The Effects of Task-Based Instructions on Secondary Students' Reading Performances

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https://doi.org/10.54855/ijli.22112

ABSTRACT

Keywords: Reading Comprehension, Task-based instructions, Task, Second language acquisition	The study's goal is to cast light on the impacts of task-based instruction on the reading comprehension of EFL secondary students. The process was undertaken in a middle school in Kien Giang province in 2022. Reading pre-test and post-test data were first employed to gather research data from more than 70 students in a Secondary school. The post-tests were conducted after the pre-tests for five weeks. Then the data was converted into an excel version to be processed. Research results reveal that task-based instruction positively influenced learners' reading performances. The mean scores from the reading post-tests are relatively higher than those of the reading pre-tests. It can be inferred that students who participated in the treatment could improve their reading capability. Thus, having said that teachers used the TBI appropriately, they could scaffold their students' reading performance in particular and boost students' reading competency as a whole.

Introduction

One of the most critical elements for learners to develop in an effort to accomplish language proficiency is reading skills (Okcu, 2015), as it enhances the language acquisition process (Lap & Trang, 2017; Okcu, 2015). Reading skill is deemed as a cognitive faculty that enables individuals to communicate with hard copies (Bojovic, 2010). The reading instructions assist learners in steering through the text and allow them to stay focused on the basic issues of the text. When students gain a deeper understanding, they are mindful of their surroundings, environment, and context implied by the author (Hermida, 2009). To put it another way, reading is an active way of receiving information wherein readers attempt to comprehend the meaning of the text (Khand, 2004; Mao, 2012). Similarly, reading is a demanding cognitive process involving the reaction between the text and the readers (Poorahmadi, 2012). Consequently, the more able learners to sense, experience, practice, and cooperate, the easier they can absorb the meaning of the text (Mao, 2012).

Literature review

Reading comprehension, defined by Ellis (2000), is the degree of text comprehension that originated in the engagement of documented utterances and how words modify knowledge

beyond the reading. Not only is reading comprehension an essential attribute for acquiring knowledge, but it also plays the most momentous skill in learners' success (Iranmehr et al., 2011). Specifically, thanks to reading comprehension, students will likely read a variety of materials for different aims such as learning, researching, and entertaining (Poorahmadi, 2012). Students are bound to use such higher cognitive and metacognitive skills that they can absorb, process the text, and negotiate meanings with the writer of the text (Hermida, 2009). Therefore, there is little doubt that reading comprehension is essential for students of English as a second language (ESL) because it has a beneficial effect on students' academic results.

Furthermore, to improve the learners' ability in reading comprehension, many practitioners and researchers have promoted and applied a task-based approach to teachers' daily instruction (Mao, 2012) because task-based language teaching (TBLT) is a novel approach (Tilfarlioglu & Basaran, 2007) for language instructions (Nguyen, 2022). It is also claimed to be a strong version of communicative language teaching (CLT) developed by Kappler (2003), which is under the sociocultural hypothesis. In fact, Howatt (1984) asserts that in the strong version of CLT, language is obtained via interaction and that it is not simply a matter of stimulating an ability, existing but dormant language knowledge, but of simulating the advancement of the linguistic regime as a whole. Language is not only viewed as a tool that the process is socially mediated (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), but it is also a central apparatus for both thought process development and the mediation of people's cognitive processes. Besides, Ellis (2003) claims that the two main second language acquisition (SLA) related to task-based instruction (TBI) are psycholinguistically related to the cognitive approach to learning a language (Skehan, 1998), and sociocultural approaches. According to Skehan (1998), fluency, accuracy, and complexity of language production are psycholinguistic aspects supporting students' engagement in making meaning-oriented tasks. Nevertheless, when it comes to the perspective of SLA sociocultural theory, the task of communication task-based language instruction (CTBLT) is considered to be the building of meaning related to students' participation and self-regulation, including private utterance, mediation, internalization, and facilitation of learners' interaction. The two domains of SLA aligned with TBI have a positive influence on learners' language cognition and interaction.

Over time, TBLT has been advocated by many insightful linguists since the 1980s (Bygate et al., 2001; Long, 1980; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996). This is simply because using TBLT to apply in the classroom will likely provide language teachers plethoral opportunities to engage students in the language learning process (Ellis, 2017; Nguyen, 2022; Nunan, 2014). In turn, teachers can help students stay focused on both language and their learning practice (Oxford, 2006). In other words, tasks dramatically enhance students' engagement and improvement of language skills, including speaking, writing, reading, and listening (Sholeh, 2020).

Definitions of task

The task is defined in a variety of ways. A task is described as an activity that is conducted as the achievement of language process and understanding (Richards & Rodgers, 1986) or obliges learners when using language as an explicit focus on connotation to obtain a goal (Bygate et al., 2001). Put another way, tasks are classified into target tasks and pedagogical tasks. Target

tasks that entail the application of language outside of the classroom (Nunan, 2014) are the things people do daily whilst pedagogical tasks refer to the tasks happening in the classroom (Long, 1985). Oxford (2006) claimed that the tasks defined by these researchers are broad, while Ellis (2003) argued that the task is not as related to a pedagogical view as a language acquisition perspective. Applying CTBLT for instructing second language (L2) reading, teachers give students chances to process and understand the information in the reading materials known as a part of the cognitive information process. They can also accomplish the appointed task through meaningful interaction (Nunan, 2014). They are active in working on tasks to achieve their goal when the teachers apply TBLT to teaching students. Hatch (1978, as cited in Sidek, 2012) argued that students could deepen their full understanding of the meaning and linguistic aspects of L2 when they work in pairs or groups on reading tasks. Nevertheless, students find it arduous to comprehend the reading text on account of unfamiliar words which have many different meanings. Students struggle with long sentences containing complex structures unless they do get teachers' support (Mao, 2012). Likewise, the L2 researcher, Widdowson (2003, as cited in Sidek, 2012), argued that students need to prepare for tasks that may result in a hindrance in developing linguistic competence. Thus, it can be inferred that when teachers allow students to observe and become acquainted with the lexical items as frequently as possible (Dinh, 2022), they can identify the feature of language patterns, assisting their learning process more effective

Characteristics of Task-based language teaching and learning[1]

Designing a task-based lesson includes the lesson principle components and stages (Oxford, 2006). Many researchers proposed various task designs. They, however, have grouped the same common three principle stages (Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996). The phrase illustrates the step-by-step activities of task-based lessons (Ellis, 2003; Oxford, 2006). The pre-task is considered the first phase, comprising a multitude of activities that instructors and learners take charge of before commencing the tasks. In this stage, teachers give time for students to plan the task performance. The task is carried out in many instruction choices in the next phase and the during phase. The teachers set time for learners to conduct. The task phase is compulsory in task-based instruction, whereas the pre-task and post-task phases are exceptions (Ellis, 2009). These phases are said to play a pivotal role in task performance, which supports continuous academic achievement.
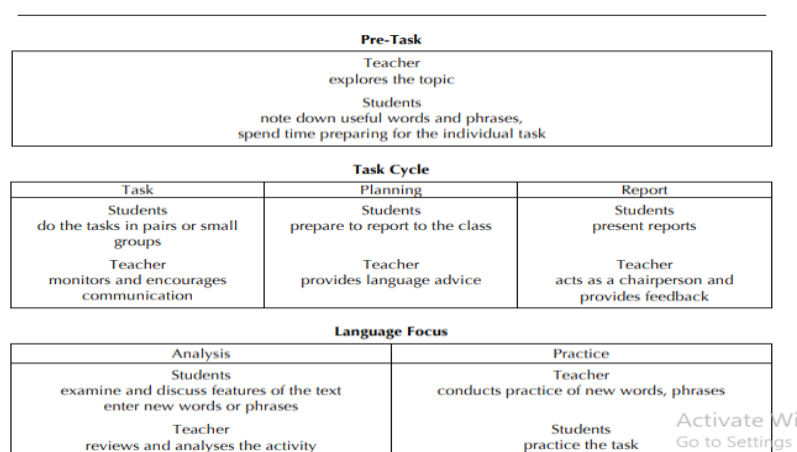
Pre-Task		
Teacher explores the topic		
Students note down useful words and phrases, spend time preparing for the individual task		

Task Cycle		
Task	Planning	Report
Students do the tasks in pairs or small groups	**Students** prepare to report to the class	**Students** present reports
Teacher monitors and encourages communication	**Teacher** provides language advice	**Teacher** acts as a chairperson and provides feedback

Language Focus	
Analysis	Practice
Students examine and discuss features of the text enter new words or phrases	**Teacher** conducts practice of new words, phrases
Teacher reviews and analyses the activity	**Students** practice the task

Figure 1. Willis' (1996) TBI framework

Little can be said save that studies examining the impact of task-based instruction (TBI) on Secondary school students 'reading performance in Kien Giang province are relevant but should be approached with *caution*. The author's goal in this study is to shed some light on the effects of TBI on students' reading ability. This is simply because the author is attempting to search for solutions for the reading comprehension of EFL secondary students.

Research Questions

The survey sought to answer the following research question in order to fulfill the study's purpose:

To what extent does TBI influence EFL secondary students' reading comprehension?

Methods

Research settings and participants.

The research was conducted in a Secondary school in Kien Giang province, Vietnam. The teachers of English are conveying English textbooks published by the Ministry of Education and Training, which are official materials for students from grade 3 to grade 12. More than over 800 students at school are studying textbooks from grade 6 to grade 9. At the end of each semester every year, students experience the test, including four skills. Among the three other skills, reading tests makes up from 25% to 30% of the total marks. Students can pass the exam if they get a band of 5.0 overall.

The two classes were randomly chosen and assigned to an experimental group with 71 students. The majority of students have already spent three years studying English in primary schools. The data was accumulated throughout routine class sessions in English classes. The current research utilized a quantitative study.

Design of the Study

Quantitative methods were employed. Quantitative data with numerical statistics were collected using pre-test and post-test. Convenience sampling is applied because two classes are appointed to the teacher at the onset of the school year (Fraenkel et al., 2012; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The pre-test on reading comprehension was given to the participants in the experimental group (EXPG) before the intervention. Following that, the experiment group was given a post-test to assess their reading comprehension ability after five weeks. There are two types of reading tests in both the pre-test and post-test.

Instruments

Pre-test and Post-test:

The pre-test and post-test were applied to assess the student's reading performance. The reading comprehension quiz was extracted from the English workbook of Global Success. The book published by Education Publisher was used to test students as the presumption for such a study's pre-test. It was created for elementary students (A1) and included a Future Home topic. Part 1 and Part 2 of the pre-test and post-test were included, as well as the following shall be investigated:

- Part 1: A scaffolded reading test from students' workbooks was selected to evaluate the student's ability to test students comprehension. This section required students to do a vocabulary test and a comprehension test. It took twenty minutes for students to finish the test.

- Part 2: The pupils' reading output on the test was recorded for later evaluation. The test was split into two sections and stayed that way for 20 minutes. The design of the Post-test and the Pre-test are the same.

Research procedure

The study embarked on the second semester, right after the mid-term test, and lasted for five weeks, with five reading lessons:

Phase 1: At the commencement of the treatment, the author surveyed two elementary classes level of 71 students each to represent a treatment group.

Phase 2: The group delivered the model utilizing TBI to study reading.

Phase 3: After five weeks of treatment, the researcher conducted a post-test. The post-test followed the same format and procedure as the pre-test.
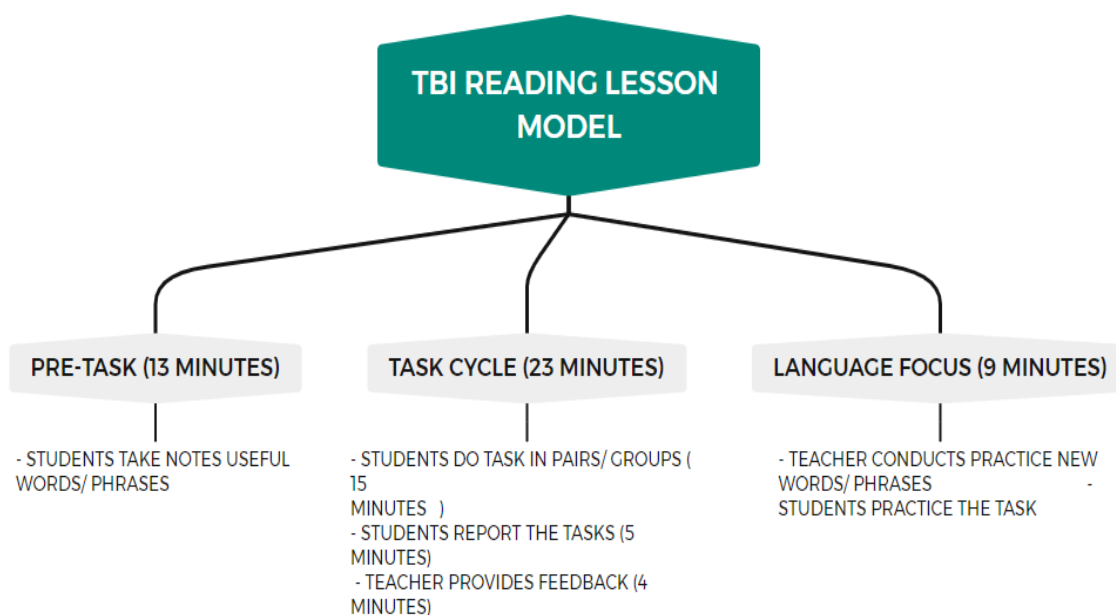
Training Procedure

Fig 2. The training procedure for the TBI model

Results

Fig. 2 compares the students reading scores before and after an experiment in class 6 at a Secondary school in Kien Giang Province. Overall, following treatment, students' reading comprehension scores increased significantly. While the rate of learners who got under band 5 experienced a downward trend, making it the most considerable fall.
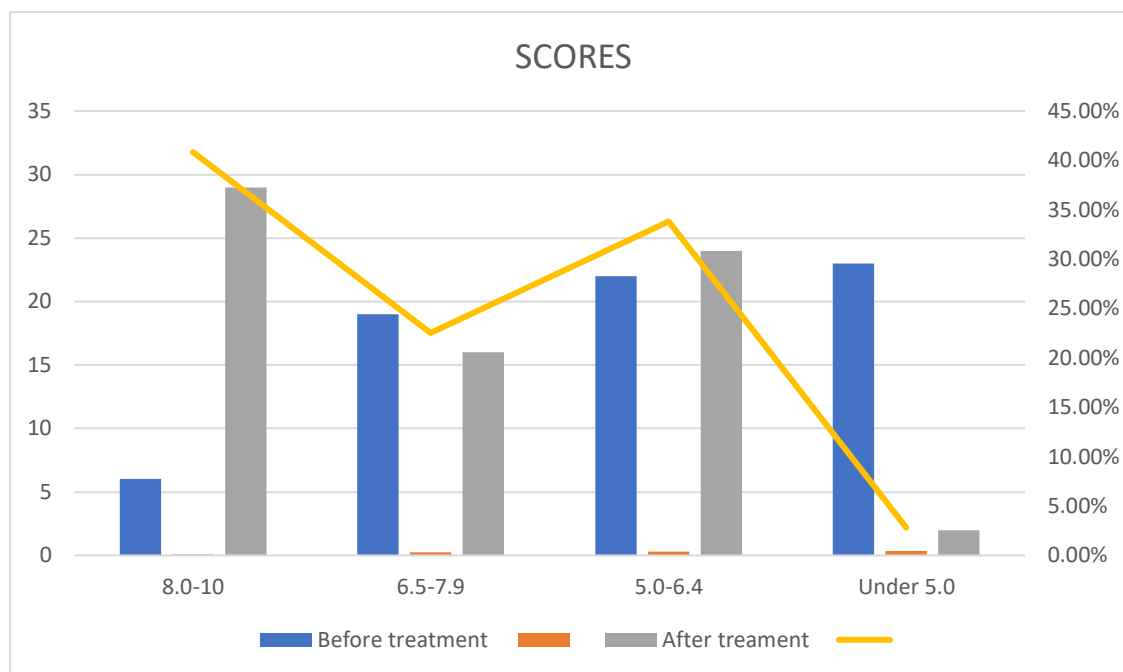

Fig 3. The student's reading comprehension scores before and after treatment

It can be seen from the chart that the proportion of students obtaining reading comprehension tests under band 5 constituted approximately 30% before the experiment, which was higher than that of other band scores, and fell dramatically by under 3% after conducting. Although students possessing reading comprehension scores in band 8.0-10 were lower than other reading comprehension scores, it saw a considerable rise of roughly 30%. This figure was ten times higher than under band 5.

However, students' 6.5-7.9 reading scores declined slightly at the end of the treatment from 19% to 16%, while there was a slight increase in students' 5.0-6.4 scores, just over 15%.

Research question: To what extent does TBI influence EFL secondary students' reading comprehension?

To deal with the research question, data analysis was computed to compare the reading pre-test and post-test results. The results have statistical significance. The students got an average mean score of 7.08, which was 1.48 higher than the mean score of the pre-test for reading comprehension. When students applied to TBI reading, their reading performances were better than the pre-test results.

Table 1 illustrates the students' scores reading pre-test. Mean = 5.62, SD = 1.65, range = 7.6 , SDs indicated low variability in pre-test scores on most tests.

Table 1. Comparison of the reading pre-test and post-test Scores

Scores (Reading Pre-test)	
Mean	5.628169014
Standard Error	0.196049342
Median	5.5
Mode	5.5
Standard Deviation	1.651941118
Sample Variance	2.728909457
Kurtosis	-0.265849136
Skewness	-0.162651372
Range	7.6
Minimum	1.8
Maximum	9.4
Sum	399.6
Count	71
Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.391008083

Table 2 gives the information on the students' post-test reading scores. On most tests, the SDs showed a low variability in post-test scores (mean = 7.08, SD = 0.18, range = 7.6).

Table 2: Students' reading scores after the experiment

Score (Reading Post-test)	
Mean	7.087323944
Standard Error	0.184149899
Median	7
Mode	8
Standard Deviation	1.551674632
Sample Variance	2.407694165
Kurtosis	-0.123145134
Skewness	-0.327426784
Range	7.6
Minimum	2.4
Maximum	10
Sum	503.2
Count	71
Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.367275393

Conclusion

In summary, the study was carried out to investigate the effects of TBI on the reading comprehension of EFL secondary students. The goal of the study is to scrutinize if there were any changes in EFL secondary learners' outcomes after reading classes applied TBI in the classrooms. The findings reveal that TBI positively impacts students' reading performances. The author suggests some recommendations to enhance students' reading comprehension from

the results.

From the educational makers' perspectives: the creation of conferences and seminars about using innovative approaches, especially TBI, in teaching English will help students develop their language skills. When teachers regularly employ TBI in the classroom, they will create the chances for students to work together to solve the task effectively.

From teachers' perspective: supporting an effective approach to reading for students, teachers will have to design a plan wherein the fundamental objectives and learning ultimate goals are needed to encourage learners to take appropriate approaches.

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Biodata

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