THE EFFECT OF A TASK-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM ON IMPROVING AL AL-BAYT UNIVERITY STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL OF ACCURACY

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigates the effect of a Task-Based Instructional (TBI) program on improving Al al-Bayt University students' English speaking skill of accuracy. A sample of 64 students was divided into three groups: a pilot study group, a control group and an experimental group. The experimental group was taught for eight weeks using the suggested TBI speaking program. The control group was taught for eight weeks using the teacher's book. To assess students' speaking skill of accuracy, a speaking pre-post test was designed and a scoring scale was adapted. Students' responses were recorded on audio files. They were scored by two different raters and correlation coefficient was calculated. The findings of the study revealed that there were statistically significant differences at (α=0.05) in the mean scores of the accuracy post test between the experimental group students and the control group students in favor of the experimental group students due to using the TBI program.*

KEYWORDS: speaking accuracy, English speaking skills, task-based instruction

INTRODUCTION

Though language acquisition needs a lot of skills, it is a fact that speaking is the most frequently used skill. Born with two ears and a tongue, a child utters spoken forms first. Unlike reading and writing, listening and speaking skills are born with humans. The main concern for teachers and learners of a second or a foreign language could be approximating native 'speakers' performance in that target language. A native language user can be described as a 'speaker' of that language. This is undoubtedly not to underestimate the importance of other language skills. Graham–Marr (2004) listed two reasons to show why teaching speaking skills is important: (a)- the fact that humans have been acquiring language through speaking and listening long before they began reading and writing and (b)- our brains are well programmed to learn language through sound and speech.

Due to its significance, speaking is one key skill for most TEFL instructional programs. It is argued that success in learning a language is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the target language (Burkart and Sheppard, 2004; Nunan, 1999). Effective speaking instruction helps learners converse spontaneously, accurately and fluently with other speakers which, in turn, may support other language skills. Here, Gass and Varionis (1994) emphasized that oral interaction importantly shapes the learner's language development.

Further, Hilferty (2000) showed that learning speaking can lead to the development of reading competence. Severino and Trachsel (2008) pointed out that learning speaking can help the development of writing. Brown and Yule (1983) believed that speaking skills are the criteria for knowing a language. They concluded that learners assess their progress in terms of their accomplishments in spoken communication.

Florez (1999) listed the following speaking skills that need to be synthesized to achieve successful speaking tasks: (a)- using grammar structures accurately; (b)- assessing characteristics of the target audience, including shared knowledge, status and power relations, or differences in perspectives; (c)- selecting vocabulary that is understandable and appropriate for the audience, the topic being discussed, and the setting in which the speech act occurs; (d)- applying strategies to enhance comprehensibility, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, or checking for listeners' comprehension; (e)- paying attention to the success of the interaction and adjusting components of speech such as vocabulary, rate of speech, and complexity of grammar structures to maximize listener's comprehension and involvement.

When learners produce oral expressions and interact with others in the target language, they use some communicating strategies. Due to their poor vocabulary and being afraid of committing grammatical errors, they opt to use some personal strategies. These strategies range from approximation, circumlocution, translation, word coinage, asking for assistance to even avoiding using some words and replacing them with simple synonyms. It is the teacher's role to scaffold and develop these strategies to develop strategic competence of the learners. Teachers should encourage learners to use the first two strategies while speaking and to try to use the rest of the strategies while listening.

Accuracy in teaching speaking could be related mainly to vocabulary and grammar structures. It would be endangered if learners' speech has very limited words and lots of grammatical errors accompanied by problematic word order. A successful speaking instructional program would enrich learners' vocabulary use and idioms. In addition, it would improve the grammar and word order in speech in a way that approximates that of a native speaker of the language. As for fluency in teaching speaking, it would be endangered if learners' speech is fragmentary, hesitant and forced into silence leading to an impossible conversation. A successful speaking instructional program would make learners' speech effortless, less hesitant and approximating that of a native speaker. The level of linguistic accuracy is not an end in itself. It could be upgraded by incidental teacher support. The more communicative tasks learners carry out the more they engage themselves in negotiating meaning, checking their comprehension and asking for more clarifications to become more accurate (Richards, 2008). This may lead to a gradual improvement of learners' fluency and self-confidence.

There are six stages or phases for TBI. First, the pre-task stage includes introducing the topic by the teacher, giving instructions on what to do with the task, and playing a recording of others accomplishing the task for modeling. Second, the task stage represents student's completion of a given task under the teacher monitoring and encouraging. Third, the planning stage ends up with students preparing an oral presentation of what they have done with the task. Fourth, the report stage may have a small amount of corrective feedback. Fifth, the analysis stage enables teachers from highlighting the language used by students. Sixth, the practice stage agrees with students speaking needs and increases their confidence.

Statement of the Problem

In the light of the researcher's experience as an instructor of English as a foreign language for more than twenty years, many students suffer a lot in their speaking performance. Students are required to say simple few words responding to some questions from their teachers. They may produce chunks of expressions or even simple yes- no responses. Unfortunately, they are not given enough time to practice speaking in the target language. The evaluation system at Al al-Bayt University focuses on reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary. Speaking activities are either not given enough attention by teachers or mostly not taught at all.Poor speaking performance makes up the problem of this study. Some previous research results share this problem, Murad (2009); Al-Jamal and Al-Jamal (2014) and Al-Hamlan and Baniabdelrahman (2015). The current study attempts to improve EFL students speaking performance with reference to accuracy. Here, TBI may help students overcome speaking problems by training them to be more accurate.

Purpose of the Study

This study is carried out to investigate the effect of a TBI program on improving Al al-Bayt University EFL students' speaking skill of accuracy.

The Question of the Study

This study addresses the following question:

Are there any statistically significant differences at (α=0.05) between the mean scores of Al al-Bayt University students on the suggested speaking post-test in the speaking skill of accuracy (grammatical competence and vocabulary) due to the use of the TBI program vs. the teacher's book teaching method?

Significance of the Study

Up to the researcher's knowledge, this study is the first to utilize a public Jordanian university students to investigate a TBI program on improving the English speaking skill of accuracy. The study may contribute to modifying some teaching methods relevant to speaking. This study could encourage teachers to use TBI in teaching the English speaking skill of accuracy.

Limitations of the Study

As it is difficult for a an empirical study to cover a very large population, this study will be restricted to the students of the Language Center at Al al-Bayt University, Marfaq, Jordan. The results and findings of this study may be limited only within this population of students. A limited duration for implementing the proposed program may be another restriction. The period of the study is limited to eight weeks in the first semester of the academic year 2018/2019.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Different EFL teachers use different methods while teaching speaking. Some of them depend on what professional development workshops recommend and suggest. Others use either theoretical views to help them teach speaking or empirical studies of the effect of x and y on improving speaking skills. Many more teachers innovate their own methods as they do not have the opportunity to attend a workshop or a training course. Unfortunately, they even do not have access to any theoretical or empirical studies. Speaking instruction's big challenge emerges from the issue of evaluation and measurement.

As cited in O'Brien (1996: 3), Nunan (1991) listed five characteristics of task-based approach to language teaching. These characteristics emphasize on learning to communicate in the target language, on introducing authentic teaching materials into the learning process, and on enhancing the learner's personal experiences in the classroom learning environment. The tasks involved in this approach are mainly communicative in the sense that they focus on meaning rather than linguistic structures. The components of such tasks may include comprehending a message, manipulating learners' self-capabilities, and producing a meaning-focused message Nunan (2004) defined task-based language teaching and clarified the concept of a task. Focus was on experiential learning and the role of the learner. In the second chapter, a framework for task-based instruction was proposed. Seven principles for task-based language teaching were suggested. In the third chapter, tasks components and types were presented. In the fourth chapter, an empirical evidence was drawn in favor of task-based language teaching. In the fifth chapter, focused and unfocused tasks were discussed. The importance of conscious-raising tasks was highlighted. In the last three chapters, grading, sequencing and integrating tasks were explained. Teachers' roles and the criteria for assessing task-based language teaching and self-assessment were all theoretically discussed.

Sanchez, A. (2004) attempted to describe (TBA) Task-Based Approach critically. Positive aspects of this approach were presented along with the inadequacy of some of its assumptions. It was argued that tasks could help in motivating students and in focusing the attention of teachers and learners on meaning and communicative language use. However; the debate on TBA reached the conclusion that it shouldn't be considered the method language teachers and learners had been waiting for.

While talking about important tasks of English education in Asia, Nunan (2005:6) suggested the following six attractive features of TBI:
1- TBI is a replacement to or a supportive infusion of more student centered learning.
2- TBI utilizes more authentic experience and materials as well as principles of constructivism compared to top down teaching .
3- TBI creates more of a sense of personal and active accomplishment including developing a greater sense of language ownership.
4- TBI increased students participations when task based teaching is well planned and implemented to be sensitive to learners' learning styles.
5- TBI makes specific lesson goals more evident through movement towards success of task completion.
6- TBI is an important, ongoing assessment and "wash-back" to both teacher and learner.

Empirical Studies
Shantha and Mekala (2017) conducted an experimental study on how to improve the English spoken proficiency of Indian engineering students using task-based approach. The study explored the pedagogical role that enables learners to improve their speaking skill. The participants were first year civil engineering students. They were 38 students in a control group and 38 students in an experimental group. The researchers used oral communicative tasks to think and generate sentences on their own orally. The results of the study revealed that there was a significant level of improvement in the oral proficiency of the experimental group.

Farabi, Hassanvand and Gorjian (2017) resorted to guided oral presentation in teaching English speaking skills. The researchers employed both guided and free oral presentations. The purpose of the study was to investigate whether guided or free oral presentation can develop Iranian EFL learners' speaking skills. The participants of the study were 60 homogenous female students from Andisheh English Language Institute. The results showed that the guided oral group outperformed the free oral group on the post-test. The researchers recommended that guided oral presentation could be useful in developing the speaking skills of pre-intermediate learners.

AlSaleem (2018) investigated the effect of Face-book activities on enhancing oral communication skills for EFL learners in the English Department at Yarmouk University, Jordan. The participants of the study were first year English Language B.A. students. The researcher hypothesized that practicing Face-book activities may improve learners' oral communication skills. The results of the study revealed that the suggested Face-book activities were effective on improving participants' oral communication skills. The study recommended that Face-book activities may even improved other skills of listening and pronunciation.

Torky (2006) aimed at identifying the speaking skills necessary for first year secondary school students, designing a task-based program in the light of the cognitive approach, constructing a proposed program to develop first year secondary school students' speaking skills, and measuring the effectiveness of the proposed program. The sample of the study consisted of 76 girl students (38 students as a control group and 38 students as an experimental group) from a Cairo governmental school. The findings of the study showed that the proposed task-based program had the proof to be effective in developing first year secondary students' overall speaking performance.

Murad (2009) investigated the effect of a task-based language teaching program on developing the speaking skills of Palestinian secondary students and their attitudes towards English. The participants were 91 eleventh grade students (37 boys and 54 girls) from Bueina-Nujidat and Tamra High Schools. The findings of the study showed that the task-based language teaching program enhanced significantly the speaking skill of the experimental group students positively.

Mohammadipour and Rashid (2015) used a cognitive approach to investigate the impact of task-based instructional program on fostering learners' speaking ability. The study aimed at determining the effectiveness of a proposed task-based instructional program within a cognitive approach in fostering overall speaking proficiency of undergraduate students. 72 students from public universities participated in the study. The findings of the study showed a significant improvement in the overall speaking proficiency of the students who were exposed to the propose program.

Chen and Zhang (2015) employed task-based interaction pedagogy in English speaking instruction. the study investigated the effect of this teaching. The researchers adopted a quasi-experimental design. The sample of the study consisted of 70 Chemistry majors (42 males and 28 males) who had to take the college English speaking course. The findings of the study showed that the task-based interaction pedagogy was more effective in improving students' English speaking ability. Most of the students' English speaking abilities in the experimental

group met the basic requirements of College English Curriculum Requirements, whereas many students in the control group did not.

Both theoretical and empirical studies encouraged and recommended using TBI to improve speaking skills. Several theoretical studies defined TBI and tasks explaining tasks components and presenting purposes, principles and characteristics of TBI. They also clarified roles of teachers and learners, O'brien (1996); Eliss (2000); Calvache (2003); Nunan (2004); Sanchez (2004) and Dickinson (2010). An increasing number of empirical studies investigated the effects of TBI programs on improving learners' oral performance in different EFL contexts, Torky (2006); Murad (2009); Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010); Ghodrati, Ashraf and Motallebzadeh (2014); and Alsagheer (2014) . Though TBI has lots of positive effects on improving speaking skills, it should not be taken as a one-size-fits-all, Bao and Du (2015).

METHOD

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were 64 students in three sections that were randomly selected from four English 101 course classes of the researcher's teaching schedule at the Language Center of Al al-Bayt University, Marfaq, Jordan. That was in the first semester of the academic year 2018/2019. The 64-student sample was from three intact classes of the researcher's four classes. The sample was equally and randomly assigned and divided into a pilot study group of 24 students, a control group of 20 students and an experimental group of other 20 students. This participants were convenient for the researcher on that semester. The participants were informed about their participation in this study and they signed a consent form for that purpose. Table (1) shows the distribution of the sample of the study according to the two independent groups: the need-analysis group and the experimental group.

Table 1 : Distribution of the participants of the study according to their groups

Group	Students given IDs	Number
Pilot Study	1-24	24
Experimental	49-68	20
Control	25-44	20
Total		64

The TBI Program

The researcher designed an instructional program based on TBI to achieve the purpose of the study. The instructional program followed specific instructional strategies, starting with brainstorming, questioning, clarifying and modeling. The roles of both the teacher and students were restricted within a pre-determined time framework. The researcher implemented each strategy by following specific steps in performing specific tasks to teach speaking skills with focus on accuracy sub-skills of vocabulary building and grammar, in order to develop students' interaction and participation with the speaking audio materials

After the completion of this TBI program, students will be able to:

1- correctly use the spoken grammar described in English 101 teacher's book. (New Headway Plus –Intermediate Level).

2- use relevant and appropriate vocabulary items.

3- interact and manage a conversation through encouraging the speaker to go on speaking, showing understanding, and turn-taking.

4- speak fluently at a reasonable rate of speech.

5- ask and answer questions sharing personal information.

6- accurately respond to an interviewer for a job.

7- correctly use directions like: *go straight forward…go along these lanes…*

8- describe a route using distances and timings like: *The quickest way to reach…*

9- use different future forms like : *Be going to + verb*

10- talk and predict about the future

11- use phrases for giving advice and making suggestions

12- adequately describe people , pictures, and houses.

13- use polite requests and respond for someone' request positively

14- ask for permission politely

Instruments of the study
The Pre-Post Speaking Test
The researcher designed a speaking pre-post test based on a review of the related previous literature. The pre-post test included both speaking activities and tasks. Both of the accuracy sub-skills of vocabulary and grammar and the speaking fluency skill were measured using a well-structured open-ended questions developed by the researcher in accordance to the Teacher's Book of English 101 course. The learning and teaching objectives included in the teacher's book guided the development of the speaking test. The pre-test was intended to reflect the students' speaking performance levels on the individual and group levels before the administration of the TBI program to the experimental to verify if there is any effect of the program.

Students Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM)
    This instrument was originally developed by the San Jose Area Bilingual Consortium and had undergone revisions with leadership from the Bilingual Education Office of the California Department of Education. It is within the public domain and can be copied, modified, or adapted to meet local needs. As a rating instrument, this local SOLOM is adapted and modified to be restricted to only two components : vocabulary and grammar.

Validity and Reliability
In order to validate the instructional program, the researcher presented it to a jury consisting of nine TEFL and linguistics university professors to look into its content and provide their feedback. Based on their suggestions, such as adding timing for each procedure in the lesson, unifying the format of the detailed lesson plans, omitting and modifying some tasks for time constraints, adding some more notes and instructions for both students' and teachers' evaluation at the end of each lesson. The researcher revised the instructional program and reproduced it in light of validating jury members' feedback. To judge the content validity of the test and linguistic suitability, the test was given to a jury consisting of nine TEFL and linguistics

university professors, to look into its content and provide their feedback. The jury was asked to read the test and check the ambiguity, time and relevance of the test. Their comments and suggestions, such as deleting ambiguous questions, replacing them with clear questions, and checking all questions for clarity and simplicity, were taken into consideration in rewriting the questions of the test.

To establish the test reliability, the researcher carried out a pilot study with 24 students from the Language Center at Al al-Bayt University, whom were excluded from the participants of the study. Inter rater reliability was established by asking two other teachers to score students' performance. For that purpose voice files were recorded for students' performance on the pre-post tests. Pearson-correlation coefficients of the test-retest reliability were 0.885 for the first rater and 0.829 for the second rater (see table 2). The computed results of the reliability, which are appropriate values, indicate the reliability of the scale.

Table 2: Correlations of the participants of the pilot study scores of the test-retest for the first rater

04-11-2018 post test	14-10-2018 pre test		
.885(**) .000 24	1 24	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	14-10-2018
1 24	.885(**) .000 24	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	04-11-2018

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

For the sake of reliability, the researcher and other two teachers will attend each student's test and fill in a separate rating sheet format of the adapted SOLOM. Tape-recording in the form of voice files for each student could help both raters put their rating after accurate and careful listening to each student's performance. Each rater may sit after the test finishes listening again and again to students' responses in order to give their ratings. An average of the two ratings will be calculated for each student out of fifteen points.

THE FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Are there any statistically significant differences at (α=0.05) between the mean scores of the students on the suggested speaking post-test in the speaking sub-skill of accuracy (grammatical competence and vocabulary) due to the use of the TBI program vs. teachers' book teaching method? In order to answer this question, means and standard deviations were calculated on the post-test. Table 3 presents the students' mean scores and standard deviations in the speaking skills of vocabulary and grammar in the pre-post test.

Table 3: The means and standard deviations of the students' mean scores in the speaking skills of accuracy pre-post test

Group	N	Pre test		Post test	
		Mean*	Std. Deviation	Mean*	Std. Deviation
Experimental	20	3.75	1.323	5.78	1.713
Control	20	3.93	1.004	4.08	.907
Total	40	3.84	1.162		

*Means are out of 10

Table 3 shows that there are observed differences in the students' mean scores in the speaking skill of accuracy post-test due to the use of the TBI program vs. the teacher's book teaching method. To check whether these differences were statistically significant at (α = 0.05), ANCOVA test was applied. Table 4 presents the results.

Table 4: ANCOVA results of the mean scores in the speaking skill of accuracy post-test.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
accuracy (Covariance)	39.496	1	39.496	45.841	.000*	.553
Group	34.098	1	34.098	39.576	.000*	.517
Error	31.879	37	.862			
Corrected Total	100.275	39				

*Statistically significance at (α = 0.05).

Table 4 shows that there are statistically significant differences in the mean scores of students' scores in the accuracy speaking skill in the post-test due to the use of the TBI program vs. teacher's book teaching method. F value was 39.576, which is statistically significant at (α=0.05). Therefore, there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in the accuracy speaking post-test due to the use of the TBI program vs. teacher's book teaching method. To find out which groups were more affected, the adjusted means and standard errors were measured. Table 5 presents these results.

Table 5: The adjusted mean scores and standard errors of students' scores of the accuracy speaking skill in the post-test due to the use of the TBI program vs. the teacher's book teaching method

test	Group	Mean	Std. Error
Accuracy	Experimental	5.851	.208
	Control	3.999	.208

Table 5 shows that the adjusted mean scores of speaking skill of accuracy for the experimental and control groups were 5.851 and 3.999 respectively and out of 10. In order to know the effect size, Eta square was measured in table 6. It was 0.517, which means that 51.7% of the variance in the total degree scores of the accuracy speaking test was attributed to the teaching method using the suggested TBI program.

The results of the study showed that there were statistically significant differences at ($\alpha = 0.05$) between the mean scores of the experimental group and control group in the accuracy speaking skills post-test in favor of the experimental group which was taught using the TBI program. It is indicated from the results that the students who were taught accuracy speaking skills using the designed TBI program have improved their spoken production more accurately. The researcher assumes that the nature of the designed program played a major role in improving students' speaking skills of accuracy. The TBI program was designed carefully and was validated for implementation to achieve its purposes. The program depended on using some strategies of TBI: predicting, note-taking, role-playing, practicing, questioning and brain storming, summarizing, self-evaluating and reflecting to facilitate the interaction between the teacher and students and between students themselves. Moreover, the program included different tasks and different assessment tools to achieve its proper implementation.

One of the aims of the TBI program of this study was to improve students' accuracy in speaking through considering individual differences among students. Therefore, the program was based on designing tasks suitable for group work and individual work to help students be more involved with the recordings they listen to, taking into consideration individual differences among students. The interactive nature of TBI let students become more engaged in the learning process rather than being passive recipients of information. It is worth mentioning that the main idea behind TBI is to encourage students to cooperate in understanding and analyzing the materials they are studying. The students in the experimental group became more accurate speakers and capable of self-evaluating their accuracy sub-skills of grammar and vocabulary.

The TBI program offered a variety of words, advanced words, idioms and phrasal verbs embedded in different tasks. It also prepared students for longer responses, not only yes-no answers. More focus on the correct word order was presented. Different verb tenses and sentence structures were utilized. Some tasks train students to connect ideas in different ways using coordinate conjunctions, adverb clauses, relative pronouns and transition words. Focus on form was restricted to certain components of vocabulary and grammar. These features of the TBI program could justify the improvement in the experimental group students' speaking accuracy.

These findings are consistent with previous studies (e.g. Shantha and Mekala, 2017; AlSaleem, 2018; Calvache, 2003; Torky, 2006; Murad, 2009; Alsagheer, 2014; Mohammadipour and Rashid, 2015; Chen and Zhang, 2015). These studies were conducted to investigate the effect of TBI on improving accuracy speaking skill among students. These studies agreed upon the beneficial aspect of using TBI to teach speaking skills because of its interactive nature that helps students become more accurate speakers. Moreover, these studies stressed the importance of accuracy speaking skill as a major speaking skill that supports students in improving their language proficiency in general. The results of the first question are in line with the findings of

these studies, and therefore, support the purpose of the study to use TBI to teach accuracy speaking skill to EFL students in Jordanian universities.

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

1- The Ministry of Higher Education and the administration of Al al-Bayt University in particular are recommended to adopt the present instructional program in designing English (1) curriculum to include a variety of instructional strategies to teach speaking.

2- Conducting workshops and training sessions promote training teachers to use TBI in their classes to achieve more communicative learning outcomes.

3- EFL teachers are recommended to use the present instructional program in teaching speaking skills of accuracy in their classrooms to help students overcome speaking challenges.

4- Textbook authors, curriculum designers and EFL teachers are recommended to infuse TBI into their teaching materials and to focus on improving accuracy and fluency in speaking skill sections.

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