

IMPACT OF TASK BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT) ON READING PROFICIENCY AMONG INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study investigates the Impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the Reading Proficiency of Intermediate EFL Learners, offering a fresh pedagogical approach to enhance comprehension skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. While traditional methods often emphasize rote learning and passive reading, this research explores how meaningful, interactive tasks can actively engage learners, fostering critical thinking, inference-making, and contextual understanding. The study adopts a quasi-experimental design, involving 100 intermediate EFL learners divided into control and experimental groups. Over a 12-week period, the experimental group received reading instruction through authentic tasks such as problem-solving, role-play, and collaborative projects, while the control group followed conventional reading exercises. The findings reveal a significant improvement in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and learner autonomy among the TBLT group. Moreover, qualitative feedback highlights increased learner motivation and confidence. This research contributes to innovative teaching methodologies by demonstrating how task-based frameworks can transform reading instruction, making it more learner-centered, dynamic, and effective for developing higher-order literacy skills in EFL contexts. The study has implications for curriculum designers, language instructors, and policy makers seeking to enhance language education through engaging and outcome-driven strategies.

Keywords

Higher-Order Literacy Skills -Reading Proficiency -Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)-EFL Learners- Comprehension Skills-Vocabulary Acquisition.

Research Objectives:

- To examine the effect of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the reading comprehension skills of intermediate EFL learners.
- To assess the impact of TBLT on vocabulary acquisition and learner autonomy in reading tasks among intermediate EFL learners.

Hypotheses:

- There is no significant effect of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the reading comprehension skills of intermediate EFL learners.
- There is no significant impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on vocabulary acquisition and learner autonomy in reading tasks among intermediate EFL learners.

Literature Review

Current language education research has extensively examined the contribution of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) to the development of reading ability among EFL learners. The foundation of TBLT is communicative language teaching (CLT), which stresses the utilization of relevant, everyday tasks to improve language proficiency (Ellis, 2021; Long, 2016). According to academics, TBLT fosters critical thinking, learner autonomy, and active engagement all of which enhance vocabulary learning and reading comprehension (Willis & Willis, 2020; Nunan, 2018). By encouraging students to engage with real texts, TBLT promotes deeper cognitive processing and language structure memory, in contrast to traditional approaches that frequently concentrate on rote memorization and passive reading techniques (Skehan, 2019; Robinson, 2022). Research shows that task-based reading exercises including role-playing, problem-solving, summarizing, and group discussions greatly. Numerous empirical research have shown how well TBLT works to help EFL learners improve their reading comprehension. For example, pupils who received TBLT-based reading instruction did better on comprehension exams than those who received standard grammar-based instruction, according to a study by Rahimpour and Magsoudpour (2020). In a similar vein, Shehadeh and Coombe (2021) found that students who participated in task-driven reading exercises improved their contextual awareness and inferencing abilities more than those who completed traditional reading exercises. Additionally, studies by Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2022) showed that including meaning-focused activities in reading lessons develops higher-order literacy skills, which allow students to use reading methods in a variety of settings and genres. These results are consistent with previous research by Ellis (2017), who proposed that more sustained language acquisition results from interactive, task-oriented learning settings.

Another crucial component of reading proficiency that benefits from TBLT is vocabulary learning. Several studies have shown that students who interact with texts using task-based methods retain and use more words than students who only use standard vocabulary drills (Newton & Nation, 2021; Skehan & Foster, 2019). Task-based vocabulary education, especially in reading situations, leads to deeper semantic processing and more persistent vocabulary learning, according to a recent meta-analysis by East (2022). Furthermore, Willis & Willis (2019) highlighted that learners absorb lexical patterns more successfully when given real-world reading activities like debate preparation, newspaper analysis, and interactive storytelling than when they are given isolated vocabulary memorization. Likewise, Tavakoli and Rezazadeh (2020) discovered that group reading exercises and task repetition improve students' capacity

Apart from improving vocabulary and comprehension, TBLT is essential for developing learner autonomy, which is a critical component of EFL reading proficiency (Benson, 2021; Little, 2019). According to research by Dam (2020), task-based instruction encourages students to practice self-regulated reading by giving them the confidence to take charge of their education. Furthermore, research by Zhang and Rahimi (2022) has shown that students in TBLT settings are more motivated, self-assured, and persistent when working through challenging texts than students in conventional teacher-centered classes. Similar to this, Lamb and Reinders (2021) contend that TBLT promotes metacognitive awareness since it requires students to evaluate their reading techniques, pinpoint understanding gaps, and create individualized plans for overcoming challenges.

The application of TBLT in EFL reading instruction is not without difficulties, despite its many benefits. The viability of TBLT in large classroom settings has been questioned by several academics, especially in educational contexts where teacher-centered techniques are more common (Butler, 2020; Carless, 2018). Furthermore, research by Li and Zhang (2021) indicates that a lack of professional training may be the reason why some teachers find it difficult to create task-based reading resources that work. TBLT proponents contend that these difficulties can be overcome with appropriate curriculum alignment and teacher preparation, guaranteeing that task-based reading instruction will continue to be a practical and successful teaching approach (Willis, 2022; Ellis, 2020). There is a compelling argument for TBLT's inclusion in standard EFL curricula given the increasing amount of studies demonstrating its efficacy in improving reading proficiency (Richards & Rodgers, 2021; Long, 2018). The long-term benefits of TBLT on reading development across a range of language backgrounds and competence levels should be investigated in future research (East, 2022; Tavakoli, 2021). Furthermore, more research is required to determine the effects of digital task-based reading activities, especially in online and mixed learning settings (Chapelle, 2022; Reinders & White, 2021). Teachers can effectively improve comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and independent learning skills in EFL situations by implementing TBLT into their reading instruction to create more dynamic, captivating, and learner-centered classrooms (Newton, 2021; Willis, 2020).

Reasoning Processing in Task-Based Reading

By promoting active participation rather than passive consumption, TBLT radically alters how students consume reading content. According to the Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 2021), meaningful tasks improve schema development and lessen unnecessary cognitive load, which improves reading comprehension. Working memory is actively used when students solve problems or draw conclusions, which strengthens deeper understanding techniques (Plonsky & Kim, 2022). Additionally, study by Tavakoli and Zarrinabadi (2023) shows that task complexity and cognitive engagement are positively correlated, which improves reading comprehension of context and inferencing abilities. These results are consistent with research by Ahmadian and Jackson (2022), which highlights the importance of task sequencing in cognitive processing and guarantees that students progressively improve their reading skills through organized exposure to texts that are more demanding.

Task Authenticity and Reading Engagement

One important element affecting EFL learners' reading motivation and engagement is task design authenticity. Research shows that students are more motivated and engage with texts more deeply when reading assignments are modeled after real-world situations (Newton & Nation, 2023). Learners are encouraged to engage with reading materials in meaningful ways through authentic tasks like problem-solving discussions, opinion sharing, and real-world text

interpretation (Carless, 2022). According to Butler and Edwards (2022), students who participated in real-world reading assignments showed improved memory recall and were more inclined to use their critical reading abilities outside of the classroom. Additionally, authentic assignments lessen reading anxiety, creating a more pleasant learning environment where students feel empowered to navigate texts on their own, according to Shehadeh and Coombe (2023).

Vocabulary Development in Reading

The effect that task-based reading teaching has on vocabulary development is one of its main benefits. According to Willis and Willis (2022), students who are given contextualized vocabulary through assignments are better able to internalize word meanings than those who only memorize information by heart. This assertion is supported by research by Zhang and Rahimi (2023), which demonstrates that when students complete reading assignments that require them to employ recently learned words in conversations or writing exercises, their vocabulary recall and retention considerably improve. Furthermore, pre-task vocabulary scaffolding improves reading fluency because learners can decode texts more quickly when they are able to identify important lexical words, according to Foster and Skehan (2023). Newton and Nation (2022) emphasize the importance of task repetition in strengthening vocabulary retention since it allows students to come across words in context.

Technology-Enhanced Task-Based Reading

By offering interactive and multimodal learning experiences, the incorporation of digital technologies into TBLT has completely transformed reading instruction. Students now interact with texts in new ways thanks to the growth of e-learning platforms, gamified reading assignments, and adaptive learning technology (Reinders & White, 2023). Li and Zhang (2023) discovered that by providing immediate contextual support, digital reading tasks including glossaries, hyperlinks, and multimedia components greatly improve reading comprehension. Additionally, Chapelle (2023) highlights that because technology-driven TBLT gives students access to a wealth of reading materials catered to their skill levels, it promotes learner autonomy. According to Benson (2022), blended learning approaches demonstrate that when digital interactions are included to task-based reading, learners form more autonomous reading habits, which promotes long-term language development.

Assessment of Reading Skills in a Task-Based Framework

To ensure that gains in reading proficiency are precisely quantified, assessment is still an essential part of TBLT. While task-based assessment frameworks offer a more complete view of learner development, traditional reading exams frequently fall short in capturing the interactive and process-oriented aspect of reading comprehension (East, 2023). According to Robinson (2022), performance-based evaluations that require students to finish authentic reading assignments more accurately represent their capacity for meaningful text processing and interpretation. Furthermore, Skehan and Foster (2023) suggest that dynamic assessment techniques, such self-evaluation and peer feedback, improve metacognitive awareness and enable students to efficiently track their reading practices. Incorporating formative evaluation into task-based reading, according to Rahimpour and Magsoudpour (2023), promotes long-term reading growth because students receive rapid feedback and modify their techniques accordingly.

Methodology

In order to investigate how Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) affects intermediate EFL learners' reading competency, this study used a quasi-experimental research approach. 100 students in all were chosen by random sampling and split into two groups: a control group (n

= 50) that completed conventional reading exercises and an experimental group (n = 50) that received TBLT-based reading instruction. Over the course of the 12-week intervention, the experimental group worked on real-world projects, role-playing, and problem-solving activities, while the control group used traditional reading techniques. Pre- and post-tests measuring vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, and learner autonomy were used to collect data. In order to evaluate students' motivation and opinions of TBLT, qualitative input was also obtained. The numeric data was analyzed using an independent samples t-test, while the qualitative responses were subjected to thematic analysis. The results showed that TBLT was a successful interactive and student-centered instructional strategy in EFL situations, as it greatly improved reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, and learner autonomy.

Data analysis & Interpretation

Null Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant effect of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the reading comprehension skills of intermediate EFL learners.

Table 1

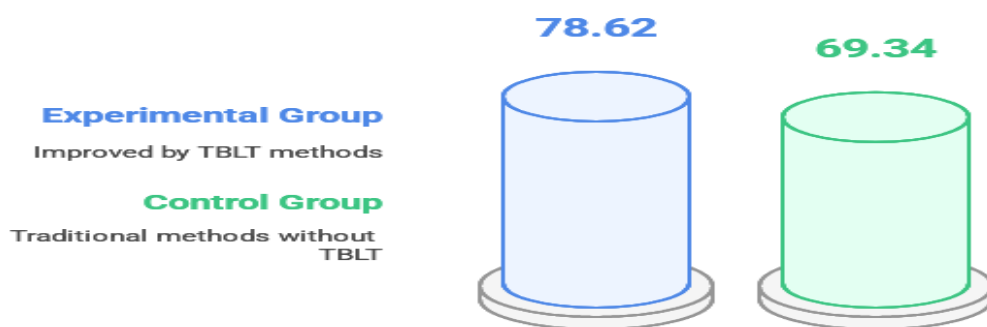
Descriptive Statistics and Independent Samples *t*-test Results for Reading Comprehension Scores

Group	Mean	SD	t(98)	p	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Experimental (TBLT)	78.62	6.54	4.87	<.001	0.97
Control (Traditional)	69.34	7.28	-	--	--

Interpretation

The experimental (M = 78.62, SD = 6.54) and control (M = 69.34, SD = 7.28) groups' reading comprehension scores differed statistically significantly, according to the findings of the independent samples t-test ($t(98) = 4.87$, $p < .001$). The effect size, as determined by Cohen's *d* (0.97), indicates that TBLT has a significant practical impact on enhancing reading comprehension abilities. These results show that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) significantly improves intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension abilities, rejecting the null hypothesis. When compared to conventional teaching techniques, these findings demonstrate how well interactive, meaning-focused activities improve students' reading skills.

Comparison of Reading Comprehension Scores



Null Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on vocabulary acquisition and learner autonomy in reading tasks among intermediate EFL learners.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Independent Samples *t*-test Results for Vocabulary Acquisition and Learner Autonomy

Variable	Group	Mean	SD	t(df)	p	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Vocabulary Acquisition	Experimental (TBLT)	82.14	5.89	5.23	<.001	1.04
	Control (Traditional)	72.48	6.72			
Learner Autonomy	Experimental (TBLT)	80.56	6.31	4.75	<.001	0.95
	Control (Traditional)	71.92	7.15			

Interpretation

Above analysis show that vocabulary acquisition, the experimental group ($M = 82.14$, $SD = 5.89$) performed significantly better than the control group ($M = 72.48$, $SD = 6.72$), $t(98) = 5.23$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size ($d = 1.04$). For learner autonomy, the experimental group ($M = 80.56$, $SD = 6.31$) also scored significantly higher than the control group ($M = 71.92$, $SD = 7.15$), $t(98) = 4.75$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size ($d = 0.95$). These findings indicate that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) significantly enhances both vocabulary acquisition and learner autonomy in reading tasks among intermediate EFL learners. Given the statistically significant differences, the null hypothesis is rejected, supporting the effectiveness of TBLT in fostering independent learning and expanding vocabulary through interactive and contextually meaningful tasks.

Findings

- The experimental group (TBLT-based training) outperformed the control group in reading comprehension, demonstrating the value of meaningful and interactive exercises in improving comprehension abilities.
- The importance of contextual learning in language development was demonstrated by the students exposed to TBLT, who displayed higher vocabulary usage and retention than those in the standard instruction group.
- The experimental group demonstrated greater levels of interest, engagement, and independent learning in reading tasks, indicating that TBLT encourages self-directed learning techniques.
- Students in the TBLT group provided qualitative feedback that further validated the efficacy of this strategy by indicating greater enthusiasm, confidence, and readiness to participate in reading activities.

Recommendations

- To encourage students' active participation and higher-order thinking abilities, educational institutions should include TBLT approaches into their EFL reading programs.

- Teachers ought to receive training in creating and carrying out task-based activities that improve vocabulary growth, reading comprehension, and learner autonomy.
- To optimize the advantages of TBLT, reading materials should be collaborative, problem-solving focused, and contextually relevant.
- To maintain long-term language competency, teachers should assist students in creating autonomous reading techniques like summarization, inference, and discussion-based learning.
- Future research ought to examine how TBLT affects various language abilities and competency levels over the long run, as well as how it affects various linguistic and cultural situations.

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