

**Comparing the Efficiency of Task-based Interactive  
Language Teaching and Task-based  
Language Teaching on Language  
Learners' Fear of Negative Evaluation  
in University Heterogeneous Classes**

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**Abstract**

Psychological barriers have always had negative effects on English learning. This research was done to compare the efficiency of TBILT and TBLT on learners' fear of negative evaluation. The statistical population included all 4200 Babol Azad University students of whom 320 were volunteers to participate in English language classes via public invitation. Then, 90 students were selected using available sampling model and were placed randomly in three groups (two experimental and one control). Before starting teaching, Leary's fear of negative evaluation questionnaire with Cronbach's alpha of .769 was administered, and then using three methods namely TBILT in the first experimental class, TBLT in the second one, and Traditional method (GTM) in control group, the teacher taught in 20 sessions, 90 minutes each. After the post test, the two-way single variable co-variance and the Post Hoc Tukey Test revealed that both experimental groups did much better than the control group ( $p < .001$ ). On the other hand, the TBILT group acted much stronger than the TBLT one ( $p < .001$ ).

**Keywords:** TBILT, TBLT, fear of negative evaluation, heterogeneous class

### **Introduction**

The necessity of learning English in the era of science, technology and communication is an absolute need (Khani & Tarlani, 2016); however, there are some barriers –linguistic or psychological- for some learners to get through it as a foreign language (Sharma & Sharma, 2017). Hence, considering the importance of learning English as a common language among the nations, furthering its speakers throughout the world and the need to be in contact with all the brilliant thinkers, the owners of science and technology, we extremely feel need to master this entering key (Brock-Utne, 2016).

There has been a long debate among the applied linguists and educational psychologists in terms of the best way of teaching English (Stern, 1983; Richards, 2014). The history of language teaching in most Asian countries including ours, reveals that rather than receiving joy and merits from the benefits of learning an international language, most language learners feel a kind of despair, anxiety, apprehension, and inefficiency (Atef & Kashani 2011; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017), except those who based on inner influential personality traits have the required arousal to deal with the case (Mastan & Maarof, 2014). In such circumstances, the appropriate teaching methods can pave the way and remove or lessen the learning barriers.

It is crystal clear that a great number of learners suffer from shared barriers due to their similar psychological characteristics (Chen, 2005), including lack of motivation (Kormos & Csizer, 2008), anxiety (Liu & Huang, 2011), fear of negative evaluation (Aydin, 2008), psychological stress as the result of negative thinking (Sampson, 2018), negative attitude toward western languages and their native speakers (Elyildirim & Ashton, 2006), lack of the required self-confidence (Dornyei, 2003) and many others which have always acted as the interventions. Consequently, learning a foreign language by the learners who benefit from their mother tongue, have always been paralleled with psychological barriers and the education experts have been trying to lubricate the way using different theoretical approaches (Cook, 2016).

In this research, fear of negative evaluation, among various psychological barriers, was under the scope. Such a fear, which includes the sense of apprehension and wordiness, and is generally expected to be negative, interferes in the process of listening/speaking and the active cooperation on the learners' side in English classes (Na, 2007; Liu and Jackson, 2008; William and Andrate, 2008; Mak, 2011). This kind of fear is changed to anxiety and eventually leads to the learners' inefficiency. Jibeen, Baig, and

Ahmad (2019) concluded that there is a direct negative connection between fear of negative evaluation and willingness to speak in English.

Since the traditional teaching methods have not been able to give the language learners adequate communicative competence and change that into communicative performance simultaneously (Howat and Widdowson, 2004; Akbari, 2015; Ellis, 2018), a shift toward the process oriented teaching methods was terribly felt, and the recent researches unveiled that one of those replaced methods was Task-based language teaching (Long, 2014; Skehan, 2016). The exact question of the present research is: since the university classes nowadays are entirely heterogeneous after having the university doors widely open for everyone to enter, can Task-based language teaching (TBLT) be replaced with Task-based interactive language teaching (TBILT) in which the language learners act under the supervision of teacher-assistants in smaller round-table groups to remove the learners' fear of negative evaluation? Thus, the research hypotheses are:

1. Both TBLT and TBILT are efficient in removing the learners' fear of negative evaluation.
2. The efficiency of TBILT is more than TBLT in removing the learners' fear of negative evaluation.

Widdowson (2013) believes that TBLT is a classroom technique whose idea is to activate the language learners on a kind of purposeful problem solving activities. When the language learners get involved in problem solving or doing a task to reach the goal, they are deeply aroused, have less stress, anxiety, or apprehension, and are consequently well-prepared to participate in classroom activities with the highest degree of self-concept. In other words, it can be explained that TBLT was formed based on this logic that those language learners can learn English language effectively whose mind mostly focus on doing the assigned tasks rather than getting themselves involved in language forms (Prabhu, 1990).

On the other hand, for some language learners, the intensity of willing to learn does not necessarily follow any internal or external motivation; rather, it is resulted from their successful involvements in learning process (Abdollahzadeh and Papi, 2009), and this means the suitable teaching methods can strengthen the positive psychological traits such as motivation, self-confidence, and self-monitoring. The literature review also shows a mutual direction; that is, both the personality traits can boost learning success, and learning success which is resulted from the appropriate

teaching methods can fertilize gaining positive personality traits (Yosuf, 2011).

The theoretical foundation of both TBLT and TBILT can be traced back in works of Gass (2017), Vygotsky, in Eune (2017), Dornyei (2015), Skehan (2003), and Piaget, in Brown (2000). These researchers rely on Vygotsky's social constructivism theory and scaffolding for weak students from the side of smarter ones. Vygotsky believed that cognitive development and learning originate in a social context, and the higher psychological functions such as learning are developed through the interaction with the people living around. The other theory which is resorted by the above researchers is Bandura's observational learning theory. He states that observational learning occurs through observing, retaining, repeating, and imitating the behavior of the doer of an action by the observer (Borsa, 2019). Bandura (1977) also emphasizes that the positive psychological traits come from the sources of which the most important are vicarious and mastery experiences in doing daily tasks. Since task-based interactive-cooperative language teaching can give the weak and lower intermediate language learners both vicarious and mastery experiences through watching what the upper intermediate and top students do, can strengthen the learners' positive psychological traits.

## Method

### Participants

This study was a quasi-experimental research in pre-test, post-test multi group model. The statistical population included 4200 Babol Azad University students of whom 320 registered for English classes via a public invitation. Using the available sampling model, 90 of them were selected and put randomly in three 30-member groups (two experimental and one control). Based on the aim of the research and to clarify the learners' level of English language proficiency, particularly to choose the teacher-assistants for one experimental class which was supposed to be run under TBILT, the Michigan Examination of Competency in English (MECE) was used. The lowest and the highest scores were 5 and 85 respectively which confirms the vast heterogeneity of the recent university classes. Thus, there were three heterogeneous classes at hand one of which received TBILT as the first independent variable, the second experimental class received TBLT as the second independent variable, and the third class (the control group) received none of the mentioned methods, but the traditional one, Grammar Translation Method (GTM), instead.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument in this study was Leary's fear of negative evaluation questionnaire. It was developed by Leary (1983) for the purpose of social anxiety assessment. This 12-item instrument was a five-point Likert Scale ranged from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1), designed to assess one aspect of the social anxiety, the fear of receiving negative judgment by the others. The items of this instrument contain the signs of anxiety and the inefficient social behavior. Items 2, 4, 7, and 10 are marked in a reverse way, and the total comes in a range of 12 and 60. The more the score, the higher the fear and vice versa. The reliability of the test based on Cronbach's alpha in this research was .769 which was significant.

### **Procedure**

**The procedure of the study was as follows.** After pre-test, the participants were taught English in 20 sessions, 90 minutes each, and twice in a week. The main concentration of teaching in three classes was planned based on listening/speaking skills using a variety of activities among which one sample is presented here.

The class in which the traditional method was used (control group), a short English text based on hierarchal level of difficulty was chosen every session. After equalizing the new words in source and target languages, reading the text and giving the Persian translation, and also explaining the grammatical points (if there were any) by the teacher, some volunteers were asked to read and translate the text, but all the learners were assigned to work on the text at home in order to be ready to answer some of the teacher's comprehension questions orally the following session.

In the experimental class benefitting TBLT non-cooperatively, the same text was read for the whole class while the learners were listening to the teacher without having the text, and if needed, they could take some brief notes. Since choosing the texts was done in a way to contain some new words and expressions in order to create some information gap, the learners were all asked to get themselves involved in a questioning/answering process with their individual partners to make the text clear. After making the theme of the story and all its corners clear, the participants were assigned to tell their partners the story orally. The teacher moved to different parts of the class to pave the way and to help the learners get through successfully. At the end, some of them were asked to represent the story on the stage.

In another experimental class run TBILT cooperatively, after having the learners sit in small five-member round-table groups under the supervision

of a teacher-assistant in each group, the teaching process and the assessment passed three main phases.

The same story which was used for the above two groups, was read by the teacher here and all the learners got themselves involved in within-group round table discussions to make the message clear after listening to the whole story. There was usually information gap on most learners' side and it was a good cause to have a real inquiry to fill the gaps.

Using four types of questions (yes/no, wh., tag-ending, and «or in the middle ones»), the learners began asking the within-group questions first to make the story clear, and as a second purpose, to be fluent enough in asking/answering skill. The main emphasis here was to give the language learners communicative competence; therefore, conveying the meaning was prior rather than the form (Nunan, 2004). More important than the priority of meaning was the next one; that is, the language items being used here had to be simultaneous and unpredictable, not designed beforehand. The teacher acted as a facilitator in asking/answering task and never did any grammatical corrections. When they were certain that there was no part of the story in the dark, retelling the story within the round-table groups began in such a way that one student, in turn, was the teller and the other four were the listeners. Moving to different stations actively, the teacher and his assistant in each group tried to help the other group members express themselves easily.

All the language learners at this step listened to a round-table discussion running on the stage by all the teacher-assistants and the teacher himself to gain a kind of equilibrium between language form and meaning. Observing the discussion on the stage, the language learners could move through the phase of a stop-and-check process and correct themselves (Bandura, 2008). To assess the language learners, the teacher asked six of them each session (in two turns of three by three) quite randomly to come on the stage and retell the story before the audience. Thus, during a 20-session semester, each language learner had four times opportunity to tell the story in public while many eyes were watching him. Taking the within-group discussions into account, all participants had chance to do 24 times the encoding activities (telling the stories), and 196 times the decoding activities (listening to the stories) which had amazing results.

### **Design**

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## Results

As already mentioned, this research aimed to investigate the effects of TBILT vs. TBLT on removing or weakening psychological barriers, fear of negative evaluation in particular, in learning English as a foreign language. The raw data from pre-test/post-test process were summarized, analyzed, and presented in three steps; demographic information, descriptive and inferential findings via the following 5 tables.

### 3.A. Demographic Information of the Participants

Table 1

*Frequency distribution of two experimental groups and one control group based on gender*

Gender	TBILT		TBLT		Traditional (GTM)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Female	25	83.3	25	83.3	24	80
Male	5	16.7	5	16.7	6	20
Total	30	100	30	100	30	100

Table 2

*Frequency distribution of two experimental groups and one control group based on age*

Age	TBILT		TBLT		Traditional (GTM)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
18-25	28	93.3	26	86.7	27	90
26-35	2	6.7	4	13.3	3	10
Total	30	100	30	100	30	100

### 3. B. Descriptive Findings

Table 3

*The mean and standard deviation of the learners' fear of negative evaluation in pre-test, post-test*

Dependent variable	Groups	Pre – test		Post – test	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Fear of Negative Evaluation	TBILT	33.63	9.70	20.50	4.48
	TBLT	34.23	9.92	25.36	4.97
	GTM	34.09	11.41	30	9.56

Based on table 3, the mean scores of the three groups on fear of negative evaluation in pre-test are almost equal, but totally different in post-test.

### 3. C. Inferential Findings

To detect the normality of the research variable, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov was used and the distribution of the scores of the assistant variable (pre-test,  $Z=.064$ ;  $P=.200$ ) and the dependent variable (post-test,  $Z=.086$ ;  $P=.104$ ) are not significant in the statistical universe and thus, let the researcher assume that the distribution is normal. The result of variance homogeneity Test of Levine ( $F= 2.29$ ;  $P=.107$ ) is not significant, and allows the researcher to assume once again that the variances are equal. The assumption of gradient regression homogeneity between the assistant and dependent variable ( $F= 28.574$ ;  $P= .405$ ), the homogeneity assumption of regression slope is approved.

#### **Hypothesis 1: TBILT and TBLT are both effective in reducing the learners' fear of negative evaluation.**

To study the effect of TBILT and TBLT on reducing the language learners' fear of negative evaluation, the one-way Ancova (within-group and between-group factors) was used.

Table 4  
*The result of one-way single variable co-variance with within-group and between-group factors*

Factors	Sum of squares	DF	Mean of squares	F	Sig.	Eta square
Pre-test	2173.480	1	2173.480	104.835	0.000	0.549
group	1303.747	2	651.873	31.442	0.000	0.422
Error	1782.986	86	20.732			
Total	62868.000	90				

The results of table 4 confirms that in terms of the within-group factor, the calculated variance for the effect of stages (pre-test, post-test) is significant at the level of 0.05 (  $F= 31.442$ ,  $p< 0.001$ ,  $Eta^2= 0.422$ ). As a result, there is significant difference between the mean scores of pre-test and post-test on the fear of negative evaluation for both groups.

#### **Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference between the efficiency of TBILT and TBLT on the learners' fear of negative evaluation.**



Table 5  
The result of the Post Hoc Tukey Test in the experimental groups and the control group

Group 1	Group 2	Mean differences	SD of error	Sig.
<b>Task-based interactive language teaching (TBILT)</b>	Task-based language teaching (TBLT)	4.746*	1.176	0.000
	Traditional language teaching method-GTM	9.323*	1.176	0.000
<b>Traditional language teaching method – GTM</b>	Task-based language teaching (TBLT)	-4.578*	0.176	0.001

\*=P> 0.01

The results of the Post Hoc Tukey Test show that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the two experimental groups (TBILT = 20.50 vs. TBLT = 25.36; 0.000). That is, the decrease of fear of negative evaluation in TBILT group was significantly more than the decrease in TBLT group after the teaching process. It can also be concluded that the difference between the mean scores of the two experimental and the control groups is significant (0.000, and 0.001).

### Discussion

The efficiency of TBLT in reducing the English language learners' psychological barriers is identical with the results of the researches done by Ghabdian and Ghafournia (2016), Tale and Goodarzi (2015), Pysarchyk and Yamshynska (2015), Hakim (2015), and Douglas (2014). These researchers believe that such factors as anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, negative attitudes towards English language classes, negative self-evaluation, fear of failure and its consequences play a significant role in inefficiency of the learners in English classes. In Task-based language teaching, the content of the syllabus design and the teaching process is chosen based on the necessity of being in contact outside the learning environment on the one hand, and the theoretical and experiential of those sociological and psycholinguistic process which facilitates language acquisition on the other. This approach in language teaching can be matched with Piaget's cognitive

learning theory and also Vygotsky's social constructivism theory (Clapper, 2015). Piaget described general development as the children's interaction with their environment. He claims that the complement of this interaction is the mutual relationship between their cognitive-perceptive capacity developments and linguistic experiences (Brown, 2000). Skehan (2003) justifies the potentiality of TBLT with a suitable logic: the learners' negative psychological load which can be a good reason to lessen their noticing capacities must be necessarily changed into a positive one in learning situation. Thus, he states that the teacher must focus his/her mind on two important choices during the TBLT program. One choice is linguistic need and the other one is psychological need. Since the noticing capacity to meet both needs is limited, getting involved in tasks or activities which reduce the negative psychological load (anxiety, weak self-concept, fear of negative evaluation, etc.), can cause to release the learners' noticing capacities and enable them to concentrate on the linguistic needs more effectively.

On the other hand, there is uniformity between the result of this research (superiority of TBILT over TBLT in reducing learners' psychological barriers) and the studies done by Khosravi (2017), Zamani (2016), Karimi & Jalilvand (2014), Kastl & Romeik (2018), Kuzmina & Ivanova (2018), and Murphy et al. (2017). Vygotsky, who believes that the higher function such as learning is developed through the interaction among people, informs us the existence of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in which the learned functions are transferred from the social dimension to cognitive dimension. One of the concepts of this theory is that a learner can learn under the supervision of an experienced one who prepares enough help and support for the confrontation of a task cooperatively (Smagorinsky, 2018). The past studies related to cooperative learning state that learning develops when it is taken place as a construct and a social activity. Moreover, if the language learners in learning atmosphere move towards a shared and common goal, the cooperative method can be a good guarantee (King, 2008). According to Barros and Verdejo (2000), cooperative learning based on Vygotsky's social constructivism tries to connect the teaching/learning process to more comprehensible, manageable, and manipulative subjects and to make the learners more responsible. Since an English language class can be considered a kind of social environment, the concept of interaction could be analyzed under the scope of this theory.

The other theory strengthening the interactive-cooperative teaching technique is Bandura's Observational Learning. Bandura believes that observational learning occurs as the result of a cognitive process and is

severely active, judgmental, constructive, but never, as others may think, the mere mechanical imitation (Olson, 2015). Even though observational learning is just a concept in order to study its influence in behavior modification, it is quite often observed that teachers use it as a central model in education (Lebel, Haverstock, Cristancho, Van-Emimeren, & Buckingham, 2018). Consequently, in Task-based language teaching in which the interactive-cooperative model of running the class is practiced and the language learners are not homogeneous, the observational learning can make the task easier and the destination more reachable.

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