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Research Article

A Mixed Methods Exploration of Task Effects on Iranian ESP Learners' Reading Skill and Attitudes toward Task-Based Language Teaching

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Abstract

Task-based approaches are widely researched in English language learning as it can positively influence learners' experiences. This study investigated the effect of task-based instruction on reading comprehension and attitudes towards classroom activities among Iranian ESP learners. Sixty Iranian accounting students of Jooybar and Babol Payam Noor Universities were selected using available sampling technique. They were randomly assigned to three experimental groups (i.e., information gap group, a sentence completion group, and a task repetition group) and a control group. Given the importance of reading skills in ESP courses, the researcher focused on reading skills prior to the start of the 2023–2024 academic year. To that end, a reading test administered to all the participants of the study, as a pretest. During the academic term, the groups completed their respective tasks. At the end of the academic term, the same reading test was administered again as a posttest. Moreover, the researchers used a semi-structured interview protocol to unearth the participants' attitudes towards task-based language teaching. Data analysis revealed a statistically significant difference among the effects of the three task conditions on Iranian accounting students' reading comprehension. The task repetition group outperformed the other groups, with significant pairwise differences in most comparisons. Moreover, the control group had the lowest mean score. Second, the analysis of the qualitative results confirmed the findings of the quantitative phase (i.e., the effectiveness of task-based instruction on ESP students' reading comprehension). This research has pedagogical implications for enhancing language learners' reading skill and engagement capabilities, with insights for curriculum developers and syllabus designers.

Keywords: attitude, ESP, information gap, task-based instruction, reading comprehension, sentence completion, task repetition

1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has garnered interest from second language acquisition (SLA) researchers, curriculum designers, educators, teacher trainers, and language instructors worldwide (Lu et al., 2025; Yao et al., 2024). In TBLT, instruction shifts from a product-oriented approach to a process-oriented approach. Through this teaching practice, learners are no longer required to master linguistic knowledge of language as the ultimate objective; instead, they are encouraged to learn how to learn. While performing tasks, language learners can develop meaningful understanding. TBLT conceptualizes language learning as an experiential process in which learners interact with one another while focusing on completing a given task. This interactional negotiation shifts their attention from language form to the meaning they intend to convey, a process shown to be beneficial in SLA (Ellis, 2017; Nunan, 2004).

The core principles of TBLT are as follows: a) language acquisition is a structured, continuous, and evolving process rather than a linear and static one; b) effective learning occurs when attention shifts from structure and linguistic knowledge to the meaning of the language; c) the negotiation of meaning is a central aspect of the TBLT process; and d) language learners must engage in authentic learning experiences that are designed or facilitated to help them achieve language proficiency naturally (Bryfonski, 2024). This approach suggests that TBLT can help students engage in the learning process more genuinely, organically, and meaningfully (Palanisamy & Rajasekaran, 2024). Hence, by providing learners with broader and more contemporary insights into language acquisition, TBLT is considered an effective instructional tool in language education (Liu & Ren, 2024).

Task-oriented learning offers an alternative approach for language instructors. In a task-oriented lesson, the teacher does not determine in advance which language will be learned; instead, the lesson focuses on completing a main task, and the language acquired emerges from the interactions that occur as students accomplish it (Ellis et al., 2020). Additionally, task-based language teaching (TBLT) enhances students' language comprehension because the authentic context in which they learn is relevant to their lives (Xie et al., 2022). A task-oriented activity requires students to use the target language to achieve a specific outcome. The most effective TBLT activities simulate real-world scenarios, enabling students to appreciate the lesson's significance in their own experiences (Gündüz et al., 2022).

Considering the importance of teaching and learning reading skills in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, recent studies have focused on

identifying efficient approaches to teaching reading more effectively and easily within the ESP context (Khamroeva, 2024; Kakoulli-Constantinou & Papadima-Sophocleous, 2020; Yu et al., 2024). In recent years, the potential of the task-oriented approach to improve all four language skills has been demonstrated in numerous studies (Lytovchenko et al., 2020; Smith & González-Lloret, 2021; Xu & Fan, 2021).

In English as a foreign language (EFL) context, reading ability is one of the essential language skills used in higher education to access additional knowledge and educational materials (Hamouma, 2025). To comprehend academic texts effectively, EFL learners must develop reading skills (Dreyer & Nel, 2003). Safdarian et al. (2014) noted that EFL learners need reading skills to meet both their daily and academic informational needs. Reading is a critical language component that learners require for academic purposes and self-directed learning across various educational settings (Grabe, 2009).

Moreover, students' attitudes toward participating in learning processes are of particular importance. A positive and favorable attitude toward class participation can serve as a driving force and enhance learners' resilience and stability in acquiring new skills (Mostafavi et al., 2021). In ESP accounting classrooms, low participation is evident in classes that rely on traditional approaches (Enesi et al., 2021; Jande & Ibrahim, 2021). In this context, recent studies suggest that the task-oriented approach effectively strengthens learner engagement, making it a potential bridge to address this gap (Fang et al., 2021; Mulyadi et al., 2023; Spada, 2022).

In the Iranian EFL context, ESP learners are expected to acquire subject-matter knowledge relevant to their fields. Difficulties in reading and comprehension often prevent learners from accessing the necessary knowledge and information from academic resources (Grabe, 2009; Golchin & Kheirabadi, 2013). These challenges are exacerbated in ESP materials, as reading deficiencies can hinder students' professional development (Kolaei et al., 2013; Safdarian et al., 2014). The main difficulties ESP students face include word identification, text processing, and meaning extraction (Grabe, 2009; Dreyer & Nel, 2003). Additional contextual challenges include ineffective teaching approaches, lecture deficiencies, lack of creativity in presentation, and unengaging instructional methods (Jande & Ibrahim, 2021; Hamouma, 2025).

Another important issue is that ESP students often express dissatisfaction with teaching practices. They believe that traditional methods are neither interesting nor meaningful and do not adequately prepare them for their future professions (Mostafavi et al., 2021; Fang et al., 2021). ESP students are expected to perform tasks in real professional contexts; therefore, merely

reading texts related to their academic majors may not effectively develop the job-specific reading skills they will require (Mulyadi et al., 2023; Spada, 2022).

This background on TBLT indicates that task diversity has rarely been examined in relation to reading skills among ESP learners at the academic level in Iran (Setayesh & Marzban, 2017). Moreover, students' readiness to engage in classroom activities has not yet been scientifically studied in Iran alongside task-based learning components (Lam et al., 2021; Xu & Fan, 2021). To addressing these gaps, the following research questions were formulated in this study:

RQ1: Does implementing information gap task, sentence completion task, and task repetition have any statistically significant effect on Iranian accounting students' reading comprehension?

RQ2: What are Iranian ESP accounting students' attitudes towards receiving task-based instruction in their learning practice?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Task-based Language Learning

Grounded in the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT), task-based language teaching (TBLT) has gained prominence in the fields of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) and SLA, attracting increasing scholarly attention (Wang, 2008). Educators consider TBLT as an effective and practical approach that enriches language teaching practices (Salimi et al., 2012). In the same vein, Ellis (2009) defined a language task as an activity that requires learners to use language meaningfully to achieve a non-linguistic outcome through communication. Serving as a bridge between theory and practice, the TBLT framework has made substantial contributions to SLA research (Ellis et al., 2019). A task should result in language use and lead to the way language is used in a real life and authentic situations (Ellis, 2003, 2009). According to Willis (2004), TBLT is a mixture of learning objective and linguistic executive knowledge to reconstruct learners' understanding in line with their performance.

Task-based learning allows students to use familiar language creatively while engaging in meaningful tasks. Teachers can delay error correction until after the activity to encourage fluency and participation (Crookes & Ziegler, 2021). Language learners complete tasks of genuine interest, often leading to presentations that draw on authentic language and real-world resources such as the internet (Butarbutar, 2021). The focus lies not on rigid language forms

but on task outcomes and the processes involved in achieving them (Lambert et al., 2023).

In the application of TBLT during the learning process, students should prioritize meaning and understanding instead of reiteration and memorization. A clearly defined outcome is necessary to assess the task's effectiveness and the student's success (Lam, et al., 2021). Educators must equip students with necessary resources, offer support, and inspire them to draw on their past language and individual experiences. This approach does not produce a grade for a multiple-choice exam. Every stage of the procedure holds equal significance for task achievements and, ultimately, practical language success (Ahmadian & Long, 2021). Assignments tackle genuine life requirements and enable students to utilize their language skills to fulfill those needs. Moreover, incorporating tasks introduces diversity in the classroom, reduces boredom (when designed effectively), and motivates students to employ a range of communication methods and strategies, including comparing, debating, and persuading (Xu & Fan, 2021).

Task repetition, a subcategory of task-based activities, has attracted considerable attention in TEFL (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011). In this activity, learners complete the same task twice, which helps them internalize meaning more effectively. Repetition provides learners with the opportunity to focus on the process of task performance, increasing their cognitive investment and drawing attention to multiple dimensions of the task (Birjandi & Ahangari, 2008). Bygate and Samuda (2005) argued that task repetition effectively integrates language knowledge, meaning, and performance, thereby facilitating learners' comprehension and negotiation of meaning.

In applying TBLT in ESP courses, the order and type of tasks are organized based on students' pedagogical needs. The cognitive demand of tasks enables the teachers to encourage their students to direct their attention to complete the given task through the negotiation of meaning in the classroom. In this way, the teachers can motivate their students to involve in learning events and simultaneously practice language-related activities in the process of the task completion (Van Avermaet & Gysen, 2006).

2.2. Reading Skill

Reading is a receptive psycholinguistic activity in which the writer initially encodes a message, and the reader then decodes it by assembling the intended meaning. The reader derives meaning by reconstructing the author's intended message. To achieve this, the reader needs to connect the new information to their prior knowledge to comprehend another aspect of the text (Zhang et al., 2024).

Reading comprehension encompasses various cognitive functions such as planning, focus, and both simultaneous and sequential processing, all collaborating to interpret the text. It's more than merely interpreting words; it's a dynamic, interactive activity where readers connect with the text, utilizing their previous knowledge and experiences to create understanding (McCarthy & Yan, 2024).

Essential skills aid in reading comprehension, such as decoding and fluency, vocabulary growth, grasping text structure, and possessing relevant background knowledge (Şimşek et al., 2025). The purpose of reading comprehension extends beyond merely recognizing the written words; it involves using that insight to establish connections, draw conclusions, and apply the acquired information (Yang & Hu, 2024).

In exploring the connection between task-based teaching and the enhancement of the variables examined in this study, the ideas of negotiation of meaning (Huang, 2024) and strategic adjustment (Hanan et al., 2024) can be highlighted. Task-oriented exercises can greatly enhance reading comprehension skills due to their adaptability to active, meaningful learning (Liu & Ren, 2024). Moreover, the dynamics of concept exchange in task-focused education can significantly enhance students' active involvement in classroom activities (Anito et al., 2025).

2.3. Empirical Studies

To examine the effect of TBLT on enhancing ESP reading comprehension skills in Iranian EFL learners, Setayesh and Marzban (2017) conducted an experimental study. Furthermore, the study sought to examine whether there are statistically significant differences between students of Law and Mechanical Engineering in addition to the differences between male and female students. The results of the data analysis indicated that the TBLT approach significantly enhanced reading comprehension skills for all study participants. However, its effectiveness was notably higher for female learners than for the male participants in this research. Based on the literature review, recent studies have concentrated on the use of task-based teaching methods in developing language skills. However, this study marks an instance of implementing TBLT within the ESP context of Iran to measure the possible improvement in ESP students' reading comprehension ability.

Shabani and Ghasemi (2014) examined the impact of TBLT and Content-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) on the reading comprehension level of Iranian intermediate ESP students. The participants were divided into two similar groups. The participants in the initial group engaged in TBLT within

their particular ESP subject, while the other group members were given CBLT instead. The results of this research validate the superiority of the TBLT method compared to the CBLT in enhancing students' reading comprehension levels.

Golchin and Kheirabadi (2013) performed a study examining the impact of TBLT on the reading comprehension advancement of Iranian EFL learners. Sixty advanced EFL students, who were randomly separated into an experimental group and a control group, participated in the study. They were subjected to TBLT as part of the study's treatment. The data analysis showed that applying the TBLT approach improved students' reading comprehension skills.

Kolaei et al. (2013) examined the impact of TBLT on the reading comprehension development of Iranian EFL students. The participants were divided into two groups: a control group and an experimental group. Members of the experimental group underwent TBLT, while those in the control group were subjected to traditional reading instruction. The data analysis from this study revealed that both teaching methods used significantly improved learners' reading comprehension skills, and there was no substantial difference in their effects on the development of reading comprehension.

3. Method

3.1. Design

This study employed a mixed-method approach. The quantitative section utilized a quasi-experimental research method with a pretest/posttest non-equivalent control group design. The initial research questions pertained to the quantitative aspect, while the subsequent research question focused on the qualitative aspect of this study. The study involved three independent variables (i.e., information gap and sentence completion tasks, and task repetition) and two dependent variables (i.e., reading proficiency and attitude towards the task).

3.2. Participants

The target population of this study was 92 Iranian accounting students of two branches of Payam Noor university in Mazandaran, Iran. Convenience sampling was used in this study. From all available accounting students, 60 Iranian accounting students of Jooybar and Babol Payam Noor Universities were selected for conducting this study. They were female (n=30) and male (n=30) students aged 20-28. All participants were at their fifth semester of university academic year 2023–2024. They were divided into three experimental groups: information gap group (n=20), sentence completion

group (n=20), and task repetition group (n=20). Based on the informed consent forms and the explanations of one of the researchers, they were assured about data confidentiality.

3.3. Instrumentation

3.3.1. Reading Comprehension Test

This instrument was a researcher-made test aiming to cover the course objectives and was used as a pretest and posttest of this study. This test comprised four passages and each had five items. For each passage, three multiple-choice items, one fill-in-the-blank item, and one true/false item were designed, resulting in a total of 20 items. Forty minutes were allocated for test completion. Through this test, the researcher was able to measure students' reading comprehension. Because there was sufficient time between the administration of the pretest and posttest, the same version was used for both administrations. To examine its reliability, the test was piloted, and Cronbach's alpha was calculated at .83. For validity of this test, the researcher designed the test based on students' course-book contents.

3.3.2. Attitudes towards Receiving Task Questionnaire

This researcher-made questionnaire was designed to elicit students' beliefs, feelings, ideas, and opinions about effectiveness of doing tasks in their learning practice. This questionnaire comprised of 16 items. To avoid redundancy and unrelated responses to the open-ended questions, the researcher managed the interviews in which the questionnaire was administered at the end of the instructional phase. Regarding the reliability of this questionnaire, the researcher piloted it and calculated the reliability of the questionnaire through Cronbach alpha formula which was about 0.79. Considering the validity of this instrument, the researcher consulted with some TEFL experts and professors during item development.

3.3.3. Semi-structured Interview Protocol

To explore Iranian ESP accounting students' attitudes toward task-TBLT, a semi-structured interview was designed. The interview protocol consisted of ten core questions, each designed to elicit participants' perceptions of TBLT, its advantages and disadvantages, their comfort and engagement in the classroom, challenges experienced, and preferences between TBLT and conventional teaching practices. The questions were informed by the study's research objectives.

3.4. Procedure

Before starting the new academic term, a reading test administered to all the participants as the pretest of this study. Then, during the academic term, the information gap group members were exposed to information gap task requiring them to complete a balance sheet in a pair-work. The sentence completion group members were exposed to sentence completion task in which they were supposed to complete some incomplete sentences about financial statements.

In another type of task, the teacher asked the students to rearrange a series of jumbled information in the form of several pieces of separate texts in order to create a coherent and meaningful text. To acquire the necessary skills in this work, the teacher already familiarized the students with the necessary and sufficient techniques and strategies and actively monitored and evaluated the learning process. In another type of task, a series of unscrambled information was presented to the students in the form of several separate paragraphs and they were asked to complete a series of official forms with the accounting technique using the given information to calculate and present the requested values. It should be noted that in the given information, some values were placed in a deviant manner to evaluate the accuracy and technical vocabulary knowledge of the students.

The task repetition group was asked to practice task repetition demanding them to do the same task twice. At the repetition stage, the researcher asked them to do a similar task that differed slightly from the previous one. Examples of tasks used in this study are provided below. In one task, the teacher chooses a series of texts for students. These texts have words that were familiar or they had learned them during the class. Then, the teacher designed questions that focus on concept and meaning of the given texts. Students were only able to respond when they understand the meaning of the texts. Finally, the teacher designed a similar test to evaluate the learning progress of students.

At the end of the academic term, the same reading test was re-administered as the posttest. The data obtained through the pretest and posttest of this study were analyzed in SPSS software (version 26) in order to answer the quantitative research questions. Also, at the end of instructional phase, the researcher used attitude towards receiving task questionnaire through administration of semi-structured interviews. From each group, 5 random participants were chosen for the interviews. For ease of analysis, all the answers were collected and coded in some similar categories. The frequency and percentage of each category were reported and considered for descriptive analysis.

3.5. Data Analysis

The quantitative data from this study (pertaining to the initial research questions) was examined using IBM SPSS software version 26. The first research questions included the presentation of descriptive statistics, normality calculations, and inferential statistics (i.e., one-Way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis H test). For the qualitative data, the researcher showcased the results grounded in the analyses and interpretation of the data collected from semi-structured interviews.

4. Results

4.1. Results for the First Research Question

Initially, to address the first research question of this study (i.e., Does implementing information gap task, sentence completion task, and task repetition have any statistically significant effect on Iranian accounting students' reading comprehension?), the descriptive statistics for the pretest scores were calculated (Table 1).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for the Pretest Scores

Group	N	Mean	SD
Information Gap	20	9.65	2.96
Sentence Completion	20	10.40	2.44
Task Repetition	20	8.95	2.59
Control	20	10.65	1.66
Total	80	9.91	2.50

As presented in Table 1, a total of 80 participants completed the pretest, with 20 participants in each group. The mean pretest scores ranged from 8.95 for the task repetition group to 10.65 the control group. The information gap group had a mean score of 9.65 ($SD = 2.96$), while the sentence completion group had a slightly higher mean of 10.40 ($SD = 2.44$). The task repetition group scored the lowest on average, with a mean of 8.95 ($SD = 2.59$). The Control group obtained the highest mean score of 10.65 ($SD = 1.66$). Across all participants, the overall mean was 9.91 ($SD = 2.50$), with scores ranging from 5 to 15. The 95% confidence intervals suggest moderate variability in the pretest scores across groups, indicating that the means were relatively stable within each group. The normality statistics for the pretest scores are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Skewness and Kurtosis for the Pretest Scores

Statistic	Value	Std. Error
Skewness	-0.20	0.26
Kurtosis	-0.53	0.53

As can be seen in Table 2, the examination of data normality revealed a skewness of -0.20 (SE = 0.26) and a kurtosis of -0.53 (SE = 0.53). These values fall within the commonly accepted range of ±2 for skewness and kurtosis, suggesting that the distribution of pretest scores is approximately normal. It means that the scores were normally distributed. Levene's test was also conducted to check variance homogeneity (Table 3).

Table 3
Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances for the Pretest Scores

Test Basis	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	2.35	3	76	0.07

As shown in Table 3, the test based on the mean indicated no significant difference in variances, $F(3, 76) = 2.35$, $p = .08$. These results suggest that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met, supporting the use of parametric tests for subsequent analyses. Table 4 presents ANOVA for the pretest scores.

Table 4
One-Way ANOVA for the Pretest Scores Across Groups

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	35.54	3	11.85	1.96	0.13
Within Groups	458.85	76	6.04		
Total	494.39	79			

According to Table 4, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare pretest scores across the four groups. There was no statistically significant difference among the groups, $F(3, 76) = 1.96$, $p = .13$. This suggests that the pretest scores were relatively similar across the information gap, sentence completion, task repetition, and control groups prior to the intervention. To continue with the analysis, it was necessary to check whether the difference between the posttest means was statistically significant or not. To do so, first, the descriptive statistics for the experimental and control groups' posttest scores are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
The Descriptive Statistics for the Posttest Scores

Group	N	M	SD
Information Gap	20	11.75	2.65
Sentence Completion	20	12.20	2.22
Task Repetition	20	14.05	2.65
Control	20	10.35	0.93

Table 5 shows that the task repetition group achieved the highest mean score ($M = 14.05$, $SD = 2.65$), followed by the sentence completion group ($M = 12.20$, $SD = 2.22$) and the information gap group ($M = 11.75$, $SD = 2.65$). The control group had the lowest mean score ($M = 10.35$, $SD = 0.93$). Subsequently, it is important to ascertain whether the mean difference in posttest scores holds statistical significance. Initially, it is important to assess the distribution of scores to identify a suitable statistical test for comparing means. In this case, the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality was used due to the sample size being less than 100. Table 6 shows the statistics for the distribution of posttest scores.

Table 6
The Normality Test of the IG and Control Groups' Posttest Scores

Test	Statistic	df	Sig.
Shapiro-Wilk	0.97	80	0.05

Table 6 shows that the Shapiro-Wilk test suggested that the data were approximately normally distributed, $W(80) = 0.97$, $p = .05$, indicating that the scores followed a normal distribution. Therefore, the researcher was permitted to conduct a parametric test to compare the means. Then, Levene's test was used to determine the homogeneity of variances (Table 7).

Table 7
The Levene Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Posttest Scores

Test Basis	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	3.72	3	76	0.02

According to Table 7, the p value of Levene's test was less than the significance level of .05 ($p = .02 < .05$). This result indicates that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not met. Therefore, the nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis H test was considered. Table 8 presents the mean ranks for the comparison of the experimental and control groups' posttest means.

Table 8
Mean Ranks for the Posttest Scores Across Groups

Group	N	Mean Rank
Information Gap	20	38.60
Sentence Completion	20	43.58
Task Repetition	20	57.15
Control	20	22.68

Table 8 indicates the task repetition group had the highest mean rank (57.15), followed by the sentence completion group (43.58) and the information gap group (38.60). The control group had the lowest mean rank (22.68). These rankings suggested that participants in the task repetition group tended to achieve higher posttest scores compared to the other groups, while the control group had the lowest rank. Then, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was run to examine differences in the posttest scores across the four groups (Table 9).

Table 9
Kruskal-Wallis Test for Posttest Scores Across Groups

Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig.
Kruskal-Wallis H	22.90	3	0.001

As shown in Table 9, the test revealed a statistically significant difference among the groups, $\chi^2(3) = 22.90$, $p < .001$. This indicates that at least one group's posttest scores differed significantly from the others. Post hoc comparisons were run to determine which specific groups differ using Mann-Whitney U tests (Table 10).

Table 10
Mann-Whitney U Tests for Posttest Scores Across Groups

Comparison	Mean Rank Group 1	Mean Rank Group 2	U	Z	p (2-tailed)
IG vs. SC	19.35	21.65	177.00	-0.63	0.53
IG vs. TR	15.90	25.10	108.00	-2.51	0.01
IG vs. CG	24.35	16.65	123.00	-2.12	0.03
SC vs. TR	16.60	24.40	122.00	-2.13	0.03
SC vs. CG	26.33	14.68	83.50	-3.20	0.001
TR vs. CG	28.65	12.35	37.00	-4.46	0.000

Note. IG = information gap; SC = sentence completion; TR = task repetition; CG = control group

As displayed in Table 10, the task repetition group scored higher than the other groups. Comparisons between the information gap and task repetition groups ($U = 108$, $p = .01$), and between the information gap and control groups ($U = 123$, $p = .03$) were significant. The sentence completion group also differed significantly from the task repetition ($U = 122$, $p = .03$) and from the

control group ($U = 83.5$, $p = .001$). the task repetition group scored significantly higher than the control group ($U = 37$, $p < .001$). No significant difference was found between the information gap and sentence completion groups ($U = 177$, $p = .53$). Overall, these results indicate that the task repetition group outperformed the other groups, while the control group scored the lowest, supporting the effectiveness of the experimental interventions.

4.2. Results for the Second Research Question

In order to answer the second question (i.e., What are Iranian ESP accounting students' attitudes towards receiving task-based instruction in their learning practice?), the researcher administered semi-structured interview among fifteen participants who were randomly chosen from each group. Their elicited answers were coded and categorized into some specific categories. Then, the frequency and percentage of each answer was recorded. Table 11 presents the statistics for frequency and percentage for the first item of the interview (i.e., Do you think TBLT will cause a change in your learning effectiveness?).

Table 11

The Statistics for Frequency and Percentage for the First Item of the Interview

Code	Answer Category	IG *f*	IG %	SC *f*	SC %	TR *f*	TR %	Total *f*	Total %
1	Yes	3	60	3	60	4	80	10	66
2	No	1	20	2	40	1	20	4	26
3	I have no idea	1	20	0	0	0	0	1	8

Note. IG = Information Gap group; SC = Sentence Completion group; TR = Traditional group. *f* = frequency; % = percentage.

As it can be seen in Table 11, more than half of the participants of three groups believe that TBLT practice is an effective teaching practice causing them to perform better in their learning, with 66% of the total sample responding Yes. Conversely, 26% of the participants indicated that TBLT would not improve their learning outcomes, while a smaller proportion (8%) reported having no clear opinion. Table 12 presents the statistics for frequency and percentage for the second item of the interview (i.e., What kind of differences do you see between the conventional form of teaching and TBLT?).

Table 12

The Statistics for Frequency and Percentage for the Second Item of the Interview

Code	Answer Category	IG f	IG %	SC f	SC %	TR f	TR %	Total f	Total %
4	TBLT is more innovative than the conventional practice	2	40	2	40	1	20	5	34
5	TBLT is more interesting than the conventional practice	2	40	1	20	3	60	6	40
6	TBLT is more sophisticated than the conventional practice	1	20	1	20	0	0	2	13
7	The conventional practice is easier than TBLT	0	0	1	20	1	20	2	13

Note. IG = Information Gap group; SC = Sentence Completion group; TR = Task Repetition group. *f* = frequency; % = percentage.

Table 12 shows the largest proportion of participants (40%) perceived TBLT as being more interesting than conventional teaching, while 34% regarded it as more innovative. A smaller group of participants (13%) described TBLT as more sophisticated, and another 13% noted that conventional teaching appeared easier than TBLT. Overall, these findings suggest that while most learners valued TBLT for its engaging and innovative features, a minority viewed it as more demanding compared to conventional methods. Table 13 presents the statistics for frequency and percentage for the third item of the interview (i.e., What is your opinion about the advantages and disadvantages TBI?).

Table 13

The Statistics for Frequency and Percentage for the Third Item of the Interview

Code	Answer Category	IG f	IG %	SC f	SC %	TR f	TR %	Total f	Total %
8	It was purposeful but difficult to execute.	3	60	1	20	2	40	6	40
9	It enhances my performance but is time-consuming.	1	20	3	60	0	0	4	26
10	It motivates me and helps my understanding. I think there were no major disadvantages for TBLT practice.	0	0	1	20	2	40	3	20
11	It was a totally boring process and there were no considerable advantages for this practice.	1	20	0	0	0	0	1	7
12	I have no idea about this item.	0	0	0	0	1	20	1	7

Note. IG = Information Gap group; SC = Sentence Completion group; TR = Task Repetition group. *f* = frequency; % = percentage.

According to Table 13, the most frequently reported view (40%) was that TBLT was purposeful but difficult to execute. Another 26% indicated that

TBLT enhanced their performance but was time-consuming, while 20% emphasized its motivational value and contribution to better understanding, with no major disadvantages noted. A smaller proportion of participants expressed negative or uncertain views: 7% considered TBLT totally boring with no considerable advantages, and another 7% stated that they had no opinion. Overall, these results suggest that while most participants acknowledged both the benefits and challenges of TBLT, only a small minority dismissed its value entirely. Table 14 presents the statistics for the fourth item of the interview (i.e., Were you comfortable with TBLT?).

Table 14

The Statistics for Frequency and Percentage for the Forth Item of the Interview

Code	Answer Category	IG f	IG %	SC f	SC %	TR f	TR %	Total f	Total %
13	Yes.	3	60	2	40	4	80	9	60
14	To some extent but not fully comfortable.	1	20	2	40	0	0	3	20
15	No.	1	20	0	0	1	20	2	13
16	It was even disturbing for me.	0	0	1	20	0	0	1	7

According to Table 14, 60% of the participants reported being comfortable with TBLT, while an additional 20% indicated they were somewhat comfortable but not fully at ease. In contrast, 13% of participants stated that they were not comfortable, and 7% described the experience as disturbing. Overall, the majority of participants expressed positive or moderately positive feelings toward TBLT, although a small minority viewed it as uncomfortable or even disruptive. Table 15 below presents the statistics for frequency and percentage for the fifth item of the interview (i.e., What kinds of differences did you realize in the classroom after the study?).

Table 15

The Statistics for Frequency and Percentage for the Fifth Item of the Interview

Code	Answer Category	IG f	IG %	SC f	SC %	TR f	TR %	Total f	Total %
17	In terms of classroom atmosphere, it was more attractive than before.	4	80	2	40	1	20	7	46
18	In terms of comprehensiveness, it was better than before.	0	0	1	20	3	60	4	27
19	All the students became engaged thoroughly in the process of learning.	1	20	2	40	1	20	4	27

Note. IG = Information Gap group; SC = Sentence Completion group; TR = Task Repetition group. *f* = frequency; % = percentage.

According to Table 15, 46% of the interviewees argued that the classroom situation was attractive and welcoming for them. For 27% of them, the TBLT practice was comprehensive and enhanced their understanding. The increasing classroom engagement was mentioned by 27% of the interviewees as a unique feature of this practice. These findings suggest that participants perceived improvements not only in the classroom environment but also in the depth of instruction and learner participation following the implementation of TBLT. Table 16 below presents the statistics for frequency and percentage for the sixth item of the interview (i.e., Would you like to continue your classes using TBLT?).

Table 16
The Statistics for Frequency and Percentage for the sixth Item of the Interview

Code	Answer Category	IG f	IG %	SC f	SC %	TR f	TR %	Total f	Total %
20	Yes	3	60	4	80	3	60	10	67
21	No	1	20	1	20	0	0	2	13
22	It depends on the situation	1	20	0	0	2	40	3	20

Note. IG = Information Gap group; SC = Sentence Completion group; TR = Task Repetition group. *f* = frequency; % = percentage.

According to Table 16, more than half of the participants wanted to continue this practice for entire semester. In contrast, 13% reported that they would not prefer to continue with TBLT, while 20% stated that their preference would depend on the situation. These findings indicate that the majority of learners favored the continuation of TBLT, though a minority expressed conditional or negative attitudes toward its ongoing use. Table 17 presents the statistics for frequency and percentage for the seventh item of the interview (i.e., Do you have any challenge when performing assigned tasks in TBLT classroom?).

Table 17
The Statistics for Frequency and Percentage for the seventh Item of the Interview

Code	Answer Category	IG f	IG %	SC f	SC %	TR f	TR %	Total f	Total %
23	The procedure of completing tasks was very troublesome for me.	3	60	2	40	3	60	8	54
24	TBLT made me confused when I went through its process.	1	20	2	40	0	0	3	20
25	I did not experience any challenge when using TBLT practice.	1	20	1	20	2	40	4	26

According to Table 17, more than half of the participants experienced difficulty with TBLT procedure. In contrast, 26% stated that they did not experience any challenges when using TBLT. These results suggest that although many learners encountered difficulties in carrying out tasks, a notable proportion managed the TBLT activities without significant problems. Table 18 presents the statistics for frequency and percentage for the eighth item of the interview (i.e., Some students find TBLT procedures and principals as weird and complicated activities to do in their classroom. Do you agree with them?).

Table 18

The Statistics for Frequency and Percentage for the Eighth Item of the Interview

Code	Answer Category	IG f	IG %	SC f	SC %	TR f	TR %	Total f	Total %
26	Yes.	2	40	1	20	2	40	5	33
27	No.	3	60	4	80	3	60	10	67

Based on Table 18, 67% of the interviewees were disagree with the claim that TBLT is a complicated and strange practice. For 33% of them, TBLT practice was complex and difficult to execute because of TBLT vague and ambiguous principals. These findings indicate that while a minority of learners perceived TBLT as unusual or overly complex, the majority did not share this view and appeared to find the approach more acceptable. Table 19 below presents the statistics for frequency and percentage for the ninth item of the interview (i.e., Do you believe practicing TBLT in your classroom makes you confused and brings you lots of problem?).

Table 19

The Statistics for Frequency and Percentage for the Ninth Item of the Interview

Code	Answer Category	IG f	IG %	SC f	SC %	TR f	TR %	Total f	Total %
28	Yes.	1	20	0	0	1	20	2	13
29	No.	4	80	4	80	4	80	12	80
30	I have no idea about that.	0	0	1	20	0	0	1	7

Based on Table 19, 80% of the interviewees did not find TBLT as a confusing and problem-rising practice. For 13% of them, TBLT was a troublesome and ambiguous practice that they experienced. Also, one of them did not have idea about TBLT regarding this question. Overall, these findings suggest that most learners viewed TBLT as a manageable instructional approach, with only a small minority experiencing notable difficulties.

Table 20 presents the statistics for frequency and percentage for the tenth item of the interview (i.e., If you have option to choose TBLT or the conventional teaching approach for your class, which one do you prefer?).

Table 20

The Statistics for Frequency and Percentage for the Tenth Item of the Interview

Code	Answer Category	IG f	IG %	SC f	SC %	TR f	TR %	Total f	Total %
31	TBLT	3	60	4	80	5	100	12	80
32	The conventional practice	1	20	1	20	0	0	2	13
33	Neither TBLT and nor the conventional practice	1	20	0	0	0	0	1	7

Based on Table 20, 80% of the interviewees preferred to follow and practice TBLT in their learning process, while TBLT was not an option for 13% of them. They preferred to follow conventional teaching practice for their learning. Also, for one of them, neither TBLT nor the conventional practice was the first preference.

The interview findings suggest that students generally found TBLT to be a more engaging and meaningful way to learn compared to traditional teaching. Many shared that it made lessons more interesting, motivated them, and helped them understand the material better, creating a livelier classroom atmosphere. At the same time, some admitted that completing tasks could be challenging, time-consuming, or occasionally confusing. Despite these difficulties, most students felt comfortable with TBLT, preferred it over conventional methods, and wanted to continue using it. Overall, TBLT appears to offer a rewarding learning experience, balancing its challenges with clear benefits for student engagement and performance.

The analysis of the quantitative data revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the effects of receiving information gap task, sentence completion task, and task repetition on Iranian accounting students' reading comprehension where the task repetition group outperformed other groups. Also, with a general view on the results of the qualitative part of the study, it can be said that the results of the quantitative part were confirmed.

5. Discussion

The present study was designed to investigate whether different types of tasks (i.e., information gap, sentence completion, and task repetition) produce statistically significant effects on the reading comprehension of

Iranian ESP accounting students. Second, the study aimed to explore Iranian ESP accounting students' attitudes towards TBLT.

Regarding the first finding of the study, the possible reason is the potential of the task repetition for raising students' awareness in three phases of conceptualization, formulation, and articulation. According to Bygate and Samuda (2005), in the process of task repetition there is the capability of raising awareness for task executers. This is because task repetition can promote linguistic development, quicker access to the information, and a higher level of attention for language learners. Also, Cook (2000) argued task repetition is considered to have potential for providing EFL learners to engage in fundamental aspects of their learning process through maximizing both focal and peripheral attentions, linguistic awareness, and authenticity of language structures used in task completion.

Considering the findings of the qualitative part of the study, it can be said that TBLT practice can improve students' assumptions and attitudes towards reading practice significantly. Also, there is general agreement on effectiveness of TBLT among students. In addition, for the majority of the participants TBLT was regarded an encouraging and facilitative practice for learning reading. These findings are in line with the fact that TBLT has great potential for language learning development. While performing a given task, language learners can practice improving their linguistic knowledge and performing skills simultaneously. Lin (2009) argued that learners are able to apply their communicative competence in an exchange between first and second languages through TBLT. Furthermore, it gives the learners the chance to learn and interact in a cooperative manner that contributes to their pedagogical and professional development.

Based on all the findings from the study, it is reasonable to conclude that TBLT strengthens the principles of CLT and aims to enhance students' linguistic range in a second language by encouraging participation in a variety of classroom activities (Ji & Pham, 2020). Consequently, language acquisition stems from developing suitable communicative tasks in the classroom, reflecting learner-centeredness, where students engage more actively in their learning process (Noroozi & Taheri, 2021). Additionally, TBLT emphasizes the incorporation of genuine materials, language abilities, and cognitive processes in language teaching, and it encourages meaningful communication. While carrying out tasks, students can gain additional exposure to the target language through reading or listening; this exposure may assist them in recognizing how meaning is conveyed. Such exposure may also support learners in improving their learning outcomes. (Sumarsono et al., 2020).

Moreover, TBLT enables learners to engage with the target language through listening, reading, or both. This participation supports learners in achieving learning outcomes. In other words, the exposure allows students to gain more opportunities to negotiate and understand task meanings and peer communication, receive both implicit and explicit feedback from peers or instructors, recognize the difference between the learner's output and the provided input, and reinforce memories of prior language outputs (Xu & Fan, 2021). Consequently, students noted a rise in classroom engagement and chances to utilize the target language, reduced their anxiety, and found enjoyment in classroom learning (Detken et al., 2024).

A central idea of this research, negotiation of meaning, entails a discussion between two or more individuals aimed at reaching an agreement on a matter of mutual interest (Bryfonski, 2024). It involves conversation, negotiation, and concessions from one or several parties to achieve a mutually acceptable outcome (Huang, 2024). This ability could support focused teaching and learning to improve the exchange of knowledge and concepts, providing significant help in enhancing students' performance in the classroom (Palanisamy & Rajasekaran, 2024).

6. Conclusions and Implications

Based on the above findings of the study, the researcher concluded that implementing TBLT practice in reading classroom can be highly effective. As Willis (1996) argued, TBLT shifts the focus from language forms and linguistic features toward deeper level of information processing. As this study investigates the TBLT practice in ESP context, it can be said that ESP teachers are required to provide their learners with the opportunity of linguistic knowledge and strategic competence development with the focus on their autonomous learning capacities. The embedded meaningfulness in TBLT makes it a very powerful practice for teaching reading among ESP students.

The findings of this study also lead the researcher to conclude that if ESP teachers want to implement TBLT practices (i.e., information gap task, sentence completion task, and task repetition) in their context, they should be aware and able to provide the classroom atmosphere welcoming enough to accept TBLT practices in any forms. ESP teachers should encourage their students to view learning as a cyclical, dynamic process requiring significant engagement and cooperation. Also, the classroom culture is so important because TBLT practice requires pair work and a collaborative mindset among students. Thus, the teacher should be cautious about classroom culture. If the situation is not ready, teachers are responsible for shifting the dominant classroom culture toward the acceptance of TBLT implementation.

The results of this study should be viewed considering certain limitations. The context of the study might be regarded its primary limitation. Exploring the impact of various contexts, like EFL compared to ESL environments, could be beneficial; however, the restricted budget and financial factors compelled the researcher to focus solely on the ESP context. Additionally, the unavailability of the large sample size prompted the researcher to focus the study exclusively on readily accessible participants. This study was also limited by its use of convenience sampling.

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