

THE IMPACT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TASK-BASED TEACHING ON CHINESE
STUDENTS' COMPETENCES: PART 2

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Table of Contents

Research Focus	3
Research Method and Findings	6

The Impact of English Language Task-Based Teaching on Chinese Students' Competences:

Part 2

Research Focus

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research focus of this study is on examining the relationship between the use of the task-based English language teaching method and changes in students' competences in reading and writing. The following research questions guided this study based on the mixed methods approach:

RQ1: What is the effect of using the task-based English language teaching method on students' competences in reading and writing?

RQ2: What perceptions do students have regarding task-based English language teaching?

Referring to the research question on the relationship between TBLT and students' competences to determine the impact of the method with the help of an experimental study, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H₀: Applying task-based English language teaching has no impact on students' competences.

H₁: Applying task-based English language teaching has a significant impact on students' competences.

Participants

The participants for this study included 30 Chinese students interested in developing their English language competences. These individuals were selected among the population of 112 students enrolled in the intensive English reading and writing course. The participants included

15 males and 15 females aged 18-20 years old who had decided to study the English language as their first major. The focus was on selecting those students who had a mean score of 130 out of 150 marks received for their entrance examination in English.

Instrumentation

In order to respond to the first research question, it was necessary to conduct an experiment based on using materials for pre-testing and post-testing students' competences in relation to their reading and writing, as well as texts and tasks for the experimental part. The students were provided with protocols for pre-testing their abilities in reading and writing and protocols for post-testing their competences. The texts for students' work during the experimental stage were on the themes of Ethical Issues Related to Nursing Homes, The Role of Diversity in Colleges and Universities, and The Problem of Students' Employment During Study. Tasks were administered by the researcher who played the role of an instructor.

For the second, qualitative, part of this mixed methods research, an interview protocol was used to collect the students' opinions regarding their perceptions of task-based English language teaching. The structured questionnaire included 10 questions on students' thoughts regarding the effect of TBLT on developing their competences in reading and writing. Thus, the study employed open-ended questions to examine students' particular perceptions on the impact of task-based English language teaching approach on changes in their competences. The participants were interviewed face-to-face and via phone, and their answers were recorded and transcribed for further use during interpretation.

Procedure

The experimental part of this research was associated with conducting a TBLT-based session for students participating in an experimental group and a general learning session for

students from a control group on the same topic. The participants were grouped randomly as they all demonstrated similar comprehensive learning abilities. Two groups of students received three one-hour sessions during three weeks (one session per week). Before participating in sessions, the participants were asked to complete pre-tests. Sessions for the members of control and experimental groups differed only on the presence of tasks for students from the experimental group. Each week students were exposed to working with one of the previously listed themes. The session started with warm-up and brainstorming questions. The main activity included the work with the text, reading and writing exercises, and class discussions. The follow-up stage was associated with providing essays on the set topics and their oral presentation.

Sessions for the experimental group followed the same plan, but the main activity part was organized according to the principles of TBLT with a focus on pre-task, during task, and post-task activities. The work with the text was preceded by questions and answers, it was associated with completing certain exercises, and followed by completing a summary. Teachers are expected to give printed reading materials with several questions or require learners to watch a topic-related video before the lesson (Setayesh and Marzban, 2017). Pre-task activities enable learners to understand and prepare themselves adequately for the task to boost the language competence.

Reading and writing exercises were also introduced and finished according to the TBLT method. Instead of participating in class discussions, students were asked to prepare oral presentations of their opinions regarding the topic. In-class presentations have several primary benefits to both speakers and listeners. For instance, on-the-spot feedback helps learners to identify errors or neglected language rules during the presentation. In addition, such activities are effective in engaging students with each other's work as well as facilitating the development of

an audience's logical thinking. In the during-task stage, the selection of tasks is a prominent factor, which underpins performance. In summary, the students from an experimental group received specific tasks on reading, writing, and oral presentation. After completing three sessions, the participants from both groups completed post-testing, and the focus was on measuring the accuracy and complexity in performing tasks.

When three sessions were completed, the participants from the experimental group took part in individual interview sessions to answer the questions on their perceptions of the sessions. They were also asked to share their opinion regarding any observed changes in their English language competences. The answers to these questions were further used by the researcher for analyzing students' perceptions and responding to the second research question.

Research Method and Findings

Descriptive statistics and the results of *t*-tests were calculated for two groups in order to determine any differences in their performance with reference to the implementation of TBLT for the representatives of the experimental group. The absence of a significant difference between groups' results before the experiment was determined with a focus on comparing the means for the two groups. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics with reference to the scores received after completing the pre-test in reading.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Two Groups on the Reading Pre-Test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St. Deviation	Skewness	
						Statistic	Std. Error
Experimental	15	5	20	16.143	3.0523	-.509	.441
Control	15	3	20	15.965	4.5647	-.621	.441

According to Table 1, there was no critical difference in the mean scores determined for the reading pre-test for the experimental and control groups (16.143 and 15.965 accordingly). In order to determine the existence of the statistical significance, it was necessary to conduct *t*-tests. Table 2 represents the results of an independent sample *t*-test that was performed for the two groups on their pre-test in reading.

Table 2. Independent Sample *t*-Test for Two Groups on Reading (Pre-Test)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means						
	<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.131	.004	.163	52	.007	.1782	1.0456	-1.987	2.294
Equal variances not assumed			.163	51.99	.007	.1782	1.0456	-1.987	2.294

The results of Levene's test indicate that the *F* value is .131, where $p = .004 < 0.05$.

Therefore, the variances between the examined groups were significantly different with reference

to statistical significance. In addition, the results of the t -test, where t equals .163 and $p = .007 < 0.05$, indicate that the absence of a particular difference between the mean scores is still statistically significant. Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics details with reference to the scores that were received after completing the post-test in reading.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Two Groups on the Reading Post-Test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St. Deviation	Skewness	
						Statistic	Std. Error
Experimental	15	8	20	17.874	3.1436	-.583	.441
Control	15	6	20	16.965	3.6433	-.438	.441

The results indicate that the difference in the mean scores determined for the reading post-test for the experimental and control groups (17.874 and 16.965 accordingly) was only in about 1 point. The t -test was conducted in order to determine the existence of the statistical significance in these findings. Table 4 includes the results of an independent sample t -test that was calculated for the two groups on post-testing in reading.

Table 4. Independent Sample t -Test for Two Groups on Reading (Post-Test)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t -test for Equality of Means					
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference

	<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.023	.001	1.145	53	.004	0.9091	0.2416	1.237	2.124
Equal variances not assumed			1.145	52.98	.004	0.9091	0.2416	1.237	2.124

According to the results of Levene's test, the *F* value is .023, where $p = .001 < 0.05$.

Thus, the variances between the examined groups were significantly different in this case. The results of the *t*-test, where *t* equals 1.145 and $p = .004 < 0.05$, indicate that a particular difference between the mean scores related to the two groups of the participants is statistically significant. Comparing the results for pre- and post-testing in reading, it is possible to state that that the experimental group demonstrated the statistically significant improvement in the mean score in about 1.7 points in comparison to pre-test results and in 0.9 points in comparison to the control group after receiving TBLT. Table 5 provides the descriptive statistics related to the scores that were received by the participants when completing the pre-test in writing.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Two Groups on the Writing Pre-Test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St. Deviation	Skewness	
						Statistic	Std. Error
Experimental	15	6	20	17.135	4.2308	-.456	.441
Control	15	3	20	15.278	3.4657	-.335	.441

Table 5 lists the results indicating that the difference in the mean scores identified for the writing pre-test for the experimental and control groups (17.135 and 15.278 accordingly) was about 2 points. Table 6 provides the results of an independent sample *t*-test that was conducted to examine the statistical significance in the mean score for the two groups on pre-testing in writing.

Table 6. Independent Sample *t*-Test for Two Groups on Writing (Pre-Test)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means						
	<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.013	.325	1.267	54	.245	1.857	1.1281	1.231	2.671
Equal variances not assumed			1.267	53.89	.245	1.857	1.1281	1.231	2.671

Levene's test indicates that the *F* value is .013, where $p = .325 > 0.05$. Thus, the variances between the examined groups cannot be discussed as significantly different because of

the p value. The results of the t -test, where t is 1.267 and $p = .245 > 0.05$, also indicate that a difference between the mean scores related to the two groups is not statistically significant. Table 7 provides the results of descriptive statistics related to the scores that were received by the participants when completing the post-test tasks in writing.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Two Groups on the Writing Post-Test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St. Deviation	Skewness	
						Statistic	Std. Error
Experimental	15	6	20	17.144	3.0611	-.507	.441
Control	15	5	20	14.286	3.5677	-.439	.441

According to Table 7, there is noticeable difference in the mean scores identified for the writing post-test for the experimental and control groups (17.144 and 14.286 accordingly). Table 8 provides the results of an independent sample t -test that was performed for the purpose of examining the statistical significance in the mean score for the two groups on post-testing in writing.

Table 8. Independent Sample t -Test for Two Groups on Writing (Post-Test)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t -test for Equality of Means					

	<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.126	.001	2.348	52	.001	2.858	0.6732	0.989	1.224
Equal variances not assumed			2.348	51.98	.001	2.858	0.6732	0.989	1.224

It was found that the observed variance in the mean scores is statistically significant with the *F* value is .126, where $p = .001 < 0.05$. According to the results of the *t*-test, *t* is 2.348 and $p = .001 < 0.05$ that emphasizes the statistical significance of the difference in the calculated mean scores. When concluding about the impact of TBLT on students' competence in writing, it is possible to observe statistically significant improvements in the participants' mean scores in comparison to the results of the representatives of the control group. H_0 was rejected as a result of the study, and H_1 was supported by the study findings because of determining statistically significant differences in students' results related to post-testing in reading and writing competences.

The results of the conducted interviews were also interpreted in order to provide the answer to the second research question: RQ2: What perceptions do students have regarding task-based English language teaching? The interview questions sought to investigate the students' perceptions of any effects of TBLT on their competences (reading comprehension and writing). The participants' responses included their ideas, perceptions, attitudes, and visions regarding the following aspects:

Reading:

- Gained more new ideas while reading texts;
- improved understanding and comprehension;
- trained critical thinking;
- enhanced analytical skills;
- extended vision.

Writing:

- Made less grammatical and lexical mistakes;
- Trained to organize written texts in an appropriate manner;
- Learned how to use the advanced vocabulary;
- Advanced their skills in developing and supporting opinions and ideas.

The participants agreed that TBLT contributed to their learning and understanding, and they found the topics more related to their life and tasks more motivating for learning the material. They also stated that they developed and improved skills in reading and writing with the help of completing structured tasks. Furthermore, the TBLT approach was viewed as stimulating students' independent work with tasks. Some of the participants found themselves more motivated to learn English as a result of working with provided tasks and exercises. The collected data indicate that more than half of the participants in the intensive reading course experienced challenges in written self-expression, feared to make grammatical mistakes, and were afraid of speaking out their viewpoints before undertaking the tasks.

The results of interviews show that the participants reacted favorably toward the designed tasks. The students acknowledged the authenticity and practical benefits of the tasks in developing their linguistic and non-linguistic abilities, including logical, analytic strategies,

teamwork, and strong interpersonal communication. The task-conducting process promoted the use of the English language and allowed the Chinese students to engage in research and interacting with one another using English. The study provides evidence regarding the effectiveness of task-based English language teaching on spurring students' instructional motivations in the learning process. As well, they noted that the participation in task-conducting processes aroused and sustained the students' curiosity for new knowledge.

Reference List

Setayesh, M. and Marzban, A. (2017) 'The impact of task-based language teaching on the development of Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension skills', *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 8(2), pp. 70-76.