

Research Article

The Effects of Task-Based Speaking Tasks on Iranian University Students Willingness to Communicate and Self-Efficacy in Online Classes: A Mixed-Methods Study

Siamak Rahimi 

Faculty of Humanities, Ayatollah Ozam Borujerdi University, Borujerd, Iran

Correspondence should be addressed to Siamak Rahimi; siamak.rahimi@abru.ac.ir

Received 20 January 2022; Revised 11 February 2022; Accepted 26 February 2022; Published 20 March 2022

Academic Editor: Ehsan Rezvani

Copyright © 2022 Siamak Rahimi. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

This mixed-methods study attempts to explore the effects of TBLT on the development of Iranian university students' self-efficacy and willingness to communicate in speaking skills. To this end, two intact classes were selected in Ayatollah Borujerdi University in Borujerd City, Iran. The experimental group went through an eight-week teaching program, whereas the control group received the usual content-based instruction. The data were gathered from multiple sources at various time points using two questionnaires and a focus group interview. The results of the quantitative analysis using ANCOVA revealed a positive effect of the online TBLT approach on university students' self-efficacy and willingness to communicate in speaking in the Iranian context. Moreover, the findings of the focus group interview disclosed several themes about the merits of TBLT on self-efficacy and willingness to communicate in oral interaction skills. In the end, a range of implications is suggested for the different stakeholders.

1. Introduction

Second Language (L2) teaching and learning have become one of the most important endeavors for almost all age groups, especially in the 20th and 21st centuries. An abundant budget is spent annually on L2 instruction worldwide [1]. School and university students, for example, are considered the harbingers of the L2 learning challenge due to the need to complete university entrance examinations and score well on high-stakes tests such as IELTS and TOEFL for immigration and occupational purposes. These academic groups have discerned that the preliminary medium of interaction with the outside world is accessible through learning an international language, namely English [2]. On the other hand, the influence of many leading sectors of the industry and social classes from all walks of life has reflected the developing status of English learning. Due to this nonstop increasing desire for English language learning, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers have borne the strain to bring about a paradigm shift in traditional L2 teaching approaches and methods [3–5].

This ubiquitous growing demand on the part of people and governments has been a powerful impetus to introduce and establish pedagogies that can cultivate language skills and components. Coupled with this, there has been a wide consensus that the existing language teaching methods and practices have not adequately lived up to the goals and wants of L2 learners [6].

Thus, the language teaching profession transforms itself permanently through new educational philosophies, advances in technology, and new research findings [7]. As a result, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) could be considered as a quintessential of how societal and educational demands led to the new movement and approach in English language teaching. TBLT specialists formulate curricula based on the objectives for which people are learning a language, i.e., tasks that need to be fulfilled by the learners in real-life settings rather than focusing on specific words and grammar rules [8].

Moreover, the electrifying performance of English language learners in the class is related to other variables such as self-efficacy and willingness to communicate (WTC).

Extensive research shows that self-efficacy affects motivation constructs, learners academic performance, college majors, and career choices [9]. Also, the ultimate goal of communicative language approaches like TBLT is to promote language learners communicative competence in the target language [10]. However, English language learners have different tendencies toward communication in the English language. Some learners are willing to communicate eagerly in the English language, while some others avoid the inclination to interact.

Though researchers have investigated the effects of self-efficacy and WTC on various attributes in language pedagogy (e.g., [11–14]), no concrete and available evidence have been obtained to demonstrate the influence of the TBLT program on these constructs, synthesizing across both quantitative and qualitative data. Thus, in this study, the researchers attempted to investigate the effect of TBLT speaking tasks on the university students' self-efficacy and WTC in online classes.

1.1. Online Teaching and Learning. Though the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly replaced traditional face-to-face classes with online classes, the development and popularity of social or Web 2.0 technologies (e.g., social networking sites, blogs, microblogs, and wikis) have shifted educational stakeholders' attention to online classes for over two years. The activities that employ social technology to enhance quality teaching and learning in cooperative contexts are referred to as online teaching and learning [15]. "Content-generating, sharing, interacting, and collaborating" are some of the activities that can be employed to help with teaching and learning in online classes ([15]. p. 2). Students may easily construct and develop their content, create their own unique ideas, and support them via social technologies, as Osman and Koh [16] point out. Furthermore, students are given the necessary skills to produce and share their thoughts and material with others all over the world [17]. Furthermore, as is clear, social technologies enable students to actively participate in online conversations [18]. Finally, according to Kane and Fichman [19]; social technologies enable students to collaborate and learn as a group, pooling their ideas and efforts to solve an issue.

A number of notable advantages of online classes have been highlighted in the associated literature. Flexibility is the most significant benefit [20]. It means that students can take advantage of online education with less time and location. Self-motivation is the next important benefit [21]. That is, because self-directed and motivated students can learn at their own pace and are not bound by a course deadline, they can make room in their calendar for other learning and activities. The next significant benefit is cost-effectiveness [22], as students do not have to commute to school, saving both time and money. The final benefit is independence [23]. That is, online lessons are thought to be more convenient.

1.2. TBLT in Language Pedagogy. In a different way than researchers, language teachers and material developers have focused on polishing the relevance of tasks. Tasks have been

embraced by some teachers as supplementary materials to standard lessons [24]. According to Richards and Rodgers [4] and Ellis et al. [25], task-supported activities provide conditions in which L2 learners can develop their abilities to use language in real communications, provide meaningful activities to enhance learning, and provide meaningful patterns advocating learners learning processes.

According to Richards and Rodgers [4], TBLT can be viewed as a cognitive perspective on SLA theory. They see language teaching as an internal and organic process that occurs through "noticing" or "consciousness-raising" activities, while learners do not miss focus on form and "meaning negotiation" through the implementation of tasks that provide learners with "managed output" and "comprehensible input," and, in the end, tasks can foster "scaffolded learning" and bring about "motivational" drives (pp. 180–4).

It seems that the second language instruction field and its leading figures, as Van den Branden [5, 8] puts it, accepted TBLT, especially tasks, as an appropriate approach to design proper courses for different ages across different settings. TBLT can meet several needs of young and adult learners and the settings and the domains on which a course must focus on delivering the right materials tuned with L2 learners' objectives. A suitable course, to close, should accord with the real-world needs of L2 learners, which can be done well by TBLT.

1.3. Willingness to Communicate. Willingness to communicate (WTC) has been investigated considerably in second/foreign language studies (e.g., [11, 26]). However, due to variation in communicative competence in second/foreign language contexts, WTC differs drastically from person to person [27]. MacIntyre et al. [5, 8] described WTC as "a readiness to enter into discourse, at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using L2" (p.547). They also put forward a framework that explains the sources of WTC. These components include self-confidence, desire to communicate with a person, individual and group motivations, communicative competence, and social attitudes.

1.4. Self-Efficacy. The concept of self-efficacy was delineated by Bandura [28]. It focuses on people's beliefs about their capabilities to generate specific levels of performance. As Bandura [28] suggests, self-efficacy can be influenced by four main causes: mastery experience, social persuasion, physical and emotional states receiving from others, and gaining experience from the outside world of individuals. Self-efficacy also received abundant studies in second/foreign language settings (e.g., [13, 29, 30]).

1.5. Empirical Studies on TBLT Speaking Task Use in EFL Context. There are a large number of published studies that establish the link between TBLT implementation and its positive effect on English learners' speaking skills. In Bangkok, Thanghun [31] reported that speaking tasks can improve oral interaction competence in class. She also noted

that task-based instruction could promote not only motivation and confidence but also the use of target language. Another study, Ghodrati et al. [32], indicated that task-based speaking activities could enhance learners' autonomy and oral competence of English language learners.

Babaii, Taghaddomi, and Pashmfroosh evaluated the correlation between teachers' ($n=6$) and students' ($n=26$) assessments of their own speaking performance [33]. Students were asked to evaluate their own audio-recorded speaking performance before and after being given the needed rating criteria. Teachers were also asked to assess the students audio-recorded speaking performance in accordance with the grading standards. The data revealed that the students' language performance had significantly improved by the end of the course. Similarly, the results demonstrated that the teachers' and students' assessments of the students audio-recorded speaking performance differed significantly.

The relationship between task-free/task-based self-assessment and students' self-perceived communicative skills in speaking was investigated by Sadeghi, Azad Mousavi, and Javidi [34]. A self-perceived communication competence questionnaire, the students' self-evaluation (task-based and task-free) scores, and the teachers' assessment of learning speaking with the participation of upper-intermediate and advanced students ($n=48$) were used to collect the necessary data. The findings revealed a distinction between task-based and task-free self-evaluation and a strong link between students' self-perceived communication ability and their speaking self-evaluation. Furthermore, the results revealed a positive relationship between the task-based and task-free self-assessment of speaking by teachers and students.

As can be inferred from the above studies, in the Iranian EFL context, in general, and in the university context, in particular, there has been a paucity of a mixed-methods study concerning the effects of TBLT speaking tasks on students' self-efficacy and willingness to communicate abilities. This gap encouraged the researchers to set out to disclose both quantitatively and qualitatively the efficiency of TBLT in the cultivation of Iranian university students speaking skills. Hence, the following research questions were proposed in order to achieve these objectives:

- (1) Does the TBLT intervention result in developing Iranian university students' self-efficacy in speaking skills?
- (2) Is there a link between the TBLT practice and the development of WTC in speaking skills among Iranian university students?
- (3) What are the benefits of TBLT in terms of developing self-efficacy and WTC in speaking abilities, as perceived by Iranian university students?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design. A mixed-methods approach was adopted to obtain a detailed understanding of university students' willingness to communicate and self-efficacy with regard to Task-Based Instruction (TBI). As Riazi [35] asserts, utilizing triangulation, various data collection approaches

will be achieved for the researchers. Concerning the quantitative part, two intact classes of sophomore university students were selected by applying a quasiexperimental approach. These participants went through pretest, intervention, and posttest procedures. In relation to the qualitative section, the data were collected through a focus group interview.

2.2. Participants. The present study was conducted at Ayatollah Borujerdi University in Borujerd, Iran. Two intact classes of sophomores Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) university students were selected and randomly assigned as experimental group ($n=30$) and control group ($n=30$). Those students who were not able to participate in the study were excluded. The participants were both male and female, aged 20 to 23 years old. They have been studying English as a foreign language at university for two years. However, in order to check students' linguistic homogeneity, the researchers had administered the First Certificate in English (FCE) before the study began. FCE was chosen to check students' linguistic homogeneity because of the following reasonable harmony in our Listening and Speaking classes syllabi. In our university, all English language university students are trained for two years in Listening and Speaking classes using New Cutting Edge preintermediate book [36] for the first year, and Cutting Edge upper-intermediate book: A Practical Approach to Task-Based Learning [37] for the second year. Thus, the researchers were certain that these university students were capable of handling upper-intermediate level standard tests such as FCE.

The results of the independent *t*-test showed no significant differences between the two groups in terms of language proficiency $t(60) = .67, p = .50 > .05$. It should be noted that for practical purposes, the reading and listening papers were removed, and the researchers considered "writing" and "speaking" responses.

Prior to running the study, the first researcher described the objective of the current study to the participants in a session. Then, the second researcher, holding a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics, was chosen as the instructor of TBI. Furthermore, the researchers allowed the participants to withdraw what they wanted. Moreover, they were assured that the findings of the study would remain confidential, and they would be informed about the final findings.

3. Instruments

3.1. Willingness to Communicate (WTC) Questionnaire. To measure university students WTC, a modified-version questionnaire designed by MacIntyre et al. [38] and [39] was utilized. This questionnaire includes 25 items contributing to WTC factors in learning a second language. To avoid possible misunderstandings and to increase the validity of responses, the questionnaire was translated into Persian by one of the researchers and afterward verified by a professional translator. The questionnaire was based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly

disagree (1). The participants were asked to answer the items arranged on the scale. Reliability checks on the questionnaire based on the pilot yielded an alpha estimate of 0.82.

3.2. Self-Efficacy Questionnaire. Another instrument used in this study was a self-efficacy in speaking skills questionnaire, adopted from Saeidi and Ebrahimi Farshchi [14]. This questionnaire was a five-point Likert scale, including 28 items. The participants were asked to choose from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The Cronbach alpha of the reliability of the questionnaire was 0.85, which showed highly acceptable reliability.

3.3. Focus Group Interview. To examine students' views of the effects of TBLT on their self-efficacy and WTC in speaking skills and to triangulate the findings, a focus group interview was conducted with six students from the experimental group via the Adobe Connect platform [40]. The students' participation was entirely voluntary, and they signed informed consent forms prior to the interview. Hence, the researcher prepared a set of preplanned interview questions to elicit various conceptions via WhatsApp Messenger [41]. In this case, the researchers investigated outer and inner conceptions of university students about their experiences with TBLT intervention and how it affected their beliefs about their capabilities to generate specific levels of performance in speaking (self-efficacy) and how TBLT helped them to be ready to enter into conversation, at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using English language (WTC). The focus group interview was thoroughly audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using a content analysis approach. It is worth mentioning that it was held at the end of the course, lasted about two hours, and allowed students to express themselves freely in their mother tongue (Persian).

3.4. Data Collection Procedures. Some steps were taken to carry out the current study. For the quantitative part, at first, one of the researchers who was an assistant professor in applied linguistics at Ayatollah Borujerdi University ran a miniworkshop on the principles and procedures of TBLT with a particular focus on speaking skills for the teacher and the students of the experimental group. In three sessions, the researcher provided a comprehensive explanation of TBLT interactively, offering down-to-earth examples to demonstrate how TBLT is practically used in English language classes and how it differed from the traditional language teaching methods. Based on the reflections taken from the teacher, it was assured that he had learned and internalized the tenets of TBLT.

In the next step, the teachers contacted the students and asked them to install WhatsApp Messenger [41] application and Adobe Connect [40] platform on their cell phones. To ensure that the students know how to practice within the TBLT approach, the English language teacher also provided the students with a detailed explanation in Persian. Then, she played some informative short videos where the students

could see how TBLT can be practiced in real classes. In addition, she administered some examples practically.

After that, the students were asked to answer both willingness to communicate and self-efficacy questionnaires about speaking skills before the treatment through a web-based survey technique and a WhatsApp group created by the teacher to contact the students under the study. In the next phase, an eight-week (sixteen sessions) treatment was given to the experimental group. It should be noted that the experimental and control groups received their common content-based instruction. However, the experimental group received instruction based on TBLT tenets in speaking. In implementing the TBLT approach, the researchers followed Willis's [42] framework, including pretask focus, a focus on the task cycle, and a language focus. Table 1 illustrates the TBLT framework along with the sequence of activities used in online classes at the university.

In the last stage, to investigate whether TBLT instruction improved the students' self-efficacy and willingness to communicate in speaking, once again, the willingness to communicate and self-efficacy questionnaires regarding speaking skills were administered.

After the instruction, the third researcher invited six of the participants to the focus group interview run on Adobe Connect [40] platform. The details of the focus group interview were presented in the previous section.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedures. Due to the mixed-methods design of the current study, the collected data were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analyses. For the quantitative data, SPSS version 26 was used. The scores of both aforementioned questionnaires were compared through ANCOVA statistical analysis. Additionally, the qualitative focus group interview was analyzed using the inductive grounded theory approach, including the three stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding [43]. In keeping with Glaser [44], in order to do inductive grounded theory, the first researcher went through three district phases. The researchers read and reread the passages in order to find as many themes and concepts as possible in the first step, known as open coding. The researcher interrogated the data to extract ideas and concepts relevant to the study. As the researchers combed through the data, they identified 145 code labels based on similarities and contrasts (e.g., a desire to understand a new culture, enhancing student confidence and motivation, learning how to be self-sufficient). The open coding phase ended when no new themes arose from the data, and the codes became meaningful and logical. The second phase, axial coding, was done concurrently with open coding due to the nonlinear nature of the coding process [44]. The researcher went through the preceding codes to see any connections between them (e.g., student cooperation, class admiration, and students speaking improvement). The researchers attempted to compress and combine the codes in the third phase, selective coding, to extract the most general themes. It is worth noting that interrater reliability was used to assess the consistency of the findings. After completing the data analysis, the researchers hired two well-versed

TABLE 1: Task-based language teaching framework.

Pretask
Introduction to topic and task
(a) Teacher guides the students to explore the goals of the task.
(b) Teacher highlight useful words and phrases.
(c) Students listen to a recording of a parallel task being done and then record themselves and listen to them.
(d) Teacher asks students to read and compare the transcriptions of their own recordings.
The task cycle
Task
(a) The task is done and lets students express themselves.
(b) Teacher walks around and persuades students to interact.
(c) The emphasis is on spontaneous, exploratory talk and confidence-building.
(d) Success in accomplishing a task boosts students' motivation.
Planning
(a) Students prepare and practice what they want to say.
(b) The teacher monitors students' language and insists on clarity, fluency, and accuracy.
Report
(a) Teacher asks individuals to report briefly to the class so that everyone can compare findings.
(b) Teacher comments on the reports technically.
The language focus
Analysis
(a) The teacher sets some language-focused tasks and helps the students to analyze their oral performance.
Practice
(a) Based on the language analysis, the teacher starts practices. Practice activities include games, jigsaw, role play, and simulation tasks.

analysts to go over the entire data collection. Their analysis revealed a result of 0.90. In addition, the researchers employed a member-checking technique to assess the reliability of the findings. The researchers did this by giving three participants a copy of the final data to see if they matched their expectations.

4. Results

4.1. *The Results of the Quantitative Part.* The self-efficacy questionnaire explored if TBLT significantly improved the Iranian University students speaking skills. For this purpose, analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used, and the one-way ANCOVA assumptions were checked to get a valid result. First, since no student attended more than one class, the assumption of independence of the observations was met. Second, the homogeneity of the two groups was checked by using an independent sample *t*-test ($t(60) = .67, p = .50 > .05$). Thus, it was assumed that the two groups were homogeneous on the pretest. Then, to conclude that the data are normally distributed, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was conducted ($n > 50$) ($p > .05$). Table 2 shows the results of this test for both the control and experimental group.

As shown in Table 3, learners gained higher mean score after receiving the TBLT treatment: the mean score of the control group ($M = 2.67$) was lower than the mean score of the experimental group in the posttest ($M = 4.80$). Furthermore, Levene's test for homogeneity of variances was performed to check if the assumption of the equality of variances was violated or not. Levene's test showed that the variances for pretest and posttest were equal, $F(4,55) = .51, p = .72$.

The analysis of covariance was run between the posttests of the control and experimental groups, using the pretests of the two groups as the covariate variable (Table 4).

TABLE 2: Kolmogorov–Smirnov test of normality.

Groups		df	Statistic	<i>p</i>
Pre	Control	30	0.36	0.00
	Experimental	30	0.25	0.00
Post	Control	30	0.29	0.00
	Experimental	30	0.49	0.00

TABLE 3: Descriptive statistics for both groups in two time points.

Groups		<i>N</i>	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Pre	Con.	30	1.50	.68	[1.04 .42]	[.03 .83]
	Exp.	30	1.80	.76	[.36 .42]	[-1.14 .83]
Post	Con.	30	2.67	1.09	[.89 .42]	[1.33 .83]
	Exp.	30	4.80	.48	[-2.49 .42]	[6.05 .83]

TABLE 4: Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) comparing posttest scores across groups.

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	MS	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η_p^2
Corrected model	69.79	2	34.89	49.80	0.00	0.63
Intercept	106.17	1	106.17	151.53	0.00	0.72
Pre	1.52	1	1.52	2.17	0.14	0.03
Group	61.29	1	61.29	87.47	0.00	0.60
Error	39.94	57	0.70			

As it is indicated in Table 4, the covariate, pretest, was significantly related to the participants' posttest, $F(1,57) = 2.17, p = 0.14$. There was also a significant effect of TBLT on students' self-efficacy on speaking after controlling the effect of pretest, $F(1,57) = 87.47, p = .00$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.60$. Thus, TBLT had a positive impact on students' self-efficacy in speaking in Iranian university courses.

The willingness to communicate questionnaire explored if TBLT significantly improved the Iranian University students speaking skills. For this purpose, analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used, and the one-way ANCOVA assumptions were checked to get a valid result. First, since no student attended more than one class, the assumption of independence of the observations was met. Second, to conclude that the data are normally distributed, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was conducted ($n > 50$) ($p > .05$). Table 5 shows the results of this test for both the control and experimental group.

As shown in Table 6, s after receiving the TBLT treatment, the learners gained a higher mean score: the control group's mean score ($M = 2.30$) was lower than the mean score of the experimental group in the posttest ($M = 4.17$). Moreover, Based on the SPSS output in the test of homogeneity of variance, Levene's test showed that the variances for pretest and posttest were equal, $F(4,55) = .29, p = .87$. So, the assumption of the equality of variances was not violated.

The analysis of covariance was run between the posttests of the control and experimental groups, using the pretests of the two groups as the covariate variable (Table 7).

The covariate, pretest, was substantially associated with the participant's posttest, as shown in Table 7, $F(1,57) = .34, p = .56$. After adjusting for the effect of the pretest, TBLT had a significant effect on student's self-efficacy in speaking, $F(1,57) = 42.55, p = .00, \eta^2 = .42$. Thus, in Iranian university courses, TBLT positively impacted student's willingness to communicate in speaking.

4.2. The Results of the Qualitative Part. In this section, the results of the interview data analysis are reported. The data analysis yielded three recurring themes for WTC, including perceived communicative competence, attitude toward the international community, and motivation to learn English. Furthermore, three themes were extracted based on the data analysis for Self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience of observing others, and social persuasions that students receive from others.

4.2.1. WTC Themes

(1) Theme 1: Perceived Communicative Competence. A person of WTC is more expressive about WTC than the person's actual skills. In other words, people who perceive themselves as competent in communicating are more willing to initiate communication [45].

[Interview excerpt 1, June 12, 2021]

"I enjoy participating and being active during the speaking classes. I believe tasks in TBLT enabled me to perform communicative activities, which reflect real-life performances. I always had difficulty in starting a dialogue or facing unpredictable interactions, but now interaction in English language is the easiest activity for me."

[Interview, excerpt 2, June 12, 2021]

TABLE 5: Kolmogorov–Smirnov test of normality.

Groups		df	statistic	p
Pre	Control	30	0.35	0.00
	Experimental	30	0.32	0.00
Post	Control	30	0.32	0.00
	Experimental	30	0.31	0.00

TABLE 6: Descriptive statistics for both groups in two-time points.

Groups		N	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Pre	Con.	30	1.97	.55	[-.02 .42]	[.62 .83]
	Exp.	30	2.60	.56	[.19 .42]	[-.83 .83]
Post	Con.	30	2.30	.91	[1.07 .42]	[1.66 .83]
	Exp.	30	4.17	.91	[-.35 .42]	[-1.76 .83]

TABLE 7: Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) comparing posttest scores across groups.

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	MS	F	P	η_p^2
Corrected model	52.55	2	26.27	31.09	.00	.52
Intercept	28.54	1	28.54	33.77	.00	.37
Pre	.29	1	.29	.34	.56	.00
Group	35.96	1	35.96	42.55	.00	.42
Error	48.17	57	.84			

"Before this program, most of the time I was shy of giving a presentation in English in front of my classmates, even in online classes. But now, I am bold enough to express my feeling and ideas in English. Sometimes I want to show off how competent I am!"

(2) Theme 2: Attitude toward the International Community. Yashima [45] introduced *international posture* as an "interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to study or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners and... a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures" (p.57).

[Interview excerpt 5, June 12, 2021]

"I have never known that English language and culture could be so much fun! Although the sessions were run online, we were familiar with the L2-users community more than ever. I hope to gain a scholarship in one of the English-spoken universities."

[Interview excerpt 3, June 12, 2021]

"How great it is to speak English and discover the literature and culture of the English language. It seems fantastic to know more and more about English peoples lifestyle, customs, foods, etc."

(3) Theme 3: Motivation to Learn English. A number of researchers have illustrated that English learners with a

higher level of motivation interact with English language knowers more than those with a lower level of motivation [46, 47]. Also, Bandura et al. [28] suggested that instrumental motivation can have great significance in EFL contexts.

[Interview excerpt 4, June 12, 2021]

“When I figured out that learning a language can be as fun and interesting as this, I am willing to learn many more foreign languages. The online TBLT program opened a new window that made learning a child’s play!”

[Interview excerpt 5, June 12, 2021]

“I think motivation is the dominant factor in speaking English. In online TBLT classes, I learned how to be myself in the real world of tasks. Previously, I thought the problem with speaking English was not knowing enough words and grammar, but things have changed. . . . I believe you must have a reason to start talking.”

4.2.2. Self-Efficacy Themes

(1) *Theme 1: Mastery Experience.* It refers to the way students interpret and evaluate obtained results, and self-beliefs of competence are revised and created according to these interpretations [28].

[Interview excerpt 1, June 16, 2021]

“I do believe that where there is a will, there is a way. After the TBLT online program, I came to this recognition of myself that nothing is impossible, let alone speaking English fluently. Since the tasks are done based on real-world events and situations, I am sure that if I practice speaking more, I will be able to speak with native speakers without any stress and difficulty.”

[Interview excerpt 4, June 16, 2021]

“Online TBLT classes showed me that English speaking can be improved through specific strategies with which miscommunication can be handled. TBLT showed me strategies like asking for clarification, predicting the topic, etc., that could compensate for the lack of knowledge that happens for all EFL students at times.”

(2) *Theme 2: Vicarious Experience of Observing Others.* Student’s judgments of competence are also created by the vicarious experience. They evaluate their capabilities in relation to other student’s performances [28].

[Interview excerpt 3, June 16, 2021]

“I am sure I am one of the best English speakers in my class. I realize that, compared with the rest of my classmates, I cooperate in speaking sessions more actively. Generally speaking, I think if I do my best in English, I can achieve native-like fluency in the near future with TBLT techniques in speaking skills.”

[Interview excerpt 5, June 16, 2021]

“I know how to deal with my coping abilities in facing difficulties. In TBLT online classes, we learned how to participate, cooperate, and strengthen our speaking skills. Speaking is not gained by practice; instead, it is gained through strategies of interacting with people in real life. Some students understood it immediately, and some needed more reflection on the issue.”

(3) *Theme 3: Social Persuasions.* A supportive message from parents and teachers is important to empower student’s self-confidence [9].

[Interview excerpt 4, June 16, 2021]

“Compared with the TBLT program, our previous speaking classes were totally controlled by the teachers speech and commands. But in this program, teacher was a facilitator in solving and doing the tasks. The teacher admired our slightest success in speaking. I realized that learning can be doubled by positive feedback from teachers as well.”

[Interview excerpt 1, June 16, 2021]

“Our classmates did not act as competitors in the TBLT program. They were like real friends that appeared in difficult moments in speaking situations. My classmate’s guidance and help showed me a new way of learning which can last for life. Their approval enabled me to raise my confidence in speaking.”

5. Discussion

The current study was designed to determine the effect of the online TBLT program on university student’s self-efficacy and WTC constructs. The findings add to the growing body of evidence by suggesting that university students speaking skills in the experimental group significantly differed from the control group on the posttest procedures. Compared with the first self-efficacy and WTC questionnaires responses, the results showed that students speaking ability enhanced in terms of fluency, discourse, function, cohesion, and strategic options in the second administration of the questionnaires. This progress might be ascribed to the online TBLT instruction, supporting the students in the experimental group to gain strategic and interactive knowledge to excel in their speaking skills.

The outcomes of the study might be described in this way: TBLT may present communication issues by making the introduction and practice of new linguistic structures relevant and enjoyable [48]. To put it another way, TBLT sets the stage for L2 learners to use language to solve problems by offering hard tasks (e.g., giving direction on a map). As a result of their participation with the L2 language, L2 learners were able to process form, meaning, and function holistically [49]. Furthermore, Bygate, Norris, and Branden [50] argue that speaking tasks can organize language learning and use

by determining the communication context, clarifying the learning activities outcomes, and encouraging learners to appropriately use L2 to reach the task outcomes. Moreover, Ganjouee et al. [51] argue that speaking tasks can organize language learning and use by determining the communication context, clarifying the learning activities outcomes, and encouraging learners to use L2 appropriately to reach the task outcomes. In addition, the findings of this study may be supported by the fact that there were procedures that drew L2 learner's attention to features of meanings that were critical in guiding pathways through tasks while they were conducting the speaking tasks [52, 53]. It could provide important feedback on pupil's linguistic deficits "at the precise moment and situation where learners need to learn," according to the researchers ([53], p. 201).

The findings further confirm Ellis et al. [25] findings that their participants acquired the meaning and form of the target linguistic structures sufficiently during task execution. Van den Branden [5] believes, in line with the findings of this study, that TBLT can address the requirements and wants of L2 learners to solve real-life situations by encouraging them to employ all of their language skills at the same time.

TBLT can also be successfully used in Iranian university classes according to the results of the self-efficacy and WTC questionnaires. That is, TBLT increased student's motivation and self-confidence through speaking exercises. Furthermore, in a cooperative environment, pupils were encouraged to employ additional language abilities. As a result, speaking activities prioritized meaning and followed explicit real-world language use objectives. The findings of the study can be explained using coconstructivist theories [54, 55]. In this way, the students communicated with one another in a communicative setting to cocreate the necessary knowledge. Students could fill in the deficiencies in their speaking skills with the help of their peers in a social process [11, 13, 56].

According to the results obtained from the focus group interview, the participants had positive impressions of TBLT. The findings of the study show that in TBLT, the emphasis is on "knowing how" rather than "knowing that" [24]. That is, TBLT benefited from this school of thought, which emphasizes procedural knowledge in order to do a task effectively [57]. Similarly, Experiential Learning Theory [58] states that students can use new knowledge and abilities to supplement what they already know to create a well-organized paragraph.

Furthermore, the learner's positive views toward TBLT can be attributed to the belief that TBLT was beneficial in generating a learning environment that was conducive to student's involvement and motivation [59]. Furthermore, one possible explanation for the findings is that TBLT valued the student's participation and cooperation in the learning processes and encouraged them to use group work to talk based on the intended criteria [25, 52, 60].

The comments of interview participants in this regard are empirically well corroborated by the findings of Leaver and Kaplan [61], who found that TBLT was favorably received by Czech, Ukrainian, and Russian learners learning English in the United States, as opposed to traditional ways. Furthermore, the findings of the study are consistent with

those of Iwashita and Li [62], who found that TBLT encouraged their participants to participate actively in classroom interactions. Furthermore, their findings revealed that the learners rebuilt nontarget structures after receiving feedback during interactions and that the feedback was incorporated into the following production.

6. Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

Despite their strong theoretical basis, communicative techniques in general, and TBLT in particular, appear to be underutilized at Iranian public universities. This longstanding chasm prompted the researchers to use qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the effects of TBLT on the development of Iranian university student's WTC and self-efficacy in speaking skills. The results showed that after implementing the online TBLT program, the experimental group's self-efficacy and WTC constructs in speaking ability improved significantly compared to the control group.

A variety of educational implications are proposed based on the study's findings. To begin, first, preservice and in-service teacher training courses for Iranian university English teachers might be offered to familiarize them with the basic ideas of TBLT and how to use them in their classrooms. Second, educational policymakers in Iran may be able to identify and pick instructional tasks that correspond to the actions that ESP and university students are required to perform at their place of employment. The speaking section of the coursebooks, in particular, can be constructed using a process-based approach to speaking. Third, through the online TBLT program, it is crucial to foster a good, supportive, low-stress environment that stimulates innovation and risk-taking, particularly among less confident pupils.

Given the current study's limitations, a number of recommendations for further research are offered. As previously said, the current study looked into the impacts of online TBLT on self-efficacy and WTC in the speaking abilities of Iranian university students. More mixed-methods research is needed to examine the impacts of online TBLT on other language abilities in order to gain a more thorough knowledge of its efficacy (e.g., reading, writing, and listening). Though the study outcomes were encouraging in terms of the usefulness of online TBLT in the development of university students speaking skills, future research can look into its benefits in a variety of settings (e.g., primary schools, private language schools) with a variety of participants (e.g., children, teenagers, and adults). Additionally, further research can be conducted to probe into how self-efficacy and WTC can affect second language student's functions such as work performance, career choices, and driving motivators in life.

Data Availability

The data are available upon reasonable request to the author.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] DG Cnect, *2nd Survey Of Schools. ICT in Education*, European Commission, Brussels, Belgium, 2019.
- [2] R. Akbari, G. R. Kiany, M. Imani Naeeni, and N. Karimi Allvar, "Teachers teaching styles, sense of efficacy, and reflectivity as correlates of students achievement outcomes," *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 1-28, 2008.
- [3] M. H. Long, "In defense of tasks and TBLT: nonissues and real issues," *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 36, pp. 5-33, 2016.
- [4] J. C. Richards and T. S. Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2014.
- [5] K. Van den Branden, "Task-based language teaching as an innovation," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Task-Based Language Teaching*, M. J. Ahmadian and M. H. Long, Eds., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, pp. 628-648, 2021.
- [6] M. Azari Noughabi, "Current pedagogical challenges in Iranian EFL teachers views: a qualitative study," *Journal of Education and Practice*, vol. 8, no. 9, pp. 217-228, 2017.
- [7] P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Seabury Press, New York, NY, USA, 1970.
- [8] K. Van den Branden, *Task-based Language Education: From Theory to Practice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2006.
- [9] F. Pajares, "Current directions in self-efficacy research," in *Advances in Motivation and Achievement*, M. Maehr and P. R. Pintrich, Eds., vol. 10, pp. 1-49, JAI Press, Stamford, CT, USA, 1997.
- [10] Z. Dörnyei, *The Psychology of Language Learner: Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition*, Routledge, England, UK, 2005.
- [11] P. Cutrone and S. Beh, "Investigating the effects of task-based language teaching on Japanese EFL learners willingness to communicate," *Journal of Asia TEFL*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 566-589, 2018.
- [12] B. Gonsooly, G. H. Khajavi, and F. Asadpour, "Willingness to communicate in English among Iranian non-English major university students," *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 197-211, 2012.
- [13] J. Harris and P. Leeming, "The impact of teaching approach on growth in L2 proficiency and self-efficacy," *Journal of Second Language Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 114-143, 2021.
- [14] M. Saeidi and E. Ebrahimi Farshchi, "The effect of teaching communication strategies on Iranian EFL learners speaking self-efficacy in content-based courses," *Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice*, vol. 2, no. 10, pp. 220-238, 2012.
- [15] S. Hamid, J. Waycott, S. Kurnia, and S. Chang, "Understanding students perceptions of the benefits of online social networking use for teaching and learning," *The Internet and Higher Education*, vol. 26, pp. 1-9, 2015.
- [16] G. Osman and J. H. L. Koh, "Understanding management students reflective practice through blogging," *Internet and Higher Education*, vol. 16, pp. 23-31, 2013.
- [17] F. Gao, "A case study of using a social annotation tool to support collaboratively learning," *The Internet and Higher Education*, vol. 17, pp. 76-83, 2013.
- [18] C. L. Munoz and T. L. Towner, "Opening facebook: how to use facebook in the college classroom," in *Proceedings of the Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education Conference*, Charleston, South Carolina, 2009.
- [19] G. C. Kane and R. G. Fichman, "The shoemakers children: using wikis for Information Systems teaching, research, and publication," *MIS Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 1-17, 2009.
- [20] O. Wasilik and D. U. Bolliger, "Faculty satisfaction in the online environment: an institutional study," *The Internet and Higher Education*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 173-178, 2009.
- [21] M. Pacansky-Brock, *Humanizing Online Learning- Version 2.0*, 2016, <https://brocansky.com/2016/10/humanizing-online-learning-version-2-0.html>.
- [22] M. Everson, "10 Things Ive learned about teaching online," *E-Learn Magazine*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2009.
- [23] N. L. Davis, M. Gough, and L. L. Taylor, "Online teaching: advantages, obstacles, and tools for getting it right," *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 1-8, 2019.
- [24] D. Nunan, *Task-based Language Teaching*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2004.
- [25] R. Ellis, P. Skehan, S. Li, N. Shintani, and C. Lambert, *Task-based Language Teaching: Theory and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2019.
- [26] P. Maftoon and S. Najafi Sarem, "Gender and willingness to communicate," *Iranian Journal of Language Issues*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-18, 2015.
- [27] P. D. MacIntyre, R. Clément, Z. Dörnyei, and K. A. Noels, "Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in a L2: a situational model of L2 confidence and affiliation," *Modern Language Journal*, vol. 82, no. 4, pp. 545-562, 1998.
- [28] A. Bandura, "Self-efficacy," in *Encyclopedia of human behavior*, V. S. Rahmachaudran, Ed., Academic Press, New York, NY, USA, 1994.
- [29] P. Leeming, "A longitudinal investigation into English speaking self-efficacy in a Japanese language classroom," *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 1-18, 2017.
- [30] M. Sholeh and M. R. Talebinejad, "ESP via TBLT in an online environment: focus on Iranian university students writing skill and self-efficacy," *International Journal of Language Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 73-88, 2022.
- [31] K. Thanghun, *Using of Task-Based Learning to Develop English Speaking Ability of Prathom 6 Students at Piboonpranchasan School*, Graduate School of Srinakharinwot University, Bangkok, Thailand, 2012.
- [32] M. Ghodrati, H. Ashraf, and M. Khalil, "Improvement of Iranian EFL learners autonomy through task-based speaking activities," *International Journal of Medical and Clinical Research*, vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 1002-1008, 2014.
- [33] E. Babaii, S. Taghaddomi, and R. Pashmforoosh, "Speaking self-assessment: mismatches between learners and teachers criteria," *Language Testing*, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 411-437, 2015.
- [34] K. Sadeghi, M. Azad Mousavi, and S. Javidi, "Relationship between EFL learners self-perceived communication competence and their task-based and task-free self-assessment of speaking," *Journal of Research in Applied Linguistics*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 31-50, 2017.
- [35] A. M. Riazi, "Innovative mixed-methods research: moving beyond design technicalities to epistemological and methodological realizations," *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 33-49, 2016.
- [36] S. Cunningham, P. Moor, and F. Eales, *New Cutting Edge Pre-Intermediate Students*, Pearson Longman, London, UK, 2007.
- [37] S. Cunningham and P. Moor, *A practical approach to task-based learning, Cutting Edge Upper-Intermediate Student's Book*, Pearson Education Ltd, London, UK, 1999.
- [38] P. D. MacIntyre, S. C. Baker, R. Clement, and S. Conrod, "Willingness to communicate, social support, and language-

- learning orientations of immersion students,” *Studies on Second Language Acquisition*, vol. 23, pp. 369–388, 2001.
- [39] P. Baghaei and A. Dourakhshan, “The relationship between willingness to communicate and success in learning English as a foreign language,” *Elixir International Journal*, vol. 53, no. 1, pp. 12160–12164, 2012.
- [40] Adobe Systems, “Adobe Connect,” 2019, <https://www.adobe.com/products/adobeconnect.html>.
- [41] WhatsApp LLC, “WhatsApp LLC,” 2020, <https://www.whatsapp.com>.
- [42] J. Willis, *A Framework for Task-Based Learning*, Longman, Harlow, UK, 1996.
- [43] A. L. Strauss and J. M. Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Grounded Theory*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 1998.
- [44] B. G. Glaser, *Getting Out of the Data: Grounded Theory Conceptualization*, Sociology Press, Mill Valley, CA USA, 2011.
- [45] T. Yashima, “Willingness to communicate in a second language: the Japanese EFL context,” *Modern Language Journal*, vol. 86, no. 1, pp. 54–66, 2002.
- [46] Y. Hashimoto, “Motivation and willingness to communicate as predictors of reported L2 use: the Japanese ESL context,” *Second Language Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 29–70, 2002.
- [47] P. D. MacIntyre and C. Charos, “Personality, attitudes, and affect as predictors of second language communication,” *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 3–26, 1996.
- [48] V. Samuda and M. Bygate, *Tasks in Second Language Learning*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, UK, 2008.
- [49] S. W. Eskildsen and G. Theodórsdóttir, “Constructing L2 learning spaces: ways to achieve learning inside and outside the classroom,” *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 143–164, 2017.
- [50] M. Bygate, J. Norris, and K. V. Branden, “Task-based language teaching,” in *Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics* Wiley, Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2015.
- [51] A. A. Ganjouee, B. Ghonsooly, and A. H. Fatemi, “The impact of task-based instruction on the enhancement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners speaking skill and emotional intelligence,” *Applied Research on English Language*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 195–214, 2018.
- [52] R. Ellis, *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2003.
- [53] R. Ellis, “Task-based language teaching: sorting out the misunderstandings,” *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 221–246, 2009.
- [54] L. S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society. The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, USA, 1978.
- [55] L. S. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, USA, 1986.
- [56] P. Moore, “Task-based language teaching,” in *Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics* Wiley, Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2018.
- [57] G. Jordan and H. Gray, “We need to talk about coursebooks,” *ELT Journal*, vol. 73, no. 4, pp. 438–446, 2019.
- [58] D. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, Prentice-Hall, Hoboken, NJ, USA, 1984.
- [59] R. Bao and X. Du, “Implementation of task-based language teaching in Chinese as a foreign language: benefits and challenges,” *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 291–310, 2015.
- [60] P. Skehan, “Task-based instruction,” *Language Teaching*, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 1–14, 2003.
- [61] B. L. Leaver and M. A. Kaplan, “Task-based instruction in U.S. government slavic language programs,” in *Task-based Instruction in Foreign Language Education*, B. L. Leaver and J. R. Willis, Eds., pp. 47–66, Georgetown University Press, Washington, DC, USA, 2004.
- [62] N. Iwashita and H. Li, “Chapter 7. Patterns of corrective feedback in a task-based adult EFL classroom setting in China,” in *Task-based Language Teaching in Foreign Language Contexts Research and Implementation*, A. Shehadeh and C. Coombe, Eds., John Benjamins, Amsterdam, Netherlands, pp. 137–162, 2012.