Exploring EFL Learners' Attitudes and Beliefs of Task-Based Language Teaching: The Case of EFL Learners Development of Speaking and Writing Skills

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Abstract

Although most EFL learners are equipped with a fair command of general English knowledge, they lack the sufficient proficiency required to communicate their thoughts and ideas fluently and accurately. This study was conducted to explore the impact of task-based language teaching (TBLT) on the development of EFL learners' productive skills. The participants of this study were 25 undergraduate students majoring in English Language and Literature at a State University who had enrolled in a course entitled "Listening and Speaking (I)." The teaching method utilized for this course included three tasks (listening, writing, and speaking), and each task included three phases (pre-task, whilst-task, and post-task). For the purpose of data analysis, the researcher analyzed students' four oral presentations and four writing assignments quantitatively and qualitatively. Furthermore, an attitude questionnaire was administered and a semi-structured interview was conducted to elicit the participants' attitudes regarding (TBLT). The findings revealed that all the students could significantly improve their productive skills. Correspondingly, the results of the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews revealed participants' positive attitudes regarding (TBLT). Students realized that developing their speaking and writing skills was a complex process, and through practicing, they could overcome their problems and enhance their fluency and accuracy.

Keywords: Non-Native Learners, Productive Skills, Speaking Skills, Task-Based Language Teaching, Writing Skills

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1. Introduction

There is a wide consensus that English has been recognized as an international language, and it is the language of science, research, technology, and commerce in today's global world. The primary goal of foreign language teaching is to create a communicative environment in which EFL learners attempt to communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively and accurately using the target language. In spite of the fact, that EFL learners need real contexts, and some appropriate opportunities to practice and produce language, traditional, teacher-centered instruction still persist in many EFL settings.

Language consists of four skills that can be classified into two groups: receptive and productive. Golkova and Hubackova (2014) state that the category of receptive skills, also known as passive skills, is determined by listening and reading. They are actually the preliminary skills which are used to have comprehension. The productive skills, also known as active skills, are speaking and writing by which the production of language occurs. These two categories as the integral parts of learning processes at any stage of development are not separable and one cannot exist without the support of the other.

In spite of the fact that EFL learners have passed different courses and they have knowledge of vocabulary items and grammatical structures, they are not able to communicate their thoughts and ideas in the spoken or written medium. This is due to the fact that the productive skills are given less priority in the teaching/learning programs.

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the impact of TBLT on the development of the undergraduate students' productive skills majoring in English Language and Literature. Therefore, this study attempted to reveal the impact of TBLT on the linear development and improvement of the participants' productive skills. The second goal of this study was to explore the learners' attitudes and beliefs regarding TBLT.

1. To what extent has TBLT proved effective in developing EFL learners' productive skills?

2. What are the attitudes and beliefs of the participants regarding TBLT utilized to develop their productive skills?

2. Review of the Related Literature

Although many studies have been conducted relating to the effect of TBLT on different aspects of language in a variety of pedagogical settings, few research studies have shown the impact of TBI on the development of learners' productive skills.

Nouri and Mazdayasna (2014) assert that the current teaching methodologies do not appropriately pave the way to develop students' productive skills.

According to them, there are not sufficient and appropriate assignments as well as activities provided to the students in the classes. In addition, examination oriented and lectured-based classes along with ineffective teaching methodologies may result in students' lack of confidence to participate in class discussions, their negative attitudes towards language learning as well as inability to participate in pair/group activities.

Likewise, Hasan (2014) also asserts that students do not learn how to produce language by just attending classes where teachers, as only speakers, fill in the students' minds with information while the learners are taking notes, and passive recipients of knowledge. Therefore, a key factor which plays an important role in language learning is involvement in the learning process. To date, the current methodologies used in most English classes do not pave the way for the students to develop their communicative competence. The purpose of such methodologies is just to practice language in a very controlled framework in which EFL learners are not given enough opportunities to produce language creatively. Al Muhaimeed (2013) describes form-focused English classes in which learners' roles are listening, repeating, memorizing, individual learning (as opposed to group work learning), answering and not questioning. Another problem is that in many English classes there are a few students who are active and proficient; however, majority of the students lack confidence and do not participate in class discussions.

Ellis (2003a) offered a framework for sequence of functions to draw EFL learners' attention to the aspects of language. In the current study, this framework was utilized to assist the students to attend to the rhetorical patterns along with appropriate lexico-grammatical features. The series of tasks was as follows:

(1) Listening task: Students listened to a text at average speed, which they processed for meaning. (2) Noticing task: Students listened to the exact text for the second time, which allowed for chunking of the information contained in the talk. Students listened to the text for the third time called 'consolidation' in the form of message units. The speaker utilized redundancies, reiteration, and verbal fillers in the presentation. (3) Consciousness-raising task: Students discovered the manner in which lexico-grammatical features and rhetorical patterns are utilized by analyzing the content provided in the listening text. (4) Checking task: Students responded to a set of questions to check if they had understood the content. (5) Production task: Students had an opportunity to utilize the target rhetorical patterns and appropriate lexico-grammatical features in an innovative context by performing oral and writing tasks.

Correspondingly, another framework proposed by Ellis (2006) was utilized in the current study. This framework consisted of three phases, namely pre-task, whilst-task, and post-task. In the 'pre-task phase' the teacher (the second author) designed brainstorming activities. Next, that is, 'whilst-task phase' the teacher exposed the students to the main task, and they had access to the input data.

Finally, in the 'post-task phase' the teacher designed language awareness activities.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

As the planning stage and to probe the objectives of the current study, one entire class including 35 undergraduate students majoring in English Language and Literature at an Yazd University served as the participants. All the participants had enrolled in the four-unit course entitled "Listening and Speaking (I)" in the fall semester of the academic year 2015-2016.

They were a cluster of freshmen aged between 18-22 years old. The data from the participants who had not participated regularly in all the tasks were excluded. The performances of the remaining 25 students (3 males and 22 females) were evaluated and examined statistically.

3.2. Instruments

The four instruments utilized in this study are as follows: Four oral presentations were audio recorded on four different occasions. In addition, four writing tasks were assigned to the participants throughout the semester. Moreover, an attitude questionnaire comprising a total number of 13 items (see Appendix A) was distributed to explore the participants' opinions regarding TBLT. The respondents had to express their views about each statement by marking the options on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Finally, a semi-structured interview was conducted at the end of the semester. The semi-structured interview consisted of four questions, and some additional questions which cropped up naturally during the interview session were posed to the students. Each student was interviewed for 10 to 15 minutes. A copy of the interview questions along with the transcription of one interviewee's responses is included in Appendix B.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

In the first session, the participants were given a listening task which consisted of three phases. The first phase, that is, 'pre-listening task had three stages: (i) Listening preparation in which the topic, for instance, "Hydroponic Aquaculture" was discussed orally to activate students' background knowledge and help them preview the content of the main listening task. (ii) Next, there was a preview of vocabulary items. In this section, the definitions of some story-specific vocabulary were illustrated by using exemplifications in the content. Finally, (iii) rhetorical listening cues were highlighted to raise the learners' awareness of the rhetorical patterns used in the listening text. The following rhetorical patterns, namely chronology, process, classification/ definition, comparison/ contrast, and causal analysis, were introduced.

The second phase, that is, `whilst-task consisted of three stages: (i) initial listening in which the learners listened to the lecture using their headphones in the language laboratory; (ii) mental rehearsal and review of the talk in which the lecture was provided in message units, that is, in the form of sentences; simultaneously, the learners listened for the second time and were recommended to repeat each sentence silently. Finally, (iii) consolidation in which the learners had to listen to the lecture once again, that is, for the third time. The speaker used redundancies, reiteration, and verbal fillers in the recorded speech. The students were recommended to take notes using their computers, simultaneously.

Finally, in the post-task phase, the students had to respond to a set of multiple-choice items in the format of true and false statements, and short answer questions to check their listening comprehension. Furthermore, each student had to present an oral summary of the listening task spontaneously. Within the competence and interest of the students, the teacher (second author) posed some questions related to real-life topics for free discussions.

On the following session, (i.e., on the second session), students were assigned a writing task which was about a topic related to an actual situation and close to the main listening lecture of the previous session to make use of their background knowledge and transfer it to an innovative context. In the pre-task phase, the students participated in class discussions to become familiar with the topic. Next, 'during the task, they had to use their repertoire and appropriate lexico-grammatical features to write about the topic using Microsoft Office Word. The students had to write the first draft in class and hand it over to the instructor at the end of the session. For data collection, four such writing assignments were taken into consideration for data analysis to examine students' progress throughout one semester.

Next, the researcher (first author) read the students' written texts and provided feedback on grammar, diction, organization, content, and mechanics. Errors related to inappropriate use of each of them were underlined and the correct form was written in the margin, or above the error. Subsequently, on the next session (i.e., on the third session), the first drafts of the written texts were given to the students including instructions regarding cohesion and coherence. In this manner, students were instructed to proofread and revise their second drafts and submit the final draft on the following session, that is, on the fourth session.

Finally, on the fourth session, the students submitted their final writing assignments to the teacher, and the students came one by one in front of the class to give an oral presentation of their written assignments which they had revised based on the feedback and comments. Most importantly, students' oral presentations were audio-recorded on four different occasions in the language laboratory. The topics for oral presentations and writing tasks and the exact date of the oral presentation, are demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1

The Topics of Writing and Oral Tasks

Unit/Chapter	Topic	Date
1/2	1- In your opinion, what is the most dangerous man-made disaster facing the world? What do you think we can do about it?	3/10/2015
3/4	2- What is your idea about this statement? "It is too difficult for second language learners to learn the differences between formal and informal English and just English native speakers can get a mastery over it."	21/11/2015
5/2	3- Why did dinosaurs disappear from the face of the Earth?	19/12/2015
6	4- What foreign languages are used in your country? For what purposes and by whom are they used?	19/4/2016

Moreover, the task-based instruction utilized throughout the semester is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

The Framework of Task-Based Instruction

Task	Session	Phases
Listening	1	**A)** Pre-task a) Listening preparation b) ~~Preview~~ of vocabulary and sentences c) Rhetorical listening cues
		B) Whilst-task a) Initial listening b) Mental rehearsal and review of the talk c) Consolidation

Writing		**C)** Post-task ⟶ Comprehension check	
	2	**A)** Pre-task ⟶ Introducing a new topic and discussing	
		B) Whilst-task ⟶ Writing the first draft about the topic in the class and submit it.	
	3	**C)** Post-task ⟶ Teacher's feedback and comments.	
Speaking	**4**	**A)** Pre-task ⟶ After a brief discussion, the students submit the final writing draft.	
		B) Whilst-task ⟶ Oral presentation of the writing task	
		C) Post-task ⟶ Giving feedback about oral presentation	

3.4. Research Design

The required data for the current study were obtained by analyzing four writing assignments and four oral presentations which were audio recorded on four different occasions. Furthermore, the participants' oral presentations were transcribed by the researcher. The data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. As mentioned above, students' first, second, and third performances were collected in the course entitled "Listening and Speaking (I)." The students' fourth performance as a delayed performance was collected after a gap of four months in the next semester in the course entitled "Listening and Speaking (II)."

3.5. Data analysis

For quantitative analysis of oral and writing performances, language aspects namely article, tense, plural/singular, and preposition were taken into account. For qualitative analysis of the students' oral presentations, a rating scale presented by Mazdayasna (2012) was utilized (see Appendix C). This rating scale comprised three general components: (1) preparation, (2) organization, and (3) presentation. Organization had three sub-components: 'introduction', 'development' and 'conclusion'. Presentation had five sub-components: 'communication', 'clarity', 'grammar', 'vocabulary', and 'pronunciation'. The Likert-type scale provided a numerical rating from 0 to 5, where 5 indicated excellent, 4 very good, 3 good, 2 fair, 1 poor, and 0 indicated the absence of the criterion. For each student one rating sheet was dedicated on which the teacher

(the second author) gave score while the student was presenting his/her oral presentation.

Furthermore, students' writing assignments were scored using guidelines of the scoring system (see Appendix D) suggested by Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey (1981). Five aspects of language, namely content, organization, vocabulary, mechanics and language use, were taken into account. Mechanics consisted of three sub-factors such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The scoring procedure was as follows: 30 points were assigned for content, 25 for language use, 20 for the organization, 20 for vocabulary, and 5 points for mechanics, resulting in a maximum possible score of 100 for each writing task. The researcher evaluated 50 percent of the data randomly for the second time. All the data were examined quantitatively and qualitatively two times by the researcher with an interval of two months to check intra-rater reliability.

Table 3

The Aspects Utilized in Each Type of Analysis

Type of analysis	Type of task	Aspects
Quantitative	Oral presentations	Article, Tense, Singular/Plural, Preposition
	Writing task	
Qualitative	Oral presentations	Mazdayasna (2012): Preparation, Organization, Presentation
	Writing task	Jacobs et al. (1981): Content, Organization, Language use, Vocabulary, Mechanics

For analyzing the data, Microsoft Excel was utilized for statistical computations. One-way repeated measure ANOVA was computed to explore whether the students' performances across four oral and four writing performances differed significantly. Moreover, the responses which the students had provided during the interviews were analyzed qualitatively by the researcher. Furthermore, the descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage, were computed for the items on the questionnaire. The reliability of the questionnaire was also analyzed by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of the quantitative analyses of the participants' oral and writing assignments regarding the language aspects, as illustrated in Table 4, revealed students' improvement in the correct use of articles, tense and plural/ singular forms in the third and fourth oral and writing tasks in comparison to the first and second. The highest mean scores were obtained in the third and fourth oral, and writing performances. The participants had a linear development regarding the correct use of prepositions across four writing and oral presentations, and the highest mean scores were obtained on the last performance.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Quantitative Analysis of Students' Four Oral and Four Writing Performances

Aspects	Mean scores							
	Task 1		Task 2		Task 3		Task 4	
	Writing	Oral	Writing	Oral	Writing	Oral	Writing	Oral
Article	11.60	5.92	13.32	13.36	25.48	25.76	19.16	19.44
Tense	14.00	13.32	34.24	35.92	38.60	38.64	37.12	37.56
Plural/singular	14.04	12.52	39.60	39.88	48.24	45.80	45.08	45.28
Preposition	9.76	9.76	27.00	27.28	29.16	30.20	35.76	35.76

The numerical data obtained across four oral and four writing performances were fed in Microsoft Excel, and one-way repeated measure ANOVA was conducted to compare students' oral presentations and writing tasks. According to Table 5, the differences of four writing and four oral performances regarding the correct use of articles, tense, plural/ singular forms, and prepositions were statistically significant ($p= 0.000$). Correspondingly, the results revealed the efficacy of TBLT on the students' improvement concerning the correct use of all the language aspects across four oral and four writing tasks.

Table 5

One-Way Repeated Measure ANOVA of Students' Performances across Four Oral and Four Writing Performances

Aspects	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Article	performance	8032.375	3	2677.458	19.802	.000	.452

Tense	performance	20772.975	2.265	9170.629	43.337	.000	.644
Plural/singular	performance	36776.335	2.605	14117.621	44.010	.000	.647
Preposition	performance	18657.415	2.759	6763.474	54.759	.000	.695

The participants' oral presentations were assessed qualitatively utilizing a rating scale proposed by Mazdayasna (2012). Table 6 depicts the number of participants, the mean scores of four oral presentations, and the standard deviations. As the results in Table 6 reveal, the mean scores of the participants on the third (M_3= 17.44, SD= 2.800) and fourth (M_4=16.96, SD=3.323) oral presentations were higher in comparison to the first and second oral performances.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Qualitative Analysis of Students' Four Oral Presentations

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Performance 1	7.36	3.593
Performance 2	13.76	2.847
Performance 3	17.44	2.800
Performance 4	16.96	3.323

Table 7 illustrates the results of one-way repeated measure ANOVA which was conducted to compare the learners' performances across four oral presentations. The results indicated a significant difference at *the p ≤ .005* level across four oral presentations and proved the effect of TBLT on the development of learners' oral presentations (F= 94.458, *p*= .000).

Table 7

One-Way Repeated Measure ANOVA of Students' Performances across Four Oral Presentations

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Performance	1617.120	3	539.040	94.458	.000

Error (performance)	410.880	72	5.707

For data analysis, four writing tasks were analyzed qualitatively based on the guidelines of the scoring system suggested by Jacobs et al. (1981). The results are demonstrated in Table 8. The mean scores in Table 8 suggest participants' improvement across four writing tasks. The lowest mean scores were for the first task, and the highest mean scores were for the fourth task concerning all the language aspects.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of Qualitative Analysis of Students' Four Writing Assignments

Aspects	Mean scores			
	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4
Content	21.040	24.400	26.240	27.320
Language use	19.720	22.200	23.040	24.360
Organization	16.440	18.040	19.080	19.160
Vocabulary	15.600	17.560	18.080	19.320
Mechanics	4.340	4.580	4.660	4.840

In addition, one-way repeated measure ANOVA was conducted to explore whether the degree of differences of each aspect of the students' four writing tasks was statistically significant. As Table 9 depicts, there was a significant difference at *the $p \leq .005$ level* for all the aspects across four writing assignments ($p= 0.000$).

Table 9

One-Way Repeated Measure ANOVA of Students' Performances across Four Writing Assignments

Aspects	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Content	Performance	567.790	2.050	277.021	14.544	.000

Language use	Performance	286.350	1.681	170.371	20.959	.000
Organization	Performance	120.440	1.859	64.787	14.819	.000
Vocabulary	Performance	179.600	1.876	95.747	24.505	.000
Mechanics	Performance	3.228	1.631	1.979	13.073	.000

All the learners' writing and oral performances were examined both quantitatively and qualitatively two times by the researcher (first author) with the interval of two months to check intra-rater reliability. The researcher evaluated 50 percent of the data randomly for the second time. Table 10 illustrates the results of the intra-rater reliability of quantitative analyses of four writing and four oral tasks and qualitative analysis of four writing assignments. Cronbach's alpha values indicated a high degree of correlation. In addition, the results of intra-rater correlation demonstrate the extent of correlation between quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data across two times by the same researcher. The correlation values in Table 10 are satisfactorily high.

Table 10

Results of Intra-Rater Reliability

Tasks	Quantitative analysis of four writing assignments		Quantitative analysis of four oral presentations		Qualitative analysis of four writing assignments	
	Intra-rater Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha	Intra-rater Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha	Intra-rater Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
1	0.82	0.90	0.82	0.90	0.83	0.91
2	0.80	0.89	0.78	0.88	0.66	0.79
3	0.71	0.82	0.64	0.79	0.87	0.87
4	0.64	0.78	0.90	0.95	0.76	0.87

Moreover, an attitude questionnaire was distributed to the participants at the end of the semester to explore their opinions concerning the effect of TBLT on the development of their speaking and writing skills. Table 11 displays the descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage for the responses to each item included in the questionnaire.

Table 11

Results of the Students' Responses to the Questionnaire Items

Items		Strongly disagree	Disagree	No idea	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Q1	Frequency	3	5	4	13	---	25
	Percent	12.0	20.0	16.0	52.0	---	100.0
Q 2	Frequency	---	2	7	14	2	25
	Percent	---	8.0	28.0	56.0	8.0	100.0
Q 3	Frequency	1	2	9	13	---	25
	Percent	4.0	8.0	36.0	52.0	---	100.0
Q 4	Frequency	---	4	6	13	2	25
	Percent	---	16.0	24.0	52.0	8.0	100.0
Q 5	Frequency	---	2	1	16	6	25
	Percent	---	8.0	4.0	64.0	24.0	100.0
Q 6	Frequency	1	2	8	13	1	25
	Percent	4.0	8.0	32.0	52.0	4.0	100.0
Q 7	Frequency	---	4	1	16	4	25
	Percent	---	16.0	4.0	64.0	16.0	100.0
Q 8	Frequency	---	8	6	10	1	25
	Percent	---	32.0	24.0	40.0	4.0	100.0
Q 9	Frequency	---	3	3	14	5	25
	Percent	---	12.0	12.0	56.0	20.0	100.0
Q 10	Frequency	1	1	---	18	5	25
	Percent	4.0	4.0	---	72.0	20.0	100.0

Q 11	Frequency	---	5	8	9	3	25
	Percent	---	20.0	32.0	36.0	12.0	100.0
Q 12	Frequency	---	6	8	10	1	25
	Percent	---	24.0	32.0	40.0	4.0	100.0
Q 13	Frequency	1	1	2	19	2	25
	Percent	4.0	4.0	8.0	76.0	8.0	100.0

The reliability of the distributed questionnaire was computed, and the results are illustrated in Table 12. According to Table 12, the value of Cronbach's Alpha is .75, which is higher than .7; therefore, the items included in the questionnaire had the essential reliability.

Table 12

Reliability Statistics for the Questionnaire

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.75	13

To facilitate interpretation of the results of the nominal categories 'strongly agree' and 'agree' were reduced to 'agree' and 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' were reduced to 'disagree.' The results obtained from the questionnaire and the interview revealed that a solid majority of the participants (64%) believed that TBLT utilized in this course was innovative, motivating and provided them with sufficient opportunities to participate and get involved in the process of language learning by doing numerous practical tasks about creative topics (52%). Likewise, they responded that they could develop all the language skills (cf. questionnaire items 1-2, interview question 1). Colina and Garcia Mayo (2005) concluded that different task types draw students' attention to different features; therefore, it would be fruitful to combine additional task types to integrate various aspects of language.

Subsequently, students developed their accuracy and fluency in the productive skills due to accomplishing several tasks and receiving insightful comments (cf. questionnaire item 3, interview questions 2-3). A good majority of the participants (60%) reported that all the students had equal opportunities to participate in the class, and it was considered as one of the advantages of TBLT (cf. questionnaire item 4).

Almost all students (88%) responded that TBLT proved fruitful to raise the students' awareness of lexico-grammatical features (cf. questionnaire item 5). Similarly, Ellis (2003b) suggests that learners need to pay conscious attention to specific linguistic forms while attempting to communicate. Besides, TBI had a positive effect on the affective factors; as the students' anxiety reduced, their self-confidence increased (cf. questionnaire items 6-7). The results of the current study supports the findings of the study conducted by Boonkit (2010). The confidence of Thai EFL undergraduate students increased as a result of accomplishing speaking tasks during the course. Furthermore, the findings of the questionnaire demonstrated that nearly half of the students (44%) were in favor of listening to their classmates' oral presentations. On the one hand, it was a good practice of listening, and, on the other hand, they could be exposed to a variety of forms of language (cf. questionnaire item 8).

There was a consistency of opinions among the students concerning the impact of feedback and comments which they received from the teacher and the researcher; since the feedback and comments raised their language awareness and helped them to perform better on prospective tasks (cf. questionnaire items 9-10). Approximately half of the students (48%) admitted that the current course provided opportunities to perform the active role (cf. questionnaire item 11). Similarly, a substantial number of students (44%) reported positively regarding the knowledge imparted to them about how to write coherent and cohesive texts. Moreover, 84% of the students were satisfied with the techniques such as summarizing, paraphrasing, and, most importantly, raising their awareness regarding the rhetorical patterns such as chronological order, description, process, classification, as well as cause and effect (cf. questionnaire items 12-13).

The last interview question elicited the participants' attitudes regarding the salient features of the course in comparison to other classes. The majority of the students admitted that the "Listening and Speaking (I)" class was not teacher-centered. Because a variety of tasks were assigned, and the interviewees expressed their satisfaction with this issue. Most importantly, learners' interests, needs, and their proficiency levels, were taken into consideration while the teacher was selecting and designing assignments. TBLT should be adapted to local contextual conditions, and the perceived needs, lacks, and wants of the learners should be taken into consideration. The teaching method should be selected based on the environment. Likewise, appropriate activities should be designed based on the factors such as culture, setting, teachers' existing beliefs, values, and practices (Calvert & Sheen, 2015; Carless, 2003, 2007).

Moreover, a considerable number of students responded that although the main focus of "Listening and Speaking" course was to develop their productive skills, the methodology utilized in this course was based on a holistic approach; since the students could improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. In addition, to achieve the outcome of the tasks, the students' attention was

drawn to form and meaning, simultaneously. Consequently, students reported that their language awareness and their communicative competence increased because the focus of the course was not only on grammar or communication, instead there was a kind of integration between form and meaning. Skehan (1996; Skehan, 1988) argues that if a form of language is not highlighted sufficiently, the communicative strategies of learners improve without developing their knowledge of the language. In other words, learners build their fluency at the expense of accuracy, and the result would be fossilization. He suggests that the lexico-grammatical features of language should be highlighted in the post-task phase.

5. Conclusion

This study attempted to utilize TBLT in the course entitled "Listening and Speaking (I)" to shed light on the impact of TBLT on the development of EFL learners' productive skills. A secondary aim was to elicit the attitudes and beliefs of the participants regarding TBLT. Therefore, the participants' four oral presentations and four writing assignments were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. In addition, their attitudes were explored through an attitude questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview was conducted at the end of the semester. The qualitative and quantitative findings provided evidence for the positive impact of TBLT on the development of the participants' productive skills. The teaching methodology utilized in this course focused on oral and writing tasks to provide learners with adequate opportunities to change their roles from being passive recipients of knowledge to active participants.

The findings of the analyses of writing assignments and oral presentations revealed the development of students' accuracy in using appropriate lexico-grammatical structures, content, and organization. Correspondingly, their fluency and accuracy improved significantly throughout the semester. Furthermore, the feedback the students received on their oral and writing performances from the teacher and the researcher proved fruitful. Therefore, the tasks and techniques utilized in the current course paved the way for raising the students' language awareness. Likewise, students were motivated to perform better next time, since the tasks were selected to fulfill students' needs and match their current proficiency level.

The findings of this study revealed that TBLT proved effective to accelerate learners' proficiency in English by raising their awareness which helped them to have more control over their learning process. By receiving feedback and comments throughout the semester regarding their oral and writing performances, they developed a good repertoire of efficient strategies for productive skills. Subsequently, they could control the process better, which in turn would result in better performance due to more effective use of strategy.

A few limitations of this study are worth mentioning due to administrative and logistical difficulties. In the current study, it was not feasible to divide the participants into two groups, namely the control group and the experimental group, for one semester. Secondly, the findings of this study are limited to twenty-four freshmen students majoring in English Language and Literature at Yazd University who had enrolled in a course entitled "Listening and Speaking (I)."

Additional research can be conducted with an overwhelming number of participants, at different levels (e.g., students in primary school, secondary school, and at the graduate level) to determine whether there is any relationship between students' proficiency level and the impact of TBLT. It would be helpful to conduct a longitudinal study to investigate the efficacy of TBLT on language skills over a longer time. In addition, the impact of TBLT on receptive skills can be explored in prospective studies.

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Appendix A

Attitude Questionnaire

Dear participants,

The following questionnaire is a part of a research project that investigates the impact of task-based instruction on the development of speaking and writing skills. Please select the best option and put a mark (✓). Please give a response to all the questions.

No.	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	No idea	Agree	Strongly agree
1	The selected topics were interesting, and I had some background knowledge about them.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2	The teaching methodology utilized in this course was innovative and provided us with sufficient opportunities to practice using language.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3	My proficiency level in speaking and writing skills improved by the end of the semester.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
4	Oral presentations in front of the class were fruitful in developing my speaking skill, and all the students had equal chances to speak.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
5	I could enhance my knowledge of grammatical structures and vocabulary items through written and oral tasks.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6	After being exposed to task-based instruction for one semester, I can communicate my thoughts and ideas more accurately and fluently.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
7	The performance of written and oral tasks increased my self-confidence and decreased my anxiety.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

8	Listening to the oral presentation of my classmates was beneficial.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
9	The comments provided on the preliminary writing drafts were effective and helped me write better in the following tasks.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
10	The feedback provided by the instructor and the researcher raised my language awareness.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
11	All the students had several opportunities to participate in class discussions in this course, in comparison to other classes where the teacher was the sole speaker.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
12	There is a lack of instruction on how to write academic papers, and this course attempted to get rid of this shortcoming.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
13	This course helped provide us with some valuable techniques such as summarizing, paraphrasing, and becoming familiar with some rhetorical patterns such as chronological order, description, process, classification, and cause and effect.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1) To what extent you could improve your speaking skill in this course?

2) To what extent could you improve your writing skill in this course?

3) What are the salient features of this course in comparison to your other courses?

4) Are you satisfied with the methodology used in the class?

Transcription of a Sample Interview

Interview Transcript	Key part
R (Researcher): Welcome.	
S (Student): Thank you.	
R: Now, I am going to ask you some questions. Please feel free to say what you think frankly and how you feel while answering the questions. We will talk about the course entitled "Listening and Speaking (I)."	
R: Was the course "Listening and Speaking (I)" useful to improve your speaking skill?	- Raising language awareness and improving speaking skills.
S: Yes, of course, you know we had several presentations, and because we had both writing performances and oral presentations, the assignments helped us to improve our knowledge of grammar, and we could improve our speaking. In addition, I learned a lot of techniques.	-Learning a lot of techniques
R: Could you improve your writing skill as well?	-Improving writing skill
S: Yes. I can write better now.	
R: What are the salient features of this course in comparison to your other classes?	- Good and sufficient opportunities to participate in class discussion
S: In this class, we could give more comments, we could participate more. In other classes, the teacher is just the speaker, but in this class, we also could speak, and participate in class discussion.	
R: The methodology used in this class was that at first, you had listening, discussion, writing, and then speaking. Was it helpful to you? Did you like it?	-Good methodology
S: Yes, it was good, and we benefitted from this method.	

R: Do you prefer to change the order of the tasks?

S: No, the order was OK. Because at first we listened and activated our background knowledge; then we could write and, finally, we presented the topic orally.

-No need to change the methodology

-Good sequence of assignments

R: Was the oral presentation in front of the class valuable for improving your speaking ability? Did you increase your confidence and get rid of feeling embarrassed to speak in front of your classmates?

S: Yes, it was helpful. Since it was my writing and not somebody else or I did not copy from the Internet; therefore, I was familiar with whatever I had written, and I could reproduce it in the class. I gained enough confidence to give an oral presentation in front of my classmates.

-Giving an oral presentation is effective and it is a good practice of speaking

Appendix C

Rating Scale of Oral Presentation (Mazdayasna, 2012)

STUDENTS NAME:..........................

DATE:...

TIME: FROM...........................TO............................

		0	1	2	3	4	5	OBSERVATIONS
PREPARATION	(1) PREPARATION & KNOWLEDGE							
ORGANIZATION	(2) INTRODUCTION							
	(3) DEVELOPMENT							
	(4) CONCLUSION							

PRESENTATION	(5) COMMUNICATION
	(6) CLARITY
	(7) GRAMMAR
	(8) VOCABULARY
	(9) PRONUNCIATION

TITLE:..

COMMENTS:..

Appendix D

Scoring System (Jacobs et al. 1981)

ESL COMPOSITION PROFILE

Student ....   Date..............................
Topic ....

	Score	Level	Criteria	Comments
Content		30-27	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: knowledgeable, substantive, thorough development of thesis, relevant to the assigned topic	
		26-22	GOOD TO AVERAGE: some knowledge of the subject, adequate range, limited development of thesis, mostly relevant to the topic, but lacks detail	
		21-17	FAIR TO POOR: limited knowledge of the subject, little substance, inadequate development of the topic	
		16-13	VERY POOR: does not show knowledge of the subject, non-	

		substantive, not pertinent, OR not enough to evaluate
Organization	20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: fluent expression, ideas clearly stated/ supported, succinct, well-organized, logical sequencing, cohesive
	17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: somewhat choppy, loosely organized but main ideas stand out, limited support, logical but incomplete sequencing.
	13-10	FAIR TO POOR: non-fluent, ideas confused or disconnected, lacks logical sequencing and development.
	9-7	VERY POOR: does not communicate, no organization, OR not enough to evaluate.
Vocabulary	20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: sophisticated range, effective word/idiom choice, and usage, word form mastery, appropriate register
	17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: adequate range, occasional errors of words/idiom form, choice, usage, but meaning not obscured
	13-10	FAIR TO POOR: limited range, frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage, meaning confused or obscured
	9-7	VERY POOR: essentially translation, little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms,

		word form, OR not enough to evaluate
	25-22	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: effective complex constructions, few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions
Language use	21-18	GOOD TO AVERAGE: effective but simple construction, minor problems in complex constructions, several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions, but meaning seldom obscured
	17-11	FAIR TO POOR: major problems in simple/complex constructions, frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions, and/ or fragments, run-ons, deletions, meaning confused or obscured
	10-5	VERY POOR: no mastery of sentence construction rules, dominated by errors, does not communicate, OR not enough to evaluate
	5	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: demonstrated mastery of conventions, few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing
	4	GOOD TO AVERAGE: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization,

Mechanics		paragraphing but meaning not obscured
	3	FAIR TO POOR: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, poor handwriting, meaning confused or obscured
	2	VERY POOR: no mastery of conventions, dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, handwriting illegible, OR not enough to evaluate
Total score	**100**	