

تعزيز الكفاءة النحوية لدى طلبة المرحلة الثانوية الهاائية في ليبيا من خلال التدريس القائم على المهام ومقاربات تنمية الوعي النحوي

حنان علي حسين / قسم اللغة الإنجليزية / كلية الآداب / جامعة سرت

hanna.ahsien@su.edu.ly

الكلمات المفتاحية

نظريه التدريس القائم
على المهام والتمارين،
تنمية الوعي النحوي،
التعليم الثانوي، نظريات
تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية
كلغة اجنبية، الكفاءة
ال التواصلية، اكتساب
القواعد، اصلاح المنهج
ال الدراسي

الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث الى دراسة فاعلية دمج التدريس القائم على المهام والتمارين مع استراتيجيات تنمية الوعي النحوي لدى طلاب مرحلة الثانوية في ليبيا. رغم اعتماد المنهج الحديثة على مبادي التواصل الا ان التدريس لا يزال يعتمد بشكل كبير على الطرق التقليدية مثل حفظ القواعد والترجمة. اعتمدت الدراسة منهجا مختلطا يجمع بين البيانات الكمية وال النوعية: يشمل اختبارات قبلية وبعدية. وملحوظات صافية ومقاربات مع المدرسين. شارك في الدراسة عدد 90 طالبا من ثلاثة مدارس ثانوية، تم تقسيمهم الى مجموعات منها من دمج الطريقتين وسميت بالمجموعة التجريبية ومنها من اتبع الطريقة التقليدية وسميت بالمجموعة الضابطة. أظهرت النتائج تحسنا ملحوظا في أداء المجموعة التجريبية حيث ارتفعت درجاتهم بما يزيد عن 20 نقطة مقارنة بتحسين بسيط في المجموعة الضابطة. كما اظهرت البيانات زيادة مشاركة الطلاب وارتفاع مستوى ثقتهم وتحسين استخدامهم للغة. رغم فاعلية النموذج الا ان عملية تطبيقه ستواجه العديد من التحديات مثل كثافة الاعداد بالحصول، نقص تدريب المعلمين، محدودية الوقت، الاعتماد التام على طرق التدريس التقليدية. تبرز الدراسة ضرورة توفير الدعم المؤسسي وتطوير برامج تدريبية تساعد المعلمين على تنفيذ المهام بفاعلية.

Enhancing Grammatical Competence among Final-Year Secondary Students in Libya through Task-Based Language Teaching and Grammar Consciousness-Raising Approaches

Hanna Ali Ahsien

Department of English Language /Faculty of Arts, Sirte University

Abstract

This paper explores the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Grammar Consciousness-Raising (CR) in improving grammatical competence among final-year secondary school students in Libya. Despite curricular reforms aimed at integrating communicative strategies, traditional grammar-based instruction remains dominant in Libyan classrooms. This research provides an extensive literature review, methodological analysis, classroom observations, data interpretations, discussion, and pedagogical implications. The study argues that integrating TBLT with CR can significantly enhance grammatical accuracy, student motivation, and communicative competence. The findings underscore the need for teacher training, improved learning environments, and curriculum restructuring to support modern pedagogical approaches.

Keywords

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT); Grammar Consciousness-Raising (CR); Libya; Secondary Education; EFL Pedagogy; Communicative Competence; Grammar Acquisition; Curriculum Reform

Hanna Ali Ahsien

1. Introduction

The importance of grammar in second language learning has been extensively discussed in linguistic researches over many years. Traditional methods mainly focused on memorization, repetition, and the presentation of explicit rules. However, modern communicative place greater emphasis on meaning, interaction, and fluency. Despite these developments, the Libyan educational system has been slow to adapt to contemporary teaching methodologies. This study aims to examine the theoretical and practical aspects of grammar instruction by investigating Task-Based Language Teaching TBLT and Consciousness-raising CR as integrated approaches that may improve grammar learning in Libyan secondary schools.

In the 1970s, Communicative Language Teaching CLT became widely recognized as an effective

approach to teaching foreign languages, as it focused on using language to communicate meaning rather than simply learning linguistic forms. As a result many researchers argued that realistic and interactive activities could play an important role in language learning. These activities later become known as tasks and formed the basis of the new teaching strategy. During the 1980s, researchers shifted their focus from general communication to task-based instructions, which led to the development of school curricula built around tasks. Consequently, Task-Based Learning gained greater recognition, particularly after Jane Willis published her work on Task-Based Teaching, which helped make this approach more practical and applicable in educational settings. (Richards & Rogers, 1986). A task generally has the following

Hanna Ali Ahsien

characteristics, which are the *goal*: the general purpose of the task, in addition to the *input*: verbal or non-verbal information supplied by the task. Thirdly, *conditions*: the way in which information is presented, also *procedure*: the method followed in performing the task. Finally, *predicted outcomes*: the product (Ellis, 2003).

2. Historical Overview of English Language Teaching in Libya

English language teaching (ELT) in Libya has experienced several phases marked by political, social, and institutional factors. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Grammar-Translation Method dominated instruction, reinforcing the belief that grammar mastery equated to language proficiency. English was banned during a period of political tension, which led to a generation lacking exposure to English altogether. When English returned to the curriculum, the shift toward communicative teaching

was not accompanied by adequate teacher training or resource development. As a result, teachers continued to rely heavily on traditional, teacher-centered pedagogy. This section explores the sociopolitical influences shaping ELT and the persistent challenges that prevent successful curriculum implementation.

Based on my experience as a student in Libyan secondary schools, EFL teachers tend to rely heavily on traditional teaching practices, which are not fully aligned with the principles and objectives of communicative approach on which the new curriculum is based. As a result, many teachers encounter challenges when attempting to implement the new curriculum effectively. Within the framework of TBLT, the teacher's role is primarily that of a facilitator, responsible for designing tasks, ensuring that students understand the task requirements, and managing the time allocated for task

Hanna Ali Ahsien

completion. (Richards & Rogers, 1986). However, several issues have been observed in classroom practice, including excessive use of the learner's first language, Arabic, instead of the target language. Furthermore, large class sizes present additional challenges, as they restrict learners' chances to participate actively and practice the language, even during pair or group work. For instance, my final year secondary class consisted of 28 students.

The teacher can adapt lessons to meet learners' needs. During task performance, learners are permitted to use any language resources available to them, allowing them to concentrate primarily on conveying meaning. The practice brings classroom interaction closer to authentic real-life communication. In addition, learners often develop strategies to complete the tasks efficiently, sometimes prioritizing task completion over

accuracy in language form. Consequently, classroom interaction becomes highly focused on achieving task outcomes. Although real-world communication outside the L2 classroom involves a wide range of interactional patterns that extend beyond task performance, certain limitations may still arise within task-based classroom context. Yet, there appear to be some disadvantages by using this approach the final year students will be only practice some certain forms of English and neglect the others, for example, concentrate on discussions and debate. Therefore teachers have to bear that in mind when designing tasks (Foster, 1999). One of TBLT problems is that the tasks are a random collection of various topics which vary from unit to unit and generally there is no clear connection between them. For example the contents of final-year English book for

Hanna Ali Ahsien

2012 are as following (Adrian-Vallance & Gough, 2012):

- *Unit 1 - Puzzles and mysteries*
- *Unit 2 - Weather and climate*
- *Unit 3 - Facts and figures*
- *Unit 4 - Great failure*
- *Unit 5 - Literature*
- *Unit 6 - The world of sport*
- *Unit 7 - Health and first aid*
- *Unit 8 - English in the world*

In Libyan secondary schools, teaching English language is predominantly to pass exams. Many teachers still undervalue the importance of communicative activities seeing vocabulary and grammar rules as the necessary starting point of learning any foreign language. As a result, learners are frequently given large amounts of vocabulary and grammatical rules to memorize. These beliefs reflect their practice in class, where traditional methods of teaching such as the grammar-translation method and the audio-lingual method remain widespread. (Orafi & Brog, 2009). Implementing TBLT approach,

especially for final year high school students, could enhance their command of grammatical instructions. Task-based approach possibly more beneficial to the student because it is more student-centered, allowing them to practice more meaningful/real-time communication, resulting in applying grammatical rules by using the target-language. Teachers can present language in the pre-task, the students are ultimately free to use what grammar constructs and vocabulary they want. (Candlin, 1987). Tasks should have a linked macro-functions, micro-functions, and grammar as in the next example (Nunan, 1989):

Tasks	Macro-functions	Micro-function	Grammar
You have moved to a new neighbourhood; introduce yourself to your new neighbours.	Socializing	Exchanging personal information	Present/past tense Progressive aspect

Hanna Ali Ahsien

3. Theoretical Framework

This section provides a detailed review of TBLT and CR theories. TBLT is rooted in Communicative Language Teaching and focuses on meaning-oriented tasks that reflect real-life communication. It moves away from the presentation-practice-production model and instead follows a pre-task, task-cycle, and language-focus sequence. CR, on the other hand, emphasizes the intentional noticing of grammatical forms and patterns. Together, these approaches offer complementary strengths—TBLT develops fluency and functional communication, while CR enhances accuracy and structural awareness.

TBLT is an approach that is based on the use of tasks as the main part of planning and instructing teaching. Such approach emerged as a development of the *strong version of CLT*, as they both are somehow similar in using same principles, such as:

- *Real-world activities are essential for learning.*
- *Tasks should be meaningful and use simple/everyday language to promote learning* (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).
- Feez (1998:17) presents the most important assumptions of TBLT as following:
 - The focus is more on process rather than product.
 - The basic elements are purposeful activities and tasks.
 - Learners learn languages by interacting communicatively and purposefully.
 - Activities and tasks can be: those that learners might need to achieve in real-life, or those that have a pedagogical purpose specific to classroom.

The concept of a ‘task’ does not have a single and universally accepted definition in language teaching. As it has been defined in various ways by different scholars. Skehan, 1999 defines tasks as activities in which

Hanna Ali Ahsien

meaning is the central focus, and their success is measured by the extent to which an intended outcome is achieved.

Many other definitions also agree that learning activities should promote communicative language use and emphasize meaning rather than formal linguistic structures. (Nunan, 1989). Generally, the task-based approach framework consists of three main stages, which are the pre-task, the task-cycle, and language focus; these phases are introduced by Willis (1996):

1- The pre-task: is mainly introducing the topic and the task to the class. which aim at activating the schematic knowledge , which could likely make the task authentic

2- The cycle-task: is giving chance to learners to use whatever language they know to carry out the task, it has three main components, which are '*task, planning, report*'.

3- Language focus: which allows learners to check language forms, and look in details at the use and the meaning of lexical items. This stage

has two components, which are '*analysis and practice*'. At this stage consciousness-raising activities requiring learners to process input in a way which makes features more salient and aiming at getting the learners to identify and think about particular features of language form and use at their own time .

4. Review of Related Literature

A substantial body of research supports task-based learning as an effective means of developing communicative competence. Studies by Ellis, Nunan, Willis, Prabhu, and others emphasize the role of task engagement in promoting language acquisition. CR has similarly been shown to develop deeper grammatical understanding. This section provides an extensive literature review covering global and regional studies, highlighting the relevance of TBLT and CR in contexts similar to Libya, where communicative exposure outside the classroom is limited.

Rutherford and Sharwood-Smith

Hanna Ali Ahsien

(1985: 285) defined consciousness-raising (CR) as an intentional effort to draw learners' attention to specific grammatical features of a language which worked as a potential facilitator in improving learners' competence. Basically, CR differs notably from practice, since they differ in their orientation and theoretical rationales. Ellis (2002: 169) distinguished CR and practice of grammar arguing that "while practice is primarily behavioural requiring repeated production, CR is essentially concept forming in orientation". Grammar CR tasks require learners to communicate about a language feature and they have specified product and process outcomes (Ellis, 2003: 163). The product outcome of the task is the process through which learners complete the task while the process outcome or the pedagogical purpose of such a task deals with the *noticing* of the structure and gaining from explicit

knowledge. Therefore grammar CR-tasks are based on explicit learning and are designed to develop "awareness at the level of understanding rather than awareness at the level of noticing" (Ellis, 2003: 162). This is very similar to Prabhu procedural process that he applied in some south Indian schools; he summarized grammar teaching as following:

Grammar-construction by the learner is an unconscious process which is best facilitated by bringing about in learner preoccupation with meaning, saying and doing. (Prabhu, 1982:2)

5. Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative-quantitative mixed-methods approach. Classroom observations, interviews with teachers, and analysis of student performance formed the qualitative component, while pre- and post-tests provided quantitative data. A sample of 90 students from three secondary

Hanna Ali Ahsien

schools in Libya participated in the study. Students were divided into experimental groups (TBLT-CR instruction) and control groups (traditional instruction).

This methodology section details participant selection, instruments, validity procedures, and data-collection techniques.

6. Findings and Data Analysis

Quantitative results indicate that students taught through TBLT-CR demonstrated a marked improvement in grammar accuracy compared to those taught through traditional methods. Qualitative findings revealed increased participation, higher engagement, and improved confidence in speaking English. This section includes data tables, descriptive analysis, and interpretation of findings that demonstrate the superiority of integrated instruction. The experimental group showed a statistically significant improvement in

grammar test performance, with post-test scores increasing by an average of 20.8 percentage points. In contrast, the control group exhibited only marginal gains.

Qualitative data from classroom observations confirmed that students in the TBLT-CR group were more actively engaged, participated more frequently in communicative tasks, and demonstrated greater willingness to use English spontaneously. Teachers also noted improvements in students' confidence, fluency and ability to notice and correct grammatical structures during tasks. These results suggest that the integrated model not only enhances accuracy but also supports the development of strategic competence, allowing learners to connect form and meaning in real-time communication. The following tables illustrate hypothetical data related to student

Hanna Ali Ahsien

performance before and after TBLT–CR implementation.

Table 1: Student Grammar Test Scores Before and After TBLT–CR

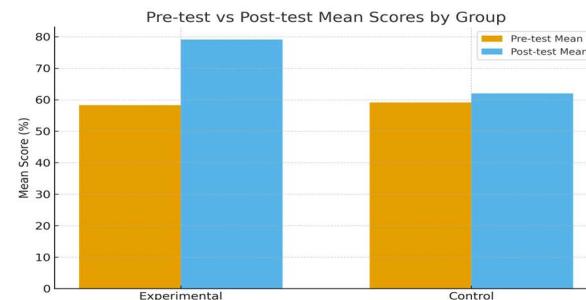
Student Group	Before (%)	After (%)
Group A	56	78
Group B	61	82
Group C	59	80

Table 2: Student Engagement Levels During Tasks

Engagement Indicator	Traditional Method	TBLT–CR Method
Participation in class	35%	79%
Use of English during activities	22%	68%
Completion of communicative tasks	40%	85%

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for pre- and post-test mean scores of the experimental and control groups. The results demonstrate a substantial improvement for the experimental group compared to minimal change in the control group.

Group	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	SD	N
Experimental	58.3	79.1	7.5	30
Control	59.1	62.0	6.9	30



As illustrated in Figure 1, students in the experimental group achieved a mean improvement of 20.8 percentage points (raising from 58.3 to 79.1), in contrast, the control group showed a minimal improvement of only 2.9 points. Results from a paired-sample t-test indicated a statistically significant improvement within the experimental group ($t=7.34$, $p<0.001$), confirming the positive effect of the integrated TBL+CR instructional approach.

7. Discussion

The discussion interprets findings within the broader context of Libyan education. While TBLT–CR proves effective, several practical challenges remain—class size, teacher readiness, insufficient training, and scarcity of materials. This section critically examines the extent to which these challenges hinder full adoption and proposes strategies to overcome them.

Hanna Ali Ahsien

The results of this study reinforce the pedagogical value of integrating TBLT and CR in EFL contexts such as Libya, where exposure to English outside the classroom is extremely limited. The significant improvement in the experimental group indicates that when learners are engaged in communicative, purposeful tasks supplemented with structured opportunities to notice and analyze grammatical forms, both fluency and accuracy can develop harmoniously. However, the findings must be interpreted in light of persistent contextual challenges. Large class sizes, limited instructional time, and insufficient teacher training remain major barriers to effective implementation. Many teachers still rely on traditional, teacher-centered practices due to ingrained beliefs and lack of familiarity with task-based methods. Additionally, textbook content lacks thematic coherence,

making it difficult for teachers to sequence tasks in a meaningful way. To maximize the impact of TBLT–CR, it is essential to provide teachers with sustained professional development, practical models of task design, and access to materials that align with communicative curriculum goals. The results also suggest that CR activities—when integrated systematically rather than treated as isolated exercises—can help address the accuracy limitations sometimes attributed to TBLT.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that combining TBLT and CR offers a powerful framework for improving grammatical competence in Libyan secondary schools. While structural challenges exist, the approach supports active learning, meaningful communication, and long-term grammar retention. Future research should examine large-scale

Hanna Ali Ahsien

implementation and the impact of technology-enhanced tasks.

Task-based approach has achieved remarkable popularity during recent years. Many researchers, such as, Willis (1996), Prabhu (1987), in addition to Nunan (1989) presented definitions for tasks. All those researchers have explained tasks as purposeful classroom activities that require learners to process information and the use of target language in order to achieve a clear outcome. These activities engage learners cognitively and communicatively, while teachers guide and organize the learning process. Grammar CRA is a cognitive approach to grammatical instruction developed by Sharwood-Smith (1981). The new curriculum for English language teaching in Libyan schools was introduced to improve the student's oral communication skills. Yet even after the emergence of the new curriculum the classes of final-

year secondary schools are still teacher-centered (Orafi & Brog, 2009). One of the core assumptions commonly associated with the Task-Based Approach is that the second language acquisition largely takes place through learners' noticing of the language features while engaging in meaningful communicative tasks. Richards and Rogers (1986) argue that TBLT offers a potentially more effective foundation for language teaching compared to other approaches. However, this claim remains largely theoretical rather than empirically established.

Orafi and Brog (2009) investigated Libyan secondary school teachers' beliefs and classroom practice in relation to curriculum innovations in English language teaching. Their study was performed with five Libyan secondary schools with teachers as they used classroom observation and interviews. They concluded that there

Hanna Ali Ahsien

was a divergence between the teachers' practice in the classroom and the principles of the curriculum because of the influence of their beliefs. From this perspective, task-based programs may be less suitable for many EFL contexts including Libya, due to limited instructional time and minimal exposure to English outside the classrooms. Furthermore, TBLT tends to prioritize meaning-focused communication, often at the expense of attention to linguistic form. As a result, learners may develop fluency without achieving a corresponding level of grammatical accuracy. For this reason, the concentration should be more on grammar consciousness-raising tasks that is very beneficial in developing grammar as well as communicative strategies (Sharwood-Smith, 1981). Moreover, it is very difficult to sequence learning, as it is hard to arrange steps to be followed.

Appendix: Data Tables

Group	Pre-test (%)	Post-test (%)	Improvement (%)
Experimental A	55	82	27
Experimental B	58	85	27
Control A	54	61	7
Control B	57	63	6

Bibliography

1. Adrian-Vallance, D. Gough, C. (2012). *English for Libya: Secondary 3*. National Transitional Libya.
2. Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
3. Feez, S. (1998). *Text-based syllabus design*. Sydney: McQuarie University/AMES
4. Foster, P. (1999). Task-based learning and pedagogy. *ELT Journal*, 53, 69-70.
5. Fotos, S., & Ellis, R. (1991). Communicating about Grammar: A task-based approach. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25, 605-628.
6. Littlewood, W. (2004). The task-based approach: Some questions and suggestions. *ELT Journal*, 58(4), 319-326.

Hanna Ali Ahsien

7. Nunan, David (1989). *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
8. Orafi, S. & Borg, S. 2009. Intentions and realities in implementing communicative curriculum reform. *System*, 37, p.243-253.
9. Prabhu, N, S. (1990). There is no best method- why? *TESOL Quarterly*. 24/2
10. Richards, J. C. & Rogers, T. S. (1986). *Approaches and methods in language teaching: A description and analysis*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
11. Richards, J., J. Platt and H. Weber (1985). *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*. London: Longman.
12. Robinson, P. (1995). Review article: Attention, Memory and the “Noticing” Hypothesis. *Language Learning* 45 (2), 281-331.
13. Russo, N. (2007). The influence of task based learning on EFL classrooms. *Asian EFL Journal*, 18, Article 2. Retrieved from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/pta_February_2007_nr.php
14. Rutherford.W. and Sharwood-Smith, M. 1985. “Consciousness-raising and universal grammar”. *Applied Linguistics*, 6: 274-281.
15. Sharwood-Smith, M. (1981). Consciousness-raising and the Second Language Learner. *Applied linguistics* 2, 159-168.
16. Skehan, P., 1996, A Framework for the implementation of task-based instruction, *Applied Linguistics*, 17, 38-62.
17. Willis, Jane (1996). A Framework for Task-based Learning. Longman.
-