Perceptions of English Language Learners about Teaching of Reading Comprehension Skills: A View of Task-based Language Teaching Method

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Abstract

The present research was an endeavor to determine whether or not the adoption of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) can be an effective means of increasing the students' reading comprehension ability. Also, this paper explored the students' views towards the mentioned method. To fulfil the purposes of the study, a mixed method research was employed and 80 advanced EFL learners of university participated in the study that were assigned randomly to the experimental and control groups. Having instructed the two groups with the same texts but different methods of teaching during a term, the learners' reading performance results were compared through administering a reading posttest to both groups. The researchers in the control group class followed her regular teaching practice through the conventional book-based method, but, she applied task based method in three stages in the experimental group class. The obtained data were analyzed using t-test to examine the effectiveness of TBLT method as on students' reading performance. Moreover, the students' views of the experimental group were investigated through related questionnaire and interview. The findings revealed that the experimental group remarkably performed better than the control group. Therefore, TBLT had a significant effect on learners' reading performance compared to traditional reading instruction. On top of that, findings of the interviews and questionnaires demonstrated the participants' satisfaction with implementing TBLT method, and also revealed that they had positive views towards it.

INTRODUCTION

Task-based instruction (TBI) is considered as an alternative teaching method to traditional language teaching methods since it favors a methodology that aims at functional communicative language use (Brumfit, 1984; Willis, 1996; Ellis, 2003). Moreover, according to Ellis (2003) and

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Willis (1996), TBI is an effective approach, which creates a learning environment and learners are free to use the target language forms that they think are most likely to achieve communicative goals. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has gained remarkable attention within applied linguistics, though there have been few large-scale practical applications of it and little documentation concerning its implications or effectiveness as a basis for syllabus design, materials development, and classroom teaching. TBLT proposes the notion of "task" as a central unit of planning and teaching Although definitions of task change in TBLT, there is a common understanding that a task is an activity or goal which uses language, such as reading a map and giving directions, finding a solution to a puzzle, writing a letter, or reading a set of instructions, etc. (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Moreover, "Task" is one of the key concepts in task-based teaching and learning which is defined in various ways in the literature. In second language education, a "task" refers to an activity which emphasize on meaning and learners undertake using the target language in order to reach a specific purpose at the end of the task (Bygate et al., 2001). As Lee (2000) stated, tasks should motivate and encourage learners to complete the activity communicatively, and learners are provided with a goal to use the target language by doing tasks. Also, he added that in determined learning process, learners are not taught to use specific language forms. Instead, they are motivated to make and use target language by themselves and teacher's support, but not with immediate teacher's correction. In other words, the role of the teacher is to facilitate and observe the process of task-based communication (Lee, 2000). In the other place, Skehan (1996) mentioned that tasks should be designed to make a relation with the real world to enhance the communicative nature and meaning-focused of tasks. The relation to real life makes it more authentic and meaningful. As Ellis (2003) declared, authentic tasks refer to such tasks whose interactional patterns are similar to those in real

life situations. Apart from definitions that focus on the relation of tasks to real life, other ones underscore the pedagogical usefulness of tasks. He also added that pedagogic tasks are similar to authentic tasks, but they do not certainly aim to have interactional patterns which happen in the real world. Although the real world and pedagogic tasks are called goal-oriented, they are "form-unfocused" tasks which improve comprehension and production of language for communicative goals. Unlike unfocused tasks, the focused ones are formed to draw learners' attention to specific linguistic forms (Ellis, 2003).

Task-based language teaching (TBLT), known as a subcategory of communicative language teaching, is one of the most important methods in English teaching that was developed under the influence of communicative language teaching (Branden, 2006). Also, it should be mentioned that the general goal of language learning refers to the accurate, fluent, and effective use of the target language and TBLT is a teaching method which treats language as a tool for communication rather than object for study (Ellis, 2003). Recently, TBLT has received much attention from educators and researchers in various teaching fields, and a growing interest in language teaching environment on task-based approach was found. Traditional methods of English language teaching cannot help students better comprehend English when the focus is on reading comprehension. Besides, some of the language teachers believe that one reason for language learners' dissatisfaction can be related to the employing of the traditional methods of teaching in educational environment (Muhaimeed, 2013).

Facing some challenges, language teachers are exploring some effective methods to create a change in their classrooms. Generally, the problems are caused by learners' lack of motivation. Maximizing students' motivation and involvement has always been the primary concern of language teachers. It is worth mentioning that applying more communicative methods as TBLT in EFL classes creates a variety for language learners, encourages involvement, and improves

their language performance (Khalili Sabet & Tahriri, 2014). Teacher-centered methods of teaching seem useless and helpless in improving the students' reading ability and their motivation in English study in inside and outside the classroom. Focusing on teacher-centered methods and language forms may lead teaching reading skill in low efficiency and gradually makes the English learners less eager or willing to participate in English classes. Since the EFL curriculum has been changed, it is expected that teaching approaches will be changed accordingly. Besides, it is essential to elicit students' interests and present them with such a different and collaborative method in order to overcome the related problems. Seemingly, implementing task-based approach in teaching English skills have the potentials to shed some light on the issue at stake. In academic situation, most of the Iranian EFL students have difficulty with some of the language skills, especially reading comprehension ability. This is reflected in the scores of their examinations. Although task-based instruction has been explored in EFL classrooms, little work has been done on the effectiveness of TBLT at university level and being aware of students' views towards it. In other words, to the author's best knowledge, there are a few empirical studies to date on using TBLT tasks for reading comprehension ability at academic level. Hence, this paper may provide general information for program planners at the university level by providing an additional tool for the improvement of students' skills such as reading.

Research Objectives

The researchers attempted to evaluate the effect of task based language teaching (TBLT) on improving students' reading comprehension skills including students' perceptions. Moreover, the EFL learners' perceptions on the mentioned method of teaching were achieved by carrying out the study. Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions have been formed:

1. What is the effect of task based language teaching on improving students'

reading comprehension skills including students' perceptions?

2. What are the EFL learners' views towards task-based method in reading comprehension?

METHODS
Participants

This study was conducted with a total of 80 EFL students in two intact classes. The reason behind choosing intact classes was that researchers did not have a chance to access different classes on a randomized basis. Due to the administrative constraints, researchers selected intact classes and implemented the TBLT method. The participants attended English department of Azad University of Kerman, as EFL students. All of them had studied English teaching at this university for three academic years. To homogenize them, a language proficiency test was distributed among them. Thus, both male and female participants enjoyed having the same proficiency level. As Dornyei (2007) stated, cluster sampling is defined as a sampling method where multiple clusters of people are created from a population where they are indicative of homogeneous characteristics and have an equal chance of being a part of the sample. In accordance with Dornyei (2007) cluster sampling, all the advance EFL learners, were selected as the sample of this study. After homogenizing them, 40 students were randomly set in the control group, and 40 of them were the participants of the experimental group.

MATERIALS

This study employed some instruments to obtain data to answer research questions that were postulated earlier. The considered instruments were proficiency test, pre and post-test, questionnaire, and interviews.

Proficiency Test

The participants took part in paper-based TOFEL test (2018). It is the standardized, reliable, and valid test, which is known all over the world. The

purpose of it was to achieve homogeneity between them, so regarding the obtained scores, the students were selected. The test consists of 40 multiple-choice reading comprehension questions, and the scores were calculated out of 20. The content validity of the test items was evaluated by three experience professors in the field of language teaching. Once again, the reliability of the test was found to be .78 using KR-21. Out of 89 students, 80 participants whose scores on the language proficiency test fell within ±1 standard deviation of the mean score, took part in the present research.

Pre and Post-test

Exploring the effectiveness of task based instruction on the development of EFL learners' reading skill of the Iranian EFL learners was the main purpose of the study. To achieve this goal, a standard academic IELTS Test has been used as the instrument for pre-test and post-test to collect data on their performances. The standard IELTS Test consists of 40 questions on reading skill was used to examine the participants' improvement. Pre-test was administered by researchers before the treatment. However, at the end of the treatment, post-treatment reading comprehension test, similar to the pre-tests, was administered to 40 students of experimental groups. The same procedure as in the pre-treatment test was followed in the post treatment test. The setting was their regular classrooms and the treatment lasted for a semester.

The content validity of the test items was evaluated by three experts in the field of language teaching. All the experts were Ph.D. university instructors majoring in English language teaching. That is to say, one of the instructor was full professor and the others were assistant professor in the field of language teaching. Three experts were asked to rate each item as to whether it was congruent with the objectives and the level of comprehension stated using the evaluation form constructed by researchers. To ensure the reliability of the tests, two parallel forms of the tests were calculated by Kuder-Richardson-20

formula (KR-20) after the pilot study. The results were 0.81 and 0.82, which can be interpreted that both of them had high reliability. Also, all test items were analyzed for difficulty index and discrimination index of the test.

Questionnaire

The researchers decided to apply a questionnaire for examining the participants' views on TBLT method. That is to say, to explore the views of the participants in experimental groups, a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire developed by Jeon and Hahn (2006) was used. Since the purpose of this study was to explore students' perceptions about teaching of reading comprehension skills, only the experimental groups completed the questionnaire after the task experience. The questionnaire includes the items which were intended to be taught during the treatment. The reliability of the questionnaire was analyzed by Cronbach's Alpha test and reported as 0.76. Also, to validate it, three distinct steps took place, which were;

1. Suitability of the questions was investigated for the study population by referring to the similar studies in similar cases.
2. Measurement properties of the questionnaires were assessed by the characteristics of the present study population.
3. Length of the questionnaires and the questions difficulty were modified by referring to the similar literature.

Interview

To investigate students' views towards the implementation of the TBLT method, some interviews designed by Jeon and Hahn (2006), were done in this study. Participants of the experimental group were interviewed based on data saturation technique, and they were asked some open-ended questions about whether they found this strategy (TBLT) useful or not, how they felt about the usefulness of using TBLT, and its effect on their reading comprehension ability. In

qualitative research, data saturation technique has attained widespread acceptance as a methodological principle. It is usually taken to show that, on the basis of the data that have been gathered hitherto, further data collection or analysis are not necessary. In the interview process of this study, when the researchers began to hear the same comments again and again, data saturation was being reached, then they stopped gathering information and started analyzing data that have been collected. In other words, participants of the study were interviewed as long as no new information was coming.

PROCEDURE

A mixed method research (MMR) was employed for carrying out the project. It is defined as the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study (Ary et al., 2014). Triangulation in research refers to the use of multiple techniques for gathering or handling data within a single study. In the current study, the aim of triangulation was to seek confirmation of received findings. Also, the use of triangulation procedure facilitated the researchers' attempt to provide a complete picture of the phenomenon explored in the study. Thus, a triangulation procedure has been adopted through using pre and post-tests, questionnaire, and interview with the students to collect data. That is to say, the quantitative analyses of the study covers the impact of the independent variable of the study (implementation of TBLT method) on the dependent variable of the study (EFL learners' reading skill) which was measured on an interval scale. This study was conducted with a total of 80 EFL students in two intact classes and the researchers had to rely on the available classes. Both male and female students participated in the study. Exploring the effectiveness of task based instruction on the development of EFL learners' reading skill of the Iranian EFL learners was the main purpose of the study. To achieve this goal, a standard academic TOFEL Test has been used as the instrument for pre-test and post-test to collect data on their performances. The standard TOFEL Test consists of 40 questions on reading was used to examine the participants' improvement. Pre-test was administered by the researchers before the treatment. However, at the end of the treatment, post-treatment reading comprehension test, was administered to 40 students of experimental group. The same procedure as in the pre-treatment test was followed in the post treatment test. The setting is their regular classrooms and the treatment lasted for twelve sessions (one semester).

Actually, after administering pre-test and post-test in two groups, the scores were collected by the researchers. To compare the performances of the participants on the post-tests, the mean scores were compared through a paired sample t-tests to highlight the possible significant differences between the subjects' performances after the treatment. Moreover, to explore the views of the participants in the experimental group, a Likert-scale questionnaire was used to measure the participants' views on TBLT method. Since the purpose of this study was to explore students' reaction to task-based instruction, only the experimental group (40 students) completed the perception questionnaire after the task experience. Also, the EFL learners in the experimental group were interviewed based on data saturation method and asked some open-ended questions about using task-based instructions in classroom. In other words, 12 EFL students of the experimental group answered the questions carefully without any time limitation. The students' interviews were conducted in English and there was no need to be translated.

According to Willis and Willis (2007), selecting the topics that feature in the students' English textbooks can be the most appropriate ones. Researchers explored the reading texts from the English students' textbook "Developing Reading Skills" which was thought to the advanced learners in Azad University. The mentioned book consists a collection of texts emphasizing guided reading practice and the development of reading speed, for those who want to strengthen their reading skills for academic and career purposes.

The texts have been selected from current notification, magazine, and newspaper writing. Tested with native and non-native speakers of English and it is appropriate for both ESL and EFL classes. The book included 12 units, but the students were asked to select the six most interesting topics. It should be mentioned that the book and the texts were the same for both groups. Each lesson lasted for 2 sessions and the time of each period was 80 to 90 minutes. In the experimental group, the researchers provided the students with a thorough introduction to the basic principles of the approach and she tried to make the students familiar with different forms of activities they were supposed to have in the following sessions. In the following sessions, researchers applied different task based techniques, problem solving activities, collaborative tasks, and group work in the classroom instruction. It is worth mentioning that the present study adopted the framework of task-based English reading instruction consisting the three phases of Task-based presented by Willis (1996).

Teacher-centered training was applied in the control group. In each session, the teacher read the new text and then several students were asked to read each paragraph of the text again. At the end of each paragraph, meaning of the new words was identified by the teacher. Also, the teacher explained the grammar points directly and wrote down all the points on the board. After that, the students had to do the activities and exercises of the text individually. Finally, the students read their answers to the class, and if they were incorrect, the teacher would correct them and the students took all the notes. All in all, in a traditional book-centered method, teacher plays an important role in the learning process. In other words, teacher considers as an information provider or evaluator to handle student to get the right answers. However, the student is viewed as a learner who passively receive information.

As mentioned earlier, TBLT method aimed at breaking away from the traditional book-centered method of teaching language skills. At the beginning of each session, new vocabularies were taught to the students of the experimental group. Also, the grammar part (related to the text) was taught inductively and the students were presented with some examples on the board. After that, the students were asked to use the new vocabularies for making sentences. In the second part of each session (about half an hour) they reviewed the new words of the previous session and answered the questions. In the pre-task phrase, the researcher (teacher) introduced and defined the topic to the learners and they were provided with the obvious instructions for performing the task. The students engaged in activities which helped them to remember the necessary words and phrases to do the task. More importantly, the teacher observed the class and helped the students to recall some of the words or phrases that could be useful for the task. In the task cycle, the students tried to do the task in small groups or pairs while the researchers was monitoring and providing encouragement. Then, the students worked on a report and prepared it for the class (in a group) about how they had done the task and also about their achieved findings or conclusions. Moreover, they had to indicate the outcomes and results to their classmates in written format or orally. In other words, they had to report to the whole class about what had happened during their task and what they had done. Thus, they had to practice on their reports for presenting in the class. Next, in the language focus stage (final phrase), specific language features from the tasks were marked and applied for conducting practice activities. Importantly, the teacher tried to keep the time in both classes (experimental and control group) the same in all the stages of carrying out the research. Having finished the instructional period, the two groups took part in English reading comprehension posttest. The English reading comprehension posttest from IELTS was administered to both groups and the scores of both were compared with those of pretest to see if the groups performed differently. According to all the obtained scores, the effectiveness of the task-based English reading instruction was evaluated.

Design and Analyses

Creswell (2011) mentioned that "research designs are procedures for collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting data in research studies which represent different models for doing research, and these models have distinct procedures associated with them" (P.53). This study aimed at examining the impact of TBLT implementation on EFL students' reading comprehension and its effectiveness on teaching and learning from both teachers' and students' viewpoints. Munn and Drever (1990) mentioned that when the participants respond to different instruments in the same way, the data become more reliable. A mixed method research (MMR) was employed for carrying out the project. It is defined as the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study (Ary et al., 2014). In fact, a triangulation method has been adopted through using tests, questionnaires, and interviews with the students and teachers to collect data. Besides, the qualitative procedure includes an interview with teachers and observing the experimental groups, the quantitative method contains the descriptive results of the pre and post- tests and the questionnaire were provided. That is to say, the quantitative analyses of the study covers the impact of the independent variable of the study (implementation of TBLT method) on the dependent variable of the study (EFL learners' reading skill) which was measured on a ratio scale.

Regarding the data collected during the experimental phase of the study, the raw scores obtained from the proficiency test, the pre-test and post-test were submitted to statistical analyses. In data collection stage, the scores of all tests were taken for analyzing. Actually, after administering pre-test and post-test in both groups (experimental and control), the scores were collected by researchers. To compare the performances of the participants on the post-tests, the mean scores of the participants after the treatment were compared through a paired sample t-tests to highlight the possible significant differences between the subjects' performances after the treatment. In

addition, the interviews with students of the experimental group were analyzed, and interpreted qualitatively by researchers. As mentioned earlier, experimental group were interviewed based on data saturation method and asked some open-ended questions. As long as no new information, so just 12 of them were interviewed. In fact, coding data and frequencies of responses were calculated for analyzing the interviews' responses. Also, the data from students' responses to the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively. The statistical data obtained from the Likert-scale questionnaire, were examined using SPSS software version 24. Then, means and standard deviations for all responses were compiled and interpreted in the following part.

The results of data analysis for the mentioned research question are presented below. The following table, displayed mean and standard deviation of all the students' scores of the two groups, control and experimental. According to careful analysis, in both groups, the mean score has increased in the post-tests. However, the difference between the means of the pre and post-test in the experimental group is remarkable.

RESULTS

Quantitative Data (Descriptive Statistics)

1. What is the effect of task based language teaching on improving students' reading comprehension skills including students' perceptions?

Regarding the result of pre-test, mean and standard deviation of learners' reading comprehension in the control group is 15.35 and 2.40 (M = 15.35, SD = 2.40), and in the experimental group is 15.82 and 2.60 respectively (M = 15.82, SD = 2.60). However, considering the results of the post-test, mean and standard deviation of learners' reading in the control group is 15.45 and 2.39 (M = 15.45, SD = 2.39), and in the experimental group is 17.35 and 2.33 respectively (M = 17.35, SD = 2.33).

To compare the difference scores of the pre and post-tests of reading comprehension ability

of the two groups (control and experimental), independent t-test was used with the assumption of not being the equality of the variance (P-Value of Levene's Test = 0.000). Considering the significance level of this test (P-value = 0.04) which is less than .05 (α = 0.05), it can be said that with more than 95% of certainty, by removing the effect of pre-test scores, the mean of reading comprehension ability in the two groups was significantly different (t= -2.0, df=66.381, p<0.05). Moreover, based on the following table (Table 1), comparing the mean scores showed that the EFL learners' reading comprehension ability in the experimental group was more than the control group (M_2 = 1.33, SD = 0.99> M_1 = 0.95, SD = 0.64). The effect size, which is an indicator for determining the magnitude of the effect of the intervention, has been investigated by various individuals in different ways. These indices are independent from the sample size. There are numerous formulas and mathematical equations to measure this index, and the most widely used indicators of the effect size, is Doy Cohen. The effect size is ES = 0.47, which is equivalent to r = 0.227. Regarding the thresholds set for these two indicators, it can be concluded that the greatness of the effect size was small for the second group. Therefore, it can be claimed that by eliminating the effect of pre-test scores on reading comprehension of the two groups, the implementing of TBLT method has been the intervention effect on the EFL learners' reading comprehension of the experimental group compared to the control group (which has no intervention in training).

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of T-tests in Terms of Reading Comprehension Skill of Both Groups

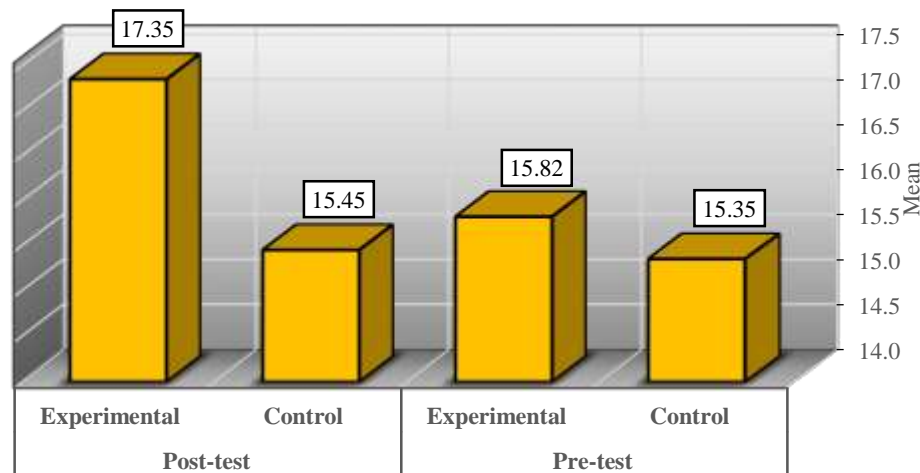| Tests	Group	Control (n1=40)		Experimental (n2=40)	
	Statistics Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	Learners' Reading Comprehension	15.35	2.40	15.82	2.60
Post-test	Learners' Reading Comprehension	15.45	2.39	17.35	2.33

Figure 1.The Mean Scores of Both Groups in Pre-test and Post-test

Moreover, as figure 1 presented, the students' performance of the experimental group was better than control group. That is to say, the EFL learners' reading comprehension was improved dominantly by TBLT method.

2. What are the EFL learners' views towards task-based method in reading comprehension?

One-sample T test was used for analyzing the third research question which the data were gathered through the related questionnaire (Table 3). Since the measured scale was

5, the base average was considered as 3. Considering the significance level of this test, it can be said with more than 99% of certainty, there is a significant difference between the base mean and the mean of this variable ($\Delta M = 0.58$). Also, the average acceptance of individuals on TBLT method was more than the base average (M = 3.58). That is to say, the learners of the experimental group who have thought by TBLT method, indicated their great agreements on the items related to this method (t= 10.19, df =39, p<0.01).

Table 2.
One-Sample T-test for Evaluating Students' Views on Implementing TBLT

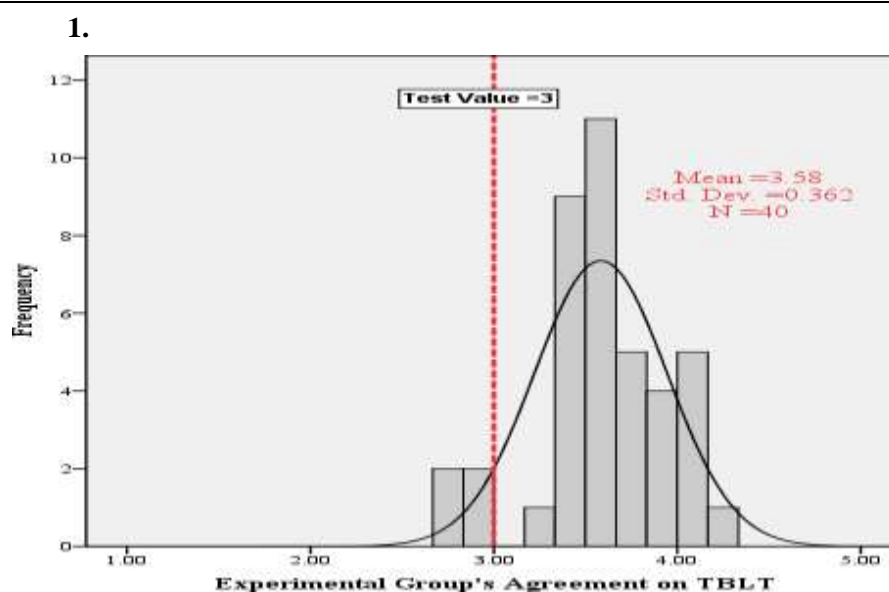| Test Value =3					
Mean of Variable	**N**	**T**	**df**	**P-Value**	**Mean Difference**
3.58	40	10.19	39	0.000	0.58

1.

Figure 2.Students' Views on Implementing TBLT

Additionally, as figure 2 displayed, the average acceptance of individuals on TBLT method was more than the base average (M = 3.58). That is to say, the learners of the experimental group who have thought by TBLT method, indicated their great agreements on the items related to this method (t= 10.19, df =39, p<0.01).

Qualitative Data (Students' Perceptions)
Interview with students was the last stage of gathering data in the current project. As mentioned before, the students took part in the interview based on data saturation method.

1. Do you prefer the traditional language teaching method which focuses on grammar and vocabulary or the Task-Based language teaching approach which emphasizes meaning and interaction? Why?

Most of the students in the experimental group preferred task-based language teaching method. As they stated "This method provided an opportunity to interact a lot with classmates by engaging in task-based activities". In their views, they preferred to use this method because most of them dared to take part in the class. Also, some of the students mentioned that "I am motivated and encouraged to participate for completing tasks". In addition, some of the participants believed that working and learning in a group were more effective and the information learnt was

more permanent than information learnt individually. For instance, two of the students reported that "If I do not understand a text when we read by myself, I can ask our classmates". Also Sara, one of the students stated that "I am more confident in myself and feel relaxed about the learning process". Surprisingly, two of the students respectively said that "I like to use this method in the other courses in English department" and "I prefer to employ this method by other teachers of different courses". Totally, the students of the experimental group focused on the positive effect of implementing TBLT method than traditional method as they were able to teach some points to their classmates. The findings from the above question seem that Task-based reading instruction provided plenty of chances for the students to participate in the class. In my view, studying in a group and presenting for the class increased their motivation and confidence that can be assumed as the positive effects of TBLT method.

2.   What did you like more about the implementation of TBLT method?

According to the participants' views, they totally liked learning through TBLT method. In their words, the students referred to some concepts as "Responsibility, relaxation, and confidence in such environment". Also, they emphasized on "Sharing and contributing the materials to their peers". Furthermore, some of them uttered that "learning in groups is more enjoyable than sitting and memorizing individually". More importantly, six of the students commented that "Faster and better learning happened by working in group" and the same number mentioned on "Asking numerous questions from other students in the group/class". However, one of them notified that "I was nervous when I spoke with my teacher, but I was not worry with my classmates. Two of the participants reported that "When I studied alone I skipped some parts which had difficulty in understanding them, but I could ask my classmates to help me when they experienced learning through TBLT method of teaching" and the other pointed out that " I ignored difficult ac-

tivities before, but working in a group allowed me to ask my friends and do them". The above statements make clear that TBLT was a favorable method for the students as they recalled some particular concepts as boosting their responsibility, engagement, calmness, interest, motivation, etc. Totally, in their views, they achieved some advantages of this method which they liked and prefer to use it for their reading comprehension ability.

3.   What you did not like about the implementation of TBLT method?

It is worth mentioning that some of the students encountered a few problems in using TBLT method in the class. In their words, "The problems were related to write a report for the class which was one of the important group activities". Some of them were not able to prepare a report successfully and found some mistakes in their reports, as three of the interviewees declared that "It was hard for me to write a report in pairs", "I got anxiety with writing a report to the class", and "The most difficult part is writing a report, I don't like to write it". Another problem that they found in the group activity referred to the conflicts they met in giving their reports to each other and comparing the outcomes. That is to say, every member in the group regarded his/her report was better than the others. Also, several of students did not show their interests in doing the tasks, in their ideas "The tasks were too long and difficult", "The tasks were not suitable for their level" or "Some of the tasks were not clear enough to do". At the end, most of them argued about the "Time limitation that was inadequate for carrying out the tasks", especially the tasks requiring the students to write. It was evident from the interviews that providing the report to the whole class was not an easy activity for some of them. It seemed they were not able to report successfully and some of them found some mistakes in their reports. Also, as one of the teachers (observer) mentioned earlier, "time constraint was a major problem found in this study". Obvi-

ously, the students were not provided with the sufficient time.

    4. What is your idea about the group tasks you have done during this course?

The results of the interview showed that the members of the TBLT group found the activities useful and fun that encouraged them to participate in class activities. Also, the students remarked that "the received feedback from the classmates and teacher was constructive" and added "It was not such a feedback in the other classes". Although some of the learners considered some tasks were difficult, others found them easy and comprehensible. For example, one of them noted that "As I expected, the tasks were at the normal level and also useful, but a few of them were a little vague". While, three of them respectively reported that "TBLT tasks were completely obvious", "I could cooperate with my classmates and complete the tasks easily" and " Doing the tasks was not difficult for me and other students of the group". It should be noted that a great numbers of the interviewed students who had experienced TBLT method announced that such cooperative tasks increased motivation and competition among them as they preferred to continue the same activities. All in all, the participants of the experimental group were satisfied with the group tasks which practiced during the course.

    5. Are you satisfied with the outcome of the course?

A few of the respondents said that "Learning from the teacher was better than learning from the classmates or in group", but they recognized the advantages of both. In their opinions, "The teacher was professional, knew more ways of explaining and teaching, and provided more correct information". Thus, they preferred to learn from the teacher than their classmates. Amazingly, many of the interviewees informed that the course was helpful for them and they were agreed to participate in such classes. Two of the inter-

viewed students asserted that "Since such group activities and tasks are not usually applied in regular courses at the university, I would participate in future courses if they were available" and" I like to participate actively in the courses that the teachers employ TBLT method". It should be noted that three of the respondents did not indicate their deep satisfaction, but they were pleased with what they learned because they found the course offered many new things. For instance, one of them said that "The course was useful and informative since my classmates used vocabulary in context and negotiated the meaning". Totally, the results of the interview revealed that most of the participants were satisfied with their achievements and the received feedback during classroom interactions. Particularly, they indicated their satisfaction in terms of the interactions with their classmates and the teacher.

DISCUSSION

The present study looked into the task based teaching instruction and students' perceptions. As this research started with the assumption that implementing TBLT could enhance the Iranian EFL students' reading comprehension ability, the experimental group was thought by TBLT method, by contrast, the control group followed conventional method which received teacher's explanations of the materials. Having administered quantitative method includes pre-test, post-test and questionnaire, as well as qualitative method contains interview, researchers realized that implementing TBLT method affected the students' reading comprehension ability and their views towards it.

First, t- tests for independent samples were conducted in order to compare the post- test mean score of the experimental and control groups in overall reading comprehension ability. Based on the received data, there were statistically significant differences at 0.05 level between the mean score of the experimental group exposed to the task-based program, and the control group received regular instruction. That is to say, the analysis of the t-test revealed that the mean

score has increased in post-tests of both groups. However, it has been statistically increased in the experimental group which is reported as 1.53. Findings from the quantitative analysis revealed that the implementation of the mentioned method contributed to the students' development in terms of overall reading comprehension ability. To sum up, the experimental group out-performed the control group on the post-test in reading comprehension skill. It worth mentioning that the results of the present study are in accord with the findings of some previously conducted research (Rezaei et al., 2017; Chalak, 2015; Poorahmadi, 2012). For example, on a relevant study conducted by Rezaei et al., (2017), the effect of different types of task has investigated on intermediate Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension performance. Findings of the study showed that the second task including the activities as reading, noting, and discussing, found to be more effective in enhancing learners' reading skill. In another study by Chalak (2015), an experimental research on TBLT was conducted to see its impact on reading skills. The students of experimental group provided a positive result comparing to the controlled group in the post reading tests. In addition, Poorahmadi (2012) carried out a study on the Iranian EFL learners and found that TBLT was effective in improving their reading comprehension ability of the experimental group. The results of the present study are also congruent to the some previous studies (e.g., Bahar & Bhuiyan, 2019; Rubaiat, 2018; Hokmi, 2005) reporting the students' reading ability had been increased significantly after learning through task-based activities (Bahar & Bhuiyan, 2019; Rubaiat, 2018; Hokmi, 2005). For instance, in a more recent study conducted by Alptekin (2006) revealed that task based method and activities had the potentials to help students improve reading skill. Rubaiat (2018) has also focused on the impact of TBLT on improving ESL learners' reading skill. The results indicated that both students and the teachers accepted the fact that tasks helped in improving their reading which the researchers also observed in the classes.

Additionally, the questionnaire and some interviews were the related instruments for gathering data. Regarding the quantitative analysis, one-sample t-test was used for analyzing the students' views, and a significant difference between the base mean and the mean of this variable was found which the average acceptance of individuals on TBLT method was more than the base average (M = 3.58). Accordingly, the learners of the experimental group thought by TBLT method, indicated their great agreements on this method of teaching. Generally, the students' views on task based reading instruction were summarized in the two main categories which is related to their satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Also, they have some comments on the group activities. In terms of their satisfaction, the interviewed students reported that task-based English reading instruction provided students various types of tasks that increased their interests and motivation to take part in class, interaction with teacher and classmates, and contribution to each other's learning. In other words, EFL learners had harmonious relationship with their classmates and often did their utmost to complete the tasks in pairs/groups and provided prompt help to their classmates. This kind of communication improves the students overall abilities. As Vygotsky (1978) noted, social interaction plays a vital role in the development of individuals' cognition. Besides, the EFL learners believed that their responsibilities, confidence, and relaxation have been increased which lead to their reading comprehension skill. On the contrary, they were dissatisfied with some mistakes in their reports, difficult, and too long texts. Also, they referred to time limitation and some conflicts between the members as other dissatisfied factors. In Addition, most of the students were pleased by group activities and tasks during the class, as they regarded them useful and effective which increased their motivation and followed the constructive feedback. Similar to Willis's (1996) idea, doing a task in pairs or groups has remarkable benefits as increasing the students' confidence to attempt without fear of being corrected in front of the class, widening

their experience of interaction, providing learners' opportunities to benefit from understanding, engaging students in using language purposefully, and making learners to participate in a complete interaction. Regarding most of the students' comments, TBLT method is the effective and useful method, and the results supported the positive effects of the task-based activities. These pieces of evidence were part of the participants' statements as *"I prefer to use this method because I dared to take part in the class", "I am motivated and encouraged to participate for completing tasks", "working and learning in a group were more effective and the information learnt was more permanent than information learnt individually", and "I prefer to employ this method by other teachers of different courses".* Also, students' words highlighted that activities of TBLT method motivated participants to complete the tasks and encouraged more classroom interactions among EFL learners which lead to improve their reading comprehension skill. From all the viewpoints, it is obvious to see though a few participants were not in favor of TBLT method, most of the EFL students showed positive attitude and asserted that TBLT method improved their motivation to learn and helped them in improving the language skill as reading comprehension ability. The findings support with what Carless (2002) achieved in implementing TBLT. He announced that TBLT provides successful language learning for learners by actively involving them in doing tasks which results in increasing their motivation. In a similar vein, Namazian et al., (2017) carried out a research towards the effect of task-based method on students' motivation and a great motivation was found among the participants of the experimental group according to the results of motivation questionnaire.

CONCLUSION

Although limited in scope, this research tried to examine the impact of task-based method on improving the Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability, as well as to gauge the EFL leaners' views after implementing TBLT.

Throughout this study, the researchers obviously observed that implementing various tasks, following task cycles, producing cooperative learning, and different types of feedback provided the learners of the experimental group with an environment in which they were interested in what they were reading and achieved. Based on Grainger et al., (2005), such an environment is characteristically conducive towards the creative context that has the potential of institutionalizing interaction, involvement, and communication in class and can together with certain other features which have result in the enhancement of both the creativity and learners' reading comprehension ability.

The quantitative analysis of the students' scores revealed that implementing task based language teaching method had remarkably effect on their reading comprehension skill. As it was obvious, the experimental group achieved tangible progress in their reading skill after implementing the method comparing their reading performance before the program implementation. Thus, the quantitative results proved the effectiveness of the proposed method (TBLT) in improving the advanced students' overall reading performance. Besides, the received data from the students' questionnaires highlighted their positive views on different aspects of TBLT method. As well as that, the qualitative data from the open-ended questions indicated that the applying this method to reading courses were challenging somehow, but they were fun, interesting, motivating, effective, and useful. Also, the students' reports on implementing the method showed that such tasks in English reading class created a variety for students' interaction and involvement which lead to improve reading comprehension ability. All in all, the overall participants' satisfaction with the task used in the EFL class was achieved by carrying out this study. Several factors in the process of conducting the present research might have limited the generalizability of the findings. At first, the method of sampling did not follow true randomization procedure, but rather complete intact classes participated in the

study. Second, the participants knew they were being tested as part of an experiment, although they were not informed about its exact purpose. There is a possibility that such differences might have influenced the participants in some ways. Third, the specific participant population, native speakers of Persian learning English in EFL situations, limited the generalizability of the findings. A larger sample size would make the results of the study more powerful and reliable. Replication studies with larger and more varied populations would expand the scope of the findings. Lastly, the specific features of the instruments employed in the current study might have influenced the results. Regarding the mentioned factors, the generalizability of results is questionable.

On the basis of findings, the study have certain implications for some individuals. At first, teacher should be careful in selecting materials for the instruction. It would be better to select the topics related to the learners' interests that they can expand their language proficiency into content areas of personal interest. Also, it is essential to train teachers how to deal with mixed ability students. If a teacher knows how to put learners into groups and set different homework to students with different level, mixed ability students may not really cause problems. Furthermore, the teacher should provide their students a chance to select the reading text based on their interests. Based on Müller-Hartmann and Ditfurth (2010), different texts, activities, tasks, and materials avoid boredom and raise learners' interest. The second implication is related to the types of the task. By adopting TBLT framework, the teacher should provide the learners a variety of enjoyable tasks. Providing a variety of tasks can affect the students' improvement and make positive views towards the lesson. Besides, teachers are recommended to provide an enjoyable learning environment for their students. Classroom atmosphere is very important for learning. The students make use of more opportunities of learning when they relax and free in the classroom. Additionally, the results highlighted that teachers and learners need sufficient time to do learning tasks.

Thus, administrators should devote suitable time to the related courses. Other pedagogical implication of the findings deals with educational settings. A strong channel of communication between administrators and teachers should be promoted. That is to say, a lack of communication between the administrators and teachers may arise negative views of teachers toward the implementation of TBLT. In order to enhance students' English competence, administrators and teachers should make efforts to overcome such obstacles in the language environment. Lastly, this study offers some implications not only for EFL teachers in academic situation, but also for teachers at public schools. Although EFL learners in Iranian schools are not accustomed to TBLT, it does not mean that instructors should put TBLT aside and follow traditional methods and teacher-centered of language teaching. As the EFL learners' views of the current study to TBLT were positive, EFL teachers may encourage to adopt this approach in the EFL classes. Consequently, decision makers in charge of the educational system should do their best to apply and promote the mentioned method. More importantly, for getting favorable results in implementing TBLT, teachers should be given the chance to be educated in fields relating to the task-based planning, implementation, and evaluation. For this purpose, some language teaching programs and workshops should familiarize teachers with the strengths and weaknesses of TBLT as well as its basic techniques and principles. Also, some training courses are required to be held for teachers to understand about different aspects of TBLT as well as to develop their professional skills. In Richards & Farrell's (2005) views, opportunities for in-service training are necessary to the long-term improvement of teachers and also for the long-term success of the programs they work. Above all, textbooks should include authentic materials and appropriate information for the Iranian context, meet the varied needs of language classes and serve language learners' goals in order to work well in particular teaching and learning contexts.

This paper provides general information for program planners at the university level by providing an additional tool for the improvement of students' reading skills. At the local level, the study may contribute to consult and re-design of courses in the curriculum renewal process in many universities and colleges. Moreover, some experience in TBLT helps teachers in designing more focused tasks on the particular requirements of students as well as assist them in modifying tasks based on the students' needs. Also, the study can provide EFL teachers with a motivated language teaching procedure which they can use in classroom to improve their students' achievement in English. Such a study can be essential in terms of exploring the effectiveness of applying task-based approach in educational environment as well as finding the applicability of applying TBLT method on advanced levels considering EFL learners' perceptions towards the method. In terms of practical significance, it can be stated that cooperative and collaborative teaching strategies are employed in many colleges and universities worldwide. All in all, implementing activities in university curriculum can improve through communication and learners' perceptions. Applying various tasks in EFL classes provides an enjoyable environment for learning and increasing motivation. At end, finding easier and better methods of teaching and comprehending reading texts in foreign language and making learners motivated and interested in EFL classes would be worthwhile.

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