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Task Based Learning as an Alternative Approach to the Teaching of Languages in Kenyan Schools: Towards Best Practices

Abstract

Although language syllabuses in Kenyan primary and secondary schools encourage teachers to involve learners in their own learning, actual classroom practices reveal that this is not fully implemented for various reasons. Nevertheless, one of the approaches to the teaching of languages advocated for by language specialists is Task Based Learning (TBL), in which the central focus is completion of tasks that involve learners in language use in real life situations. In so doing, learners develop excellent communication and social interaction skills. The idea is for learners to learn the target language by being exposed to meaningful task-based activities. They perform tasks in pairs or in small groups after which they compile a report and present their findings to the class in written or spoken form. The research on which this paper is based investigated the use of TBL as an alternative to the teaching of English in Kenyan primary schools. A school in Nyeri County, Kenya, was purposively sampled. Learners in the experimental class were taught using TBL while those in the control class were taught using the Presentation, Practice and Performance (PPP) approach. A pre-test and a post test were administered before and after the teaching. Afterwards, the scores were tabulated and analyzed quantitatively and the emerging patterns discussed. The findings revealed that many benefits are derived from the adoption of TBL in the language classroom. Thus, we recommend that TBL be adopted in the teaching of languages in Kenyan schools and that language teachers be trained on this approach.

Key words: Task based learning, language teaching, methodology, language activities.

Introduction

Linguists and educationists have for a long period of time explored on the best pedagogical approaches beneficial to language teaching and learning (Crookes & Gass, 1993). These approaches have broadly been categorized as either form based (content based) or meaning based (Nunan, 1989). Whereas content based instruction like Presentation, Practice and Performance (Production), PPP or 3Ps, focuses on subject matter content (Long, 1998), task-based instruction focuses on a whole set of real-world tasks (Skehan, 1999). Ellis (2003) refers to PPP as the Present-Practice-Produce procedure which is mainly directed at the linguistic forms of the target language. On the converse, the task-based language teaching, sometimes simply referred to as TBL (Task-Based Learning), TBLL (Task-Based Language Learning), Task Based Approach

(TBA) or TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) (Crookes & Gass, 1993), has lately gained currency among linguists as discussed later in this paper. This research will employ the abbreviation TBL and PPP henceforth for the two approaches of language learning.

Task-based learning (TBL) was first developed by Prabhu in Bangladore, Southern India. Prabhu opined that students may learn more effectively when their minds are focused on the task, rather than on the language they are using (Prabhu, 1987). A Task, according to Ellis (2003), holds a significant position in second language acquisition research and in language pedagogy. Thus, a task-based curriculum involves "an integrated set of processes involving, among other things, the specification of both *what* and *how* (Nunan 1989, p.1). Skehan summarizes succinctly the difference between PPP and task based learning as follows:

> A PPP approach looks on the learning process as learning a series of discrete items and then bringing these items together in communication to provide further practice and consolidation. A task based approach sees the learning process as one of learning through doing – it is by primarily engaging in meaning that the learner's system is encouraged to develop (Skehan 1996, p. 21).

Willis (1996) also contributes to the debate and argues that TBL is a learner-centered approach, in which students discover the target language through self-directed, task-based and project-based group investigations. In TBL, language learning becomes "a process that requires opportunities for learners to participate in communication, where making meaning is primary" (Skehan, 1996, p.38). TBL, therefore, employs interactive tasks which require meaningful communication and interaction among learners (Nunan, 2004). According to Ellis (2003, p. 65), 'TBL is mostly about the social interaction established between learners as a source of input and means of acquisition, and involves the negotiation of meaning, communicative strategies, and communicative effectiveness'. TBL employs normally familiar tasks to a learner, which may involve simulation of activities like visiting the doctor, conducting an interview, or calling customer services for help (Ellis, 2003). On the other hand, Skehan (1998) points out that the PPP is one of the traditional and most influential approaches of organizing language teaching. PPP analyses the language into an inventory of forms which can then be presented to the learner and practised as a series of discrete items (Nunan, 1989). The two approaches can be employed effectively by language teachers to teach lexical items in English like nouns, adjectives and prepositions.

Naskar and Bandyopadhyay (2006) claim that a preposition is a word placed before a noun to show in what relation the noun stands with regard to the other noun and verb words in the same sentence. Syntactically, prepositions can be categorized into three types: simple prepositions (for example, in, at, from and over, compound prepositions and phrase prepositions. A compound preposition is made up of words (for example, in spite of, in front of and apart from*). A phrase preposition, on the other hand, is a simple preposition preceded by a word from another category, such as an adverb, adjective, or conjunction (for example, instead of, prior to and according to).

According to Cho (2002), the acquisition of English prepositions is one of the current topics of study in the field of lexical acquisition. Cook (2007, p.25), for example, notes that English is a very important language in the whole world as it "is now taught as the main foreign language in virtually every country and is used for business and education." Prepositions are less likely to be acquired compared to open-class items such as nouns and verbs (Trask, 1996). Jackendoff (1977) clearly points out that "people seem never to have taken prepositions seriously". The purpose of this study, therefore, was to analyze the effectiveness of TBLL and PPP as instructional approaches in the acquisition of English prepositions by standard four learners in the Kenyan Primary School educational system.

Statement of the issue

One of the challenges facing language teachers is how to capture the interest of learners and to stimulate their motivation to learn (Nunan, 1989). Thus, the proponents of task-based instruction and the PPP have been embroiled in an unresolved debate on the most effective methodology towards the teaching of language (Ellis, 2003). Each of the approaches has attracted criticism and plaudits in almost equal measure. PPP, has for example, been criticized for viewing language as a series of "products" that can be acquired sequentially as "accumulated entities" (Ellis, 2003, p.). Skehan (1998) claims that the PPP approach is commonly used because it maintains teacher's feeling of professionalism as it places the teacher firmly in charge of the teaching context. On the other hand, the opponents of TBL approach claim that TBL promotes learner centredness at the expense of teacher-directed instruction (Swan, 2005). However, Oxford (2006) says that TBL is an exciting field that offers great riches if explored by teachers in their dual roles as instructors and action researchers. This paper, therefore, intends to teach English prepositions to Grade 4

learners in a Kenyan Primary classroom in order to find out the best methodology of teaching the lexical items.

Rationale

First, there are various language instruction approaches such as Content-Based Second Language Instruction (Brinton, Snow and Wesche, 1989), Presentation, Practice and Production (Long, 1998), and Task-Based Language Instruction (Prabhu, 1987). Our choice of TBL approach is founded on the fact that TBL has received the most attention in the literature (Prabhu, 1987). Moreover, TBL offers the possibility of combining 'the best insights from communicative language teaching with an organized focus on language form' and thus avoiding the drawbacks of more narrowly form-centred or communication-centred approaches (Willis, 1996). Ellis (2003) points out that the overall purpose of a task-based approach is to create opportunities for language learning and skill development through collaborative knowledge building. Conversely, the PPP approach, among various objectives, lends itself to accountability since it generates succinct and tangible goals, precise syllabuses for the evaluation of the effectiveness of a learning model. That is why this study zeroed in on the TBL, a modern perspective, vis-à-vis, PPP, a traditional perspective.

Secondly, Edmund (2005) claims that although the complexity of preposition usage has been documented by various scholars, there is a paucity of studies on prepositions. While nouns, verbs and adjectives have received considerable focus in terms of lexical semantic language resource development (Mahesh 1996) and automatic ontology construction (Lin 1998), little work has been done on the teaching of English prepositions as second language. Romaine (1995) claims that prepositions are a difficult grammatical category to acquire and understand for native speakers of a given language, and yet more difficult for second language speakers. Since they are difficult to acquire by second language learners (Romaine, 1995), prepositions are a valuable medium to test the permeability of grammar. That is why it is imperative that this study is undertaken and more specifically to learn the acquisition of prepositions in a multilingual setting.

Our choice of English is based on the fact that it is accessible to a considerable proportion of the world's population (Cook 2007, p.25). English in Kenya is learned throughout the Primary

school. In Grade one to three, English is taught as a subject, while mother tongue languages are used as the media of instruction. In Grade four to eight, English is taught as a subject and is used as the medium of instruction in other subjects (Kenya Institute of Education, 2002). Thus, the acquisition of prepositions is critical to the successful teaching and learning of English by standard four learners.

Theoretical Framework

Presentation, Practice and Produce Approach

The PPP model of language teaching (Presentation, Practice, Performance (Production) is based on the assumption that a language is best presented to learners as a syllabus of structures, and that through controlled practice a fluent and accurate performance of the 'structure of the day' can be achieved (Foster, 1999). Errors are, therefore, evidence of poor learning, requiring more PPP treatment (Foster, 1996). Skehan (1998) claims that the PPP approach is commonly used because of the following reasons: first, as mentioned above, it maintains teacher's feeling of professionalism as it places the teacher firmly in charge of the teaching context and secondly, it lends itself neatly to accountability since it generates clear and tangible goals, precise syllabuses, and a comfortingly itemizable basis for the evaluation of effectiveness.

Presentation, the first stage in PPP, often focuses on a single point of grammar, usually presented clearly in a context. This stage is assumed to develop an understanding of the language point in the learner. Presentation is followed by practice, which is presumed to help learners to use and automatize the newly grasped rule or pattern. At the production stage, often called the 'free stage', the learner is expected to reproduce the target language more spontaneously and flexibly (Skehan, 1998). Willis (1996, p.135), however, notes that final P, Production, is often not achieved. Either learners 'conform' to teachers' wishes (Willis, 1996) and focus primarily on form, making sentences with the new item or they focus primarily on meaning and often accomplish the task successfully without embracing the new item at all. PPP, therefore, assumes that learners will learn what is taught in the same order in which it was taught, but there is no evidence that this happens (Skehan, 1996, p. 18). PPP is largely adopted in the traditional teaching of languages and will be applied in the teaching of English in the control group.

Task Based Language Learning Approach /TBL

Definition of the term "task"

There is no agreement among linguists as to what constitutes a task (Long, 1985). Willis (1996: 53), for example, defines a classroom task as 'a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome.' Thus, examples of tasks include filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, writing a check, finding a street destination and helping someone across the road, creating a crossword puzzle, making a video, preparing a presentation or drawing a plan. Tasks may also be complex, for example, creating a school newspaper or easier such as making a hotel reservation (Lightbrown and Spada, 1999).

Prabhu (1987, p. 24) defines a task as "an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process". Nunan (1989, p. 10) defines a task as "a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form". Skehan (1996, p. 38) defines a task as an activity in which: i) meaning is primary; ii) there is some sort of relationship to the real world; iii) task completion has some priority; and iv) the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome. There are several common features that can be identified from these definitions. First, the definitions emphasize the importance of focus on meaning. Second, tasks are oriented towards goals, and the third is that tasks entail an active role of the participants (Long, 1985).

TBL, therefore, is teaching and learning a language by using language to achieve open ended tasks (Ellis, 2003). TBL is compatible with a learner-centered educational philosophy (Ellis, 2003). TBL advocates for content-oriented meaningful activities rather than linguistic forms (Carless, 2002; Littlewood, 2004). Breen (1987:23) defines task based language learning as 'any structured language learning endeavour which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task.' The experimental group was taught using the TBL approach.

The Phases / Stages of the Task Based Learning

According to Willis (1996), Prabhu (1987) and Nunan (1985), the TBL framework consists of three main phrases for language learning. These are pre-task, task-cycle (task) and post-task stages (language focus). These components are carefully planned to create most favourable conditions for language acquisition, and thus provide rich learning opportunities to suit different types of learners (Willis, 1996).

The Pre-task Stage

The *pre-task* stage generally refers to the stage where the learners prepare for the task completion (Willis, 1996; Ellis, 2006 and Skehan, 1996). One of the activities in this stage is exposing the learners to the target language or providing the learners with language support (Willis, 1996). The language support that is given can be vocabulary and/or form that are necessary for the task completion. Willis (1996, p.1) claims that "the aim of tasks is to create a real purpose for language use and to provide a natural context for language study". In the pre-task, the teacher introduces the class to the topic and the task activating topic-related words and phrases (Frost, 2004). The pre-task stage can also contain playing a recording of people doing the task. This gives the students a clear model of what will be expected from them. The students can take notes and spend time getting prepared for the task (Ellis, 2003).

The Task-stage

In this stage, the learners perform the activity by themselves (Prabhu, 1987). The learners carry out the task in pairs or small groups while the teacher monitors from a distance (Ellis, 2003). This cycle gives them speaking and writing contact with opportunities for students to learn from each other. The learners then plan how they will tell the rest of the group what they did and how it went, and then they report on the task either orally or in writing, and compare notes on what has happened (Willis, 1996). Linguists normally argue that there are three components of a task cycle: the *task* (activity), *planning* (where learners plan their reports effectively and maximize their learning opportunities) and *report*. In the same vein, Candlin and Murphy (1987) argue that tasks can be effectively organized based on systematic components including *goals* (the general aim for the task)*, input* (verbal or non-verbal materials that learners can manipulate)*, setting* (environment in which the task is performed)*, activities* (the things participants will be doing in a given setting)*, roles of both the teacher and learner, and feedback of the task evaluation*.

The Post-task stage / Language Focus

The *post-task* stage is the phase after the main activity is completed (Willis, 1996). The post-task stage allows a closer examination and analysis of some of the specific features occurring in the language used during the task cycle (Skehan, 1996). First, the learners may do a public performance (Willis, 1996 and Skehan, 1996), where they perform the task again with the class, another group, or teacher as the audience. The learners, therefore, have another opportunity to interact in the target language. Secondly, learners may have language focus activities such as consciousness-raising activities (Willis, 1996), practice of words, phrases, patterns, and sentences (Willis, 1996). Thirdly, the learners can be involved in correction of both content and language. Finally, the teacher may give feedback with regard to the learners' language accuracy.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This is an action research project in which two approaches, TBL and PPP, are applied to an existing classroom system in a Grade four Kenyan primary school. An action research normally takes place when a teacher works with her/his own class as she/he feels the need to improve her teaching/learning experiences (Cohen and Manion, 1980). The study was designed to investigate the relationship between an independent variable (the efficacy of prepositions in the teaching of English and the linguistic dependent variable (the performance of learners in English). This research was conducted using a pre-test / post-test paradigm. It could be argued that "methodology becomes the central tenet of task-based pedagogy," since the goal is to allow learners to navigate their own paths and routes to learning (Kumaravadivelu 1993, p.73). Therefore, the most important thing in a TBL is not what the learner will learn, but how they will learn (Nunan, 2004). That is, the 'what' and the 'how' of teaching are merged in a TBL (Nunan, 2004). In a PPP, however, the focus is on what the learner will learn.

Sites, Population and Sample Size

Karindundu Primary School in Nyeri County, Kenya, was purposively sampled for this study. To achieve the aims of the study, data were collected from learners of Grade 4 classes studying English as a Second Language. The underlying principle of purposive sampling method entails identifying in advance the target variables. The researcher visited the school for permission from

the head teacher to undertake the research as well as to ascertain that the learners had not been introduced to the prepositions in Grade 4. Two Grade 4 classes, 4 West and 4 East were used for the study. Each class had a research sample of 25 learners.

Data Collection Procedures & Methods for Quantifying the Linguistic Dependent Variables

A pre-test on prepositions was administered by the researcher on the first day to the two Grade 4 classes (cf. Appendix A). The test contained thirty questions. The test was developed based on the revised English syllabus (Kenya Institute of Education, 2002). The researchers made sure that the tasks were intellectually challenging enough to maintain the learners' interest. This is in line with the tenets laid down by Prabhu (1987). The pre-test was marked and scores entered. On the second day, the researcher introduced prepositions to Grade 4 West, the experimental class, using the TBL approach for a period of 35 minutes. The experimental class was divided into 5 equal groups of 5 learners. Ellis (2003) recommends mixed groupings (for example, in terms of language level) over homogeneous ones.

The learners were involved in different tasks in the experimental class. The learners discussed what happens when travelling. For example, boarding a bus, conductor asking for money, the change they get, arrival at destination, how many buses they change, etc. Secondly, the students were given pictures to discuss and report what they saw in them (cf. Appendices C and D). Thirdly, the students also discussed what they do during their birthdays, the places they visit, when they close school, among other topics. This exercise focused on prepositions of time. The students were also discussed about the placing of an object such as besides, under, on and opposite to practise place prepositions. The teacher asked each group to give a report on the outcome of the task. The teacher then highlighted relevant parts from the text of the recording for the students to analyze. The teacher also highlighted the language that the students used during the report phase for analysis. Finally, the teacher selected language areas to practice based upon the needs of the students and what emerged from the task and report phases. The learners then did practice activities to increase their self-confidence and make a note of useful language. According to Long (2000), TBL is a pedagogy that encapsulates the principle of "learning by doing."

For the control class, Grade 4 East, the traditional method of presenting the prepositions, doing exercises and performance was employed for a period of 35 minutes. The researcher took an active role in the teaching process while the learners were passive participants. The researcher defined the term prepositions, gave examples of prepositions, gave exercises on the same and marked the learners' books to check on their performance. A post-test, the same test administered as a pre-test, was given to the two classes. The researchers scored the post-tests and generated quantitative data which have been analyzed for comparison.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Specifically, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances demonstrated whether the observed differences between two sample means were purely random or whether there were real differences between the means. In the application of the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, the researchers wished to see whether variability in the dependent linguistic variables was statistically significant so that it could be concluded that the means were different. The results were then presented in tables showing means and standard deviations and levels of statistical significance.

Literature Review

A Review of Studies on Task Based Language Learning

An enormous growth of interest in task-based language learning and teaching has been seen in recent years (Ellis, 2000, 2003; Skehan 2003 and Littlewood, 2004). For example, Nunan (2004), in his study based on interviews with teachers, teacher educators, and ministry officials, notes that TBL has emerged as a central concept from a study of curriculum guidelines and syllabi in the Asia-Pacific countries.

Barnard and Nguyen (2010) undertake an in-depth study of teacher cognition in Vietnamese high schools using 'a multi-methods' of data collection. Specifically, teachers were asked to write reflective comments about their attitudes towards TBL in Vietnamese, and their recent experience of applying TBL in their classroom. Barnard and Nguyen (2010) note that TBL is an effective model of language learning in schools. Pham (2000, p. 23), however, argues that

"modern teaching methods should be applied with a close and careful consideration of the cultural values of Vietnam.'

Richards and Rodgers' (2001) conclude that the Malaysian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) secondary curriculum is a task-based communicative curriculum based on their examination of the general English use objectives for EFL oral communication. In the same vein, Sidek (2012) analyzes the reading instructional approach as reflected in an EFL secondary school curriculum in Malaysia by examining the curriculum in terms of theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), theories of L2 reading as well as learner roles in relation to Communicative Task-Based Language Teaching (CTBLT) characteristics. The study found out that the majority of reading tasks in the selected EFL secondary reading curriculum is highly lacking CTBLT characteristics. Other studies, for example, Mackey (1999) have shown that performing tasks can also assist the acquisition of grammar.

Studies on Prepositions

Huddleston (1984) defines a preposition as a word that indicates a relation between a noun or pronoun it governs and another word, which can be a verb, an adjective or another noun or pronoun. A preposition is a word that typically goes before a noun phrase or pronoun to express a relationship of meaning between two parts of a sentence, most often showing how the two parts are related in space or time. Most of the common English prepositions such as **at, in,** and **for** are simple; that is, they consist of one word. Other prepositions, consisting of more than one word, are called complex. Examples include **in view of, according to, away from, as for, on account of**. Quirk *et al.,* (1985) note that a preposition in English expresses meanings of space, time, instrument and even cause. The following examples in Quirk *et al.,* (p. 669) illustrate.

(a)   My car is **at** the garage (space)

(b)   He came **on** Friday (time)

(c)   Everyone ran **for** shelter (purpose)

(d)   They left **by** plane (means)

(e)   I am glad you are coming **with** us (accompaniment)

Prepositions have been studied extensively from both linguistic and computational perspectives (Jackendoff, 1977). For example, cognitive theorists have examined the polysemous nature of prepositions and explored the conceptual relationships of the polysemy, proposing the graphical mental images (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980 and Langacker, 1987). Fauconnier (1994) has also looked at the pragmatic aspects of prepositions. A recent semantic study of prepositions for computational use is analysed by Voss (2002), with a focus on spatial prepositions. The semantics of spatial prepositions has also been dealt with (Voss, 2002).

Tanaka (1997) also notes that Japanese learners of English have a tendency to search for a one-to-one correspondence or direct translation equivalent in Japanese. Garcia (1995), on the other hand, analyzes the preposition *en* in a corpus of Spanish in San Antonio, Texas and finds out that *en* used in locative senses is the most frequently occurring usage, followed by its usage in temporal constructions. Dorr (1997) undertakes a lexical semantic analysis of English prepositions and classifies 165 English prepositions into 122 intransitive and 375 transitive senses using the lexical conceptual semantics framework.

Learners of English as a second language face difficulties in the learning of prepositions in the English language (Njoroge, 2011). This state of affairs can be explained from the point of view of the influence of African indigenous languages. Many African languages have very few prepositions that correspond to the English ones (see Jibril, 1991). Instead, they make do with a few general purpose particles which are less specific in their reference to temporal and spatial relations than the English prepositions. For example, in Gikuyu language, the particle **na** is used as both a preposition and a conjunction. Thus the study's focus on preposition is rationalised as preposition forms a major topic in the English syllabus for Kenya primary schools.

Findings

The tables below present the results of data analysis and the interpretation and the discussion of the emerging patterns is based on these results.

Table 1: Group Statistics (pretest)

Group Statistics

Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pretest control	25	16.74	3.347	.644
experimental	25	16.89	3.166	.609

Table 2: Independent Samples Test for pretest

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.194	.662	-.167	52	.868	-.148	.887	-1.927	1.631
Equal variances not assumed			-.167	51.841	.868	-.148	.887	-1.927	1.631

Tables 1 and 2 show the descriptive statistics for the pretest scores of the control class, c and the experimental class, e. There are no significant differences in standard deviations and means. The results of carrying out an independent t test and measuring the Levene's Test for Equality produced the results above with 0.662 significance. The t test therefore fails to reveal a

statistically reliable difference between mean pre-test scores that the control class has (M=16.74, s=3.34) and the ones that the experimental class has (M=16.89, s=3.166), t (52) =.167, p=.662, α=.05.

Table 3: Differences between pre-test and post-test scores

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
										95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper	
diff	Equal variances assumed	.553	.460	-3.975	52	.000	-1.815	.457	-2.731	-.899	
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.975	48.220	.000	-1.815	.457	-2.733	-.897	

The p value is .460 which is greater than α=.05, hence we reject the null hypothesis that there is a statistically significant difference between the variances of the control group, c (M = 2.89, s = 1.423) and the experimental group e (M = 4.7, s = 1.898). Assuming the equal variance, we therefore take the values on the top row giving us t = -3.975, df = 52 and sig. (2 tailed) = .000. Since the significance level is less than .05 we conclude that the difference between the means

could not have occurred by chance. The reason for the difference could be because of the application of Task Based Language learning method that was used in the experimental class.

Table 4: Score differences between pre-test and post-test for the control and experimental groups

Increment	Control	Experiment
Below 0	3	2
Between 1-3	13	2
Above 3	9	21

In the experimental class, majority of the pupils showed remarkable improvement in the post test scores with 21 out of 25 pupils (84%) improving by over 3 scores. Only 9 pupils (36%) in the control class were in the above 3 category. The graph below gives a pictorial representation of the pattern.
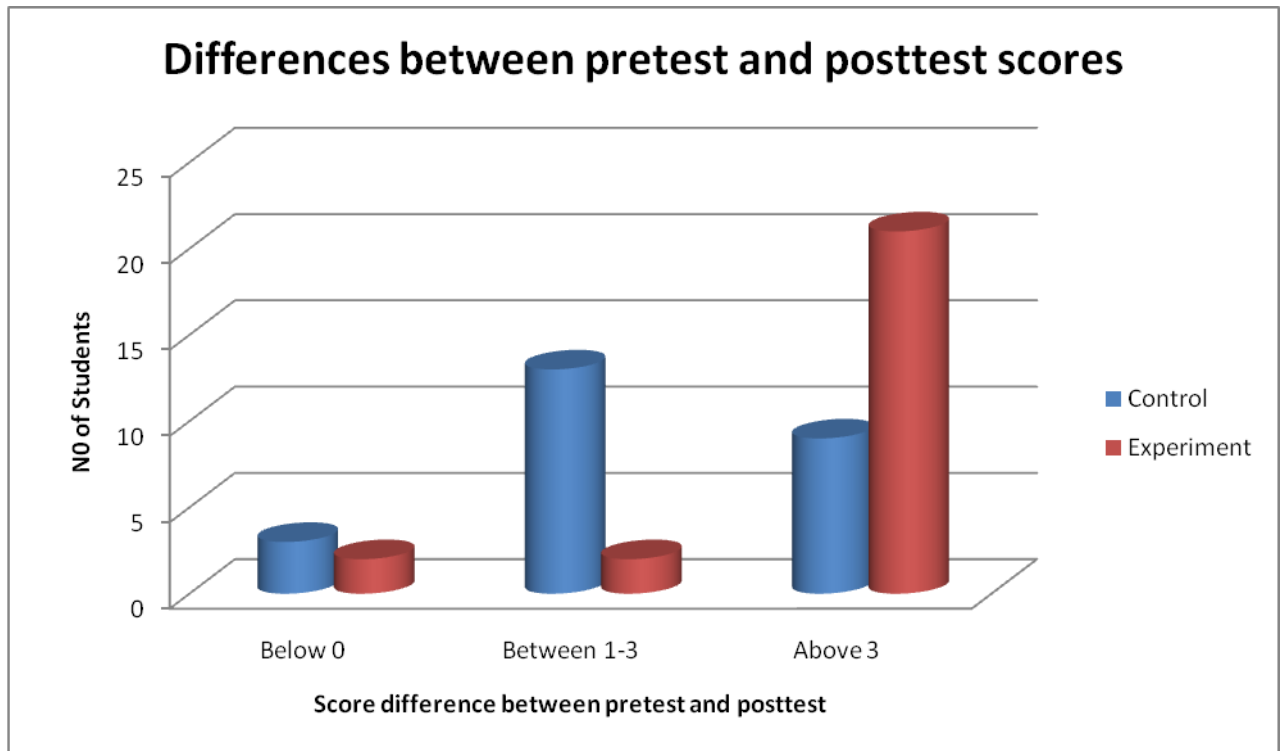
Fig. 1: Score difference between pre-test and post-test

Discussion of Findings

The general finding of the study indicates that the use of Task Based Language learning method (TBL) in the teaching of prepositions is effective and subsequently influences performance. The statistics shows that the learners who were exposed to the TBL method did much better in the post test than their colleagues who went through Presentation, Practice and Performance (PPP) method (cf. Table 4) This finding suggests that TBL method may have contributed to the improvement of performance since at the pretest stage, both groups' scores were similar (see Table 1).

The finding points to the many advantages of the TBL as a method of language learning. First, learners get to enjoy learning the target language because they are involved in their own learning. The tasks that they are engaged in enable them to DO, and make the language learning a memorable experience for them. The fact that TBL involves the learners in the use of language in real life situations whose goal is to promote the use of the target language encourages them to communicate in the target language. For successful accomplishment of the task, the learners must communicate in the target language, thus getting essential practice of the language structures that the teacher wishes to introduce to the learners.

Second, the learners get to use the skills they have acquired and apply these skills in developing competence in the target language. The main strength of TBL is that the concern is on the learner. The tasks are learner centred; the goal is for the learner to achieve a specific goal by the use of the target language, for they must use what they have learned of the language to perform the particular task assigned to them during Task Based Language learning method. By the time the learner is being exposed to the TBL, it is assumed that the learner will have been exposed to a variety of lexical items and language structures in the target language to be able to communicate during the doing of the task assigned to him or her. The teacher is expected to produce and supply meaningful tasks that will give the learners opportunities to experiment and guide the learner in the language learning process.

Third, the TBL gives the teachers an opportunity to plan in advance the tasks that will optimally help the learners in achieving the set goals. As he or she selects the tasks that will motivate the learners and at the same time enhance their language development, the teacher is given a chance

to reflect on the entire lesson long before the actual teaching takes place. This gives the teacher an upper hand while monitoring the performance of the tasks by the students for the tasks are not performed for the sake of it: they have set objectives and the teacher should ensure that the learners are guided if the set goals are to be realized.

In addition, the learners get a chance to see language learning from a practical perspective. It is not all abstract and theoretical. They learn moving from the known to unknown. Thus another advantage of TBL is to take language learning from abstract knowledge to real world application of knowledge. The learners will no doubt find language learning much fun and this will ultimately improve their performance. The teacher too gets a chance to vary the teaching style and methodology and all this will help in creation of a conducive atmosphere in the classroom. Further, learners learn the art of working with others as a team, more so if the teacher keeps changing the group members every time a new task is being introduced to the class.

Conclusion

The findings have clearly indicated the class that used TBL as a method of language learning did better in the post test which points to the need for the teachers of languages to apply this method in their teaching often instead of the traditional PPP approach that is usually used in the language classroom. The paper has also highlighted the advantages of TBL as a method of language teaching/learning. Despite the fact that TBL requires a lot of time to prepare the tasks, and then implement them in the classroom, the benefits that may be accrued from the method far outweigh the time taken. The finding in this study implies that teachers of languages should utilize TBL in their language classrooms for maximum enjoyment and acquisition of various language structures being focused on. In so doing, teachers will be creating a conducive learning atmosphere for their learners and this in turn will help in the improvement of learners' performance in the target language.

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APPENDIX A: TEST 1

Use the correct preposition
1. When the book is ----------------- the table you may not see it (under/in/on/over).
2. The teacher placed the radio---------------- the table thus we all saw it (in/on/over/through/under).
3. My friend sat -------------- me and I was happy (beside/besides).
4. When travelling to Nairobi ----------------------- (with/in/on/by/through/over) car, the journey takes one hour.
5. The teacher wrote --------------------------- (in/on/over/to/through) the board.

Insert the correct preposition

1. If you want to go [____] bus, you have to go [____] the bus stop.
2. Then you wait [____] your bus.
3. When the bus arrives, you get [____] the bus.
4. When you arrive [____] your destination, you get [____] the bus.
5. Sometimes you even have to change buses [____] another bus stop.

Complete the exercise with the correct prepositions.

1. I got these photos [____] my friend Jane.
2. These photos were taken [____] her boyfriend, who is a hobby photographer.
3. [____] these pictures you can see a giraffe.
4. So, these are pictures [____] a giraffe.
5. Look [____] these pictures. Aren't they wonderful?

Fill in the correct prepositions.

1. Peter is playing tennis [____] Sunday.
2. My brother's birthday is [____] the 5th of November.
3. My birthday is [____] May.
4. We are going to see my parents [____] the weekend.
5. [____] 1666, a great fire broke out in London.
6. I don't like walking alone in the streets [____] night.
7. What are you doing [____] the afternoon?

8. My friend has been living in Canada [____] two years.

9. I have been waiting for you [____] seven o'clock.

10. I will have finished this essay [____] Friday.

Complete the exercise according to the picture.

1. [____▼] the picture, I can see a woman.

2. The woman is sitting [____▼] a table.

3. She is sitting [____▼] a chair.

4. There is another chair [____▼] the woman.

5. Her feet are [____▼] the table

APPENDIX B: MARKING SCHEME

Preposition

Use the correct preposition

1. When the book is -----*under*----------- the table you may not see it (under/in/on/over).
2. The teacher placed the radio-----*on*---------- the table thus we all saw it (in/on/over/through/under).
3. My friend sat ------*beside*-------- me and I was happy (beside/besides).
4. When travelling to Nairobi ------*by*----------------- (with/in/on/by/through/over) car, the journey takes one hour.
5. The teacher wrote ----------*on*----------------- (in/on/over/to/through) the board.

Insert the correct preposition

1. If you want to go [by] bus, you have to go to the bus stop.
2. Then you wait [for] your bus.
3. When the bus arrives, you get [on] the bus.
4. When you arrive at your destination, you get [off] the bus.
5. Sometimes you even have to change buses [at] another bus stop.

Complete the exercise with the correct prepositions.

1. I got these photos [from] my friend Jane.
2. These photos were taken [by] her boyfriend, who is a hobby photographer.
3. [In] these pictures you can see a giraffe.
4. So, these are pictures [of] a giraffe.
5. Look [at] these pictures. Aren't they wonderful?

Fill in the correct prepositions.

1. Peter is playing tennis [on] Sunday.
2. My brother's birthday is [on] the 5th of November.
3. My birthday is [in] May.
4. We are going to see my parents [at] the weekend.
5. [In] 1666, a great fire broke out in London.
6. I don't like walking alone in the streets [at] night.
7. What are you doing [in] the afternoon?
8. My friend has been living in Canada [for] two years.

9. I have been waiting for you [since] seven o'clock.

10. I will have finished this essay [by] Friday.

Complete the exercise according to the picture.

1. [In ▼] the picture, I can see a woman.

2. The woman is sitting [at ▼] a table.

3. She is sitting [on ▼] a chair.

4. There is another chair [opposite ▼] the woman.

5. Her feet are [on ▼] the table.

APPENDIX C: TASK 1

APPENDIX D: TASK 2

	Test 1

APPENDIX E: THE CONTROL GROUP

NAME	pretest	posttest	diff
Learner 1	20	24	4
Learner 2	18	22	4
Learner 3	22	27	5
Learner 4	17	24	7
Learner 5	21	24	3
Learner 6	19	23	4
Learner 7	18	22	4
Learner 8	10	09	-1
Learner 9	17	21	4
Learner 10	13	16	3
Learner 11	12	12	0
Learner 12	19	22	3
Learner 13	16	20	4
Learner 14	15	18	3
Learner 15	11	13	2
Learner 16	15	15	0
Learner 17	16	19	3
Learner 18	22	26	4
Learner 19	12	15	3
Learner 20	15	17	2
Learner 21	13	15	2
Learner 22	17	20	3
Learner 23	18	21	3
Learner 24	21	25	4
Learner 25	20	24	4

Test 1

APPENDIX F: THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Learner 1	18	23	5
Learner 1	20	26	6
Learner 4	19	23	4
Learner 5	16	21	5
Learner 6	17	23	6
Learner 7	21	27	6
Learner 8	19	24	5
Learner 9	12	20	8
Learner 10	15	20	5
Learner 11	14	19	5
Learner 12	18	23	5
Learner 13	19	23	4
Learner 14	23	29	6
Learner 15	19	24	5
Learner 16	16	22	6
Learner 17	10	17	7
Learner 18	13	12	-1
Learner 19	18	22	4
Learner 20	17	21	4
Learner 21	18	18	0
Learner 22	19	24	5
Learner 23	12	15	3
Learner 24	11	15	4
Learner 25	20	23	3