

Original Article

Exploring the Effect of Task-Based Language Teaching on Reading Comprehension: Evidence from Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners

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Submission date: 28 February, 2022

Acceptance date: 24 April, 2022

Abstract

The current research investigated the impact of task-based language teaching (TBLT) on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension ability. To this end, sixty EFL learners were chosen based on their performance on Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). Next, the researchers divided them into one experimental and one control group. At the beginning of the study, a pretest was run for both groups to examine their reading. Then, the experimental group was treated for ten sessions and received training in reading comprehension skills based on TBLT. In contrast, the control group received a placebo (teaching reading via the existing method). At the end of the study, both groups took part in the reading posttest. The researchers analyzed the data using Independent and Paired Samples T-test methods. The results represented that TBLT had a statistically significant effect on the reading comprehension of Iranian intermediate learners. The results demonstrated a statistically significant difference in posttest scores between the control and experimental groups. The experimental group performed better than the control group in the posttest of reading comprehension ability, and the progress in the experimental group was higher than the control group. Pedagogical implications are provided for EFL teachers and material designers to incorporate TBLT activities into curriculum development to aid learners' reading comprehension skills.

Keywords: EFL, Intermediate Learners, Reading Comprehension, Task-Based Language Teaching

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1. Introduction

Reading is a conversation between the reader and the writer, and understanding is how the reader constructs the text using their knowledge, experience, and information from the text (Chalak, 2015; Long, 2015). Developing reading comprehension skill is a significant feature in acquiring a language. This is the process of giving meaning to a written text. There are many ways to improve students' comprehension skills. One of those methods is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) which focuses on practical tasks and requires the learner to use the language in the real world (Chalak, 2015). TBLT is one of the educational approaches that is currently widely discussed. It allows students to interact automatically with their peers in the target language and helps them overcome doubts and fears (Bhandari, 2020). TBLT, with emphasis on meaningful and interactive use of language, has attracted considerable attention in foreign language teaching (Pirzad et al., 2021).

Task-based teaching starts with a task-based needs analysis to identify the tasks a particular group of learners-what they need to do in the language. Interactive processes will achieve language learning in language classes, and the appropriate way is to use educational and practical activities. In TBLT, learners apply the target language to complete significant and valid tasks. Communicative tasks focus learners on understanding, using, or producing the target language while paying more attention to meaning than form (Long, 2016). Instead of grammar or vocabulary, it is organized around activities and tasks (Kessler et al., 2021; Sert & Amri, 2021). TBLT makes easy second language acquisition (SLA) and makes learning and teaching more systematic and efficient (Izadpanh & Abdollahi, 2021).

In some methods, the focus is on teacher-centeredness, and attention to grammar and vocabulary learning makes the drills possible. In the traditional teaching methods, once learners learn grammatical structures, they learn vocabulary. Vocabulary is significant for Iranian learners' reading comprehension skills. Nevertheless, many Iranian teachers use traditional methods for teaching reading comprehension. Many teachers focus on translating lessons, practicing grammar, and memorizing vocabulary items and meanings without focusing on real activities (Chalak, 2015).

Some researchers have argued about the implications of learning with a task-based approach in language learning. They emphasized that language that is meaningful and

engages learners can enhance language learning (Nunan, 2004; ÖKCÜ, 2015; Willis, 2007). Although English is not spoken in Iran, it is often needed in many conditions like career programs or university entrance exams. Some language institutes are the only places where learners can learn the language.

Since learners have no English classes outside their classrooms, the quality of education given at universities is greatly important. Teachers often use traditional teaching methods due to course books which are not sufficiently qualified. Teachers manage their classes and provide a few exercises for meaningful interaction. Learner-centered classes and native language classroom instruction are also necessary. Therefore, a task-based approach supporting active student participation can be an alternative to the traditional teaching method (ÖKCÜ, 2015).

TBLT can help students by doing activities that facilitate the learning process, leading to the development of comprehension skills. This means that TBLT can motivate students to communicate in the language used in class. TBLT in language classes helps learners understand the content, enhance their proficiency, and improve their reading comprehension. Therefore, TBLT can play a crucial role and is regarded as a new method for developing reading comprehension ability.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study has been proposed by Ellis (2006). The TBLT method consists of two kinds of processes. First, some processes determine how curriculum activities are transformed into real lessons and the processes that involve teacher and learner participation and interaction in lessons. Lesson design deals with the steps of a lesson in which a task is a core component (Ellis, 2006). According to Ellis (2006), in TBLT, a lesson plan involves pre-task, during a task, and post-task. Pre-task includes activities that teachers and learners must do before beginning the Task. A task is related to and consists of some instructional choices. Post-task involves subsequent activities pertinent to task performance and focuses on language forms. Only the task stage is mandatory in TBLT, while the other two stages are optional.

Task-supported language teaching is the more moderate version of TBLT that can have more positive results due to teachers' challenges and have to accept a more theoretical

version of TBLT (Carless, 2012). This endorsement is not a one-size-fits-all approach but rather an adaptation of language learners' tasks and roles in teaching the existing language (Lai, 2015). TBLT focuses more on learning theory than language theory (Thomas & Reinders, 2015). Integration with learning theory, TBLT encourages incompetent students with more confidence to use the language they already have in completing a task without fear of making a mistake (Kafipour et al., 2018; Motlagh et al., 2014).

2.2. Reading Comprehension

Doff (1998) defined comprehension as the process of meaning-making through interaction with written text. Teaching reading requires considering various kinds of learners and their needs. The primary purpose of reading is to understand the concepts. It includes clarifying what is implied in the sentence (Nation, 2005; Spear-Swerling, 2006). Comprehension is the result of some procedures or principles. These procedures involve cognitive structures that act as the reader's previous experience, classifying everything the reader knows about the world and doing as the theory of his understanding of the world. These cognitive structures involve the comprehension of spoken and written language. There is an interrelationship between perception and prediction. This means that prediction is to ask questions while understanding them (Setayesh & Marzban, 2017).

Teachers should pay attention to the four important matters for assisting learners' reading comprehension which involve permitting adequate time for authentic texts, training learners to focus on comprehension, providing learners with opportunities for collaborative learning, and giving them a chance to speak to teachers about their answers (Fielding & Pearson, 1994). Understanding is obtained when meaning is made through text. The meaning is connected with the reader's intention to read, combined with existing knowledge and linguistic scheme. This scheme is utilized in producing and realizing language (Goodman, 2003; Setayesh & Marzban, 2017). Understanding is regarded as awareness of the communicative aim and environment which is available in the text. Comprehension is not an end in itself, but a way to master the language used. Understanding a language is considered a creative, complex, and active skill that involves many processes that are the focus of the classroom (Rezaei et al., 2017).

Despite the need to read a lot, this proficiency is not obtained during school and the following stages of education. Learning to read is a problem-solving activity that is often

overlooked. Many language learners do not understand language texts due to their inability to learn to read. They read with less comprehension of what they are expected to read and slower than what they read in the first language. When we talk about reading, it includes understanding what we are reading. This idea is called creating meaning. Creating this meaning depends on having exact word skills and appropriate field knowledge along with a set of perception processes. These components should be particularly considered in both instructional environments and all stages of learning reading skills (Pressley, 2000; Rezaei et al., 2017).

2.3. Previous Studies on Using Task-Based Language Teaching in Reading Comprehension

Tasks that engender various kinds of interaction aim to create many conditions to negotiate both meaning and form, which are considered to improve language learning. In TBLT, authentic activities have a crucial role in language learning, and using language communicatively is more important than producing its forms (Ashrafi, 2020; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

According to Willis (2007), using meaningful language creates a learning setting where learners obtain communicative skills in TBLT. Learners learn the language as they practice it. In addition, the use of communicative language is a necessary part of task-based teaching. Even though TBLT focuses on the importance of meaning, a focus on form is vital in the learning process. Willis (2007) expressed that learners can gain accurate and fluent use of the language in a task-based framework. That is, TBLT provides authentic texts for language learning. In task-based teaching, communication is equally important in comprehensible input and output. In task-based learning, learners can discuss meaning to solve a communication problem (Ashrafi, 2020; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Some studies have examined the impact of TBLT on reading comprehension ability. For example, Nahavandi (2011) investigated the effect of task-based activities on students' comprehension. Sixty participants from the private institutes in Jihad-e-Daneshgahi, Tabriz, were selected and divided into empirical and control groups. The experimental group was trained using task-based activities, while the control group was traditionally trained. The findings revealed a statistical difference between the two groups, as students' reading comprehension improved in the empirical group using task-based activities.

A study carried out by Jeon and Hahn (2006) examined Korean EFL secondary school teachers' attitudes toward TBLT. Although many teachers held a level of understanding about TBLT, they had a negative attitude towards performing it in their classes. Xiongyong and Samuel (2011) realized that large classroom size is the main obstacle to TBLT in Chinese students. The other study conducted by Hu (2013) investigated Chinese teachers' attitudes toward TBLT at various schools. The findings showed that 17% of teachers had a negative attitude towards TBLT and were involved in exams and students' high scores. Thirty-three percent were taught based on textbooks. Fifty percent of them had positive beliefs in TBLT and were interested in increasing their knowledge of TBLT.

Moreover, Nemati (2013) investigated school instructors' views about the task-based approach. Results indicated that although teachers did not fully understand TBLT, they had a good attitude. Teachers believe that TBLT aids learners in developing inner motivation and creates effective learning environments through shared tasks. Besides, Ansari and Shahrokhi (2014) performed research and showed that almost fifty percent of teachers negatively rated TBLT performance in their classes. They didn't use TBLT since they thought that they didn't have adequate knowledge of TBLT and the large size of the classroom was a barrier to practicing TBLT.

Similarly, Zheng and Borg (2014) examined secondary school teachers' attitudes toward TBLT and found that they had a limited comprehension of TBLT. Teachers assumed that large classrooms, exam systems, time pressure, and inadequate knowledge of TBLT stopped or restricted using TBLT in their classes. In the same way, Chalak (2015) carried out research to investigate students' reading comprehension through task-based activity. 135 Iranian learners were selected from various grades. Participants in empirical groups were taught task-based activities, while control groups were traditionally trained. The results displayed that the performance of the experimental groups was superior to the students in the control ones. It was also found that using interactive and flexible tasks in the classroom improves Iranian students' reading comprehension skills.

Furthermore, Mesbah (2016) examined the effectiveness of task-based language activities in the comprehension of medical students at Guilan University, Iran. Sixty students were selected and assigned to the empirical (30) and control groups (30). The empirical group received task-based teaching, whereas the control group was taught

utilizing the conventional way. The results demonstrated that TBLA improved students' reading comprehension skills. Mezhgan and Seyed (2017) also performed research to explore the impact of Task-Based Language Activities (TBLA) on students' reading comprehension. Seventy participants were divided into experimental and control groups. Findings showed that TBLA greatly impacted students' reading progress compared to traditional reading comprehension teaching.

Rahimi and Rezaee (2020) performed a study to explore the possible sources of problems in using Task-Based Instruction (TBI) in English language classes. 120 teachers were selected, and they answered a questionnaire consisting of 20 items. The data were analyzed through confirmatory factor analysis. Lack of proper evaluation methods, cultural differences, and method efficiency were the three essential factors that prevented teachers from using TBI. In addition, Sebayang (2020) examined the impact of using TBLT on learners' reading comprehension. Fifty-six learners participated in this study. They were selected by random sampling. The experimental group was trained by TBLT, while the control one was instructed without applying it. Results showed a significant effect of using Task-based language teaching on students' reading comprehension skills.

Finally, Rostami Abusaeedi et al. (2020) investigated the role of TBLT on students' reading comprehension ability. The control group followed the conventional method, and the experimental group received a task-based method. Findings manifested a statistically significant difference in the experimental group's performance in reading skills. Few studies in Iran investigated the impact of TBLT on reading comprehension ability at the English Institute level (Nahavandi, 2011; Namaziandost et al., 2019; Rezaei et al., 2017). Thus, this research examined the impact of TBLT on improving intermediate learners' reading comprehension at the Institute level.

The following question was presented to meet the aims of this study;

Does TBLT have any significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL Learners' reading comprehension ability?

The following hypothesis was considered to fulfill the objective of this research;

TBLT does not significantly affect Iranian intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension ability.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The current study followed a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design in which participants were non-randomly selected, were made homogeneous. Then their intact classes were randomly assigned into control and experimental groups to examine the study's research question. The most important reason for choosing this design was that random assignment of treatments individually to participants was not desirable. Randomization of samples is more appropriate for experimental designs in which samples are randomly selected for control and experimental groups (Shadish et al., 2002). This study focused on the variable of task-based language teaching (TBLT) as an independent variable and reading comprehension as a dependent variable which is hypothesized to be impacted by the independent variable. Consequently, one class formed the experimental group (30), and the other class formed the control group (30). The experimental group was trained in reading comprehension ability by TBLT, while the control group followed the traditional way of teaching reading.

3.2. Participants

The participants of the present investigation were intermediate students who study English in one of the language institutes in Guilan, Iran. Ninety participants took part in this study. Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was conducted on 90 students studying in one language institute. According to the results obtained from OQPT, 60 students were selected as the sample of the current research. The participants were selected based on a convenience sampling method. Participants were assigned to one experimental and one control group. According to the rating scale of OQPT, those who scored between 37 and 47 were regarded as intermediate students.

3.3. Instruments

The researchers used the OPQT as the first instrument of this study to select a homogeneous sample. It was carried out on 90 intermediate learners. It helped researchers identify their participants' proficiency levels (elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, & advanced). Based on the findings of OQPT, students whose scores ranged from 37-47 were determined as the intermediate level.

The researchers used a researcher-made reading test as the second instrument of the current research, which was used for the pretest and posttest. Four reading passages with 40 items were considered in the pretest and posttest. A pilot study was conducted to gain high validity and reliability. Students answered the test in almost 30 minutes, after which their copies were collected to be analyzed. The pre and posttest reliability was calculated and was met according to the Cronbach Alpha formula as ($r=.79$) and ($r=.83$), respectively.

Additionally, one Associate Professor and one Professor of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) approved the validity of the pretest and posttests. The experimental intervention used "Active Reading Skills" as a reading textbook. It is a wonderful five-level study sequence that ameliorates students' vocabulary knowledge.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

The first step in this research was administering OQPT to homogenize the students. The researchers administered it to 90 learners. Then 60 intermediate students were selected. Then, the researchers assigned them to one experimental group and one control group. A reading pretest was performed for both groups to understand their comprehension. The aim was to measure students' reading comprehension ability with 40 items. They were asked to respond to items in 30 minutes.

After the pretest, the researchers conducted the treatment on the experimental group. As TBLT was the research treatment, the researchers selected some reading passages to be used prior to each session. The experimental group was taught reading comprehension ability through TBLT, while the control group was instructed traditionally. In the experimental group, students read the passages and conducted relevant exercises. The researchers employed images, audio clips, and videos to keep students interested in the subject and help students perform meaningful activities on the subjects in English.

Thus, the whole class was involved in group discussions about selected matters that emerged from them. The tasks involved: short quizzes; learners' group discussion to produce ideas or solve problems; students' presentations to share information, and whole-group seeing main places for group discussion and interpretation. In the control group, the teacher did not teach the reading passages, and the students read the passages before their class time. That was a quick review of the students' reading practices and their general understanding of the topics to be discussed in groups within the class.

The treatment took ten reading sessions. All groups had similar materials and time of instruction. *ACTIVE Skills for Reading* was utilized in the experimental group as the coursebook. Before teaching every lesson, the researchers provided some background knowledge for the learners; they started teaching them. Students were requested to read the texts carefully. The researchers provided constructive comments on the students' mistakes in the experimental group. The control group was instructed in traditional reading comprehension exercises involving question and answer and class discussion. The researchers corrected students' mistakes without providing valuable feedback. Finally, post comprehension test was performed for both groups, and questions were answered in 30 minutes by the students.

3.5. Data Analysis

This research data was gathered through OQPT, performed on 90 Iranian intermediate students. Based on the results, 60 students were chosen at the intermediate level. The researchers analyzed the data by running an Independent Samples t-test between the posttest of the study. Paired-sample t-test was also run between pretest and posttest research groups.

4. Results

The nature of the research hypothesis required the researchers to apply descriptive and inferential statistics to interpret data. Therefore, a descriptive analysis of the hypothesis data is presented; then, inferential data analysis is also provided using tables. The descriptive analysis includes a discussion of mean, standard deviation, and standard measurement error. Inferential analysis of the data involves the calculation of an independent sample *t*-test to show the significance of the difference between two groups.

4.1. Descriptive Analysis of the Data

Descriptive analysis of the data is shown in this section. This analysis was implemented using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. Table 1 exhibits the descriptive analysis of pretest and posttest of TBLT in reading comprehension ability in the experimental group.

Table 1.

Descriptive Results of the Experimental Group

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest EX	17.5000	30	.80804	.14681
Pretest EX	16.5167	30	1.08860	.19875

Table 1 indicates that there are 30 participants in the experimental group ($N_{PREEX} = 30$; $N_{POSEX} = 30$). The experimental group's mean posttest score was 17.5000 ($X_{PREEX} = 17.5000$) compared to the experimental group's mean pretest score, which was 16.5167 ($X_{POSEX} = 16.5167$). Given the standard deviation gained for the experimental group posttest scores, there is less variation in scores than in the experimental group pretest scores. This may provide a more homogenous picture of participants' scores after the treatment. Descriptive analysis of data between pretest and posttest of the control group is presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Descriptive Results of the Control Group

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest CON	15.7500	30	1.59471	.29115
Pretest CON	15.0667	30	1.27970	.23364

As shown in Table 2, the number of participants in the control group was 30 ($N_{PRECON} = 30$; $N_{POSCON} = 30$). The mean posttest score of the control group was 15.7500 ($X_{POSCON} = 15.7500$) compared to the mean pretest score of the control group, which was 15.0667 ($X_{PRECON} = 15.0667$). Due to the standard deviation obtained for the posttest scores of the control group, there seems to be more variation between posttest scores than control group pretest scores. This can provide a more homogenous picture of participants' scores after the treatment. However, both the means and the standard deviations are shown not to be significantly different.

4.2. Inferential Analysis of the Data

This part emphasizes the inferential analysis of the data obtained from the present research. Table 3 depicts the inferential statistics that composed the calculation of the t-test between posttest of TBLT on the comprehension scores of the experimental and control groups.

Table 3.

Independent Samples T-test Results of the Groups

	t_{obs}	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	5.367	58	.000
Equal variances not assumed	5.367	42.851	.000
T-critical			

As Table 3 above shows, the observed t-value was calculated between the posttest of reading comprehension in the experimental and control groups. The observed t value was 5.367 ($t_{obs} = 5.367$), and the degree of freedom was 58 ($df = 58$). The critical value of t is 2.000 ($T_{crit} = 2.000$). Thus $t_{obs} > T_{crit}$. Finally, the significance level was 0.000 ($p = 0.000$), which illustrates that the difference between the posttest scores has been significant.

Table 4.

Paired Samples T-test Results of the Experimental Group

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Posttest EX – Pretest EX	5.937	29	.000
T-critical	2.045		

As evident from Table 4, the observed t-value between the pretest and posttest of the experimental group was 5.937 ($t_{obs} = 5.937$), and the degree of freedom was 29 ($df = 29$). The critical value of t is 2.045 ($T_{crit} = 2.045$). Thus $t_{obs} > T_{crit}$. The observed t is much higher than the critical t, which shows a noticeable difference. Finally, the significance level was 0.000 ($p = 0.000$), which proves that the difference between pretest and posttest scores in the experimental group was significant.

Table 5.

Paired Samples T-test Results of the Control Group

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Posttest CON – Pretest CON	1.988	29	.056
T-critical	2.045		

Based on Table 5, the control group's observed t-value between pretest and posttest was 1.988 ($t_{obs} = 1.988$), and the degree of freedom was 29 ($df = 29$). The critical value of t is 2.045 ($T_{crit} = 2.045$). Thus $T_{crit} > t_{obs}$. As can be seen, the observed t is lower than the critical t, which displays that there is no significant difference between the pretest and posttest of the control group. Finally, the significance level was calculated to be 0.56 ($p = .056$), which shows no significant difference between the control group's pretest and posttest scores.

4.3. Results of Hypothesis Testing

The results of the research hypothesis test are presented and clarified in this section. An attempt was made to provide a detailed analysis of the research results. The study hypothesized that TBLT does not affect Iranian learners' reading comprehension ability. Evidence from various data sources can help confirm the rejection. The independent sample t-test demonstrated that the observed t value calculated by SPSS was 5.367, and the critical value of t is 2.000. Therefore, the observed t was more than the critical t and was so large that it rejected the null hypothesis.

Another evidence for rejecting the hypothesis was the significance level value, which was calculated as 0.000 ($p = 0.000$), which indicates that the difference between the posttest scores has been significant. Therefore, TBLT significantly affected intermediate learners' reading comprehension ability in the experimental group and progressed from pretest to posttest.

5. Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of TBLT on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension ability. Data were analyzed via statistical procedures to respond to the question regarding the effect of TBLT on intermediate learners' reading comprehension ability. The results of data analyses demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the performance of experimental and control groups. The findings specified a significant difference between the means of the participants of the two groups during the test process. The performance of the experimental group was better than the control group. The findings revealed the crucial role of Task in improving Iranian students'

reading comprehension ability. Students were engaged in class activities through sharing responses, giving answers, persuading others to take part in tasks, and doing the exercises.

The findings of this research represented that students in the experimental group who received teaching to perform activities increased their performance. The interaction gave students the opportunity of speaking about words and monitor their language. Students exchanged their ideas on specific matters in the experimental group and got acquainted with many related words. Students in the experimental group got feedback from their teacher and classmates. The exercises in the control group did not motivate suitable processes to bring Iranian students to produce the words freely. They received no feedback from their friends, and just the teacher judged the correctness of practices. Thus, the traditional teaching method was not very effective in assisting them to work collaboratively (Chalak, 2015).

TBLT improves language learners' proficiency. TBLT demonstrates the use of tasks as a central part of planning in Instruction, in which students are presented with a task or difficulty to solve (Richard & Rodgers, 2001). Findings indicated that the comprehension skills of participants in the experimental group who received TBLT were significantly improved after the experiment. The mean score of the reading comprehension test in the experimental group using TBLT was noticeably increased. Findings revealed that TBLT had a significant effect on improving learners' motivation to learn comprehension ability. This finding agrees with the results of some previous studies regarding the worth of TBLT in helping students learn a language effectively. For instance, Lau (2009) found that some of the tasks excited students' interest because they created an active learning environment. They were given opportunities to participate in cooperative tasks and use their different capabilities. Similarly, Poorahmadi (2012) demonstrated that TBLT increases students' motivation to understand the text, as it creates a cooperative learning environment and engages students in communicative language development.

Based on the results of this study, TBLT persuaded an active and participatory learning environment. Students were encouraged to do interesting and challenging tasks in task-oriented activities that stimulated them to take more responsibility for their learning. According to the results, students like to take part in activities where they have the opportunity to share their perspectives, knowledge, and emotions. Suitable group work in task-based activities satisfied the needs and expectations of students in social interaction.

Besides, the results of this study are consistent with the research of Kolaei et al. (2013), representing that TBLT was effective in improving students' reading comprehension ability. The findings proved that task-based activities give students a sense of participation in a cooperative learning environment in which language activities are represented naturally and meaningfully. In TBLT, collaborative activities encouraged students to discuss and share their ideas. By performing different kinds of reading tasks, students developed their reading skills.

The above finding confirms ZandMoghadam's (2007) study, which also observed that TBLT positively affects language learning. The current study results are consistent with Iranmehr et al. (2011) and Malmir et al. (2011). They argued about the influence of TBLT on students' reading comprehension ability and vocabulary knowledge. In addition, the results contradict the beliefs of some theorists who have argued that the usage of TBLT is difficult or impossible for inexperienced teachers due to time constraints (Joen & Hahn, 2005). Findings are also corroborated by the studie's Nahavandi (2011), Mesbah (2016), and Madhkhan and Mousavi (2017). They accept that task-based activities assist learners in overcoming their comprehension problems and help them improve, develop, and enhance their reading comprehension ability.

The results obtained from this inquiry make TBLT a successful and innovative teaching method in teaching reading to intermediate-level learners. TBLT allowed the learners to see their improvement. TBLT helped meet learners' needs and provided many opportunities for interaction in English language classes. According to Vygotsky's ZPD, human learning happens primarily through interaction and becomes a part of a person's perception. Thus, learning happens when learners interact with proficient fellows. The effect of TBLT is that language development is encouraged if learners are presented with some tasks that include understanding and producing the language with a focus on meaning.

However, contrasting evidence exists about using TBLT in reading comprehension ability. Jeon and Hahn (2006) performed a study on school teachers' views on TBLT and found that they had a negative attitude towards conducting it in their EFL classes. Similarly, the current research contradicts the study of Xiongyong and Samuel (2011). Chinese teachers found that the large size of the classroom was considered the main obstacle to conducting TBLT. This study's findings contradict the study performed by Hu

(2013), indicating that nearly 17% of teachers had negative views toward TBLT and were involved with their learners' attainment of high scores. Finally, Nemati (2013) stated that some teachers were reluctant to attend task-based courses due to poor command of the target language and lack of training courses on TBLT.

6. Conclusions and Implications

This research examined the efficacy of TBLT on Iranian intermediate learners' reading comprehension ability. Results clearly stated that learning and teaching with TBLT are task-oriented while learning and teaching in the traditional method are strongly teacher-centered. TBLT offers more opportunities for learners to show their thoughts through their acts. TBLT permits students to successfully apply the knowledge they have gained and work on the existing task. The mean scores of the first group of students before and after treatment were compared with that of the control group. Results determined the significant impact of TBLT on reading comprehension ability. After the treatment, the substantial effect of utilizing TBLT tasks on reading comprehension ability was perceived. It is argued that receiving training through TBLT activities makes easy the process of learning.

TBLT ameliorates learners' learning activities, leading to the development of language. In TBLT, learners become very keen to learn, unlike conventional tasks. TBLT activities showed to be valuable for the learners. It can improve learners' English learning. The usefulness of TBLT can provide materials developers with good ideas about how to arrange the flow of their course books to find out the learners' problems easier and quicker. TBLT also helps learners' fast progress as the number of new vocabulary and new grammatical points necessary to talk about are closely related to the topic of discussion. Therefore, it is suggested that instructors and learners use TBLT activities for having better teaching and learning. They should present a set of entertaining activities to their learners. They were participating in TBLT influences learners' progress and attitudes toward the lesson.

TBLT has been shown to help increase the comprehension ability of learners of language institutes and universities. Going through the various stages of TBLT by English institute students can make English classes more important and help students understand more. In TBLT, language learning takes place in a natural learning environment, and when learners are exposed to meaningful activities using authentic materials, further progress is

made in promoting language learning. Through using TBLT, learners engage in meaningful communication and have the opportunity to improve their communicative skills. This may have several implications for intermediate EFL instructors, learners, and material designers.

Results of the present research can influence instructors to apply task-based teaching and engage learners in a variety of tasks to make learning English easier. Instructors can encourage helpful learning among the learners. EFL learners can be the recipients of the effects of the present study. Performing different tasks in different situations, EFL learners are able to overcome their reading comprehension problems. This research can make syllabus designers aware of the usefulness of TBLT in learning and teaching language. Curriculum designers can also include TBLT exercises in textbooks to require learners to learn language by completing tasks.

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