The Impact of Task-Based Instruction on Developing Saudi University EFL Students' English Speaking Skills

By

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Abstract

Speaking is considered one of the most important language skills that needs to be developed and mastered by language learners. However, mastering this language skill does not go so easily with the EFL learners. Many SL and EFL students think of speaking as the most difficult skill to attain since it requires first and foremost a great deal of practice and exposure also. To overcome this problem, teachers should seek a new approach which provides learners with opportunities to improve their speaking skills. One of the highly recommended approaches is task-based language teaching which provides learners with real life contexts to practice speaking English with their classmates. The purpose of the current study is to investigate the effects of using task-based instruction on developing Saudi EFL students' speaking skills. In the second place, it attempts to explore students' perceptions towards the use of task-based learning in the classroom. To this end, 60 Saudi EFL learners in the department of English Language and Translation, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia, participated in the study. To homogenize the participants' level of proficiency, the Quick Placement Test was employed, and the participants with the intermediate level of proficiency were selected. Then, the participants were randomly divided into two groups: thirty students representing the experimental group studied six units practicing English speaking under task-based instruction, while thirty students representing the control group studied the same units following the regular instruction. Research data were gathered through speaking tests (TOEIC), semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The data from

the speaking test were statistically analyzed using mean scores, standard deviation scores, and t-test for dependent samples and paired-sample. The speaking test findings indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and that of the control group on the post-test in favor of the experimental group which was exposed to the task-based instruction in the speaking skills. Moreover, a qualitative analysis of the interviews and questionnaire data demonstrated that the majority of the experimental group had positive reactions to the task-based instruction. They admitted that they liked the TBSA and wanted to use it frequently in learning speaking. The majority of the experimental group also added that their speaking ability has improved after implementing TBLT. The results of the current study can also be useful for teachers and curriculum planners when designing future curricula textbooks.

Key terms: task-based approach, traditional approach, speaking skills, task, attitudes

Introduction

Nowadays English is the most important language in the world because it is used as a means of communication among nations for trade, tourism, education, technology, traveling…etc. It is the fastest growing language in the world, with more people speaking English than ever before. This is a fact that seems to be irreversible. English has become the official language of the business and scientific world (Tu, 2014). English is an international language, spoken in many countries both as a native and as a second or foreign language. Linguistic scholars estimated that at the end of the 20 th century, 80% of English users were non-native speakers (Crystal, 2003). Nunan (2006) also confirms that over the past two decades, there has been significant increase in the number of people who speak English as a second language around the world. Nunan further adds that the figure of non-native speakers of English is significantly greater than English native speakers. Realizing the important role of English nowadays as an international language urged many countries all around the world to literate their young generation in English with the aim of making them able to establish and maintain successful communication with the people of the world for various reasons (Ravirot, 2015).Consequently, mastering English has become a prerequisite that everyone needs to master and learn. Thus, the status of English is more noticeable as a lingua franca over the world.

The distinguished status of English on the international level is a major factor that contributes to the increase in the importance of English in many Asian countries in general and in Saudi Arabia particularly (Hamzah and Ting 2010). In many Asian countries, English is taught as a foreign language in schools, colleges and universities, and the purpose of learning English is to prepare the learners for effective and efficient communication in English in their social and professional situations. In Saudi Arabia, the situation is not different where English has become a compulsory language subject from primary school until university. Saudi Arabia, being part of the Arab world, is also doing its best to make English an integral part of its education system. Accordingly, the main aim of teaching English in Saudi schools and universities is to equip the students with good and fluent communication skills in English so that they become able to enroll in the labor market and to attain the jobs chances, gaining knowledge, understanding others' cultures, studying overseas and travelling for pleasure (www.mkgedu.sa). To achieve these objectives, the teaching of English in Saudi Arabia is directed to develop students' competence in four language skills; they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Al jaref, 2007).

Of all the four macro English skills, speaking is the most important one required for communication (Hassan 2014). Speaking is generally considered the most important aspect of learning a second/foreign language (Nunan, 2006). Speaking is the means through which learners can make presentations, offer explanations, transmit information, describe things, make polite requests, and exchange ideas with others or to express their opinions (Lui, 2014). The mastery of speaking skill in

English is a priority for many second or foreign language learners. To Aliakbari & Jamalvandi (2010), it is by this skill that learners are judged. Many learners think that to be able to speak in English means to know the English language. Lui (2014) claims that success in language learning is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the target language. Consequently, learners often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how well they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency.

In spite of the importance often assigned to the speaking skills, it is widely acknowledged that currently learning to speak English in many countries is not successful despite studying for many years (chen and Zhang, 2015; Lui, 2014; Chen, 2011). According to the findings from recent researches at the Asian context, it is found that many students study English for many years but they cannot apply the skills in real life communicative situations effectively (Ho and Long, 2014; Hadi, 2013; Sae-ong, 2010, Ismail and Meryem, 2009). Many learners of a foreign language usually do not like or are afraid of speaking in the target language, and most of the time they exhibit a passive attitude in class, since they do not have the opportunity to express themselves naturally and spontaneously (Sae-ong, 2010). Students cannot communicate verbally in English because of shyness, fear of making mistakes in front of others, inadequate vocabulary, or simply lacking the necessary knowledge. Most of them wish that they had been taught speaking skills more properly at university.

However, the situation in Saudi Arabia is not an exception. It is generally similar to the current ones in many parts of the world. In Saudi Arabia, the teaching of English speaking skill has been deemed by many to be rather ineffective. For example, Alseweed in his study's (2009) states that Saudi students who have spent eight years learning English in primary and secondary schools have relatively low English proficiency. Rahman and Alhaisoni add that many learners who study a foreign language find difficulties expressing themselves fluently in the target language. Hassan (2014) and Al jaref (2007) find that the university students cannot express themselves orally. As a result, they have developed poor speaking ability. In similar studies, Alsamadani and Ibnian (2015) and Alseweed (2009) attribute the students' poor mastery of the necessary EFL speaking skills to several reasons. Firstly, the methods of teaching adopted don't motivate or arouse students' interest in speaking English. Secondly, teachers of English have been found to adopt traditional methods in teaching English. In such methods, the teachers' focus is on grammatical rules, memorization of vocabulary, and translation of reading texts and writing tasks but rarely have their students involved in speaking activities. The same ideas are also reported by Ho and Long (2014) who show that Vietnamese teachers spend most of the time on teaching grammar and guiding learners to do grammar and vocabulary exercises. The focus on teaching vocabulary and grammar has created negative impacts on learners' learning. Thirdly, to make the situation worse, both teachers and Saudi learners in EFL classes frequently use Arabic language throughout English classes. Finally, Al

Jaref (2007) and Alseweed (2009) state that most EFL teachers often provide insufficient opportunities for learners to practice English. In Saudi Arabia, as a non-English speaking community, opportunities to practice English outside the classroom are rare. There is lack of exposure to the native speakers of English as well as authentic materials, which is something that both students and teachers agree on. This goes in accordance with Al Jaref (2007) who concludes that teachers do not provide classroom instruction that leads students to have an opportunity to communicate as in real-life situations.

All the previously mentioned reasons behind the poor mastery of the speaking skill indicate that Saudi EFL students lack the extensive exposure to the English language in real situations, and there is a need to provide similar situations in classrooms in order to make learners interact and experience using English. Hashim et al (2014) shows that learning a language flourishes most when learners are in a positive environment and are given opportunities to communicate in authentic situations. Accordingly, many language teachers, experts and researchers are seeking to find something that can create a difference in their classroom. They have been looking for an effective teaching approach, which can provide learners with a natural context for language use. Task-based approach seems to satisfy this need to the greatest extent possible (Adendorff, 2014; Ellis, 2003 and Nunan, 2006). Task-Based Language Teaching itself is one of the mainly efficient approaches to teach a language by engaging learners in real situations (Willis & Willis, 2007). Hadi, (2013) stated that using a variety of tasks increases student talks,

makes the classroom atmosphere relaxing, and reinforces students' comprehensible input. Lee (2004) suggested that TBLT has improved the learners' self-confidence, learning attitudes, and thinking skills. Other researchers (Bao and Du, 2015; Mohammad pour and Rashid, 2015; Lui, 2014; chen and Zhang, 2015; Chen, 2011; Chen & Yang, 2009; Chuang, 2010; and Wang, 2010 and Prabu, 1987) report that task-based learning approach can increase and improve students' English speaking performance. It is one of the suitable approaches to create a natural learning context for learners to be exposed to the target language and to use it for real communication, and to motivate learners to engage in the learning process (Willis, 1996). Overall, as indicated by the above studies, task-based teaching is a promising approach to enable students to develop their own English speaking ability in order to reach their goals. Therefore, the researcher is interested in studying the effectiveness of task-based language instruction on developing Saudi students' English speaking ability.

Thus, this study aimed to investigate the effects of using TBLT on developing the speaking skills of the Saudi EFL students in academic settings at Qassim University, College of Arabic Language and Social Studies. It also investigated students' attitudes towards the use of task-based instruction. It was expected that the outcome of the study would directly enhance the development of the participants' speaking performance and also provide more insight for teachers into alternative activities to develop speaking skills for EFL learners in EFL/ESL contexts.

Statement of the problem:

The main objective of learning a foreign language is to be able to communicate in that language. Yet, it has been observed that Saudi EFL learners have difficulties in communicating in English. The reasons for learner's inability to speak well are many and varied.

To begin with, learners cannot swallow everything they need to speak well at once, nor can they learn effectively from traditional methods which do not involve the students in intensive interactions and do not help them to develop communicative abilities. Accordingly, many students in the department of English language and translation at Qassim University are unable to communicate and express themselves fluently and correctly. Students attribute their inability to communicate to their limited English speaking abilities and the lack of exposure to the native speakers of English as well as authentic materials.

Developing learners' speaking ability requires mainly overcoming these obstacles and seeking a new approach that helps learners use foreign language effectively and efficiently. One of the newly recommended approaches is task-Based Language Teaching. TBLT can be the solution for the lack of exposure to authentic English; TBLT gives the students a chance to practice their English by using different activities in real world tasks and in a stress free atmosphere in the classroom setting. Through TBLT procedures, students have more time to discuss the task topic using their personal experiences either with other mates or with the teacher.

Hence, the researcher is interested in utilizing this approach which is based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching called Task- Based language Teaching (TBLT). The current study attempts to investigate the effects of task-based instruction on the speaking skills of Saudi EFL majors at Qassim University. This study also tries to examine the students' attitudes towards the use of task-based instruction in the speaking classroom. To this end, a speaking test, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were used as the main methods.

Research questions

The present study attempts to examine the following research questions:

1. Does utilizing task-based language instruction have any effect on developing the English speaking ability of Saudi EFL language learners at Qassim University?

2. What are the EFL students' perceptions and attitudes towards the use of the task-based teaching in enhancing English speaking ability?

Research Hypotheses

With regard to the first research question, the researcher proposed the null hypothesis of the study:

1. There is no a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group exposed to the task-based language instruction, and the control group receiving regular instruction on the pre-test in overall speaking proficiency in favor of the experimental group.

2- There is no a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the control group on the speaking pre-test and post-test in overall speaking proficiency in favor of the post-test scores.

3- There is no a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on the speaking pre-test and post-test in overall speaking proficiency in favor of the post-test scores.

4- There is no a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group exposed to the task-based language instruction, and the control group receiving regular instruction on the post-test in overall speaking proficiency in favor of the experimental group.

Significance of the study

The significance of this study stems from the following factors:

1. The study addresses the paucity of research on the employment of task-based instruction in EFL speaking classrooms. Although task-based instruction has been investigated in ESL classrooms, little research has been conducted in EFL speaking classrooms at the university level. The situation becomes more exacerbating when it comes to the context of Saudi Arabia. Unfortunately, no study has incorporated the efficacy of task-based instruction in learning speaking at the university level in Saudi Arabia. Thus it seems that a study utilizing task-based instruction might be an actual attempt through which the influence of task-based activities can be examined on developing the speaking skill.

2. Besides, it was the first attempt at Qassim University to examine the effect of using task-based language teaching for developing the speaking skills of Saudi EFL learners.

3. On account of dissatisfaction with conventional instructional methods, the researcher hopes that the current study will be an attempt to overcome the shortcomings in teaching the speaking skills and provide ESL students with activities and opportunities to improve their ability in speaking.

4. It is hoped that this study will contribute to English teachers to understand the effects of task-based instruction on English speaking performance.

5. The study results can be useful for all teachers of languages at Qassim University because this Institution has a tendency to use modern ways and approaches towards language teaching in order to make classes more student-centered.

6. Moreover, It is hoped that the result of the present study may provide the syllabus designers an insight into more effective methods in their materials that they design.

7. This study was expected to provide some pedagogical implications and suggestions to the classroom teachers who are interested in applying TBI into their curriculum design, classroom activities, and assessment methods.

Definition of key words

The following terms are significant in this study:

Speaking:

Speaking is defined as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, the participants, and the purposes of speaking (Ruenyoot, 2009).

Speaking is defined operationally in this study as the EFL students' ability to express themselves orally, coherently, fluently and appropriately in a given meaningful context to serve both transactional and interactional purposed using correct pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary and adopting the pragmatic and discourse rules of the spoken language.

Task-based instruction

Task-based instruction can be defined as an approach in which communicative and meaningful tasks play central role in language learning and in which the process of using language appropriately carries more importance than the mere production of grammatically correct language forms (Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Willis, 1996).

For the purpose of this study, task- **based instruction** is defined operationally as a different method to teach languages. It can help the student by placing him in a situation like in the real world. It includes communicative tasks designed and administered to the experimental group students to develop their spoken ability.

Traditional approach

By 'traditional approach' I refer to both grammar-translation and to presentation-practice-production.

Definition of Task

There are various ways to define a task, and so far no complete agreement has been achieved among researchers. For example, Long and Crookes regard a task as a real-life activity, while Nunan (2006) considers it as a pedagogical work plan. Nunan says, "A task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on the meaning. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, middle and an end."

For the purpose of this study, the task is defined operationally as an activity which requires learners to use language with an emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective.

Language Attitudes

Attitudes refer to a person's way of thinking or feeling about somebody or (Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary, 7th ed., 2005, p.85). Attitudes towards a language may also reveal what people feel about the speakers of that language. Language attitudes also have an effect on SL or FL learning. The measurement of language attitudes provides information that is useful in teaching and language planning (Murad, 2009). In this study the EFL learners' attitudes towards the task-based teaching will be measured through the use of a questionnaire which will be adapted from literature review.

Review of literature

The literature review covered three main aspects: significance of speaking skills, the task based learning approach and related research.

Conception of Speaking

Speaking is ability to speak and to understand the language by using expression and oral communication. Speaking is the most important language skill. Brown, (1994) said that speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Speaking is one of the four basic language skills that should be well mastered by the students who learn English as foreign language. In order to equip their students with good speaking skill, English teacher should be good in speaking skill. It is considered being active skill because the speaker must hand over to grasp both in thought and in utterance orally.

There are a number of factors relating to speaking skills to be considered for effective English speaking performance. Pronunciation, vocabulary, and collocations are singled out as important factors to be emphasized in building fluency for EFL speakers. Providing students with a variety of situations and frequent speaking tasks plays a significant role in the improvement of students' fluency when speaking (Brown, 1994).

Components of Speaking

According to Nunan (2006), the elements of the speaking skill are summarized as it follows:

a. Fluency is smoothness of execution. It is ability to negotiate meaning including the ability to use communication strategies with ease when facing difficulties.

b. Appropriateness includes degree of politeness, suitable timing in turn taking suitability of language used in requesting clarification and expressing disagreement.

c. Accuracy focuses on both intelligibility and grammar.

d. Range refers to adequacy and variety of vocabulary and structures.

In summary, the components of an oral English activity should emphasize the nature of communication. The three most important components were fluency, appropriateness and accuracy. Fluency conveys the meaning runs smoothly in each situation. Appropriateness refers to proper use and choice of word, phrases or sentences suitable in conveying meaning. Accuracy implies correct use of structure and grammar as well as vocabulary and pronunciation.

Teaching Speaking

Even though acquiring oral skills is considered to be important, speaking did not have a primacy in language learning and teaching in the past. Historically, learning . structural language, rote memorization of sentence patterns and vocabulary and using literary language were considered superior to practicing spoken language. These pedagogical activities were supported by the Grammar Translation Method (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). However, in the mid-nineteenth century, the importance of teaching grammar for grammar's sake decreased as a result of the existence of opportunities for achieving conversational skills in learning a foreign language.

Toward the end of the 1950's, the Audio Lingual Method (ALM) in the U.S. and Situational Language Teaching in the U.K. appeared as a reaction against the Grammar Translation Method. They dominated the field of language pedagogy. These methods both emphasized speaking and listening skills in language teaching. Although those approaches favored the spoken language, the emphasis was mostly on the use of accurate pronunciation and structures while speaking in the target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Little attention was paid to the natural and spontaneous use of this new language in conversation. This led to the emergence of the CLT which emphasized oral language proficiency. In CLT, meaningful and communicative activities are used to provide learners with the ability to use authentic language. "Using language to learn it" rather than "Learning language to use it" became the slogan of CLT. Fluency and accuracy were both given emphasis as the important language goals employed in meaningful contexts in the approach as well.

The communicative approach had many methodological offspring which attempted to shape the principles of CLT into more specific teaching practices. Thus, Content-Based Instruction (CBI), Project Work, and Task-Based Instruction all are founded on the premise that language is learned through using it communicatively. In these communicative approaches, especially in Task-Based Instruction, tasks are the tools to promote interaction and real language use. The role of tasks is to promote interactive and authentic language use rather than to serve as a framework for practice on particular language forms or functions. Tasks promote the role of speaking in negotiating meaning and collaborative problem solving (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

In this study, Task Based Learning Strategy is used to improve the students speaking ability. Chaung (2010) reports that TBI aims to cultivate students' communicative skills with purposeful language activities. From this viewpoint, tasks are activities which see meaning as the primary concern, and these tasks have a strong similarity to real-life language exchange. The approach, which employs student - centered approach, is viewed as more effective than the traditional way. This approach is slowly gaining its popularity among learners all around the world.

Task-based Instruction in Language Classroom

The emergence of the task-based language teaching as a rather newly favored pedagogy has won increasing popularity in second and foreign language research in recent years and has been recommended as a way forward in ELT. It has attracted the attention of many curriculum designers, language teachers and researchers worldwide. Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a teaching approach which is based on the use of communicative and interactive tasks in order to plan and deliver instruction. Task based language teaching is an extension of the characteristics of communicative language teaching and an attempt by its supporters to apply principles of L2 to teaching. It has been regarded as an innovative approach. Such an approach is "a development of CLT". This approach relies on three major notions in terms of tasks. Richards and Rogers (2002) introduce such criteria as:

1. Activities involve real language communication are essential for language learning.

2. Activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks promote learning.

3. Language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process."

The idea of getting learners to acquire English through task-based approach was first performed by Prabhu (1987) who advanced the concept of TBA in the 1980s. His approach was a reaction both against the traditional form of English as a foreign language (EFL) used in India and against the type of communicative language teaching which was practiced there. Prabhu's project is mostly calling attention to the cognitive processes entailed by tasks. He talks about tasks involving 'some processes of thought' (Prabhu, 1987). Prabhu (1987) defines a task as "an activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of though, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process" (p 24).

A survey of foreign language literature has provided varied definitions for the term "task". The following definitions of the term "task" are presented by linguists conducting task research.

☐ Skehan (1996a) views tasks "as activities which have meaning as their primary focus", whose success "is evaluated in terms of achievement of an outcome", resulting in the fact that "tasks generally bear some resemblance to real-life language use" (p. 20).

☐ Willis (1996) argues that tasks are "always activities where the target language is used by the learners for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome" (p. 24).

☐ Ellis (2003) claims that a "task is a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of content (rather than language)" (p. 64).

However, according to Nunan (2006), task-based instruction is a way of designing teaching syllabuses which consists of a set of communicative tasks, and a way to involve learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language. Task-based approach has attracted more and more attention in the foreign language teaching field since the 1980s. Being a learner-centered approach, it views language as a communicative tool. Task-based approach aims at presenting opportunities for learners to master language both in speaking and writing via learning activities designed to engage learners in the natural, practical and functional use of language for meaningful purpose (Prabhu, 1987). This approach provides learners with an authentic context in which they can use language. In such an approach, they have abundant chances to interact with each other and acquire the language as a result of attempting to understand each other and to be understood.

Framework

Task-based approach has been used widely for language learning. The TBT framework consists of three main stages. Willis and Willis (2007) broke it into three sections: the pre-task (where students are introduced to the topic and told what the task will be), the task cycle (where the students plan the task, gathering language and information to do it, and then produce the piece of writing or oral performance that the task demands), and the language focus (students analyze the language they used for the task, making improvements and practicing any language that needs repair or development).

Some Studies Related to the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning in developing speaking skills

A number of research investigated the effect of task-based learning on developing the students' speaking skill (Bao and Du, 2015; Kasap, 2005; Jeon and Hahn, 2000; Chaung, 2010; Tindall, 2015; Van den Branden, 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Chen and Zhang, 2015; Khoshsima and Bajool, 2015; Lui 2014; Aliakbari and Jamalvandi, 2010; Ruenyoot, 2010; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Ismail and Meryem, 2009; Torky, 2006; Jeon & Hahn, 2006 and Fan-Jiang, 2005) The studies above prove that the experimental group students performed better than those of the control group on the final speaking post-test. The findings proved that task-based learning positively affected students' speaking ability.

In a recent study, Ho and Long (2014) investigated the impacts of the TBSA on the students' oral performance; and the students' attitudes towards the TBSA. The results of the oral tests and post-questionnaire revealed that the students' oral performance in the post-test was higher than the one in the pre-test. The students had positive attitudes towards task-based activities used in the classroom.

Aljarf (2007) examined the effect of TBLT on 52 female EFL students at college of language at King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This study showed that the students could speak fluently using correct grammar and pronunciations and could easily generate idea. The success of the improvement was due to efficient task-based instruction.

Ruso (2007) conducted research into TBLT and its effects upon student motivation. The findings of the study revealed that implementing a TBLT approach in EFL classes created "variety for the students". Moreover, it enhanced both their learning and motivation since the tasks encouraged student involvement and lead to significant improvements regarding their language performance. The study draws upon a variety of different data collection methods and the use of each method has been clearly justified and any potential weaknesses have been acknowledged.

Unlike in Ruso's study, Mendoza and Keranen (2012) found that when the students were performing the tasks there was very little TL use. The teacher suggests this was perhaps due to the fact that the students did not have enough TL proficiency to carry out the task, which could indicate that TBLT is more suited to learners with an adequate level of TL fluency. Timing was also an issue as the teacher "had difficulty determining how much time the tasks were going to take" (Mendoza & Keranen, 2012).Despite the overwhelming number of negative comments from the teacher which dominate the study, pupils appeared to respond well to TBLT and interacted more than usual in the TL.

Pyun (2013) carried out research to explore learner's attitudes towards TBLT and how motivation to learn can affect this. 91 college students of Korean as a foreign language participated in this questionnaire study. The data from the study implied that students with a personal interest and motivation in language learning rated TBLT more positively.

Another study by Murad (2009) investigated the effect of a task-based language teaching program for developing the speaking skill of Palestinian secondary students and their attitudes toward English. It was found that the TBLT program enhanced significantly the speaking skill of the students of the experimental group and positively affected their attitudes towards English.

Fan-Jiang's (2005) study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of implementing TBLT in a Taiwanese primary school, and her finding revealed that TBLT could enhance students' motivation and attitudes toward learning English. Chao (2008) conducted a detailed qualitative study to explore the implementation of task-based learning and teaching in an elementary English class in Taiwan. The overall results of her study evinced that the implementations of task-based learning was challenging for both the teacher and students involved; however, students did enjoy working on the tasks at different levels.

Based on the above-mentioned literature review, it is apparent that the current study is similar to others from the standpoint of the steps and framework of processes used to analyze the effects of TBLT on the students' achievements and performance in learning a foreign language, but it differs from the studies cited here in several aspects:

1. Much of the research on TBLT has been in an ESL context, but little research has been conducted in EFL contexts.

2. Few studies have been conducted on the effects of task-based language teaching on language skills in general, and on the speaking skills in particular, which are considered the most important skill in learning English as a foreign language.

3. While the majority of researchers asserted that engaging learners in a variety of tasks would enhance their learning, most researches addressed learners in secondary and elementary school students. However, this study deals with university level.

4. However, Literature review crystalizes the need for such experimental research within the K. S.A. to support its effectiveness in the FL classroom. Literature review indicates that little research has been conducted in the K. S.A. regarding this topic in general, and particularly with English majors at Qassim University. Therefore, the current research is unique since it examines the effects of TBLT on the speaking skills of Saudi EFL students and their attitudes towards TBLT. Its results and implications will no doubt be very beneficial to policy-makers, school principals, and EFL teachers.

Research Methodology

The methodology of the research procedure included three major sections: research framework, research participants and research instruments, and data collection and analysis.

Design of the Study

The study is a quasi-experimental design in which there are both a control group and an experimental group and samples were selected intentionally and there was no true -randomization. To accomplish research objectives, a mixed-method research design (involving both quantitative and qualitative methods) was employed for data collection. According to this mixed-method approach, the research problem and objectives act as the starting point, which determine the choice between various quantitative and qualitative methods to accomplish specific research goals. Some quantitative and qualitative research tools were designed and administered: These are: were the Quick Placement Test, the speaking skills test, a semi-structured interview and an attitudinal questionnaire.

Table 1. An experimental research design with

Pretest- Posttest experimental and control groups

groups	Pretest	Process	Posttest
Experimental (30)	QPT test The Speaking Skills test	Task Based Instruction	-The Speaking Skills test -The Attitudes Questionnaire -A Focus Group Interview
Control (30)	QPT test The Speaking Skills test	Regular Instruction	The Speaking Skills test

Variables of the study:

Independent variable: The independent variable refers the treatment implemented in this study (the task-based instruction implemented with the experimental group versus the regular instruction received by the control group)

Dependent Variable : Dependent variables were the subjects' scores on the English speaking skill test and the scores of their responses to the items of the attitudinal questionnaire.

Research Participants

Sixty students participated in the present study. They were English majors at the English Language and Translation Department at University of Qassim in the academic year 2015-2016 in KSA. Students' age in both groups ranged from eighteen to nineteen. They were enrolled in the "Listening and Speaking" class and met once a week.

Before the start of the experiment, the participants were asked to take Quick Placement Test which is designed to determine the homogeneity of the groups in order to place them into appropriate classes: A, or B group. According to the results obtained by the students

in the Quick Placement Test administered before the start of the experiment, the researcher selected sixty students from the two classes since their English proficiency belonged to 'average level'. Among the two classes, the researcher randomly assigned one class as the experimental group (30 students) and the other as the control group (30 students). The students thus constituted a homogenous group in terms of their learning history and English proficiency.

Instruments of the study

Since the study focuses on two factors, using task Based approach and students' attitudes toward that approach, four research instruments were developed by the researchers. These four instruments were the Quick Placement Test, the speaking skills test, a semi-structured interview and an attitudinal questionnaire. By using a combination of Placement test, speaking tests, questionnaires, and interviews as evidence for the current study, the researcher was attempting to improve the trustworthiness of my findings.

Placement Test

In order to assess the general English knowledge of the participants, the researcher used the Quick Placement Test which is extracted from (Richards et al., 2008). This QPT test is being designed to determine the homogeneity of the groups (Richards et al., 2008). This test included 50 multiple-choice items of English language skills, and its total score was 50. The test should take around 50 minutes to complete. In order to make sure that the two groups were homogeneous; their performances were computed on the QPT were through running descriptive statistics of means and standard deviations. A group of 67 students took part in the QPT test. The participants with the intermediate

level of proficiency were selected. Based on the mean score of 14.59 and the standard deviation of 3.38 (Table 2), 60 subjects were selected and randomly assigned into two homogeneous groups of control and experimental to participate in the main study. Table.2 indicates the results of the descriptive statistics for the QPT test.

Table 2 . Descriptive Statistics Preliminary

Study for the QPT test

QPT	N	Mean (X)	S.D.	Mean - SD	Mean+ SD
Pre-test	67	14.59	3.387	11.21	17.97

The speaking test

The second data collection instrument was TOEIC speaking test in which learners' speaking abilities were graded and assessed before and after the implementation of the experiment in order to detect the effect of the task-based approach on the participants' speaking skills. The test covers the aspects of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. The test duration was 20 minutes for every student. The English Speaking Test was given in week one and repeated in week eight. The data collected through the results of pre- and post-treatment tests were used to respond the first research question investigating the effect of task-based instruction in the study. The tests were run in the college by the researcher and a voluntary teacher. After the students finished the test and left the classroom, raters scored their performance individually by using the current oral assessment rubric. Raters then compared their grades and if there was more than 10 points difference between the grades, raters negotiated a common grade through discussing the performance.

Description of the test

The TOEIC speaking test is an academic English test produced by the institution of Educational Testing Service (ETS). Table (3) indicates that the test included six parts. In part 1of the test, the candidate will read aloud the given text. He will have 45 seconds to prepare. Then he will have 45 seconds to read the text aloud. In part 2 of the test (Describe a picture), the candidate will describe a given picture in as much detail as he can. He will have 30 seconds to prepare his response. Then he will have 45 seconds to speak about the picture. In the third part of the test, the candidate will answer three questions. For each question, he begins responding immediately after he hears it. No preparation time is provided. He will have 15 seconds to respond to Questions 3, 4and 5. In this fourth part of the test, the candidate will answer three questions based on the information provided. He will have 30 seconds to read the information before the questions begin. For each question, begin responding immediately after he hears it. No additional preparation time is provided. He will have 15 seconds to respond to Questions 6 and 7, and 30 seconds to respond to Question 8. In the fifth part of the test, the candidate will be presented with a problem and asked to propose a solution. He will have 30 seconds to prepare. Then he will have 60 seconds to speak. In the last part of the test, he will give his opinion about a specific topic. The topic was written on a card, and the participant should be sure to say as much as he can in the time allowed. He will have 15 seconds to prepare. Then he will have 60 seconds to speak.

From among the reasons for choosing this instrument was that it is accepted at international scale. Leading Universities in USA, UK and Canada have recognized it as a reliable and valid test and it observed comprehensive criteria, including fluency, accuracy, communication, vocabulary, and pronunciation, to assess speaking skill which suited the very purpose of the study.

This is the TOEIC Speaking test. This test includes 10 questions that measure different aspects of the speaking ability. The test lasts approximately 20 minutes.

Table.3 Description of the TOEIC Speaking test

Question	Task	Evaluation Criteria
1	Read a text aloud	• pronunciation • intonation and stress
2	Describe a picture	All of the above, plus • grammar • vocabulary • cohesion
3-5	Respond to questions	All of the above, plus • relevance of content • completeness of content
6-8	Respond to questions using information provided	All of the above
9	Propose a solution	All of the above
10	Express an opinion	All of the above

For each type of question, the participant will be given specific directions, including the time allowed for preparation and speaking.

Scoring the test

The researcher and a voluntary teacher scored the pre-test and post-test by using the checklist extracted from Mohammadipour and Rashid, (2015); Hasan, (2014); Kasap (2005) and Reunyoot, (2010). The researcher and teacher met with each student for ten minutes, during which they asked questions from the speaking skills test. Throughout the test, the rater awards a global mark out of 25 according to five criteria which are interpreted according the following speaking assessment criteria: fluency, grammar, vocabulary, contents and pronunciation. Assessment is based on performance in the whole test, and is not related to performance in particular parts of the test. The speaking assessment and evaluation were checked by a panel of experts in the field of English language (See Appendix B).

Speaking Test Validity:

The speaking skills test was given to a panel of specialists in the field of applied linguistics to be professionally reviewed. Moreover, the jury members were asked to evaluate the test as a whole in terms of: (a) number of tasks and appropriateness to the functions measured, (b) suitability of the tasks to students' linguistic level and (c) suitability of the test to measure the intended skills. Based on the reviewers' feedback and comments, the researcher had to evaluate and fix whatever needed to be fixed, and eliminate some items. By doing so, the validity of the test can be insured.

Speaking Test Reliability

The speaking skill test was tested on a pilot group. This group consisted of 39 students randomly selected from the section of the target level at the department who were not members of two specified groups who participated in the study. A technique of a test-retest was used to ensure the reliability of the research instruments. The period between the test and the re-test was two weeks. The correlation coefficient of the test was calculated using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient and was found (85%) for the speaking skills test, which was considered statistically acceptable for the current study (See table 4).

Table 4: Instrument's Reliability

Research Tool	No. Items	No. Students	Reliability
Speaking Skills Test	10	39	85%

The administration of the Pre- Test and Post- Test

Both groups of samples will be given a Pre-Test and Post-Test to gauge their speaking performance. The pre-test will be conducted to both groups at the beginning of the study while the post-test will be conducted after the completion of the task-based listening activities. In order to see the difference achieved by both group, a comparison of two means of the scores gained by both groups will be taken into consideration. Similar to the interpretation for the questionnaire, the paired t-test will also be used to see whether the difference of the scores for both treatment and control groups is statistically significant and can be generalized on a wider population.

Inter-Rater Reliability for the Speaking Test

The speaking skill test was administered on the control and experimental groups. The correlation coefficient of the test was calculated using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient.

Inter-Rater Reliability Pre-test

The inter-rater reliability for the two raters who rated the students on the pre-test of speaking is .92 (P = .000 < .05). Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Correlation Coefficient was considered statistically acceptable for the current study.

Table 5: Inter-Rater Reliability Pre-test

	No. of Students	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Rater 1 Rater 2	60	.923	.000

Inter-Rater Reliability Post-test

The inter-rater reliability for the two raters who rated the students on the post-test of speaking is .88 (P = .000 < .05). Correlation Coefficient was considered statistically acceptable for the current study.

Table. 6 Inter-Rater Reliability Post-test

Rating	No. of Students	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Rater 1 Rater 2	60	.889	.000

The attitudinal questionnaire

The second instrument adopted in this study was a 44 Likert-scale question which was adapted from the perception questionnaires used in previous studies (i.e. Pyun, 2013 and Kasap, 2005). In this study, the questionnaire was used to obtain data to address the predetermined second research question. It was used for the purpose of finding out learners' opinions about TBLT .The draft questionnaire consisted of 48 items. The students were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed to the statements of the questionnaire. 2- point Likert scale was used for the questionnaire with number 1 indicating "disagree" and number 2 implying "agree". The questionnaire was administered to the participants in the experimental group after the implementation of the treatment.

Questionnaire Validity

The draft questionnaire was submitted to some specialists in the field of TESOL to check validity and convenience with the research purposes. Members of the jury in the field of TEFL were directed to judge the questionnaire statements according to the following criteria:

1- The relation of the statements to the research objectives

2- The clarity of the meaning of the statement to the respondents.

3- The appropriateness of the wording to the intended respondents.

4- Add any phrase or statement that seems to be fit.

5- Delete any inappropriate phrase or statement.

The reviewers suggested that some of the scale's items should be re-written or eliminated in order to be suitable for the study. Accordingly, the researchers agreed with the reviewers' suggestions to modify, and eliminate some items. As a result, the scale ended up with a twenty item attitudes instrument.

Questionnaire Reliability:

To find out reliability degree of the questionnaire, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) was calculated as an indicator of homogeneity to the level of instrument as a whole.

The attitudinal questionnaire was tested on thirty nine students who were not members of two specified groups who participated in the study. A technique of a test-retest was used to ensure the reliability of the research instruments. The period between the pre and the post application was two weeks. A statistical Alpha Cronbach calculation showed a higher level of reliability of 0.840, which is acceptable by the researchers, (Table 7).

Table 7: Instrument's Reliability

Research Tool	No. Items	No. Students	Reliability
Questionnaire	20	39	0.840

Semi-structured interview

The fourth instrument used in the present study was semi-structured interviews which involve inquiries in order to gather information and support the results obtained from speaking test and the questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the present study with ten participated students from the experimental group who were randomly selected by the researcher. They were interviewed face to face individually at the end of the experiment. This interview was conducted in order to investigate learners' perceptions about task-based instruction after the treatment. The data from these interviews were used to respond to the second research question in respect to student attitudes towards task-based instruction.

As far as the structured interview is concerned, the researcher arranged a meeting with each participant separately. This meeting was held on December 2015. The duration of each interview was between 20 to 25 minutes. At the beginning, the researcher explained the purpose of this structured interview, i.e. the use of authentic task-based materials as a means to develop business students" oral communication skills and so on.

Validity of the interview

In terms of the fourth study tool (interview) validity, the designed interview was submitted to some jury members specialized in TESOL (n=7) to check validity and consistency with research purposes. Based on jury's suggestions, some amendments were made. Then, the interviews were piloted on 10 EFL students. Based on a test-retest procedure, the resulting reliability value was 0.6. After that, a sample of EFL student teachers (n=10) was randomly selected for the interview. Then, data was collected and analyzed with the assistance of qualitative Word-processing. Based on this analysis, perceptions of EFL student towards TBTA was compiled.

Materials

Both groups studied "Interaction 1: Listening and Speaking Book. All the students met once a week, one hundred fifty minutes a time, and they were taught the same topic and content—the only difference was that the experimental group was asked to complete six tasks in the classroom as TBT. The experimental group was exposed to some supplementary video files extracted from TED conferences before doing the task. TED is a nonprofit devoted to ideas worth spreading. It started out in 1984 as a conference to bring together people from three domains of: technology, entertainment and design. Since then its scope has become ever broader. All the video files were selected from TED Talks according to the students' level and according to the content or spoken genre tackled by each task. While selecting the video files, the researcher took into account the following criteria:

-They were relevant to students' background knowledge and culture.

-They were authentic, representing real life spoken discourse and including natural characteristics of spoken discourse such as (fillers, hesitation markers, fixed expressions, ellipsis, vague language…etc.).

-They could lend themselves to analysis and close examination as a means of raising student's awareness of different aspects of spoken discourse. The main site students were referred to was: http://www.TED.com

A framework for designing six Task-based Learning Lesson Plans

Six lesson plans were constructed based on the framework for task-based learning by Willis (1998). The three basic conditions for language learning are pre-task, task cycle and language focus. The pre-task mode will introduce the class to the topics, the tasks, together with topics related words and phrases. The task cycle will offer students the chance to use whatever language they already know, in order to carry out the exercise, and then develop their language under the teacher's guidance. Finally, the language focus includes two components: Analysis and Practice. During the analysis stage, the teacher reviews what happened in the task and highlights language forms for the students to analyze. Then, the students practice activities to extent their confidence. It is also an opportunity for the teacher to emphasize key language.

The role of the teacher in both classes

The teacher's role in the traditional classroom was the leader, and the main activities in the control classes were teacher-student questions and answers. To sum up, the features of traditional English classroom in this study included 1) the teacher-centered; 2) more teacher-student interactions than student/ student interactions; 3) lack of pair/group work in class; and 4) most learning activities conducted as whole class activities.

On the other hand, the teacher's role in TBI classes was the facilitator who monitored and gave advices to the students during the focused tasks as needed, and the in-class tasks mainly conducted as student-students interactions. The procedure of lesson plan followed Willis' (1996) three-stage framework: pre-task, task cycle (task, planning, and report) and language focus (analysis and practice) (figure 2).

The researcher who taught the experimental classes was required to conduct six task-based activities in class including (1) Shopping question-and-answer (language focus: question-and-answer),(2) Planning a party (language focus: doing requests, much/many, some/any), (3) Giving directions (language focus: map expressions), (4) Decorating house (language focus:), (5) Looking for a job (language focus: Simple past and past continuous), (6) and the school trip (language focus: making requests; asking for permission). Those tasks were carried out in class (for more details, see appendices).
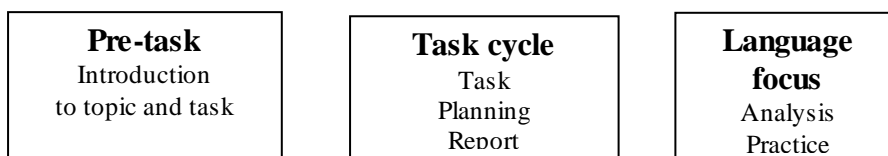
Research procedures

The research procedures for this study included six stages as follows:

Firstly, before the initiation of the study, the QPT test and the Speaking Skills test were administered to both groups.
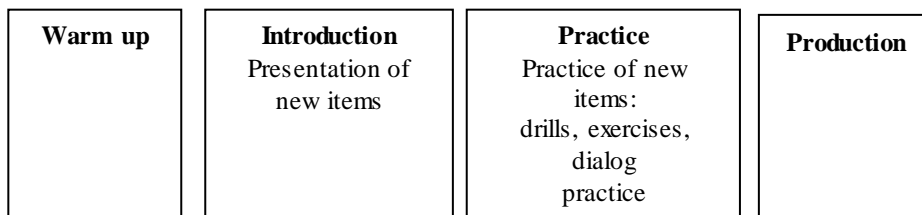
Secondly, the experiment started and lasted for eight weeks (approximately two months) through which both the experimental and the control groups participated in their listening and speaking classes once a week. Each class lasted for 150 minutes. The researcher taught the experimental group students himself based on task- based instruction by Willis (1998).

Figure.1 Lesson Plan Sequences of the Experimental Group

Pre-task Introduction to topic and task	**Task cycle** Task Planning Report	**Language focus** Analysis Practice

On the other hand, the control group was also taught by the researcher using the traditional method without doing any task-based activities (figure 2). According to regular instruction, the control group students were given little communicative opportunity to practice the speaking skills. Students rarely practiced any pre-speaking activity that aimed at teaching them the characteristics of the spoken language and they were never guided to use planning before the speaking activities. They were not given any supplementary material like the experimental group.

Figure .2 Lesson Plan Sequences of the Control Group

Warm up	**Introduction** Presentation of new items	**Practice** Practice of new items: drills, exercises, dialog practice	**Production**

In other words, the instructions of the control classes started with the presentation of a target language form by the instructor. After the new material was introduced, students focused on the target forms by doing grammar practice and language drills to ensure their mastery of using the language which was just taught.

Thirdly, Post-test. After completing the task based instruction, the same test used as a post-test was readministered to both groups to evaluate their progress in speaking skills.

Fourthly, attitudinal questionnaire was administered to the experimental group only at the end of the course to find out their attitudes towards the task- based instruction.

Fifthly, the researcher interviewed the ten assigned students for the interview one by one, and there were ten questions.

Table 8: Table four shows the different methods of data collection used to answer each research question.

Table 8: the different methods of data collection used to answer each research question.

Research Question	Method of data collection
Q1. Does utilizing task-based language instruction have any effect on developing the English speaking ability of Saudi EFL language learners at Qassim University?	Pre and post-speaking test at the beginning and the end of the study (Both groups).
Q2. What are Saudi EFL students' attitudes toward using the task-based instruction to develop the English language speaking skills?	The administration of the questionnaire and interviews after the intervention (the experimental group only)

Duration

The study was conducted during the period of two months. The study was conducted in the first academic semester of the year 2015-2016. Task-based instruction treatment in the experimental group started on October 15, 2015 and ended on December, 16, 2015. The study was conducted for 8 weeks. There were twenty hours in total. The Pre-test and the Post-test were included. The control class was taught by regular instruction (PPP teaching approach for the whole eight weeks) and the experimental class was taught by Task-based Teaching (TBT) designed by the researcher in their English classes. In the 8-week teaching period, all the students met once a week, one hundred fifty minutes a time, and they were taught the same topic and content—the only difference was that the experimental group was asked to complete six tasks in the classroom as TBT while the control group was taught by regular instruction without doing any task-based activities. In order to minimize the effects of teacher variability, the researcher taught both the control and experimental classes, following the separate lesson designs for each of these classes.

Statistical Analysis

To answer the research questions, the speaking skills test was administered as a pre-test and a post-test. Two independent t-tests were run for the difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the pre-test as well as the post-test. A paired t-test was run to find the difference between the means of the scores on the following tests: the pre- and post-tests for the control group as well as for the experimental group to see if there was any difference between the performance of the subjects on the pre- and post-tests. Moreover, in an attempt to learn what the students in the experimental group thought about the use of task based instruction, they were asked to do a questionnaire after the post-test. Data obtained from the questionnaire were calculated by using frequencies and percentages and interpreted as levels to indicate how students perceived the use of task based instruction.

Results and discussion

To answer the first research question, 'Does utilizing task-based language instruction have any effect on developing the English speaking ability of Saudi EFL language learners at Qassim University?', the student scores from the pre-test and post-test were systematically uploaded into a computer for quantitative analyses. The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) was adopted in the statistical analysis. Consequently, a set of paired and independent T-test was administered to find out whether there were statistically significant differences between the control and the experimental groups in terms of speaking proficiency.

Results related to the first tool of the study (a TOEIC speaking pre-test)

Before implementing the TBLT to the experimental group, a TOEIC speaking test is administered to both the control and the experimental groups as a pretest. Raw scores were statistically calculated. Then, an independent t-test is run to compare the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the pre-test of speaking. An independent t-test showed no statistically differences in mean scores of both groups as shown in table (9) below. The results indicated that the mean score of the experimental group was 18.73 with a standard deviation of 4.653, and the mean score of the control group was 19.23with a standard deviation 3.549. This result showed that the difference in the mean scores between the experimental group and control group was not statistically insignificant. The t-observed value is .468 (Table 9). This score of t-value is lower than the critical value of 2 at

58 degrees of freedom. As evident in the table, the result showed t = .468, df = 58, and Sig. =.102, indicating that there was no significant difference between the two groups before the experiment started, and the two groups started with the same proficiency level. Based on these results, it can be concluded that there is not any significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the pre-test of speaking. That is to say the two groups were homogenous in terms of their speaking ability before the administration of task-based language teaching to the experimental group. These findings are presented in Table (9).

Table 9: An Independent T-test results for the Comparison of Pre-test Scores between Control Group and Experimental Group in the Speaking Skills Test prior to Experimentation

Group	N.	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	DF	Sig.
Control	30	19.23	3.549	.468	58	.102
Experimental	30	18.73	4.653			

The data in table (9) indicate that the results of the independent samples T-test is consistent with the first hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in terms of their performance on the speaking pre-tests. It should also be taken into account that the scores of the students of both groups were fairly low and this may be due to the fact that neither the experimental group nor the control group was exposed to any approach in teaching speaking skills before starting the treatment. The results of the comparison of the pre-test scores between control group and experimental group in the speaking skills test prior to experimentation are also graphically shown in Figure3.
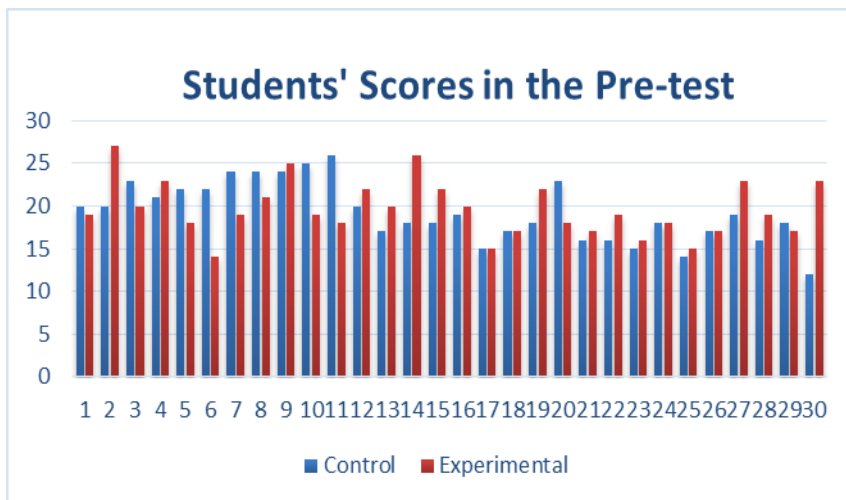
Figure 3: The Pre-test Scores of the Control Group and Experimental Group in the Speaking Skills Test

It could vividly be seen in figure (1) that there is no significant difference between the control group and experimental group in the speaking skills pre-test. It can be seen in figure (1) that the starting point of the two groups was low average. Their performance was identified as low due to their lack of exposure to opportunities for practicing English speaking.

Results Related to Comparison of the Mean of the Speaking Pre-test and Post-test within the Group

In order to see how much improvement each group had from the pre-test to the post-test, paired samples t-tests were conducted. Table (10) shows descriptive statistics for the results of the pre- and post-tests for both groups. After analyzing the data through the SPSS software version 18, the results obtained from the descriptive statistics indicated that the mean score of the learners on the pretest was less than that of the posttest.

Before the intervention, the speaking mean scores of students in control group and experimental group were 19.23 and 18.73 from 50 points, and those scores increased to 19.63 and 34.80 respectively after the intervention. It is noticed that standard deviation of the two groups also changed a little bit. From t-test analysis, there is no significant difference between means of scores obtained by the control group in terms of their performance on the pre-posttest of speaking performance. This finding obtained from table (10) agrees with the third hypotheses stating that there are no significant differences between means of scores obtained by the control group in terms of their performance on the pre-posttest of speaking performance.

From t-test analysis, the post-test mean scores were significantly higher than the pre-test mean scores in the experimental group (T = **-15.264-**). This means that the students in experimental group improved their speaking performance. However, it is noted that students who received task based instruction outperformed the control group who did traditional teaching. This considerable improvement shown by the subjects of the experimental group is due to the effect of the exposure to the test-taking strategy instruction, which included presentation and practice on test-taking strategies. This indicates that the participants in the experimental group indeed benefited from the task-based instruction. This implies that the students in the experimental group improved their speaking significantly after they were taught with the task-based instruction. This finding obtained from table (10) disagrees with the third hypotheses stating that there are no significant differences between means of scores obtained by the experimental group in terms of their performance on the pre-posttest of speaking performance.

Table 10. Paired Samples t-test of the
Comparison of the Mean of the Speaking Pre-test
and Post-test within the Group

Group	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	df	T -Test	Sig.
Control (n=30)	19.23 3.549	19.63 3.243	29	-.495-	.624
Experimental (n=30)	18.73 4.653	34.80 4.342	29	-15.264-	. 000

Control Group in the Pre and post-test
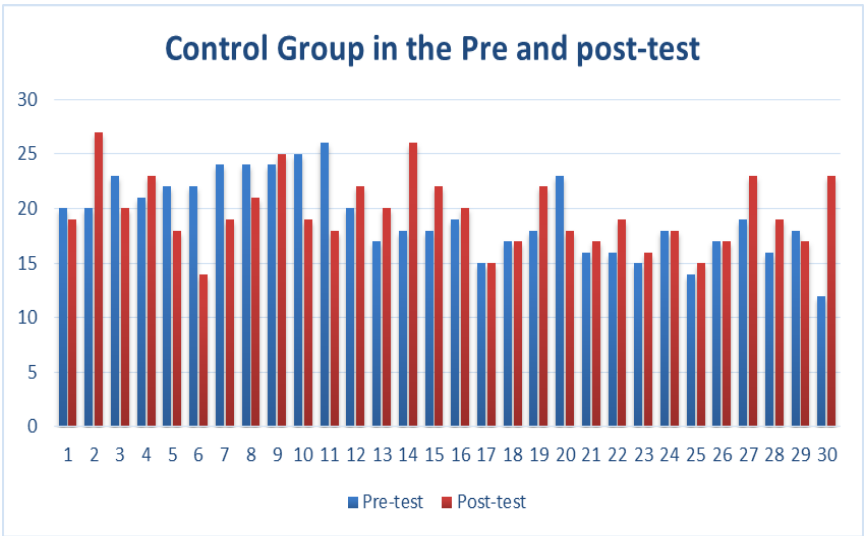
Pre-test ■ Post-test

Figure 4: The Pre-test and Post-test Scores within the control group

The results of the comparison of the pre-test and post-test within the control group are also graphically represented in figure 4. As seen in figure 2, the participants' speaking skills performance was considered as inadequate in the pre-test and post test. This is due to the lack of exposure to task based approach.

The results of the comparison of the pre-test and post-test within the experimental group are also graphically represented in figure 5.
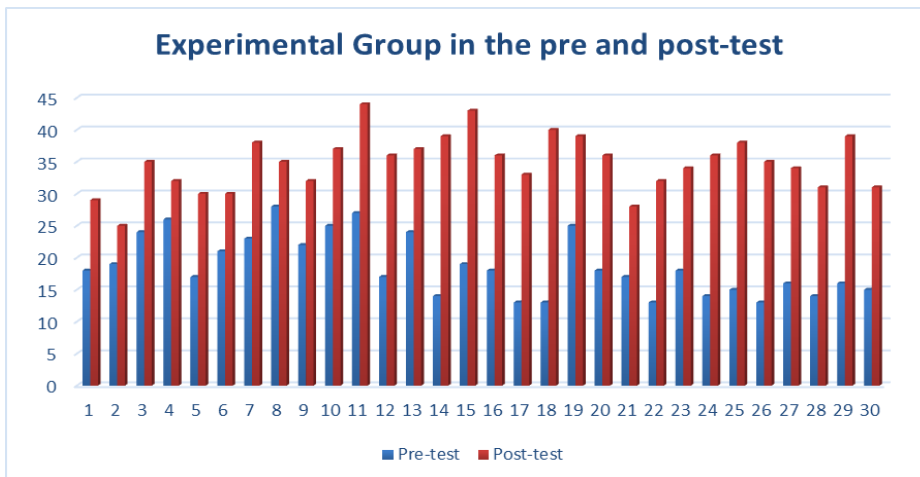

Figure 5: The Pre-test and Post-test Scores within the experimental group

As it could be seen in figure 5, the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group was a significant one. The progress that occurred from pre-test to post-test can be observed in figure 3. At the beginning, the group had a low performance qualified as inadequate, but after the group's exposure to the treatment, there was a significant increase of reaching a substantial mean score. Therefore, the difference was considerable between the pretest and posttest.

Results related to Comparison of the Post-Test Mean Scores of the Control and Experimental Groups

1: Does utilizing task-based instruction have any effect on the speaking ability of Saudi EFL language learners?

After the intervention between those having traditional instruction and those doing task based language instruction, a post-test on the participants' speaking performance was readministered. An independent t-test is run to compare the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the post-test of speaking to probe whether administration of task-based instruction has any significant effect on the experimental groups' speaking ability. As is shown in table (11) below, using t-test revealed that there is a significant difference between means of the scores of the control group and those of the experimental group in this test. The result indicated that the post-test mean score of experimental group (M = 34.80, SD = 4.342) was higher than that of the control group (M = 19.63, SD = 3.243). This result revealed a statistically significant difference in the test scores at the level of .05 as shown in Table (11). The t-observed value is -15.328- (Table 11). This score of t-value is higher than the critical value of 2 at 58 degrees of freedom. Mean scores and standard deviations for the performance of both groups on the post test of speaking showed that the experimental group students had better performance compared with their counterparts in the control group. Therefore, it can be concluded that students who received the task based language instruction in the experimental group achieved a significant improvement on the speaking test scores than the students in the control group who received regular instruction only. This finding is in a disagreement with the fourth hypothesis which states 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 speaking test. Table (11) sets out the results of the post-testing of the students' speaking performance in the test utilized in the study.

Table 11: Comparison of Post-test Scores between Control Group and Experimental Group in the Speaking Skills Test after Intervention

Group	N.	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	DF	Sig.
Control	30	19.63	3.243	-15.328-	58	.156
Experimental	30	34.80	4.342			

This finding 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 in the study, the significant improvement in the experimental group students' speaking performance in the test utilized in the study can be attributed to the effectiveness of the task based approach. This is also shown in figure (6) below.
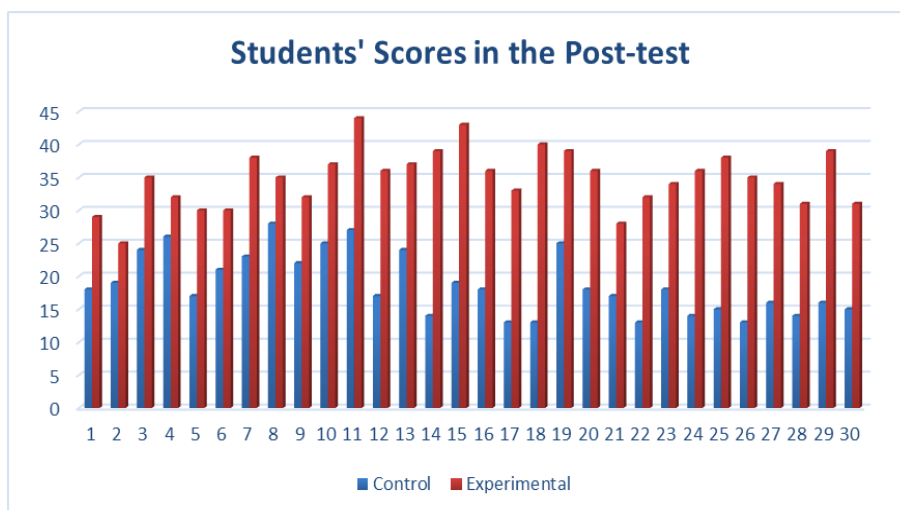

Students' Scores in the Post-test

Figure 6: The Mean Scores of the Experimental, and Control Groups on the Post-test

As illustrated in figure (6), there is a considerable difference between the two groups favoring the experimental group. The performance of this group could be considered as remarkable. Thus, it can be said that there was a positive effect with substantial improvement of speaking skills because the starting level tested as somewhat inadequate, but the post-test score was very close to top score. It is beyond question that the experimental group of the study outperformed the control group.

As it was noticed, the study came up with some notable results deserving further considerations and discussions. This result also showed that the experimental group achieved a significant improvement in their speaking performance on the post-speaking test than the control group. This significant result is due to the use of the task based instruction. This finding supports the results in previous studies which investigated the effect of using task based instruction and revealed their usefulness in developing learners' speaking skills (Bao and Du (2015); Mohammadipour and Rashid, (2015); Chen and Zhang (2015); Tabrizi (2011); Ho and Long (2014); Sae-Ong (2010); Chen (2009); Chuang (2010), Sae-Ong (2010) and Wang (2010) Murad, (2009); Al Torky, (2006); Swan (2005) Skehan (1996; Ruso, 2007; Pyun, (2013); Van den Branden, (2006); Tindall, (2015); Ellis, (2003); Mendoza and Keranen (2012); Chen and Yang (2009); Guo(2006), Kasap (2005), Liu (2014), Sae-Ong (2010), and Kasap (2005). These studies emphasized the role of TBLT in promoting speaking skills. One possible reason of this fact

could be that the tasks were related to real-world situations which improved students' motivation in English speaking. Students in task-based instruction had more opportunities to work in pairs or groups to practice speaking English with meaningful language which also motivated them to speak and learn English. Lever and Willis (2004) also pointed out that learners made far more rapid progress through |TBLT and were able to use their new foreign language in real world situations with reasonable levels of efficiency after relatively short courses. In addition, Ellis (2000), Nunan (2006) and Willis (1996) noted that in TBLT learners also use the language for a communicative purpose. Moreover, TBLT enhances students' oral discourse in terms of utterance length or complexity, fluency and accuracy, and then communication is promoted. This explains that Willis's (1998) principles of task-based learning provide students with the opportunities to use language creatively. And task-based learning enhances the language proficiency of the learners.

The researcher who implemented the task based instruction also played an important role in developing the students' speaking skills. First, he had a positive attitude towards TBLT, and was enthusiastic to teach according to its procedures and principles. Willis (1996) emphasized the role of the teachers in promoting students' learning through TBLT. Second, during the implementation of the TBLT, the teacher acted as monitor or facilitator, and encouraged his students to perform the activities. The teacher who was involved in the current study kept in mind that a task in TBLT is goal- directed and based on meaning and form. He also took into account that a task for oral social interaction is a simulation of a real life activity; authenticity of tasks is critical quality in TBLT.

To summarize the major findings of this study in terms of research hypotheses set at the outset, the null-hypothesis predicting no greater speaking proficiency skill through using task-based activities for the experimental group than for the control group was rejected in this study. Additionally, the experimental group indicated more ability in speaking. It was predicted that using task-based activities leads to a noticeable improvement in speaking.

Results of the second tool of the study (questionnaire) related to the second question:

The data used to answer the second research question were gathered from the questionnaires which were distributed to the experimental group students after the treatment. The results were analyzed in terms of frequency and percentage to find out the students' attitudes towards the TBSA in learning speaking.

The students' attitudes towards the task-based teaching

This section of the questionnaire concerned with the students' attitudes towards task based teaching approach. Based on the overall results shown in Table (12), it was obvious that students had positive attitudes towards task-based classroom activities.

Table 12 Students' attitudes towards

Task-Based teaching (TBLA)

	Statements	Agree		Disagree	
		No	%	No	%
1	I enjoy learning English using tasks.	27	90	3	10
2	The task based approach makes learning English easy.	21	70	9	30
3	TBLA helps me learn more English.	25	83.3	5	16.7
4	The task based approach makes learning English interesting.	27	90	3	10
5	I like to learn English by using task-based learning.	24	80	6	20
6	I can apply the English skills I learned from the task-based activities into real-life situations in the future.	22	73.3	8	26.7
7	The task based instruction makes me feel more relax and comfortable when using the foreign language to communicate with their classmates positively.	24	80	6	20
8	The task based instruction makes me feel more confident in using English.	27	90	3	10
9	I would like to use this approach in the other language classes.	21	70	9	30
10	I don't worry about making mistakes when I perform oral tasks in the classroom.	28	93.3	2	6.7
11	The task-based activities help me express my ideas in classroom.	26	86.7	4	13.3
12	The task-based activities came with clear goals that I had to accomplish.	25	83.3	5	16.7

When asked about their attitudes towards the TBLT, a large majority of the experimental group students feel that learning English through tasks is enjoyable (90%) and interesting in the class (85,3%), and they feel comfortable and relax when using the foreign language to communicate with their classmates positively (80%). They (90%) get more confident in using English. 80% of the respondents like to learn English by using task-based learning. More than two thirds (70%) agree that the task based approach makes learning English easy. Students felt that English language learning wasn't as difficult as they perceived it to be. Many students (70%) of the respondents also like to use this approach in the other language classes. Another important finding was that they (73.3%) could apply the oral skills they learned into real-life situations. This finding is shared by Chaung (2010) who indicated that the majority of the respondents concur that they could apply the language skills that they learn in class into their daily life and other subjects.

Regarding task-based activities used in the English classroom, the results of Table 10 indicated that most of the students considered that task-based activities came with more clear learning goals (83.3%). In addition, the experimental group students agreed that not only they learned English oral communication skills through task-based activities but also could apply the English skills they learned from the task-based activities into real-life situations in the future (86.7%).

Furthermore, Task-based learning creates a non-threatening and less stressful class environment. Table (12) indicates that the majority of students (93.3%) stated that they didn't worry about grammatical errors which allowed them to communicate more freely. The researcher told them not to worry about making mistakes while they were talking to their friends, presenting or asking questions to the teacher. The researcher told them that it was important in communicating to try to get the meaning across of what they wanted to say. This reflects the effect of the TBLA on the class environment which makes students feel more relaxed and confident. This finding is in an agreement with that reached by As Sae-Ong, (2010) and Willis & Willis (2007) who reports that task-based learning creates a non-threatening and less stressful class environment.

Students' attitudes towards the use of the Task Based approach in learning speaking skills

Regarding the students' attitude towards the use of the task-based approach in learning speaking after the treatment, the questionnaire findings confirmed positive effects of incorporating TBL to improve English speaking ability of the participants majoring in English language. Table (13) summarizes the results of the students 'attitudes towards the TBSA after training in learning speaking.

Table 13. Students' attitudes towards the use of the Task Based approach in learning speaking

	Statements	Agree		Disagree	
		No.	%	No	%
13	I feel motivated while participating in doing tasks and other speaking activities in English class.	22	73.3	8	26.7
14	The TBLA encourages me to speak more English.	23	76.7	7	23.3
15	I achieve more progress in speaking after the treatment.	26	86.7	4	13.3
16	Speaking tasks in class help me to develop my presentation skills.	25	83.3	5	16.7
17	Giving an oral report makes speaking English easier.	27	90	3	10
18	I think the TBLA gives me more time for speaking.	25	83.3	5	16.7
19	I feel that my English speaking skill has improved.	24	80	6	20
20	I think the TBLA improves my pronunciation.	20	66.7	10	34.3
21	I don't feel embarrassed to speak English in class	21	83.3	9	16.7
22	After the treatment I take part in speaking positively.	23	76.7	7	23.3
23	When performing speaking tasks, I can get so anxious that I forget things I know.	7	23.3	23	76.7
24	I think the task based approach helped me recall old vocabulary and improve my vocabulary.	20	66.7	10	23.3
25	I can use English vocabulary and expressions in context correctly.	21	70	9	16.7
26	I think the TBLA classes helped me to understand the functions of language better.	22	73.3	8	26.7

Many students (73.3%) believed that the task-based learning motivated them to speak English. This finding is in line with Bao and Du (2015) who have discovered that TBLT creates a positive learning environment by promoting learners' enjoyment, boosting learners' confidence, and increasing learners' motivation. In a similar study, Hadi (2013) found that most participants felt positively about TBLT. Learners were ready to adapt themselves to this new methodology because it enhanced their motivation, made class more fun and interesting, and produced a lively classroom atmosphere.

Table also showed that the students expressed their like of the TBSA in learning speaking because (1) they achieve more progress in speaking after the treatment (86.7%), and (2) their English speaking skill has improved (80%). These findings above correspond to previous studies which showed that the TBLT was an appropriate method to improve learners' speaking abilities (Rocha, 2005; Humanez & Arias, 2009; & Murad, 2009). The TBLT provided a relaxed atmosphere to promote target language use (Sae-Ong, 2010).

The results visibly show that the majority of the participants agree that the speaking tasks have helped them in developing their developing presentation skills (94%) and delivering oral reports (90%). This finding is similar to that concluded by Sae-Ong (2010) who stated that task activities were valuable in giving learners a chance to speak longer and in a sustained way.

The results revealed that the students got an improvement in the speaking skills because the TBSA helped the students (66.7%) recall the old vocabulary and learn new vocabulary; (2) improving pronunciation (66.7%), (3) using the vocabulary in context correctly (70%); and (4) understanding the vocabulary functions and speaking contexts (73.3%).

Concerning the use of the foreign language and the possible embarrassment, many students (83.3%) answered that they are never embarrassed to speak English in class, with 76.7% asserting that they take part in speaking positively. The creation of a relaxed atmosphere in class is vital to avoid frustration and inhibition when doing activities and tasks, and this will ultimately lead to the improvement of the speaking skills. These findings were confirmed by other researchers such as Murad (2009) and Chaung (2010) who report that the reduction of students' stress and anxiety leads to the increase of their confidence and participation in speaking. The TBSA improved students' communication in English by giving them opportunities to practice the language in classes and reactivated their knowledge of English vocabulary and structures (Adendorff, 2014).

Students' perceptions of the variety of task-based activities

Table (14) showed the degree of appreciation of the variety of tasks carried out. All the activities were designed to promote interaction and to develop the students' communicative competences. Table (14) summarizes the findings of the students' perceptions of the variety of task-based activities.

Table 14. Students' perceptions of the variety of task-based activities

No.	Items	Agree		Disagree	
		No.	%	No.	%
27	I enjoy working with listening to English radio programs.	30	100		
28	I enjoy working with computers.	26	86,7	4	13.6
29	I enjoy working with watching videos.	29	96.7	1	3.3
30	I enjoy working with newspapers and magazines.	27	90	3	10
31	I enjoy working with role-plays.	30	100		
32	I enjoy working with stories.	29	96.7	1	3.3

We wanted to detect the general and particular enjoyment of the activities used in class and which of them were preferred. The majority of students enjoy working with stories (96.7%), role-plays (100%), videos (96.7%), English radio programs (100%), and computers (100%). It is noteworthy that there is a substantial difference in the preference for readers, newspapers and magazines. Again, there is a consistent tendency to enjoy working with oral practice rather than with written skills. This is a relevant fact because they are students with low linguistic proficiency and they are likely to perform poorly in this area. The students used the authentic materials and realia to present their tasks. It enhanced the students' speaking and motivated them to speak in English. References to Kruger and Poser (2007) and Adendorff (2014) Nunan (1993); Skehan, (1998) and Ellis (2003) using activities as well as using authentic material are considered essential in Task-based Language Teaching

Attitudes toward Pair/Group Work

Questions 33 to 44 deal with students' attitudes toward pair/group work according to their experiences of TBLT. Regarding students' willingness to interact with their peers and the existence of a comfortable atmosphere when working in pairs/groups or individually, table (15) showed the students' impressions of their task-based experience in the classroom during the experimental study.

Table 15. Attitudes toward Pair/Group Work

No.	Statements	Agree		Disagree	
		No.	%	No.	%
33	I like pair work and group tasks.	28	93.3	2	6.7
34	I prefer to work individually.	5	16.7	25	83.3
35	I like to interact with peers.	24	80	6	20
36	I like to do brainstorming with classmate(s) in class.	27	90	3	10
37	I like to cooperate with my classmate(s) to complete the task assigned by teacher.	26	87.7	4	13.3
38	I like to listen to my classmates when they Speak.	23	76.7	7	23.3
39	I can learn from my classmate(s) in class when doing pair/group work.	21	70	9	30
40	I like to share experiences and exchange ideas with my classmate(s).	27	90	3	10
41	I feel less anxious when speaking English with classmate(s) in class rather than with teachers or foreigners.	20	66.7	10	33.3
42	I have more chances to do oral practice in pair/group work rather than in teacher-directed classroom.	25	83.3	5	16.7
43	The dialogues I use in pair/group work are practical to use in real-life situations.	25	83.3	5	16.7
44	I feel accomplished when I complete the task by pair/group work in class.	26	86.7	4	13.3

After experiencing TBLT, a high percentage of students (93.3%) like pair work and group tasks rather than individually (16.7%), which denotes a preference for collaboration and interaction with others in the construction of meaning. More than two thirds (70%) of the students said that they had learned more from their friends while working together.

Many students (76.7%) like to listen to their classmates when they speak, which indicates that they feel engaged in the fulfillment of the tasks. In addition to that, a high percentage of students (80%, 87%) like to interact with peers and like to cooperate with their classmate(s) to complete the task assigned by teacher. The majority of students (90%) said that they enjoyed doing brainstorming, and sharing personal experiences and exchanging ideas with their classmate(s) in class. Furthermore, many students (83.3%) turned to agree that they had more opportunity to practice their English oral skills in pair or group work rather than in traditional teacher-directed English classroom.

Finally, regarding students' perceptions on in-class pair/group work, their feedbacks appeared the surprisingly positive results. Most students (83.3%) agreed that the dialogues which they used in task-based pair/group work were practical to use in real-life situations, and they (86.7%) felt self-fulfillment when they completed the task. This is in line with the literature review that says TBLT approach, which is student centered, allows for more meaningful communication and could provide more practical extra-linguistic skill building (Van den Branden, 2006).

According to the students' opinions from the questionnaires, it was found that almost students expressed positively toward studying English through TBLA activities in an English class. The findings indicated that students valued the task based approach in developing their speaking ability after implementing TBLT. They no longer saw 'speaking' as a difficult skill to learn. In addition, students' interest in attending English classes increased a lot since they were provided with more opportunities to engage in pair/group work through TBLT to practice English without anxiety, their self-confidence therefore positively increased, and they also believed that their speaking ability could be improved through continuous practice.

Results of the third tool of the study (Semi-structured Interview) Related to the Second Question:

The purpose of the interview questions, which were directed to ten students from the experimental group after the study, was to investigate the perceptions of students towards the use of task-based instruction in the speaking classes. In EFL class, the researcher assigned various tasks to the FL students that matched with the real life situations. In short, all the ten participants were asked to express their perceptions of the ask-based language instruction.

1. Before you participated in this study, what kind of teaching methods did your teacher use?

The data from semi-structured interviews revealed that students complained about language classrooms where teachers rarely use tasks. They complained that the teacher was talking and they were only listening. Students were only following the book and perceived nothing of interest in their classroom. Students could not find enough chances to experience the language. As Willis (1996) suggests, "most of the opportunities for language use are taken by the teacher". Willis also argues that in teacher directed lessons students cannot find the chance to experience the target language.

What are your expectations of EFL class?

When asked about their expectations of EFL class, almost all learners from the experimental group expressed having negative feelings at the outset of the course, as they all thought English to be a very difficult language, especially the pronunciation:

It has so much sound; it was very difficult, because of the tones. I thought it was silly sometimes; I just need to say a tone. (EG2)

Students' thoughts about TBL

When asked about Students' thoughts about TBL, eight out of ten learners who were interviewed expressed their enjoyment of the TBLT method in a number of ways. For instance, some of these learners mentioned that what they have learned is out of their expectation:

But I think I have learned a lot more English in this way than I would have before. Because I had English for many years, and I don't feel I am good at it. (EG4)

However, learners in the experimental group reported that TBLT enhanced their participation, as task completion demanded everyone's contribution. Seven out of ten participants who were interviewed mentioned the importance of participation in learning a language over merely listening to the teacher:

It is so important when it comes to learning a language. If students don't participate, they don't learn the language, they just sit there, perhaps they understand the grammar, but in terms of speaking the language, it might be more difficult for them because language is practice. (EG3)

How do you see the class before implementing TBLA?

Before TBL was implemented, students had negative feelings about their classroom experiences such as complaining about the book. Students mentioned that nothing was interesting in their book, the book was not important for them.

The interviewees from the experimental group also showed different responses while being asked to describe their learning experience before the study. Their responses are as follows:

'The English class is a bit boring (EG01).'

'I feel that my English is not improved (EG03).'

' Lots of classmates do not pay attention in class (EG08).'

'Teachers try to help us to learn, but I do not like to study English. It is very difficult to learn English well (EG10).'

How do you see the class after implementing TBLA?

The analysis of the interviews indicates that all students realized a change within their classroom after TBL was implemented. The change was felt when the teacher started to use a variety of tasks. Furthermore, students realized the change through different tasks and positive classroom atmosphere. All students agreed that English lessons started to be enjoyable. Students found more chance to speak. Comparing with their classes before the study, students realized that their speaking time increased in the treatment. Also, they reported that speaking classes started to be enjoyable, interesting and entertaining that they were unaware of the passage of time. For instance, one of the students supported these ideas by stating that: I think we started to actively participate. Shyness disappeared. I mean when I use inaccurate language, none will make fun of me (EG1)".

Another student adds, "Speaking is actually more important for me. This new method of teaching also makes the lessons seem interesting and this helped the classes flow smoothly and fast. We didn't realize the class was over (EG3)".

What do you think of the task based activities that have been used in this study?

The interview data revealed that these participants differed widely in their attitudes towards teacher's using wide range of activities in the class. Almost 9 of participants were positive about teacher's activities, considered these as beneficial for them to develop their confidence for playing their roles to participate actively in the classroom. All these students regarded classroom activities as the tools that enable them to cope with the communicative problems for their future at their work-world organizations. All participants possessed the same views regarding use of activities. For example, one of the students said: *I like such task* based activities because they arouse my interest. I actively participate in these activities (EG8). A second student adds, "Classroom activities engage us and increase our knowledge in different ways. I think these activities make us active to study by participating in presentations or in other tasks" (EG5).

In short, most students were satisfied with the tasks used in EFL classroom. They similarly found activities beneficial for them to enhance their learning effectively.

The tasks support language learning and encourage students to speak English.

How did the task based approach help you improve your speaking skills?

All learners reported that TBLT created more opportunities for them to speak. The following are extracts of the experimental group participants' responses from individual interviews:

'My English speaking is practiced in the classroom, and I am not so afraid of speaking English. (EG 03)'

'I have more opportunities to speak out in English in class (EG04).'

'I find English speaking not as difficult as before (EG06).'

Regarding the task-based instruction, the students agreed that they became more active in the classroom. They seemed happy to see their improvement in speaking ability.

How did the tasks implemented in the class enhance your speaking skills?

When asked about the tasks implemented in the class, the students made comments on tasks related to the language used in making requests and giving directions. These tasks enabled students to practice language in different real-life contexts. One interviewee shares this idea by stating, "In my opinion, the classes should be like this, the speaking classes. If we learn something related to daily use of language, this learning becomes more permanent. Otherwise, we forget these things (EG4)".

Another participant says," I think these giving directions tasks were useful, because when we try to find and go somewhere the very first thing that we will ask is about directions if we don't know how to go there. It was useful to learn these forms to ask for directions (EG3)".

Students all agreed that tasks helped them practice "live" language and thus improve their speaking ability. The common skills they mentioned were related to the speaking sub-skills of fluency, accuracy, pronunciation and vocabulary growth. One of them stated:

We now can decide on the language we use in daily life. For example, I learned how to order in a restaurant in ordering tasks. When I learned these it affected my fluency, the vocabulary growth, the grammatical structures. In daily life, it is very important how we behave the person we interact with. (EG3)

Do TBLA help you reduce anxiety and shyness while speaking?

It was interesting, too, that the interviewees explained that TBA helped them speak without being afraid or shy:

I think it is good. You speak, and then you are not shy, especially [when] we are such a little class. (EG3)

However, more than half of the interviewee expressed that working on tasks reduced their anxiety to some degree. Learners expressed increased confidence during tasks completion:

In small group, you can speak without being afraid of making mistakes in front of others. (EG5)

Pair or group work tasks

Tasks were designed mostly as pair or group work activities. These tasks were intended to increase the communication between students. According to students' reflections on pair work tasks, the participants preferred working with partners rather than individually, and they enjoyed the feeling of self-fulfillment when completing the task. One interviewee said :

I like group and pair work tasks because they created opportunities for me to share and exchange ideas in a more comfortable environment. t (EG10)

Another interviewee expresses his opinion by saying "I like classroom tasks very much and participate either in pairs or group works because through these I can develop my confidence, and speak without hesitation" (EG 1).

Would you like to continue the speaking classes like this, I mean with these activities and tasks?

Most of the interviewee said that they wished to continue with these tasks through the end of the study. One of them suggested that the syllabus should include these tasks for the other courses: "I would prefer to go on with the tasks because they were like giving additional information for us. I would like to go on with this method (EG3)".

According to the interview results, it was found that the EG students' opinions about task based teaching were more positive. The students of the experimental group commented to the researcher that they feel less fear of grammar mistakes when they try to communicate to friends and teachers. They also said that English isn't as difficult as they used to believe. They feel interesting while learning. They had a chance to exchange their knowledge with their friends, sharing opinions and making decisions together while they completed the tasks. They help each other with planning and practicing together for presentations with teacher support. They feel more confident of speaking in front of class and motivated to learn further.

In addition, it is believed that task-based learning should be used again, when appropriate, with Saudi students. Based on the research conducted at Qassim University, it has been found to be an invaluable and effective approach that produces tangible results, and can be used to augment and support more traditional teaching methods.

The findings in this section were derived from interviews conducted with the course participants. Building up confidence in speaking to an audience was mainly reported as a factor that strengthened speaking performance. The tasks based on speaking for special communication in a variety of situations designed into the course also helped participants to prepare for speaking, and once each speaking task was well-prepared, this preparation became an effective strategy to minimize anxiety, and thus maximize speaking confidence. When speaking English in an EFL context was taken into consideration, it was not surprising that the study revealed that confidence played an important role. Promoting speaking confidence, together with appropriate task design, was recommended for the English skills development of EFL/ESL learners (Murad, 2009; Nunan, 2006; Tu, 2014; Chaung, 2010).

The responses from the interviews regarding students' perceptions of TBLT were wholly positive and are compatible with the findings of both the post test and the questionnaire. The experimental group students felt comfortable and confident in communication when practicing the TBSA; and they achieved progress in learning speaking. The findings of the study reveal that implementing a TBL approach in EFL classes creates variety for the students. Moreover it enhances their learning, since TBL tasks encourage student involvement and lead to significant improvements regarding their language performance. The findings of the

study on the use of task-based learning to develop English speaking abilities were similar to the hypotheses statements of Zhang and Hung, 2013; Chaung, 2010; Ho, 2006; Lee, 2006; Tseng, 200; Nunan (2004), Jampamoon (2012), Murad (2009), and Ruenyoot (2010). The previous studies show that the use of task-based learning effectively developed students' English speaking abilities. These studies showed similar levels of success in implementing task-based learning due to the task component arrangement.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of task-based instruction on developing the Saudi EFL students' speaking skills and to find out the attitudes of the students towards the use of the task-based instruction in the speaking classroom. In order to explore the possible effects of TBI in students' speaking abilities, pre- and post-speaking tests were conducted, whereas learners' perceptions about TBL are investigated through different data collection methods: a questionnaire and semi-structured interview. Sixty EFL students from two English classrooms participated in the study and assigned into two groups (experimental and control).

The findings indicated that the experimental group students, who study speaking through task-based teaching, performed remarkably better than those of the control group on the final speaking post-test. Whereas there was no significant increase in the control group's posttest exam results, the mean values for the experimental group's post-test results showed significant changes. The students' speaking performance in the post-test was higher than the one in the pre-test.

Qualitative and quantative analysis of the data indicates that TBLT benefits the experimental group learners in terms of increasing participation, creating more opportunities for speaking, easing learners' anxiety, and enhancing enjoyment. The experimental group reflected positively on the TBI treatment in the questionnaires and more positively in the interview. There is evidence in the qualitative data that experimental group students were interested in the tasks and wanted to continue with task-based instruction after the treatment. The findings in the present research were not new because they had been discovered by Bao and Du (2015); Ho and Long (2014); Murad (2009), Torky (2006); Rocha (2005), Murad (2009), Sae-Ong (2010), Humanez and Arias (2009). They admitted the positive effects of the TBLT on the learners' oral performance. These studies have certainly shown TBLT to be enjoyable and interesting for the majority of students. However, the findings were valuable for teachers at College as well as teachers in universities in teaching speaking.

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