based lesson (e.g. [48,9,49,16,35]). However, they all have in common three principal phases: a pre-task phase, a during task phase, and a post task phase and feedback. The following is an explanation for these phases.

- The pre task phase:

In the pre-task, the teacher introduces the topic to be learned by learners. He utilizes tasks that help learners learn useful words and phrases. In the pre task phase, it is important that the teacher should check the learners' understanding of the task instructions.

- The during task phase:

In the during task phase, the students perform the task, typically in pairs or in small cooperative structures, although this is dependent on the type of task to be tackled. The teacher acts as monitor and encourages students to be involved .

- The post task phase:

In this phase, students present their spoken reports to the class, or display their written reports. The teacher acts as chairperson, selecting who will speak next, or ensuring all students read most of the written reports .

- Feedback and evaluation

The teacher may wish to conduct a feedback session to discuss the success of the task and consider suggestions for improving it. He may give brief feedback on content and form. He may play a recording of others doing the same or similar task. Evaluation of the task will provide useful information for facilitators when planning further tasks.

2. The oral performance test:

The oral performance test accompanied by an assessment rubric for the students' oral performance was also utilized in the study aimed at assessing the effect of using task -based techniques in teaching two units in the second year course book upon the students’ oral performance in these units. Directions for both the examiner and the examinees were included. Validity and reliability of the test were assured. Inter rater reliability for the rubric was also validated. See the rubric below.

The Oral Performance Test Rubric

Name: ----- Level: -

Activity: Rating: * G:-----P:-----V:-----C:-
-----F:-----Total: -----

* G: Grammar P: pronunciation V: Vocabulary C: Comprehension F: Fluency
Methodology and Experimentation

Category	Needs improvement (1 point)	Satisfactory (2 points)	Good (3 points)	Excellent (4 points)
Grammar	There were many grammar mistakes that made the student unable to convey his message.	There were some grammar mistakes but the student succeeded in conveying his message.	There were a few grammar mistakes and the student was able to convey his message clearly.	There was no grammar mistakes and student was able to express his ideas easily in proper sentence structure and tenses.
Pronunciation	Student's pronunciation was unclear and full of mispronunciations.	Sometimes, the student's pronunciation was unclear but generally acceptable.	Pronunciation was good and did not hinder communication.	Pronunciation was very clear and easy to understand.
Vocabulary	Student showed inadequate vocabulary to express his/her ideas properly, which made his message incomprehensible.	Student was able to use few words but unable to elaborate his ideas.	Student was able to use the vocabulary learned appropriately.	Student was able to use the vocabulary learned and new vocabulary in precise and impressive manner.
Comprehension	Student was unable to understand the questions directed to him.	Student fairly understood some of the questions directed to him.	Student was able to respond to most of the questions directed to him.	Student was easily and comfortably able to respond to all the questions directed to him
Fluency	Students showed a slow and reluctant responses with long pauses that made his responses incomprehensible.	Student showed slow but not reluctant responses with few pauses and ability to continue in expressing his ideas	Student smoothly expressed himself with some stops to grope for appropriate words to be used in situations.	Student was able to express himself smoothly and comfortably without any pauses or hesitation and without groping for words.

1.Sample selection:

The sample of the study consisted of two intact classes which were randomly selected to represent both the experimental and the control groups (one class represented

the experimental group and the other class represented the control group) from the second year secondary school students at Al-Fat-h Secondary school in Abha. The number of students was 44 (23 students for the experimental group

and 21 students for the control group). The students selected for this study were assigned to a governmental school on the basis of their geographical residency regardless of their achievement level or socio-economic background.

2. Experimentation:

a. Pre-testing:

Prior to teaching the task-based program to the experimental group, a speaking test was administered to both the control and the experimental groups as a pretest. Raw scores were statistically calculated. t-test showed no statistically differences in mean scores of both groups as shown in table (1) below:

Table 1

t-test for the experimental and the control group subjects in the oral performance test prior to experimentation

Group	n	M	SD	t	p
Experimental	23	9.41	2.68	2.26	NS *
Control	21	9.22	1.99		

*NS = not significant

b. Teaching the task-based program:

The pretest-posttest control-group design was utilized in the experimentation. The sample of the research was randomly selected and assigned to an experimental and a control group from amongst the population of the second year students in Abha City. After completing the pre testing, the task-based program started to be taught to the experimental group while the subjects of the control group started to study the units selected according to the steps of the Teacher’s Guide issued by the Ministry of Education. That is, the subjects of the experimental and the control groups were taught the same content (two units from the second year secondary course book). The main difference between the experimental and the control group was that the subjects of the experimental group utilized the task-based techniques while the subjects of the control group did not utilize these techniques.

c. Post-testing:

After teaching the program of the research, the oral performance test was administered to the subjects of the experimental and the control groups as a post test. A comparison of scores of the subjects of both groups was made to measure the effect of using task-based techniques upon the second year secondary students’ oral English performance.

d. Data Analysis

The researcher and a qualified teacher of English at Al-Fat-h secondary school assessed each subject’s oral performance and assigned a score based on the rubric set by the researcher.

The present study aimed at assessing the effect of using a task based program on developing the second grade secondary students’ oral English performance. To measure the extent of achieving this goal, a task based program was followed in teaching three units in the second grade course book.. Results of implementing the program were tallied and tabulated to decide the effect of a task based program on the students’ oral performance. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in the treatment of the results of the study. t-test formula was used in analyzing the students’ scores on the oral performance test.

The Study First Question:

The study first question was stated as follows:

- What was the effect of a task based language learning program in teaching English as a foreign language on the secondary students' oral English performance in a one-way monologue represented in speech making overall test?

To answer this question, it was hypothesized that there were no statistically significant differences between mean scores of the experimental group and the control group subjects on the post-testing of their oral performance in a one-way monologue represented in speech making overall test.

To test this hypothesis, students' scores on the oral English performance test were calculated and tabulated. t-test formula for independent samples was employed to decide on the significance of the difference between mean scores of the experimental group and the control group students. Table (2) sets out the results of the post-testing of the students' oral performance in the test utilized in the study.

III. Results

Table 2

t-test results of the experimental and control group students’ oral performance in the one - way monologue post test

Group	N	M	SD	FD	T	p	ES
Experimental	23	15.73	2.23	44	9.35	*	0.67
Control	21	9.82	1.96				

* P ≤ .05

Data presented in table (2) showed that the calculated t value was (9.35) which was higher than the tabulated t value

(2.02). This proved that there was a statistically significant difference between mean scores of the experimental group

students and the control group students at (05.0) regarding their oral performance , favoring the experimental group students. Since the control group shares with the experimental group all other variables save the new program, the significant improvement in the experimental group students' oral performance in the test utilized in the study can be attributed to the effectiveness of the new program.

The Study Second Question:

The study second question was stated as follows:

- What was the effect of a task based language learning program in teaching English as a foreign language on the secondary students' oral English performance in a two-way dialogue represented in a live face to face interview?

To answer this question, it was hypothesized that there were no statistically significant differences between mean scores of the experimental group and the control group subjects on the post-testing of their oral performance in a two-way dialogue represented in a live face to face interview.

To test this hypothesis, students' scores on the Oral English Performance test were calculated and tabulated. t-test formula for independent samples was employed to decide on the significance of the difference between mean scores of the experimental group and the control group students. Table (3) sets out the results of the post-testing of the students' oral performance in a two-way dialogue test utilized in the study.

Table 3

t-test results of the experimental and control group students' oral performance in the two – way dialogue post test

Group	N	M	SD	FD	T	p	ES
Experimental	23	13.70	2.41	44	4.99	*	0.36
Control	21	10.61	1.56				

* P ≤ .05

Data presented in table (3) showed that the calculated t value was (4.99) which was higher than the tabulated t value (2.02). This proved that there was a statistically significant difference at (05.0) between mean scores of the experimental group students and the control group students regarding the oral performance, favoring the experimental group students. This significance can be attributed to the effectiveness of the task based program utilized in the study.

The Study third question:

The study third question was stated as follows:

- Was there any statistically significant difference between mean scores of the experimental group subjects on the post testing of their oral performance in the one – way monologue and the two way dialogue tests?

To answer this question, it was hypothesized that There were no statistically significant differences between mean scores of the experimental group subjects on the post-testing of their oral performance in the one – way monologue and the two way dialogue tests.

To test this hypothesis, Experimental group students' scores on both the one way monologue and the two way dialogue tests were calculated and tabulated. t-test formula was employed to decide on the significance of the difference between mean scores of both tests. Table (4) sets out the results of the experimental group students' oral performance in both the one - way monologue and the two – way dialogue post tests.

Table 4

t-test results of the experimental group students' oral performance in both the one - way monologue and the two – way dialogue post tests

Item	n	M	SD	FD	t	p
One way monologue Test	23	15.73	2.23	22	2.97	*
Two way dialogue Test		13.70	2.41			

* P ≤ .05

Data presented in table (4) showed that the calculated t value was (2.97) which was higher than the tabulated t value (2.07). This proved that there was a statistically significant difference at (05.0) between the mean scores of the experimental group students in their oral performance in the one - way monologue and the two – way dialogue post tests favoring the one way monologue test. This difference may be due to the fact that in mono dialogue students were asked to talk about a certain point without any intervention or interruption while in a two way dialogue students were interrupted to elaborate or explain some points. They were

sometimes asked some unexpected questions which caused some embarrassment or distraction.

4. Some Quotes by students

The following are some quotes by some students:

One student said " This is the first time for me to share classroom activities cheerfully".

A second student stated "I have been learning English for long, I haven't practiced cooperative or group work before".

Another student confirmed " This is the first time we do not feel hesitant to speak English".

Some students agreed " We liked the friendly classroom environment".

Other students said " The tasks we performed were new and interesting"

Others replied to a question about whether the tasks were helpful for them or not. They replied: " The tasks helped us to practice speaking and to love English".

IV. Discussion

The results mentioned in the tables above have proved the effective impact of task based instruction on teaching the speaking skill. Task-based instruction provided learners with opportunities to use the English language contextually, and to explore it through situational activities. Because task based learning is student centered, students were encouraged to use language creatively through the tasks they are asked to perform. Task based learning helped students to practice English in an anxiety free classroom. Errors, while practicing the language, were considered natural as the focus was on fluency and message conveying. Therefore, students felt free to express their ideas without fear of being reprimanded for making mistakes.

Likewise, task-based learning utilized with the experimental group learners gave them opportunities to learn by doing. "Learning by doing" is not a new concept in communicative language teaching methodologies [34]. It is based on the theory that a hands-on approach positively enhances a learner's cognitive engagement. Doughty and Long also stated that new knowledge is better integrated into long-term memory, and easier retrieved, if tied to real-world events and activities".

A close look to the task based model, we find that, the traditional PPP (presentation, practice, production) lesson is reversed. Instead of having the teacher authoritatively manage all the tasks of the lesson, students start with the task themselves. When they finish the task, the teacher draws their attention to the language used in the task, making corrections and modifications to the students' performance. Moreover, students found task based learning challenging, fun and motivating. It provided the chance for shy and quieter students to express themselves in a more forthright way.

V. Recommendations

In light of the results of the research. The following recommendations are presented:

1. The content of the English textbook of the second year secondary should be reconsidered and task based learning activities should be included in teaching English as a foreign language at the secondary stage.
2. Oral skills should be stressed in teaching English as a foreign language at the secondary stage. Teachers of English are thus required to prepare their students be

able to use oral communication in the language classroom.

3. Teachers of English are required to improve their oral communication competencies.
4. Oral skills should be included in the students' evaluation program. It is not enough to prepare the students for the summative written achievement tests as these tests cannot measure the very qualities proposed by the Ministry of Education as the goals of teaching English as a foreign language at the secondary stage.
5. Awareness of the importance of oral communication should be recognized by the students and parents because teachers of English are thus between a rock and a hard place. If they try to follow the task based instruction, then students and parents will complain, since for them any lesson content that is not covered by the exam questions is a waste of time, and is depriving students of their opportunities to get high marks at the achievement test.

Suggestions for further research

1. A similar research can be conducted at the primary and intermediate stages to investigate the effectiveness of task based learning in developing the students' oral skills.
2. Content analysis research for the English textbooks at different stages can also be conducted to see how much task based activities included and needed in these textbooks.
3. Training programs on how to devise task based activities for teachers should be conducted.

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