

**The Effect of a Task-Based Learning Program on Preparatory stage  
EFL Teachers' Oral Performance**

**A Research in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the PhD Degree in Education (TEFL)  
(EFL Curriculum and Instruction)**

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## **Abstract.**

This research was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of using a task-based learning (TBL) program in developing oral performance skills of EFL preparatory stage teachers. 20 EFL preparatory stage teachers were randomly chosen for the study group. Teachers were trained through the task-based program to develop their oral performance skills. Instruments of the study included a needs assessment questionnaire to determine the sub skills of oral performance skills that were mostly needed by EFL preparatory stage teachers., a pre-posttest in oral skills. A training program based on task based approach was designed by the researcher. Analysis of data obtained by teachers (using t-test) revealed that the study group significantly achieved higher on the postoral performance test as the difference in the mean scores of the two administrations was statistically significant in favor of the post-performance. Results of the study indicated that using a task-based learning (TBL) approach contributed more to the preparatory stage EFL teachers' oral performance. The study recommended the need for improving preparatory stage EFL teachers' performance through training courses, workshops and ongoing improvement to increase their efficiency within the field of practicing teaching the English language.

**Keywords:** Task-based Approach, Oral Performance Skills.

## **Introduction**

Oral language is considered the primary source of all the other language skills. EFL teachers usually need to be able to develop oral language with proficiency and efficiency to carry out many of their most basic tasks inside the classroom successfully and encourage their students to practice oral language inside and outside the classroom smoothly. Even though, the importance of oral performance to teachers, they even after years in the profession, their knowledge about oral English instruction is 'obscure and fragmented' and their teaching is mostly driven 'by intuition'. They are in need of theories that 'guide their teaching' to help students improve oral English proficiency in a principled and effective way (Taylor & Francis, 2011, p.17). To Taylor & Francis most EFL teachers have low self-efficacy about their oral English proficiency and inadequate pedagogical knowledge for teaching oral skills. Hence, there is clearly a need for teacher training programs to prepare EFL teachers with adequate pedagogical knowledge and language competence to embark on their teaching career.

On the other hand oral performance is considered a crucial skill, Moreover, it is a difficult activity for many EFL teachers. Lack of teachers oral performance skills is related to some reasons. The studies (Al Hosni, 2014; Taylor & Francis, 2011) indicated that teachers use the first language in the language classroom instead of the foreign language; it must draw on reducing the amount of exposure students to English during the lesson. They noticed that "teachers tend to use a lot of L1 during the lesson especially when they explain a grammar point or give the meaning of some words and sometimes the instruction of a task. The teachers also accept students' explanation of the meaning of vocabulary items in L1". This obviously indicates that some teachers teaching the form of the language while the communicative use of the language is almost neglected. They think that using L1 is very necessary to make sure that the students understand the meaning and get the point. As a consequence, oral English is always put at the bottom of the teachers' priority list and teachers declare they often have to neglect oral English activities because they cannot afford the time. Among the methods, which enables learners to use the language subconsciously in a natural environment is Task-based Instruction (TBI). There is a call now for a move in the

process of learning and teaching the language toward task-based learning. Task-based learning is considered as the most recent effective approach mainly concerned with providing certain learning environment for students in the form of different tasks for communicative purpose. It considers tasks as the central element in the language classroom, because the process of acquiring the language is developed in context through tasks (Ellis, 2003).

According to Willis (2007) and Stanley (2003) TBI provides learners with natural exposure, opportunities to express what they want to mean, and to analyze performances throughout tasks. In TBI, learners work in pairs or groups to rehearse and practice a conversation before they present it in front of their peers. It provides the opportunity to practice the language in a safer context to promote learning. Finally, it is argued that TBI lesson is commonly divided into three basic phases: the 'pre-task' which is concerned with the various activities that learners can carry out before they start the task; the 'during task' phase which concentrates on the task itself and affords various instructional options and the 'post-task' phase which involves procedures for following up the task performance (Ellis (2003) & Willis (2007)).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem of the study can be stated as a great number of EFL teachers at preparatory stage have weakness in oral performance skills and the lack of training programs towards it. Therefore, the present study attempts to help EFL preparatory stage teachers to develop their oral performance skills through using a suggested program based on Task-based learning (TBL) Approach.

### **Purpose of the study**

This study aimed to:

- 1- Identify the adequate advantages of using Task-based Learning Approach.

2- Indicate the features of the proposed program based Task-based Learning Approach for developing EFL teachers' oral performance at preparatory stage.

3- Explore the effect of the proposed program based on Task-based Learning Approach for developing oral performance for EFL teachers at preparatory stage.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

1- There is a statistically significant difference between the overall mean scores of the study group on the pre-posttest in favor of the post one administration of Task-based Learning rules.

2- There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the study group in the post-application of the oral performance skills checklist in favor of the study group.

### **Definition of the Terms:**

#### **Oral performance**

Brown (1994) defined oral performance as "an interactive process of constructing, receiving and processing information since it includes an interacting of an interlocutor and a speaker who tend to understand each other".

Segalowitz, (2003,p.384) defined oral performance as "an ability in the target language to produce or comprehend utterances smoothly, rapidly, and accurately".

For the researcher oral performance of EFL teachers at the preparatory stage is defined as the ability to speak freely, clearly, confidently, smoothly and naturally to express opinions, make arguments, offer explanations, transmit information, and make impression upon other through spoken interaction.

### **Task-Based learning:**

(TBL) Nunan (2004) defined Task-Based learning as " an approach which seeks to allow students to work somewhat at their own speed and within their own level and area of interest to process and restructure their inter language. It moves away from a prescribed developmental sequence and introduces learner freedom and autonomy into the learning process"

Frost (2007) defines Task-Based learning as "a method of instruction in the field of language acquisition and learning. It focuses on the learners doing meaningful tasks using the target language.

For the researcher Task-Based learning is that it is a method of learning that is built on different tasks for learners to perform in pairs or groups through interaction in the target language.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Theoretical Background of the study**

#### **Task based learning and Oral performance:**

Oral performance is a skill that catches attention in both first and second languages. It forms the basis of communication which is regarded as the most demanding process in language acquisition. EFL teachers need to develop their oral performance for actual performance inside the classroom. They usually need to be able to practice it with proficiency and efficiency to carry out many of their most basic tasks successfully. Moreover, to use the language classroom effectively, powerfully, confidently and smoothly with their students. Thereby, help them to promote their learning.

One of the basic problems in foreign language teaching is to prepare EFL teachers to be able to use the language. Hence, developing oral performance for EFL teachers is required. Thus, (Eslami, 2008, p.2) revealed "teacher efficacy is believed to be strongly linked to teaching practices and student learning outcomes, most EFL teachers have challenges with speaking, pronunciation and fluency aspects of the language". Moreover, their insufficient language proficiency impeded their teaching and perform to the lack of teacher confidence. Moreover, (Namaziandost&Nasri,

2019, p.4) asserted "one of the major responsibilities of EFL teachers play an important role in enhancing is to enable them to communicate effectively through oral language". Thereby, teacher efficacy is believed to be strongly linked to teaching practices and student learning outcomes. Additionally, (Cohen & Fass, 2001 p.3) declared EFL teachers are frequently not fluent in English and therefore not confident in their use of the language. Hence, EFL students do not necessarily speak very much English in class, nor do they have much opportunity to practice using the language outside the classroom, that may relate to EFL teacher does not receive adequate training or exposure to how to practice oral language performance.

Additionally, lack of teachers oral performance skills is related to some reasons. Teachers use the first language in the language classroom instead of the foreign language; it must draw on reducing the amount of exposure students to English during the lesson. In the same vein, (Al Hosni, 2014, p. 27) noticed that "teachers tend to use a lot of L1 during the lesson especially when they explain a grammar point or give the meaning of some words and sometimes the instruction of a task. They also accept students' explanation of the meaning of vocabulary items in L1". This obviously indicates that some teachers teaching the form of the language while the communicative use of the language is almost neglected. They think that using L1 is very necessary to make sure that the students understand the meaning and get the point. As a consequence (Taylor & Francis, 2011, p.11) assumed that oral English is always put at the bottom of the teachers' priority list and teachers declare they often have to neglect oral English activities because they cannot afford the time.

In this study oral performance Skills are divided into listening and speaking Skills. Oral performance seems to be a two-way process in which language is performed by a listener and a speaker, the speaker encodes the message and the listener decodes the message. Thus, both listening and speaking are regarded to be the main two components of oral performance. These two important components; listening and speaking, have a crucial role in language learning and they should go together. Thus, Cameron (2001) asserted that speaking is closely linked to listening. Moreover, they are both active use of language but they differ in the mental activity, involved and demands. Listening can be seen the active use of language to access other people's

meaning. Nevertheless, speaking is the active use of language to express meaning so that other people can make sense of them.

In the same vein, (Demir, 2017, p.1457) pointed out that the close relationship between listening and speaking skills. listening skill is a significant predictor of speaking skill. Nevertheless, speaking is involved in expressing yet listening is involved in comprehension, they are considered as activities that form the communication process, complete each other and cannot be separated. Listening and speaking constitute the two elements of oral language, and the existence of listening skills obliges speaking, but in terms of language acquisition listening is prior to speaking. In addition, (Bozorgian, 2012) added that enhancing the speaking skill is strongly related to the learners' progress in the listening skill.

Task-based approach is a student-centered approach which views language a communicative tool that aims at presenting opportunities for learners to master language skills via activities designed to engage learners in the natural, practical and functional use of language for meaningful purposes. The essence of task-based instruction is to engage students in authentic learning activities and to put them in the kinds of situations in which they need to use these skills (Lin, 2009, Jeon, 2006).

Although TBL is a method which concentrates on language learning via tasks performed by learners in real contexts, the definition of the term 'task' is still controversial. For example, Skehan (2003) stated that a task is "an activity in which " meaning is primary; there is some communication problem to solve; there is some sort of relationship to comparable real world activities; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome". Ellis (2003), as well, regarded the instructional task as "some kind of activity designed to engage the learner in using the language communicatively or reflectively in order to arrive at an outcome other than that of learning a specified feature of the language". Nunan (2004) defined a task as "a piece of classroom work that is as close to target tasks as possible, tasks become pedagogical in nature which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing and interacting while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form".

However, in order to have an overall view on the nature of the Task, Ellis (2003) mentioned six criteria features of a task as follow:

- 1- A task constitutes a plan for learning activity.
- 2- A task involves a primary focus on meaning. It seeks to engage Learners in using language pragmatically rather than displaying language. It seeks to develop language proficiency through communicating.
- 3- A task involves real-world processes of language use in which learners are engage in an activity such as that found in the real-world.
- 4- A task can involve any of the four language skills whether receptive and productive.
- 5- A task engages cognitive processes in which learners are required to utilize such processes as selecting, classifying, reasoning and evaluating information in order to carry out the task.
- 6- A task has a clear defined communicative outcome which serves as the means of determining when participants have completed the task.

Generally speaking, TBI is an effective approach which promotes learning language knowledge and training skills through the process of performing tasks. According to Willis (2007) and Stanley (2003) TBI provides students with natural exposure, opportunities to express what they want to mean, and to analyze performances throughout tasks. In TBL, learners work in pairs or groups to rehearse and practice a conversation before they present it in front of their peers. It provides the opportunity to practice the language in a safer context to promote learning. Finally, it is argued that TBI lesson is commonly divided into three basic phases: the 'pre-task' which is concerned with the various activities that students can carry out before they start the task; the 'during task' phase which concentrates on the task itself and affords various instructional options and the 'post-task' phase which involves procedures for following up the task performance (Ellis (2003) & Willis (2007)).

## **Method**

The present study adopted the quasi-experimental design using (one group for EFL teachers' pre-post treatment). The group was taught through a suggested program based on task based approach for developing oral performance skills. The pre-post pronunciation test was administrated to the same group before and after the treatment.

## **Participants**

The participants in this study consisted of A group of twenty EFL teachers for preparatory stage (males and females) who were randomly selected from Al Sayda Zainab directorate – South Cairo district in the academic year 2021-2022 (during COVID-19) their ages were ranging from thirty four to fifty two years old. The EFL teacher's group presented the experimental group which was taught by using phonological awareness program.

## **Instruments of the Study**

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the researcher designed the following instruments:

1. Needs analysis questionnaire.
2. Pre-posttest.
3. Scoring rubric.

### **Description of the different Instruments:**

#### **1- Needs analysis questionnaire.**

The questionnaire was prepared by the researcher to collect the required information from EFL teachers and the university specialists in order to elicit their responses about EFL teacher's oral performance skills that can fulfill their needs which in turn will help in designing the suggested program. The questionnaire in its final form was attempted to elicit information about EFL teachers learning needs by posing the question. How important are the following English oral performance skills to EFL teachers? The oral performance components were required for EFL preparatory stage teachers were divided into three macro skills and twelve micro skills. Respondents had to tick one choice for each skill from the three point's likert scale survey questionnaire (Very important – Somewhat important – Unimportant) to determine the opinions of the EFL teachers towards using task based instructions in development of oral performance skills.

## **Validity of the questionnaire**

To validate the questionnaire in its preliminary form, it was submitted to a panel of jurors. They were asked to judge the questionnaire validity in terms of clarity and appropriateness of its items and instructions. All jurors wrote their relevant notes, comments and recommendations about the questionnaire. Their comments and recommendations were taken into consideration. Finally, they indicated that the questionnaire was valid.

The researcher constructed and administered a pre-post oral performance test. It was used as a pre-test prior to the program implementation to identify the level of participants (EFL teacher's one group) in oral performance skills before commencing the experiment. In addition, it was used as a post-test in order to investigate the effects of the suggested program based on phonological awareness on developing the required EFL oral performance skills.

To validate the questionnaire in its preliminary form, it was submitted to a panel of jurors . They were asked to judge the questionnaire validity in terms of clarity and appropriateness of its items and instructions. All jurors wrote their relevant notes, comments and recommendations about the questionnaire. Their comments and recommendations were taken into consideration. Finally, they indicated that the questionnaire was valid.

## **2- The test**

### **Description of the test**

**The test consisted of nine situation questions representing the most important objectives of the program.**It tests of oral performance skills. It is given to the learners to be answered, that should be answered individually and orally while the instructor records the answers of each participant to be corrected later.

### **Validity of the test**

The test was submitted to a number of specialized jury members in the domain of EFL curriculum and instruction of teaching They were requested to judge the

linguistic stating of the items, appropriateness, clarity of instructions, the difficulty level, length, applicability, suitability to the participants, and how far the items measure the skill it is intended to measure. Their suggestions were taken into consideration. The jury members confirmed the suitability, validity and applicability of the test.

### **The Rubric for scoring oral performance test**

The researcher adapted Cambridge PET Speaking analytical Rubric in order to be able to measure some features oral performance. The scoring rubric was selected meticulously to assess the participants' scores in the pre – post oral performance test. The rubrics contained the target features and four scoring items to identify the EFL learners' level in each question in the test. The total test score was determined by summing the total score of the test items. The rubric ranged from (4) Excellent to (3) Very good, to (2) Good, to (1) Poor. Specialized in the field of EFL curriculum and instruction to determine its content validity.

### **Validity of the Rubric**

The rubric was submitted to a panel of jury specialized in the field of EFL curriculum and instruction so as to determine the degree of significance and appropriateness for EFL preparatory stage teachers. The jury members asserted that the oral performance rubric proved to be valid.

### **Results and Discussions**

The present study tried to explore how effective teaching oral performance through task based learning approach(TBL) was on the experimental group. The “t-test” was utilized for the analysis of data obtained from the oral performance test. Scores of the participants on the pre-post tests were analyzed and compared.

Hypothesis (1) predicted that there would be significant difference (in favor of the post-performance) between mean scores on the pre and post-performance on the total oral performance test.

Results indicated that the experimental group's mean scores on the post administration of the whole sheet of the oral performance test was higher and statistically significant compared to the pre- administration as t-value (0.98) is ( 16.04), and Eta- squared was 0.98 as presented in table (1). Consequently, the first hypothesis is confirmed and accepted.

**Table (1)**

**t-value&  $\eta^2$  between mean scores of the Experimental group in the Pre-Post oral performance Test**

No	Group	Mean	SD	DF	t-value	$\eta^2$
20	Pre	28.05	7.76	38	16.04*	0.98*
20	Post	61.75	4.85			

**\*Significant at 0.05**

**Hypothesis (2)**

Results revealed that the study group achieved a significant improvement on each domain of the post oral performance test as the difference in the mean scores between the pre and post administrations was statistically significant. Results also showed that learners got high marks on particular oral performance skills (Discussing a topic; Asking questions based on information provided; Giving opinions and making Preferences and describing pictures) as t-values were high as shown in table (2). This result illustrates that the enhancement of the studygroup performance was due to the exposure to the TBI program which was found to be effective in promoting oral performance skills of the participants. Consequently, the second hypothesis is confirmed and accepted.

**Table (2)**

**t-value&  $\eta^2$  between mean scores of the Experimental group in relation to the Pre-Post Pronunciationtest Domains**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Mean Pre</b>	<b>Mean Post</b>	<b>SD Pre</b>	<b>SD Post</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b><math>\eta^2</math></b>
1-Talkingabout yourself	3.45	7.60	1.36	0.81	0.98	11.47*
2-Describing pictures	2.85	6.70	1.01	0.90	0.99	12.38*
3-Makingsuggestions and giving advice	3.00	6.50	1.07	0.71	0.99	11.88*
4- Turn Taking	3.80	6.55	1.07	0.93	0.98	8.46*
5-Narrating or telling a story	3.05	6.55	1.32	0.92	0.98	9.47*

**\*Significant at 0.05**

## **Discussions**

Based on the results mentioned above, there is evidence that the suggested TBL program had a large effect on promoting oral performance of EFLpreparatory stage teachers. This is indicated by the previously presented statistical analysis where scores of the study group on the pre-postadministrations of oral performance test was compared using t-test. The researcher attributed these results to the implementation of TBI program in teaching the study group. Using the TBI program was found to be effective and useful for the participants. This is consistent with the results provided by varied studies that proved the effective role of TBI program on promoting EFL learners' different language skills (e.g. Amer&Demirel, 2017, ;Yildiz, 2017, Sofyana, 2015, Rahman, 2010, Murad, 2009,Torky, 2006, etc.)

TBI provided different valuable opportunities for learners to learn new information and acquire skills actively. TBI focuses on learners through which they worked cooperatively, exchanged ideas, expressed opinions and shared

experiences to perform certain tasks. Each task had a clear and obvious outcome which helped learners to focus and define their target clearly. learners also found these tasks useful and effective since they built on authentic, daily language use. Moreover, the direct and clear guidelines at the pre-task stage helped to create interest in doing the task which increased their involvement, and willingness to practice speaking activities. learners were given the opportunity to make use of the guidelines they were exposed to and the planning they did to perform a real task in the performance stage of the task. In the post- task stage, reporting and presenting the task helped learners rethink their performance throughout group discussion with the instructors before they performed publicly in front of their peers, which gave them a sense of confidence and willingness to take part.

### **Conclusion:**

The findings of the study reflect the utility of the TBI program in developing EFL preparatory stage teachers. Learners highlighted the benefits of using the TBI program as a useful tool for developing their oral performance skills. They indicated that they enjoyed the task cycle of the TBI program which were very motivating and interesting. They were satisfied with learning through different tasks which encouraged them to speak, collaborate, cooperate and debate with each other. Those tasks increased their motivation and positive attitudes towards learning to speak

Providing learners with clear and obvious instruction before the task fostered their understanding of the basic characteristics of oral discourse skills they were required to perform and also to use these characteristics and their underlying skills in actual performance. There is evidence that providing supportive feedback throughout task cycle is highly effective and appreciated from the learners as revealed in their reflections. Through this feedback, learners' strengths in speaking were stressed and possible suggestions for improvement were offered throughout in such a way that helped them develop their oral performance.

The study concludes that the use of the TBI has a significant impact on the learners' performances of different tasks in oral skills. Undoubtedly, results gained from

analysis of data are clear empirical evidence that the TBI program works effectively. The program enabled the learners to understand and prepare themselves well to the tasks and hence fosters their oral performance skills. TBI program also assisted learners to acquire different skills which they will basically benefit from in their prospective teaching profession.

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