The Effect of Using Task-Based Approach on the Achievement of Iraqi EFL Learners in the Course of Translation

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Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the effect of using the Task-Based Approach on the achievement of Iraqi EFL learners in the course of translation.

To achieve the aim of the study, it is hypothesized that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the students who are taught translation using the Task-based approach) and that the students who are taught translation using the traditional methods.

The study is intended to be carried out on the fourth-year students of the Dept. of English, College of Basic Education , Al-Mustansiryah University for the 2nd semester of the academic year 2016-2017.

To fulfill the aim and verify the hypothesis of the study, a ten-week experiment was conducted using a control group random assignment, posttest design only. At the end of the experiment, the posttest has been administered to the study sample .

The test results revealed that the students' scores in the experimental group are higher than those in the control group, which means that task-based approach has a positive impact on the students' achievement in translation.

In the light of the obtained results a number of conclusions and recommendations are made , then some suggestions for further research are presented.

Key words: Task-based approach, Translation, achievement

"اثر استخدام المدخل المستند إلى المهام على تحصيل طلبة اللغة الانكليزية في مادة الترجمة"

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الخلاصة

أن الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو معرفة اثر استخدام المدخل المستند للمهام على تحصيل طلبة المرحلة الرابعة للكلية في كورس الترجمة.من اجل ذلك تم تبني الفرضية التالية "ليس هناك فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية بين تحصيل الطلبة الذين درسوا مادة الترجمة باستخدام (المدخل المستند للمهام) وأولئك الذين درسوا نفس المادة (بطريقة المحاضرة).

حددت الدراسة على طلبة المرحلة الرابعة في قسم اللغة الانكليزية/ كلية التربية الأساسية/الجامعة المستنصرية للفصل الدراسي الثاني للعام الدراسي 2016−2017.

لتحقيق هدف الدراسة ومعرفة صدق الفرضية تم إجراء تجربة لمدة عشرة أسابيع باستخدام التصميم التجريبي ذو الاختبار ألبعدي− مجموعة ضابطة. وعند الانتهاء من التجربة تم أجراء الاختبار ألبعدي على عينة البحث وقد بينت نتائج الاختباران درجات طلبة المجموعة التجريبية أعلى من درجات طلبة المجموع الضابطة، وهذا يعني بان طريقة المدخل المستند للمهام توثر وبشكل ايجابي على تحصيل الطلبة في مادة الترجمة.

واستادا إلى نتائج الدراسة الحالية، تم وضع الاستنتاجات والتوصيات ،وكذلك قدمت بعض المقترحات لدراسات أخرى.

الكلمات الدالة: النهج القائم على المهام، الترجمة، الإنجاز

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem of the Study and its Significance

The translation is a process of transferring thoughts and messages from one language (the source) to another language (the target) in the form of written or spoken (1:online).Translation is a vital means for human communication and a valuable source of acquiring knowledge in different fields of life, therefore many universities around the world are adding courses in translation to their curriculum (2:7).

In the FL classroom, the learners frequently use translation to facilitate language learning and to learn the new language (3:1). Additionally, translation activity, as most educators concluded, has lots of positive impacts on EFL learners' learning. Duff(4:2) clarifies that translation improves important abilities to language learning: accuracy, clarity, and flexibility. Cook (5:42) reports that translation allows learners to relate new knowledge to existing knowledge (as recommended by many learning theories). He considers it as a fundamental basis for language learning that can be used to aid learning, practices what has been learned, diagnose problems, and test proficiency.

Because of the essential roles of translation in L2 learning stated above, EFL instructors should pay attention to developing their students' abilities in translation activity and using the most effective ways to help them improve their performance in this aspect. Dagilienė (6:1) asserts that EFL college students can make the best out of their learning when we encourage them to translate correctly.

Relying on her experience as a college instructor the researcher has noticed that EFL students at the College of Basic Education are not quite competent in translation activity. The inadequacy of the students' performance in this area is also ascertained by consulting many specialists in the field TEFL at the college level. This may be attributed to the traditional pattern used in teaching in which instructors are still lecturing on the platform while students are just listening to them on their seats. For Ontesol (7:online) such a pattern is not conducive to language acquisition and production nor is it good for confidence and a sense of enjoyment, each student needs to be engaged and encouraged to participate.

In order to reduce the effect of this problem, the researcher intends to use the task-based approach (henceforth TBA) to improve EFL college students' performance and achievement in translation. TBA focuses on the ability to perform a task or activity without explicit teaching of grammatical structure (8:45). It is argued that such an approach saves better conditions for the development of second language ability than does an approach that focuses just on the explicit teaching and learning of the rules of the language (9:318)(10:online).

Moreover, TBA can be highly motivating for learners and extremely useful since the TBA techniques encourage learners to work cooperatively within small or large groups in which they share information or experiences discuss points of view with each other (11:12). Within this group work, students can observe different approaches to problem-solving as well as to learn how others think and make decisions (12:online).

This study may be of value to EFL college students to get benefit from the suggested approach to improve their performance and achievement in translation. Besides, the results of this study may be helpful to guide EFL college instructors in adopting better techniques and strategies in teaching FL. Finally, it could also be beneficial for further researches in the field of ELT.

1.1 Aim of the Study: The aim of the study is: investigating the effect of using TBA on the   college students' achievement in the course of translation.

1.2 Hypothesis of the Study: To achieve the study aim it is hypothesized that: there is no significant difference between the students' achievement who are taught translation using TBA and that of the students who are taught translation using the traditional lecture .

1.3 Limits of the study: The present study is limited to the fourth-year students in the morning studies at the Department of English, College of Basic Education/Al-Mustansiryah University during the academic year 2016-2017

1.4 Definitions of Basic Terms

1.4.1 Effect: It is "something accomplished, caused or produced; a result, consequence correlative with cause" (13:78).

 Richards and Schmidt (14:175) consider it as "a measure of the strength of one variable's effect on another or the relationship between two or more variables"

1.4.2 TBA: TBA refers to an approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching (15:223)

 For Ellis (16:221) It is an approach to teaching SL aims to engage learners to communicate by having them perform a series of tasks.

Operationally, TBA is a teaching technique, consists of three stages, followed by the researcher in which students are asked to work together in groups to complete the translation task.

1.4. 3 Achievement: Good (17:7) refers to achievement as "the accomplishment or proficiency of performance in a given skill or body of Knowledge".

Achievement in learning a language refers to how much of a language someone has learned concerning a particular course of study or program of instruction (18:2)

In the present study, it can be defined operationally as the scores obtained by the students (who are involved in an experimental study) in the achievement test.

1.4.4 Translation: It is a course for teaching students to translate texts from English into Arabic or vice versa. The texts include authentic materials of different topics: literature, politics, economics, and science.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 What is Task Based Approach?

TBA is an approach that asserts holistic learning. It is in line with a teacher-centered educational theory and requires communication-based instruction(19:257). This approach was developed in India by N. S. Prabhu in the 1980s. TBA constitutes strong form of the communicative approach where the language is acquired through use (20:150).It is based on the belief that students may learn more effectively when their minds are focused on the task they are trying to complete rather than on the language they are learning (21:7) .

TBA proposes the notion of a task as the main unit of language teaching planning and instruction. Although researchers have presented different definitions of a task, there is a consolidating understanding that task is an activity or a goal that is carried out using language. Examples of tasks are playing a game, solving a problem, writing a letter or sharing and comparing experiences (15:224)(22:94).

2.2 Principles of TBA: The most prominent principles of TBA are the following:

1. The focus is on language in use rather than language as structures.
2. The basic elements in TBA are purposeful activities and task that emphasize communication and meaning.

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3. Learners learn language by communicating purposely while engaged in the activities and tasks.

4. The teacher and learners focus on the task and such attention is given to language, as it occurs in order to complete the task.

5. Error correction is done through recasts or modeling or by giving a brief grammar explanation.

6. TBA is learning-centered rather than learner-centered. (23:99),(24:135),(25:75).

2.3 Procedures of TBA: The procedures of TBA in the classroom usually involves three main stages or phases :

2.3.1 The Pre-Task Stage

During this stage, the teacher prepares the learners for the task stage by providing clear instructions on what the purpose of the task is and how it can be performed. Then, the learners engage in activities that help them to recall words and phrases that will be useful during the performance of the main task. This stage should not take more time than the task performance itself (26: online).

2.3.2 The Task Stage

In this stage, the learners perform the task (typically a reading or listening exercise or a problem-solving exercise) in pairs or small groups according to the type of activity. The learners can use whatever linguistic resources they possess to accomplish the task, then they prepare a report for the whole class on how they did the task and what conclusions they reached (27:99).

2.3.3 The Feedback Stage (Language Focus)

It is the final stage of each lesson in TBA, here the students analyze and evaluate their own and others' performance. The teacher provides the students with feedback and subsequent practice of language items that emerged from the task. He/ She makes the correction or tells the students what to change, but never follows up an error with explanation (28:106) (29:126).

2.4 Teacher's Roles: In TBA, the following can represent the teacher's roles:

1.A selector and sequencer of tasks, the teacher selects, adapts or creates the task and forms it into an instructional sequence in keeping with learner needs, interests and language skill level.

2.A guide and catalyst for classroom communication and as someone who should be providing explicit instruction and modeling the teaching language.

3.Preparing learners for tasks, the teacher introduces and clarifies the task. He may also help his students to learn or recall useful words and phrases to facilitate task accomplishment.

4. A facilitator of the communication process, the teacher acts as a participant and as a monitor. (30:84) (31:15).

2.5 Learner's Roles: The learner should carry out these major roles:

1.A participant in group :many tasks will be performed in pairs or small groups.

2. A risk-taker and innovator: many tasks will push the learners to generate and expound messages for which they lack full linguistic resources and prior experience.

3.A member of a group and learns by interacting with others, tutor, other learners and from other teaching sources.

4. A monitor: In TBA ,the class activities have to be designed so that students have the opportunity to notice how language is used in communication. (30:81) (15:235).

2.6 Benefits of TBL

TBA provides many benefits to aid FLL. The researcher lists these benefits as follows:

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1. TBA presents a different way of understanding language as a tool instead of as a specific goal.
2. It is consistent with a learner-focused educational philosophy but also permits teacher inputs and guidance.
3. It contributes to the improvement of communicative fluency while not disregarding accuracy.
4. It can be deployed together with a more traditional approach.
5. It encourages the development of reflective learners and includes a great range of learning styles.
6. It offers learners a fertile input of TL as the students will be exposed to a whole range of language forms.
7. It is widely applicable because it is suitable for learners of all ages and backgrounds.
8. A task helps meet the immediate needs of the learners and provides a framework for creating interesting classes.(32:4)(33:52)(16:225).

3.Methodology

3.1 The Experimental Design

In this study, The Post Test Only Control Group Design, has been utilized. In this design, the experimental group only receives the independent variable for a specified period, and then both groups of subjects submit to a posttest to measure the influence of the independent variable (34:211).The design takes the form illustrated in Table 1.

Table (1) The Experimental Design

Groups	Independent variable	Test
EG	TBA	Post-test
CG	Traditional lecture	Post-test

3.2 Population and Sample

The population and the sample of this study is the 4th –class students /Morning Classes, at English Dept, in the College of Basic Education Al-Mustansiryah University during the academic year 2017-2018.

The number of the 4th year students is (87), they were already distributed alphabetically into two sections. Section A is randomly assigned as a control group which consists of 44 students and section B is also assigned as the experimental group which involves 43 students. Four students from A and three from B are excluded from the sample because they were ex-primary teachers and repeaters. They are kept in their classes during the period of the experiment but they didn't sit for the post-test. Thus, the final sample is 80 students with 40 students in each group. See Table 2.

Table (2) Sample Selection

Group	Section	No.	Repeaters	Final No.
Experimental	A	44	4	40
Control	B	43	3	40
Total		87	7	80

3.3 Experiment Application

The application of the experiment started on the 18th of October 2016 and lasted for ten weeks to end on the 4th of January 2017. The researcher herself has taught the

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two groups, to eliminate any bias or factor that may affect the outcome of the experiment, at the rate of two lectures per week within the course of translation.

3.3.1 The Instructional Material

The two groups have been taught 20 texts (10 texts of L1and 10 texts of L2) taken from the students' prescribed material in the course of translation. The themes of the texts have included: social, political, scientific, literary and commercial materials. The researcher has presented a text per lecture.

3.3.2 The Experimental Group

The following procedures have been used in teaching translation according to TBA. The lecture is divided into three stages:

3.3.2.1 The Pre-Task Stage

In this stage the researcher divides the class into eight groups, each group contains (5) students and she nominates a monitor for each group and states some instructions about the task. After that, the researcher introduces the text to the students and encourages them to read it by asking questions about the title and content as well as highlighting some useful words and phrases.

3.3.2.2 The Task Stage

During this stage, the researcher has followed these steps:

1. Asking the students to read the introduced text Independently. Then, she gives them a short time to consult her about the meaning of a word or an interpretation.
2. The students begin to work on the translation in their groups they should exchange information, share ideas and their linguistic experiences and use the dictionary to complete translating the text.
3. As the conclusion of the text translation, the monitor of each group is asked to write the final revised version on a sheet of paper and he/she should provide the opportunity for the members of the group to make deletions or additions.
4. Three or four groups present their final product to the whole class. Others correct the wrong answers; suggest choices and add or modify points. In this way, all students have a chance to compare their work with others.
5. The researcher listens to the presented translation; reformulates some of the produced sentences; comments on any point that students have missed and advised about the use of the specific linguistic forms.

3.3.2.3 The Post Task Stage.

At the end of the public presentation, the researcher supplies the students with useful words or expressions they failed to produce while translating the text. She also briefly indicates their grammatical errors and corrects some of them on the board and the students should make notes.

It is worth mentioning that the researcher does not provide her final version of the translation to students to make them trust their work.

3.3.3 The Control Group

The students of this group were taught translation using the traditional method that is, the researcher gives the students the text to be translated as a take-home assignment. The students are proposed to prepare written versions of their translations to present in class. In the class, the researcher asks them to read out their translations,

she listens to their presentations and may correct their grammatical errors. Finally, she provides the students with the final version of the second language translated text. The students rely excessively on the teacher's version and try to memorize it in the exam.

3.4 The Achievement Test (The Post Test)

The researcher has constructed a written form test of (3) questions. The first two questions (with four items each) require the students to translate authentic texts in different articles from the source language to the target language.

The third question contains ten items, each item has three choices, the students are required to encircle the choice that has the correct interpretation of the term ,see Appendix A .

In order to ensure the face validity of the post-test, it was presented to a jury of experts in TEFL methodology and linguistics.(see appendix B).The experts are asked to decide the test suitability for the students' level and to give their agreement, modifications and suggestions .

The experts agreed that the test has face validity and that its items are suitable for the students. For estimating the reliability of the test, the Alpha-Cranach Formula is used since the test contains subjective and objective items, which yields a reliability coefficient of 0.84 this states that the test is reliable.

3.5 The Administration of the Test and the Scoring Scheme

The researcher has administered the test, with the assistance of an instructor*[*] in the Dept of English, to the subjects (the experimental group and the control group) totaling 80 students on 4th of January 2017.The allocated time for answering the test is 60 minutes.

The total score of the test is 100 scores. The semantic, grammatical and stylistic aspects are taken into consideration, with more emphasis on semantics. The first two questions are marked out of forty,(10 marks) are given for each item distributed as follows: (5 marks for meaning, 3 marks for grammar and 2 marks for style).Whereas the third question is marked out of twenty (2 marks)are given for each item according to the right –wrong bases. To find out the final results, students' scores are analyzed statistically .

4.Results,Conclusions,Recommendations and Suggestions

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Presentation and Discussion of the Results

In order to verify the hypothesis of the study, the t-test formula for two independent samples has been used. The mean score of the experimental group is 56.725 whereas that of the control group is 48.550. The calculated t-value is 2.479 which is higher than the tabulated one that records 1.990 at 0.05 level of significance and df 78. This shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the achievement translation of the experimental group and that of the control group in favor of the experimental group and the null hypothesis is rejected.See Table 3 and also appendix C.

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[*] Instr.Eman Mahdi.

Table (3) The Results of T-test for the Two Groups in the Posttest

Group	No.	M.	SD	t-Value		DF
				Calculated	Tabulated	
EG	40	56.725	15.697			
CG	40	48.550	13.729	2.479	1.990	78

According to the obtained data, the TBA suggested by the researcher has proved to be effective in teaching translation, since the students' achievement of the experimental group is better than that of the control group in the post-test.

4.2 Conclusions

Building up on the results of the study and the researcher's observations the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Using TBA in teaching translation is more effective than the traditional method.
2. The use of TBA gives the students a chance to learn a lot of new vocabulary since they learn

   from each other when interacting in their groups.
3. The cooperative natures of TBA stages help students get feedback from members of a task group, such feedback provides a more relaxing and less threatening condition for learning FL.
4. The TBA motivates the students to be more autonomous since it provides techniques for their learning and encourages them to look for resources rather than relying solely on the instructor.
5. The use of TBA encourages students to learn EFL more confidently and trust in their language abilities. This has been arrived at as a result of observing the students while receiving training in this technique and even in performing the posttest.

4.3 Recommendations:

Based on the gained results, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Encouraging EFL college Instructors to use the TBA as a new technique in their lectures because it is proven effective in teaching translation.
2. Iraqi EFL college instructors need to attend training courses of new trends in TEFL and be acquainted with new scientific developments in the teaching field.
3. The English syllabuses of EFL college level should have a lot of translation exercises so that the students can develop their proficiency in this skill.
4. College instructors must be ready to develop their ways of teaching translation according to students' needs and difficulties.
5. Increasing the hours allotted to teaching translation subject during the semester.

4.5 Suggestions

As an extension to this study, the researcher presents the following suggestions as projects for future studies:

1. A study can be conducted to examine the effectiveness of TBA in other language areas like listening, grammar and vocabulary.
2. A study with the same procedures is needed to investigate the impact of using TBA in teaching various subjects like linguistics, conversation& literature
3. A further study can be carried out to examine the effect of using other innovative techniques for teaching translation.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS
There are no conflicts of interest

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Appendix (A) The Post Achievement Test
Q1/ Translate the following into English:

1 .الثقافة هي التراث الاجتماعي لكل ما أنجزه الإنسان على مر العصور ومن مصادر الثقافة وسائل الإعـــلام والمدارس والجامعات،ويكون الإنسان مثقفا إذا كان على علم بما يجري في عصره. ويكون مثقفا أيضا إذا كان حريصا على طلب العلم ومتابعة ما يتطور منه من الآداب والعلوم.

2.دراسة جديدة نشرتها مجلة أمريكية تؤكد على أن الابتعاد عن القهوة قد يمثل الأساس فـــي تقليـــل خطـــر الإصابة بأمراض القلب ،وأوضح باحثون أن شرب القهوة يزيد مستويات الكلسترول فـــي الـــدم التـــي تشكل عوامل خطر مهمة للإصابة بالأزمات القلبية والسكنات الدماغية

3.الاحتكار هو الحالة التي يكون فيه السوق عبارة عن شركة واحدة فقط تؤمن منتج وخـــدمات إلـــى جميـــع المستهلكين بمعنى آخر، هذه الشركة تكون مسيطرة على كامل السوق ولهذا تـــسمى الـــشركة حينهـــا بالمحتكرة.

4. في قصة نهر الجنون لتوفيق الحكيم شرب الناس من النهر فأصبحوا مجانين كلهم ولم يـــشرب الملـــك و الوزير فاستمروا عاقلين ولكنهما لاحظا أن الناس ينضرون إليهم باستغراب وإشفاق بحيث أصبحا همـــا

المجلد 28، العدد 2: 2020. مجلة جامعة بابل للعلوم الإنسانية،

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المجنونين والناس عقلاء ولم يجدا خلاصا من هذا الحال إلا بان يشربا من النهر ويصبحا مجنونين،

اعني عاقلين (40marks).

Q2/Translate the following into Arabic:

1. The United Nations is an international organization, based in New York, which aims to preserve peace around the world and solve international problems. It was formed in 1945, and replaced the League of Nations. Most of the world's independent states are members, and each has one vote in

the General Assembly. The United Nations Security Council has the power 1to take military or economic action to settle international disputes.

2. According to Egyptian –European study, children do not inherit qualities equally from their parents. They stress that the mother's genes are mostly common and intelligence is inherited greatly from mothers, not fathers.

3. Properly most people would be interested in literature, as most people would be interested in music, if they were not afraid of it. Interest and confidence are closely connected .If you find that you can do something, you are pleased. You like the feeling that other people will admire you.

4. The translation of the scientific, literary and economic books helps to exchange ideas and views. So we can say that translation it is a general cultural. Also it is a means to carry the experience of developed countries to developing ones. A good translator should be honest and not to deviate from the text. He should stick to the text he is translating. (40 marks)

Q3/ Choose the correct interpreting for these terms.

1 . a. balminess policy   b. misspending policy   c. austerity policy   سياسة التقشف.1

2 . a. In land war   b. civil war   c. local war   2. حرب أهلية

3. a. the feeling of wander b. of sadness   c. of sympathy   3.الشعور بالإشفاق

4. a. heart failure   b. heart attack   c. heart fall .   4.أزمة قلبية

5. a. land clash   b. land war   c. land conflict   5. اشتباك بري

6. a. messenger   b. prophet   c. apostle   6. النبي

7. a. first resolution   b. tentative resolution   c. draft resolution 7.مشروع قرار

8. a. sardonic laugh   b. specific laugh   c. malicious laugh   8.ابتسامة ساخرة

9. a. people explosion   b. demographic explosion c. humane explosion   9.انفجار سكاني

10. a. top people   b. top figures   c. top specialists   10. شخصيات بارزة
(20 marks)

 (Appendix B)
The Jury Members
1.Prof.Hassan Dhuha Attallah (College of Basic Education)
2. Asst. prof.Sarhan,Saas Salal (College of Basic Education).
3. Instr.Ghanim,Ridha Ph.D.(College of Basic Education).
4. Instr.Al-Zubaidi,Azhar Jassim PhD (College of Basic Education)
5.Instr.Baheer,Huda (College of Basic Education)
6. Instr.Sabbar, Muntaha (College of Basic Education)
7.Instr.Jaburi,Hibba Rasheed (College of Basic Education)
8.Instr. Mahdi ,Emman (College of Basic Education)

(Appendix C)
The Students' Scores in the Posttest

Experimental Group				Control Group			
No.	Score	No.	Score	No.	Score	No.	Score
1.	26	21.	75	1.	43	21.	66
2.	72	22.	60	2.	48	22.	61
3.	56	23.	58	3.	26	23.	52
4.	45	24.	21	4.	24	24.	51
5.	47	25.	52	5.	54	25.	50
6.	70	26.	52	6.	55	26.	39
7.	59	27.	47	7.	62	27.	39
8.	62	28.	38	8.	49	28.	61
9.	43	29.	54	9.	40	29.	40
10.	47	30.	46	10.	62	30.	54
11.	22	31.	55	11.	29	31.	38
12.	77	32.	46	12.	50	32.	45
13.	82	33.	67	13.	51	33.	22
14.	59	34.	48	14.	47	34.	43
15.	66	35.	77	15.	86	35.	27
16.	61	36.	40	16.	75	36.	48
17.	61	37.	57	17.	67	37.	41
18.	75	38.	48	18.	38	38.	62
19.	65	39.	88	19.	46	39.	57
20.	64	40.	81	20.	41	40.	44