



King Faisal University

Department of English

English Graduation Project

Final Draft

**Testing the Effectiveness of Applying Task-Based Learning
on Encouraging Students at Hammad Intermediate School
to work in Groups and Develop their Communication Skills**

Submitted by: Mubarak

Student's no.: 2131

Submitted to: Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Al Moaily

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1. Abstract

My proposal is about applying task- based learning in Hammad Intermediate School in Dammam to help students to work in groups and develop their communication skills. Simply speaking, I will work hard to show the many advantages of task-based learning and how to apply it in order to develop students' communicative and social skills. Practically speaking, I will do an experiment to convince some teachers of the advantages of applying task-based learning. This approach helps to increase students' participation and it offers great chances to weak and shy students. I think applying this approach offers better chances of exchanging experiences among students who help each other to learn. In addition, it gives them nice chances of better communication and it helps them to get used to group work. In order to achieve this research, I will do a questionnaire and an experiment. There will be a pre-test, a treatment, and a post-test in the experiment section. I will ask teachers to help me select the students who will share in this project carefully. All in all, these are the main steps that I will take in order to fulfill my research project.

2. Introduction

Many students do not appreciate the value and the benefits of group work especially in the intermediate stage. They seize the chance to talk about the daily lives.

Unfortunately, they communicate with each other using their native language because they do not have certain tasks to finish. I think about testing the usefulness of task-based learning for helping some students at Hammad Intermediate School in

Dammam. I firmly believe that task-based learning can lead to fruitful results if it is applied in the intermediate stage of this school. Due to the many benefits and the expected results of applying task-based learning, I choose it to be the topic of my research project. Task-based learning helps students to get engaged in achieving meaningful tasks, using the target language, and developing their communication skills. Task-based learning helps also to develop target language fluency and increase students' confidence. Shy and weak students are offered valuable chances to take the initiative and participate in classroom activities. Most importantly, students do all the activities themselves. They do not depend on their teachers whose roles are to monitor, offer help and organize the students. It is a learner-centered, not a teacher-centered approach. Teachers provide students with the general lines, but they do not dictate or control the learning process. This is the students' tasks. They work together in small or big competitive groups to achieve certain tasks themselves. Teachers introduce the topic, organize the students, and give them clear instructions. They have to depend on themselves to finish their work. Competitions among the groups help to create a very promising learning atmosphere. Undoubtedly, teachers have to organize students skillfully by giving roles to students and monitoring them. They must create groups of different level and abilities. In short, I decided to help some students at Hammad Intermediate School to make use of the advantages of the task-based approach. I will initiate my project with a questionnaire to evaluate teachers' reactions towards my proposal. Moreover, I will do an experiment of three parts: a pre-test, a treatment and a post-test. There are two steps that I will rely on in order to complete this project successfully. Initially, I will do a questionnaire which helps me to deduce teachers' reactions towards my project. This questionnaire also helps me to know whether teachers are ready to offer help or not. Then, I will do a three-step experiment. The first step is the pre-test; the second step is the treatment, and the third step is the post-test. The real application of the task-based learning in classrooms

happens in the treatment section. There are six stages: a pre-task, a task, a planning, a report, an analysis and a practice.

3. Literature review

Larsson (2001) wrote about the advantages of problem based learning (i.e. task based language learning) for language learners. He believes that task-based language learning is more advantageous than traditional teaching methods. He thinks that it helps to develop learners' communicative skills. In addition, he showed that learners are developed socially because they interact and communicate with each other. Thus, there are many similarities between Larsson's views and my research proposal. Both show how task-based learning helps to develop two crucial points in learners: communication skills and the social ones. These two sides are very needed to develop learners of a foreign language. Learners can express their needs and opinions through using the foreign language. Larsson (2001) explained that task-based learning **“displays a significant advantage over traditional methods in how the communicative skills of the students are improved. The general ability of social interaction is also positively affected.”**

Larsson (2001) discussed the advantages of the Problem Based Learning. He thought that task-learning **“encourages students to gain a deeper sense of understanding.”** As mentioned before, task-based learning has many advantages to students; it is student-centered. It focuses on helping students to depend on themselves to learn better. Furthermore, this approach offers students nice chances of meaningful communication amongst them, and it provides for additional building of linguistic skills in a practical way. Students who are engaged in task-based activities will be highly motivated and active. He added **“students are not passive receivers of knowledge, but are instead required to actively acquire the knowledge”**. Larsson focused on the many advantages of task-based learning. He thought that students are not passive learners; they are active learners because task-based learning encourages them to finish certain tasks.

The following quote is from the Hong Kong Ministry of Education. It describes how task-based learning encourages students and develops their linguistic

competence. Also, it shows how students are urged to do this by challenging them to finish useful tasks.

.....the role of task-based language learning is to stimulate a natural desire in learners to improve their language competence by challenging them to complete meaningful tasks. (CDC 1999: 41)

4. Significance of Research

This research proposal is of great significance. It offers great help to students. It helps them to be independent learners. They can depend on themselves and their peers to learn better. They learn how to control their learning and to acquire new skills. They can search for information, gather them and learn them independently. The role of the teacher is to guide, direct and offer help when asked. They also monitor and offer encouragement. Furthermore, students can control language freely. Students also can use language in contexts which are relevant to them. In addition to acquiring the skills of working in groups, they develop their communication skills. This is the main core of my research project. Weak and shy students are offered real chances to be engaged in useful communication and encouraging activities. Students' exposure to language is greater with task-based language learning. They can express themselves without any fears of making mistakes. Students are free to select their activities and make their decisions rather than teacher-controlled ones. Therefore they are responsible for their own learning. This approach is closely related to the communicative approach and this is a great chance for students to spend a lot of time communicating. It is a learner-centered approach, not a teacher-centered one. Most importantly, students spend much time communicating during task-based classes. These advantages make task-based language learning enjoyable and motivating.

5. Research Question

Does task-based language learning encourage students to work in groups and develop their communication skills?

6. Methodology

This research project is built upon two steps. These steps are very integral parts of this project. At the beginning, I will initiate my research project with a questionnaire to three teachers working at Hammad Intermediate School in Dammam (see appendix). It is the first step and it helps to check teachers' reaction to my project. It also reflects their readiness to offer help. This questionnaire consists of ten questions and teachers have to agree and disagree to these questions. I will ask three teachers to help me in my project. I will show them the importance of my research. After finishing this questionnaire, I will analyze the results carefully.

The second step is the experiment. This consists of three parts: two tests and a treatment. The two tests are a pre-test and a post-test. The aim of this experiment is to make a comparison between two groups of students. These two groups are the experimental group and the control group. Before grouping the students, I will kindly ask the teachers to help me select the participants. We will try to choose students of different levels. This means that students are supposed to be very clever, weak, lazy, naughty, ordinary, and shy. This variety is very useful for the success of my research project.

After selecting the participants keenly, I will start my experiment with a pre-test. This pre-test is set at the beginning of my project. It aims to test students' communications skills and their abilities to use language in different situations in order to express themselves. Then, I will do a treatment that divides the twenty participant students into two groups that I select before: an experimental group and a control one. Each group will have ten students. Students in the experimental groups will be taught by applying the task-based language learning. This means that they will be trained to work in pairs, small groups and large one in order to achieve certain tasks. Students will be helped to shoulder the responsibility and to help each other to learn. Students will be directed to achieve certain tasks through using the language. This helps to improve their communication skills through using the language. They will have better chances to practice the language in real life situation. Taking roles and achieving certain tasks in a co-operative manner helps to develop students' communication skills. On the other hand, the control group students will be taught

with the help of Present Practice Produce which teachers are used to depend on. Finally, all the students will take a post-test to evaluate the influence of task-based learning on the experimental group. Also, I will compare the results of the two groups to know which one leads to better communication.

7. Ethical Considerations

There are some ethical considerations in this research project. This means that I have to respect participants' privacy. Personal information must be kept secret. Names of participants will not be mentioned. However, the results of this research project will be published in order to know the validity of my proposal. Honestly, I will not force anyone to take part in this project unwillingly. Initially, I will get the approval of the school administration in order to do my experiment in their school. Teachers will be kindly asked to share in this project. They will be told that they are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. As for students, they will be asked to let their parents know about the project and to get a previously-prepared written agreement from them. Getting these agreements means that parents, teachers, and the school administration agree to share freely in my project without any pressure of my side on them.

8. Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations in this research proposal. This research proposal is taking place in one school named Hammad Intermediate School in Dammam. All the activities related to my research project will take place in Hammad Intermediate School in Dammam. Other schools and students will not be a part of this project. All the students are in year two intermediate. Also, this project will be completed in only twenty days. It is a limited period.

9. Expected Results

There are lots of promising expected results. After finishing this research proposal, I expect students' communication skills will develop greatly. Students of different levels are expected to use the language in a very natural communicative manner. This helps them to develop language use in daily life. They are expected to use language in a meaningful way. They will also be encouraged to work in groups properly. They are expected to acquire the skills and the needs of group work. I also expect that shy and lazy students will be actively engaged in their groups because they will be asked to do certain roles in their groups. I expect that students will acquire great values like respecting other's opinions and co-operation. Students help each other to learn. Weak students are expected to be offered great help from clever ones. Expectedly, shy students can talk freely without fears of committing mistakes.

10. References

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Larsson, Jon (2001). ["Problem-Based Learning: A possible approach to language education?"](#) (PDF). Polonia Institute, Jagiellonian University. Retrieved 27 January 2013.

Leaver, Betty Lou; Willis, Jane Rosemary (2004). Task-Based Instruction In Foreign Language Education: Practices and Programs. Georgetown University Press.

Plews, John L.; Zhao, Kangxian (2010). ["Tinkering with tasks knows no bounds: ESL Teachers' Adaptations of Task-Based Language-Teaching"](#). TESL Canada Journal. Retrieved 26 January 2013.

11. Appendix

I will publish the following questionnaire among teachers. It aims to evaluate teachers' reactions towards my research.

Questionnaire

Dear students

I am a student at King Faisal University working on a research paper about applying task- based language learning to encourage students to work in groups and develop their communication skills. I would really appreciate your participation in this questionnaire. Thank you very much.

Name:

Age:

Experience:

Task-based language learning

	Statements	Agree	Don't agree	Don't know
1	I think task-based learning helps to encourage students to work in groups and develop their communication skills.			
2	I don't think task-based learning encourages students to work in groups and develop their communication skills.			
3	I do apply task-based learning in my classes.			
4	I know that task-based learning is a very useful approach, but I do not apply it in my classes.			
5	I do not want to apply task-based learning in my classes because I apply other successful methods.			
6	I sometimes apply task-based learning in my classes to tutor certain lessons that need students' full participation.			
7	I never apply task-based language learning.			
8	I want to apply task-based language learning, but I find it very difficult to make use of it in certain lessons.			
9	I think task-based is not a good approach because it lessens the role of the teacher.			
10	I think task-based learning needs many preparations and perfect planning from teachers.			