

THE EFFECTS OF TASK-BASED LEARNING ON MALE AND FEMALE LEARNERS' PROFICIENCY AND NOTICING

Yrd.Doç.Dr. Demet Yaylı

Pamukkale Üniversitesi

İngiliz Dili Eğitimi A.D.

demety@pau.edu.tr

ÖZET

Göreve Dayalı Dil Öğretimi yöntemi, öğretmen ve öğrencinin içerik seçimi, yöntem ve değerlendirme hakkında işbirliği içinde çalışmasını destekleyen öğrenci merkezli dil öğretimi yaklaşımlardan biridir. Farkındalık çalışmaları Göreve Dayalı Dil Öğretimi yönteminde önemli bir yere sahiptir çünkü öğrencilerin kendi dil seviyeleri ile çalışmanın gerektirdiği seviye arasındaki farkı anlamaları dil seviyelerinin gelişmesine sebep olur. Bu çalışma, cinsiyet faktörünü de göz önüne alarak Göreve Dayalı Öğrenmenin öğrencilerin yeterlik ve farkındalık seviyelerine etkisini Türkiye'de ilköğretim okulu düzeyinde belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır ve 2004-2005 öğretim yılında Ufuk İlköğretim Okulu 6. sınıf öğrencileriyle yürütülmüştür. The Simple Present Tense (Geniş zaman) çalışılacak yapı olarak belirlenmiştir ve araştırmacı tarafından öntest ve sontest olarak kullanılmak üzere bir yeterlik testi ve bir farkındalık testi hazırlanmıştır. İki sınıfın (6B ve 6C) biri deney (6B), biri kontrol grubu (6C) olarak rasgele atanmıştır. Her iki grupta da dersler araştırmacı tarafından yürütülmüştür ve deney grubunda Göreve Dayalı Öğrenme ilkelerine, kontrol grubunda ise Sunum-Pratik-Üretim ilkelerine uygun olarak öğretim yapılmıştır. Bu gruplara verilen ön ve sontestler, öğrencilerin Geniş Zamanla ilgili yeterlik ve farkındalık seviyeleri üzerine bilgi edinmeyi amaçlamıştır. Yeterlik ve farkındalık sontestleri, bu iki gruptaki öğrencilerin aritmetik ortalama açısından bir farklılık göstermediğini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Özetle, Göreve Dayalı Öğrenme Geniş zamanın öğretilmesi açısından Sunum-Pratik-Üretim yaklaşımına bir üstünlük sağlayamamıştır. Bunun yanısıra, cinsiyetin öğrencilerin öntest ve sontest başarılarını etkileyen bir etken olmadığı gözlenmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Göreve Dayalı Öğrenme, Görevler, Başarı, Farkındalık

ABSTRACT

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is one of the learner-centered approaches to language teaching which supports the fact that the teacher and the learner should work collaboratively in decisions on content selection, methodology and evaluation. Under TBLT, noticing activities have a crucial role as it is believed that once learners pay attention to form and notice the gap between their current level of grammatical knowledge and the communicative demand of the context, L2 development may be assumed to start. This study investigates the effects of TBLT on learners' proficiency and noticing levels with respect to gender in a primary school setting in Turkey. It was carried out in Ufuk İlköğretim Okulu on the sixth grade students in the academic year 2004-2005. The Simple Present Tense was chosen as the grammar unit to be studied. A proficiency test and a noticing test on the Simple Present Tense were developed as pre- and post-tests of the study by the researcher, and two classes were randomly assigned as the experimental (6B) and the control (6C) groups. The lessons in both groups were delivered by the researcher, who followed the principles of TBLT in the experimental group and the principles of Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) approach in the control group. These groups were given pre- and post-tests to elicit data on learners' proficiency and noticing levels in the use of the Simple Present Tense. Both the proficiency and the noticing post-test scores indicated no significant difference between the mean score of the TBLT and that of the PPP group. In other words, TBLT did not prove to be superior to PPP in the teaching of the Simple Present Tense in a public school in Turkey. Besides, gender did not play a significant role in the scores the learners achieved in the pre- and post-tests.

Keywords: Task-Based Learning, Tasks, Proficiency, Noticing

Introduction

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has a distinguishing place in modern language teaching. According to Willis (1996a), task-based framework differs from a Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) cycle because in TBLT the focus on the language is at the end. The communication task forms the centre of the framework. While performing the task, learners use the language they have learnt from previous lessons or from other sources. Then they write and talk about how they did the task and compare their findings. Finally, attention is directed to the specific features of the language form. The last step is to have a close look at the specific language forms.

The notion of 'task' has the main role in TBLT, and there are various definitions of tasks which have been proposed by scientists like Long (1985, cited in Nunan, 1989), Crookes (1986, cited in Bygate, Skehan, Swain, 2001), Prabhu (1987), Nunan (1989), Skehan (1996). All these definitions are very close to each other. Small differences stem from different points of emphasis. Long and Skehan, for instance, emphasize the real world relationship for an activity to be taken as a task. Prabhu, Nunan and Crookes, however, emphasize the outcome nature of tasks.

According to Nunan (1989), both the teacher and the learner create ideas for the task design, and the information gained from learners is used in planning, implementing and evaluating language programs. In TBLT, the main role of tasks is to facilitate language learning, and the teacher and the learner work collaboratively to achieve this goal. Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that task work specifies several roles for the learner and the teacher. Learners are mainly expected to be group participants, monitors, risk-takers and innovators. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), on the other hand, some specific roles are also assigned for the teacher in task-based instruction. First of all, the teacher has the central role of selecting, adapting and creating tasks. The teacher should also take learner needs, interests and current language skills into account before forming his or her adaptation of tasks into an instructional sequence.

The framework of TBLT is based on three stages, namely pre-task, task cycle and language focus. These three stages form the essential components of tasks and are well agreed by the proponents of the approach (Willis 1996b; Skehan 1996). In the pre-task stage, the teacher introduces the topic and the task and teaches some necessary new vocabulary. The task cycle stage provides learners with a chance to use the target language to complete the task. The teacher gives feedback whenever it is needed. According to the type of the task, exposure to language in use such as listening to the recordings of other people doing the same task can be provided either before or during the task cycle. As Willis (1996b) emphasizes, three basic conditions of language learning which are exposure, language use and motivation are achieved until the end of the task cycle stage. The language focus stage includes a closer study of some specific features which naturally occur in the language used during the task. The analysis and the practice components of the language focus stage provide the desirable extra condition of language learning, which is explicit study of the language form.

The theoretical basis for noticing stems from the relationship between explicit and implicit knowledge. Nassaji (2000) states that many second language researchers believe that attention to form has a central role in the cognitive process of second language development. According to Batstone (1996:273), "*Noticing is basically the*

idea that if learners pay attention to form and meaning of certain language structures in input, this will contribute to the internalization of the rule." If learners pay attention to form and notice the gap between their current level of grammatical knowledge and the communicative demand of the context, L2 development occurs.

The organic view of language learning is interrelated to the notion of grammatical instruction as consciousness-raising (CR). According to Rutherford and Sharwood-Smith (1985, cited in Cross, 2002), CR refers to the drawing of learners' attention to the formal properties of the language. Ellis (2002) states that the main idea of grammar teaching is to enable learners to internalize the structures so that learners can use them in everyday communication. According to Ellis (2002: 167), "*Consciousness-raising, as I use the term, involves an attempt to equip learners with an understanding of a specific grammatical feature – to develop declarative rather than procedural knowledge of it.*" The difference between practice activities and CR activities stems from the fact that the aim in CR activities is not to enable learners to perform a structure correctly with the help of repetitions and immediate feedback giving, but to develop explicit knowledge of grammar, to help learners to know about it. In short, it is supported that practice is mainly behavioural, but CR is to achieve concept-forming in orientation. Willis and Willis (1996) state that current concerns with CR stem from a reaction against approaches to language learning which pays little attention to the contribution of instruction. For these language specialists, CR is seen as problem solving. Learners are encouraged to notice specific features of languages, to draw conclusions from what they have noticed and to organize their view of language using the conclusions they have drawn. To sum up, according to Cross (2002), learners may notice a particular feature in input when following formal instruction as CR, and CR activities have the aim of drawing learners' attention to the formal properties of language. As Ellis (2002) mentions, CR is directed at explicit knowledge. In other words, in their communicative output, learners are not expected to use a specific target form which has been brought to their attention through formal instruction. However, noticing has supposed implications for language processing and the actual acquisition of linguistic features. The internalization of rules is aimed, and this can take place if learners pay attention to both form and meaning.

A lot of research has been devoted to TBLT in recent years. Fotos and Ellis (1999) aimed to focus on the comparison of proficiency gains between the performances in grammar tasks and traditional, teacher-fronted lessons. Similar to the findings of Doughty and Pica (1986, cited in Ellis, 1999), this study also proves that dyads cause the highest level of negotiation, groups follow the dyads, and teacher-fronted lessons do not lead to any kind of negotiation attempts. Takashima and Ellis (1999) carried out a study in order to show that the learners benefit from focused feedback acquisitionally and that clarification requests push learners to reformulate their output in the context of a message-focused task.

Swain and Lapkin (1998) view language use as both a communication and a cognitive activity, and according to them, dialogue provides the necessary condition for language learning. Their study shows that collaborative dialogue is a useful concept for understanding L2 learning. In a similar study, Murphy (2003) aimed to investigate the ways in which learners interact with tasks. According to the results, the influence of learners on the task may jeopardize the task designer's objective. Therefore, learners

should be given the chance to reflect on the ways to perform the task and on the language they will use.

Fotos (1993) focused on noticing the target structures in communicative input, and the relationship between proficiency gains and noticing frequencies. According to the data gained from post-tests and noticing exercises, grammar consciousness-raising performance proves to be useful as a pedagogic device in grammar teaching. In another study, Fotos (1994) carried out a research on grammar consciousness-raising tasks which combine the development of knowledge about problematic L2 grammatical features with the meaning-focused use of the target language. In terms of the proficiency gains, the results were similar in both the group which performed grammar consciousness-raising tasks and the one which performed traditional grammar lessons. Similarly, negotiation quantity was similar in both grammar task performance and the communicative task performance of the learners. Therefore, the researcher concludes that grammar consciousness-raising tasks may be regarded as a possible method for the development of knowledge of problematic grammar points through communicative activities.

The implementation of TBLT in classroom setting is also an issue that deserves research. Some longitudinal studies have been carried out to investigate what is going on in the TBLT classroom. For this purpose, Kim (1998) aimed to analyze communicative-oriented activities, namely task-based activities that are linked to the curriculum of the textbooks in nationwide use in EFL classrooms in Korea and Hawaii. It is concluded that teachers should implement a communicative approach and keep up with the current level of students by using realistic activities that may take place in real life.

In another study, Zhang (1994) worked as the leader of a long-term project which was based on the implementation of a task-based syllabus for a group of beginning learners of Chinese. The aim of this longitudinal study was to observe the effects of the teaching of Chinese grammar which was incorporated into a communicative curriculum. According to the data analysis, most of the students found the use of a task-based syllabus very helpful in their learning. Pair work and group work were believed to be highly favorable. The students liked the act of active participation in the process of using Chinese. The researcher also suggests the use of team teaching and peer observation sessions to avoid problems about running a learner-centered classroom. Similarly, McLaughlin (2001) carried out a case analysis in order to evaluate the English language-learning program at Andong National University in Korea. This case analysis evaluated the English language-learning program which was based on task-based principles.

Carless (2002; 2003) conducted case studies to investigate the implementation of TBLT with young children. Four themes relevant to the classroom implementation of TBLT with young learners, namely, noise/discipline the use of the mother tongue, the extent of pupil involvement and the role of drawing or coloring activities were aimed to be analyzed. The data analysis serves as useful advice for the teachers of second language. The other study focused on teacher beliefs, teacher understandings, the syllabus time available, the textbook and the topic, preparation and the available resources, and the language proficiency of the students. The idea that complex

relationships between these factors have an influence on the extent of the implementation of task-based teaching in the classroom is argued in this research.

In his study (1991), Kumaravadivelu emphasized the importance of the relationship between the teacher and the learner. In task-based pedagogy, learning outcome is viewed as the unpredictable interaction between the learner, the task and the task situation. According to the analysis of the classroom transcripts, the researcher listed ten categories as the potential sources of the mismatch between teacher intention and learner interpretation which should be understood clearly in order to avoid contradictory intentions and interpretations and to achieve the desired learning outcomes in the classroom.

Lynch and Maclean (2000) aimed to investigate the benefits of task repetition in their experimental research. A careful analysis of two students at the extremes of the proficiency level of the group, who were Alicia, the weakest in the group with less than 400 TOEFL, and Daniela, who had over 600 TOEFL, proved that task repetition enables different learners to develop different areas of their interlanguage.

Beglar and Hunt (2002) believe that a task-based syllabus has the potential to play an important role in ESL/EFL curricula; therefore, they designed an extended task-based project. This project was implemented in a private Japanese university with 340 university students. The researchers aimed to evaluate the implementation of task-based learning. The researchers conclude that the learners found the project rewarding, interesting and beneficial for their improvement. The products of the learners were of high level, and their process of doing the task was believed to improve their level of proficiency in English.

Swain and Lapkin (2001) focused on the uses of the L1 made by 22 pairs of grade 8 French immersion students while they performed either a dictogloss or a jigsaw task. The students who achieved a higher level of success in their written performance tended to use less L1. However, it was emphasized that L1 use should not be prohibited because it supports the development of the second language. In another study, Swain and Lapkin (2002) investigated the importance of collaborative dialogue as a part of the process of second language learning. Multi-stage writing, noticing, stimulated recall processes and reflection on the language are believed to be effective ways to facilitate second language learning.

Salaberry and Lopez-Ortega (1998) focused on attention to form as a direct predictor of accuracy in L2 production. In their study, the researchers aimed to analyze the accuracy of L2 Spanish production across three different tasks (narrative task, multiple-choice test and fill-in-the-blanks cloze test) on three grammatical items (past tense aspect, subject pronouns and articles) among 74 native English speakers (45 intermediate and 29 advanced students of Spanish). The analysis of the results showed that attention to form is a good predictor of accuracy among L2 learners. The researchers conclude that learners' control of the grammatical requirements of the task enables them to improve the accuracy of their L2 production.

In previous studies mentioned above, the effect of TBLT on the proficiency levels of learners in the use of a grammar point has not been studied enough. There are few studies paying attention to this issue. Most studies have been carried out mostly in the Far East. That is why more research on these issues should be done in order to study the effects of TBLT on proficiency and noticing of grammar with respect to gender in a

different educational setting. This study will contribute to the field of language teaching and TBLT as an approach.

Methodology

This quantitative study has a quasi-experimental model with one experimental group and one control group. A proficiency test and a noticing test were developed by the researcher as pre-tests and post-tests of the study. Both the experimental and the control groups took a pre-test before the treatment and a post-test afterwards. The experimental group received a treatment of TBLT, and the control group was instructed in a traditional way following the principles of the PPP chain for one month.

The Universe and the Sampling

The universe of the study is the sixth grade students in primary schools in Turkey. The sampling of the study were chosen from Ufuk İlköğretim Okulu, and two classes were randomly appointed as experimental (6B) and control (6C) groups in the academic year 2004-2005. The structures of the classes were not changed by the researcher. The experimental and the control groups both took a pre-test before the treatment and a post-test afterwards. The experimental group received a treatment of TBLT, and the control group was instructed in a traditional way following the principles of the PPP chain for one month.

Table 1: The Distribution of Participants into the Groups in the Study

Gender	Control Group PPP	Experimental Group TBLT
Female	11	12
Male	8	8
Total	19	20

Data Collection

The questions in both tests were prepared according to the table of specifications as proposed by Ertürk (1972). They were developed on the goals and objectives determined for the teaching of a grammar point, the Simple Present Tense. According to the curriculum designed for the sixth grade students by the Ministry of Education, the Simple Present Tense forms the base of the English lessons to be delivered throughout the academic year. Another reason to choose the Simple Present Tense was the popularity of the use of this tense in real life use of the language. The Simple Present Tense is the second most frequently used tense after the Past Tense (George, 1972). The questions in the proficiency test were multiple choice, matching, fill in the blanks and sentence writing types of questions in nature. The students in both groups got familiar with the question types in the production (PPP) and the language focus (TBLT) stages. The reliability analysis showed the Cronbach Alpha value of the test to be .96. The noticing test included correct-incorrect type of questions because Noonan (2004) gives this type of exercise as one of the noticing activities. The reliability analysis showed the Cronbach Alpha value for the noticing test to be .62. Both tests were developed with

support from scientists, instructors and teachers in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, which gave support to the validity of the test.

The Procedure

The instruction activity was carried out by the researcher in both groups. Before the treatment period, the students were instructed by using the methods of the treatment in order to prepare them for the treatment. The verb 'be' in the Simple Present Tense, which was studied before the experiment, was chosen for the piloting study. Both groups studied the verb 'be' in four class hours. By doing so, the students in the experimental and the control groups got acquainted with TBLT and PPP respectively. After the piloting study, the treatment focusing on the use of the Simple Present Tense was carried out in the control and the experimental groups for 4 weeks with 4 hours of classes each week. In total, except for the piloting study, both classes were exposed to the treatment (PPP and TBLT) for 16 hours each. The treatment applied in the two groups was as follows:

The treatment in the experimental group was applied according to the principles of TBLT, and the framework introduced by Willis (1996b) and Skehan (1996) was used as the basis for the lesson plans. Therefore, all the tasks done in classes had the basic stages of pre-task, task cycle and language focus. The students were asked to form pairs or groups, presented with the necessary vocabulary in order to carry out the task and exposed to the real language use in the form of input in the pre-task stage. With the use of different tasks during the task-cycle stage such as writing passages similar to the ones presented as input, finding the differences between the written and audio-taped versions of a text, separating the mixed sentences of two separate dialogues, preparing questions by using the pre-determined vocabulary and asking them to the other groups etc., the students were encouraged to use the language as in real life. The researcher did not make any corrections about the students' use of the language while they were doing the task unless there was a serious breakdown. After doing the task, the students were asked to report their productions before their classmates so that they were able to compare their findings. The researcher observed the reports carefully and announced the best performance in order to create a kind of challenge in class. Since the students were exposed to the new grammar points in the input and used the grammar points during the task-cycle stage, they gained some information and got acquainted with the new grammar points. During the language-focus stage, the grammar points were focused in meaningful contexts through consciousness-raising. Either the sentences used in the input or the students' own sentences produced during the task-cycle stage were used for the analysis of the new items. For the practice of the new grammar points, the researcher handed out exercises of different kinds. Cooperation was supported in the privacy of the small groups, and the students were encouraged to use the target language as much as possible without having the fear of making mistakes.

For the control group (PPP), on the other hand, at the beginning of the classes, the grammar rules were taught explicitly. The questions raised by the students about the grammar points were answered explicitly. In the classroom, some choral repetitions of the new item took place. After the grammar presentation, the students did oral practice on the new grammar point. The students were corrected immediately. Students worked individually and after the practice, students were asked to produce in the target

structure. At the end of the session, students asked questions about the items that were not understood and got the teacher response.

The findings of this study are presented in terms of the test scores and the statistical analysis of these scores. In addition, the study queried for the effects of the two treatments considering the variability of gender in both the experimental and the control groups.

Findings

In order to study the effects of TBLT and PPP on proficiency and noticing of the learners in their use of the Simple Present Tense, the learners were given pre-tests before and post-tests after the treatment. By doing so, the score differences between the pre-tests and the post-tests were obtained and further analyzed to find out if those differences were statistically significant. For this purpose; the mean scores, standard deviations of the pre-tests and the post-tests were obtained, and a t-test was applied.

First of all, the mean scores and the standard deviations of the control (PPP) and the experimental (TBLT) groups for the pre-test scores of the proficiency test were calculated and a dependent t-test was applied, and the findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and Dependent t-test Results of TBLT and PPP Groups in terms of Pre-test Scores of the Proficiency Test

Groups	n	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig.
PPP	19	7.90	3.35	37	0.54	Not Significant
TBLT	20	11.90	6.94			

[t (37)=2.02]

Table 2 indicates that the mean score of the TBLT group (11.90) is higher than that of the PPP group (7.90). The dependent t-test analysis proved the difference to be insignificant ($p < 0.05$).

Another analysis was performed for the analysis of the post-test scores in order to discover if the two groups significantly differed from each other. For this purpose, the mean scores and the standard deviations were calculated, and a t-test was applied. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test Results of TBLT and PPP Groups in terms of Post-test Scores of the Proficiency Test

Groups	n	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig.
PPP	19	35.32	12.19	37	0.83	Not Significant
TBLT	20	38.60	12.40			

[t (37)=2.02]

Table 3 indicates that the mean score of the TBLT group (38.60) is higher than that of the PPP group (35.32). The t-test analysis proved the difference to be insignificant ($p < 0.05$).

The findings in Table 2 and Table 3 indicate that both groups (TBLT and PPP) did not significantly differ in proficiency of the use of the Simple Present Tense regarding the pre-test and post-test analyses of the research.

This study also aimed at investigating the effects of TBLT and PPP approach on noticing of the learners in the use of the Simple Present Tense. For this purpose, a correct-incorrect type of noticing test was given to both the experimental (TBLT) and the control (PPP) groups. First of all; the mean scores, standard deviations and t-test scores were analyzed for the pre-test scores of both groups and shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test Results of TBLT and PPP Groups in terms of Pre-test Scores of the Noticing Test

Groups	n	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig.
PPP	19	1.26	1.10	37	1.72	Not Significant
TBLT	20	1.90	1.21			

[$t(37) = 2.02$]

Table 4 proves the mean score of the TBLT group (1.90) to be higher than that of the PPP group (1.26). In order to discover if this difference was significant, a t-test was applied. The t-test score shows that the difference between the TBLT and PPP groups in terms of pre-test scores is not significant ($p < 0.05$).

As in the case of proficiency pre-test scores of the two groups, mean scores, standard deviations were obtained for the post-test scores and a t-test was applied to test the significance. The findings are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test Results of TBLT and PPP Groups in terms of Post-test Scores of the Noticing Test

Groups	n	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig.
PPP	19	5.58	2.09	37	0.17	Not Significant
TBLT	20	5.70	2.32			

[$t(37) = 2.02$]

Table 5 indicates that the mean score of the TBLT group (5.70) is higher than that of the PPP group (5.58). A t-test was applied to find out if the difference was significant, and it was realized that the difference between the groups in terms of post-test scores is not significant ($p < 0.05$).

The findings in Table 4 and Table 5 indicate that both groups (TBLT and PPP) did not significantly differ in their noticing levels in the Simple Present Tense regarding the pre-test and post-test analyses of the research.

In order to investigate the differences between proficiency and noticing pre-test and post-test scores of the TBLT and the PPP groups, a t-test was applied. Table 6 shows the findings from this analysis:

Table 6: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test Scores of the Learners in TBLT and PPP Groups for Proficiency and Noticing Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Dimension	Groups	Tests	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig.
Proficiency	TBLT	Pre-test	20	11.90	6.94	19	9.36	Significant
		Post-test	20	38.60	12.40			
	PPP	Pre-test	19	7.90	3.35	18	9.70	Significant
		Post-test	19	35.32	12.19			
Noticing	TBLT	Pre-test	20	1.90	1.21	19	7.29	Significant
		Post-test	20	5.70	2.32			
	PPP	Pre-test	19	1.26	1.26	18	9.15	Significant
		Post-test	19	5.58	2.09			

[t (19)= 2.09] [t (18)= 2.10]

The proficiency test scores show that the post-test mean score of the TBLT group (38.60) is higher than the pre-test mean score (11.90). This means that TBLT instruction caused a difference for the learners. The t-test score proves that this difference is significant ($p < 0.05$). The proficiency post-test mean score of the PPP group (35.32) is also higher than that of the pre-test (7.90), and this difference is significant as well ($p < 0.05$).

As for the noticing test, the post-test mean score of the TBLT group (5.70) is higher than that of the pre-test (1.90), and this difference is significant ($p < 0.05$). The PPP group also shows a similar difference between the pre-test mean score (1.26) and the post-test mean score (5.58). This difference also proves to be significant according to the t-test analysis ($p < 0.05$).

The analysis above indicates that the methods used in the TBLT and the PPP groups both improved the proficiency and the noticing levels of the learners significantly. For the proficiency test, the mean score difference between the pre-test and the post-test of the TBLT group (26.70) is similar to that of the PPP group (27.42). For the noticing test, also, the mean score difference between the pre-test and the post-test of the TBLT group (3.80) is similar to that of the PPP group (4.32).

All these findings indicate that both the TBLT and the PPP groups improved their proficiency and noticing levels in the Simple Present Tense in a similar extent. Both methods prove to be significantly effective on the proficiency and noticing in the use of the Simple Present Tense as shown on Table 6. However, as shown on Table 3 and 4, TBLT and PPP do not significantly differ from each other. In addition, this is supported by the similar mean score improvements of both the TBLT and the PPP groups from the pre-test to the post-test scores of proficiency and noticing.

In order to investigate the effects of TBLT and PPP instructions on proficiency and noticing with regard to gender, the proficiency and the noticing scores of the learners in the experimental and the control groups were analyzed. In this analysis, it was searched if the scores of the learners significantly differed depending on gender. For this reason, the mean scores and the standard deviations of the learners' scores in both groups were analyzed in terms of gender. The findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of the Female and Male Learners in TBLT and PPP Groups for Proficiency and Noticing Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Dimension	Groups	Gender	n	Pre-test		Post-Test	
				mean	SD	mean	SD
Noticing	TBLT	F	11	0.91	1.04	5.18	1.17
		M	8	1.75	1.03	6.13	2.95
	PPP	F	12	2.00	1.35	6.25	2.63
		M	8	1.59	1.19	4.88	1.55
Proficiency	TBLT	F	11	8.00	3.82	36.27	10.74
		M	8	7.75	2.82	34.00	14.63
	PPP	F	12	11.67	7.20	40.25	13.73
		M	8	12.25	7.00	36.13	10.47

Table 7 indicates that, for the noticing pre-test scores, the mean score (1.75) of the male learners in the TBLT group is higher than the mean score (0.91) of the female learners, whereas the mean score (1.59) of the male learners is lower than the mean score (2.00) of the female learners in the PPP group. For the noticing post-test scores, also, the mean score (6.13) of the male learners in the TBLT group is higher than the mean score (5.18) of the female learners, whereas the mean score (4.88) of the male learners is lower than the mean score (6.25) of the female learners in the PPP group.

For the proficiency pre-test scores, the mean score (7.75) of the male learners in the TBLT group is lower than the mean score (8.00) of the female learners, whereas the mean score (12.25) of the male learners is higher than the mean score (11.67) of the female learners in the PPP group. For the proficiency the post-test scores, however, the mean score (34.00) of the male learners in the TBLT group is lower than the mean score (36.27) of the female learners; and likewise, the mean score (36.13) of the male learners is lower than the mean score (40.25) of the female learners in the PPP group.

In order to investigate the significance of the differences between the groups and genders for the pre-test scores, a variance analysis was applied, and the findings are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Variance Analysis of the Scores of the Female and Male Learners in TBLT and PPP Groups for Proficiency and Noticing Pre-test Scores

Test		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Noticing	Between	7.527	3	2.51	1.91	Not Significant
	Within	45.909	35	1.31		
	Total	53.436	38			
Proficiency	Between	158.231	3	52.74	1.66	Not Significant
	Within	1115.667	35	31.88		
	Total	1273.897	38			

The variance analysis result proves that the pre-test scores for both test types in the TBLT and the PPP groups do not significantly differ in terms of gender. That is to say, the difference between the male and the female learners is not significant [$F(3,35) = 2.87$] in the two groups for proficiency and noticing in the use of the Simple Present Tense.

Another variance analysis was applied to investigate the significance of the differences between the groups and genders for the post-test scores. Table 9 presents the findings obtained from this variance analysis.

Table 9: Variance Analysis of the Scores of the Female and Male Learners in TBLT and PPP Groups for Proficiency and Noticing Post-test Scores

Test		SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Noticing	Between	13.338	3	4.45	0.93	Not Significant
	Within	167.636	35	4.79		
	Total	180.974	38			
Proficiency	Between	210.693	3	70.23	0.45	Not Significant
	Within	5491.307	35	156.89		
	Total	5702.000	38			

The variance analysis result indicates that the post-test scores for both test types in the TBLT and the PPP groups do not significantly differ in terms of gender. That is to say, the difference between the male and female learners is not significant [$F(35,3) = 8.61$] in the two groups for proficiency and noticing in the Simple Present Tense.

Conclusion and Suggestions

This study indicated that TBLT did not significantly differ from PPP in the teaching of the Simple Present Tense in a public school in Turkey. In the studies of Fotos (1993; 1994); and Fotos and Ellis (1999), no significant difference was found between the traditional teacher-fronted grammar teaching and grammar task group with consciousness-raising activities. Gender also had nothing to do with the scores the learners accomplished in the pre-tests and the post-tests. Similarly, the studies of Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991), Lin and Wu (2003) and Jenks (2004) yield no clear results about the impact of gender on language proficiency or self-efficacy. In conclusion, it is not possible to claim the superiority of one of TBLT and PPP on the other or the superiority of male or female learners in the two groups in teaching the grammar point the Simple Present Tense to sixth grade learners; however, more research should be devoted to the effects of TBLT on grammar proficiency since the field lacks research carried out in real classroom setting. There is little research focusing on the implementation of TBLT and problems which arise from the implementation. Therefore, more research is needed to contribute to the field of second language teaching and acquisition. The present study took place in a public secondary school setting in Turkey. More studies are needed with participants from other age groups and types of schools.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Batstone, R. (1996). Key Concepts in ELT: Noticing. *ELT Journal*, 50/3, p. 273.
- Beglar, D.; Hunt, A. (2002). 'Implementing task-based language teaching.' in J.C. Richards; W.A Renandya. (Eds.), *Methodology in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bygate, M.; Skehan, P.; Swain, M. (2001). 'Introduction' in M. Bygate; P. Skehan; M. Swain (Eds.) *Researching Pedagogic Tasks: Second Language Learning, Teaching and Testing*. Longman: London.
- Carless, D.R. (2002). Implementing task-based learning with young learners. *ELT Journal*, 56(4), 1-10.
- Carless, D.R. (2003). Factors in the implementation of task-based teaching in primary schools. *System*, 31, 485-500.
- Cross, J. (2002). Noticing in SLA: Is it a valid concept? *TESL-EJ*, 6(3), 1-9.
- Ellis, R. (1999). *Learning a Second Language through Interaction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Ellis, R. (2002). 'Grammar teaching-practice or consciousness raising?' in J.C. Richards; W.A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ertürk, Selahattin. (1972). *Eğitimde 'Program' Geliştirme*. Ankara: Meteksan A.Ş.
- Fotos, S.S. (1993). Consciousness-raising and noticing through focus on form: grammar task performance versus formal instruction. *Applied Linguistics*, 14(4), 385-407.
- Fotos, S.S. (1994). Integrating grammar instruction and communicative language use through grammar consciousness-raising tasks. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(2), 323-351.
- Fotos, S.; Ellis, R. (1999). 'Communicating About Grammar.' in R. Ellis (Ed.) *Learning a Second Language through Interaction*. John Benjamins Publishing Company: Amsterdam.
- George, H. V. (1972). *Common Errors in Language Learning*. Massachusetts: Newbury House.
- Jenks, C. J. (2004). The effects of age, sex and language proficiency on the self-efficacy of English language learners. *ARECLS E-Journal*, 1, 50-63.
- Kim, K.S. (1998). Nose to the grindstone: task-based activities for Korean junior high schoolers. *Proceedings of the 1997 Korea TESOL Conference*.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1991). Language-learning tasks: teacher intention and learner interpretation. *ELT Journal*, 45(2), 98-107.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. & Long, M. (1991). *An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research*. Longman: London & New York.
- Lin, J. & Wu, F. (2003). Differential performance by gender in foreign language testing. *Poster for the Annual Meeting of NCME*, Chicago.
- Lynch, T.; Maclean, J. (2000). Exploring the benefits of task repetition and recycling for classroom language learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 4(3), 221-250.
- McLaughlin, J. (2001). A task-based program in Korea: a case analysis. *SLLT*, 1(1), 1-22.
- Murphy, J. (2003). Task-based learning: the interaction between tasks and learners. *ELT Journal*, 57(4), 352-360.

- Nassaji, H. (2000). Towards integrating form-focused instruction and communicative interaction in the second language classroom: some pedagogical possibilities. *The Modern Language Journal*, 84(2), 241-250.
- Noonan, F. J. (2004). Teaching ESL students to “notice” grammar. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 10(7).
- Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Prabhu, N. S. (1987). *Second Language Pedagogy*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. CUP: New York.
- Salaberry, M.R.; Lopez-Ortega, N. (1998). Accurate L2 production across language tasks: focus on form, focus on meaning, and communicative control. *The Modern Language Journal*, 82(4), 514-532.
- Skehan, P. (1996). ‘Second language acquisition research and task-based instruction’ in J. Willis; D. Willis. *Challenge and Change in Language Teaching*. Longman Limited: Essex.
- Swain, M.; Lapkin, S. (1998). Interaction and second language learning: two adolescent French immersion students working together. *The Modern Language Journal*, 82(3), 320-337.
- Swain, M.; Lapkin, S. (2001). Focus on form through collaborative dialogue: exploring task effects. in M. Bygate; P. Skehan; M. Swain (Eds.) *Researching Pedagogic Tasks: Second Language Learning, Teaching and Testing*. London, UK: Longman.
- Swain, M.; Lapkin, S. (2002). Talking it through: two French immersion learners’ response to reformulation. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37, 285-304.
- Takashima, H.; Ellis, R. (1999). ‘Output enhancement and the acquisition of the past tense.’ in R. Ellis (Ed.) *Learning a Second Language through Interaction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Willis, J. (1996a). ‘A flexible framework for task-based learning.’ in J. Willis; D. Willis (Eds.) *Challenge and Change in Language Teaching*. Longman Limited: Essex.
- Willis, J. (1996b). *A Framework for Task-Based Learning*, Longman Limited: Essex.
- Willis, J. & Willis, D. (1996). ‘Consciousness-raising activities in the language classroom’ in J. Willis; D. Willis (Eds.) *Challenge and Change in Language Teaching*. Essex: Longman Limited.
- Zhang, F. (1994). The Implementation of a task-based syllabus for a group of beginning learners of Chinese. *Final Report for a 1994 National Teaching Development Grant*. Australia.

APPENDIX
SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM THE PROFICIENCY TEST

Choose the correct option.

1. The bank _____ at 8 every morning.
a) opening b) open c) to open d) opens
2. A: 'Does it snow a lot in your country?'
B: 'No, it _____.'
a) don't b) doesn't c) do d) does

Re-write the following sentences using the frequency adverbs in parantheses.

3. We don't eat fish. (often)

_____.
Form sentences in the Simple Present Tense.

4. music / listens to / Jane / every evening (+)

_____.
Choose the sentence which paraphrases the given situation.

5. Joe: 'How often do you eat pizza?'
Mary: 'Never.'
a) Mary always eats pizza.
b) Mary usually eats pizza.
c) Mary sometimes eats pizza.
d) Mary does not eat pizza.

Re-write the following sentences using plural subjects given.

6. She speaks four languages.
They _____ four languages.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM THE NOTICING TEST

Write correct (C) or incorrect (I) for the following sentences.

- _____ 7. Do you help your mother?
- _____ 8. She drink milk every night.
- _____ 9. Where does she lives?
- _____ 10. My father doesn't has a car.

The Lesson Plan for Task 6

Performance Objectives:

The students will listen to a dialogue about *what Jane does at weekends* on the tape and write a passage about *Jane's weekend* with the help of a series of pictures showing her daily activities. The students are expected to use sentences in the Simple Present Tense. Next, they will use frequency adverbs in questions in the Simple Present Tense in a writing task.

Class Background:

The students have already studied the verb 'be', the modal 'can', the Simple Present Tense in affirmative, negative sentences, and yes/no and w/h questions. They can express daily routines with frequency adverbs and time expressions in the affirmative sentences. They have a vocabulary stock of some simple adjectives, nouns, place adverbs and verbs.

Starting the Lesson:

The students will be announced that they will use the Simple Present Tense in a listening and a writing task, study frequency adverbs in negative sentences and yes/no questions in the Simple Present Tense, and learn new vocabulary items.

Age of the Students: 12-14

Duration: 80 minutes

Date: 09. 12. 2004

The Pre-Task Stage: (10 minutes)

1. The teacher will instruct the students to form groups with different students other than the ones sitting next to them.
2. They will need a pencil and a photocopied page containing a series of pictures.
3. The teacher will give the meaning of some vocabulary items such as *go out, go shopping, skirt, jeans, cheese, olives, honey, omelet* and *department store*, which will enable the students to understand the sentences in the dialogue.
4. The teacher will tell the groups to listen to the dialogue on the tape carefully in order to write a passage about *Jane's weekend* afterwards.
5. Next, the teacher will announce that the groups will prepare two questions with frequency adverbs, and the groups will answers other groups' questions.

The Task-Cycle 1: (25 minutes)

Task: The students will listen to the dialogue about *Jane's weekend* on the tape twice. The teacher will hand out a sheet of paper containing a series of pictures about Jane's activities. The groups will write a passage about *Jane's weekend*, and the pictures will help the group members to remember the activities.

Planning: The students will check their passages so that they will be ready to present them to the whole class.

Report and Listening: The students are expected to read their passage to the class and listen to each group's passage in order to make a comparison between it and their own passage.

The students will not be allowed to criticize each other's passage.

The teacher will write some problematic sentences on the board. The teacher and the students will correct the mistakes in the sentences.

The group members who have written the best passage will be announced by the teacher.

The Task-Cycle 2: (10 minutes)

Task: The teacher will ask the groups to prepare two questions to be asked to the other groups. The students will choose the verbs among *go to restaurants, go to school by bus, get up early, go swimming* and *eat fish*. The frequency adverbs to be used in the questions are *usually, often* and *sometimes*. The students will prepare two yes/no questions using the words given.

Planning: The group members will check their questions and make some corrections before reading them aloud.

BREAK

Report and Listening: The groups will read their questions, and the teacher will call on other group members to answer these questions.

The groups who have made the least number of mistakes in their questions will be announced by the teacher.

The Language Focus Stage: (35 minutes)

Analysis and Practice:

1. The teacher will write some problematic questions and answers of the students on the board. The teacher and the students will make the corrections together.

2. The teacher will hand out a worksheet of exercises containing choosing appropriate sentences for pictures, re-writing sentences using the words in parentheses and choosing synonymous sentences.

PPP Lesson Plan 6

Performance Objectives:

The students are expected to use frequency adverbs in negatives and yes/no questions in the Simple Present Tense

Class Background:

The students have already studied the verb 'be', the modal 'can', the Simple Present Tense in affirmative, negative sentences, and yes/no and w/h questions. They can express daily routines with frequency adverbs and time expressions in the affirmative sentences. They have a vocabulary stock of some simple adjectives, nouns, place adverbs and verbs.

Starting the Lesson:

The students have already studied frequency adverbs in affirmative sentences in the Simple Present Tense. Some sample sentences will be used for warm up. Next, the students will be announced that they will study frequency adverbs in negatives and questions in the Simple Present Tense.

Age of the Students: 12-14

Duration: 80 minutes

Date: 08. 12. 2004

Presentation of the New Material: (30 minutes)

1. The teacher will give some examples in the Simple Present Tense such as *Do you sometimes drink coffee?*, *I don't always go to bed late* and *Does your sister usually play tennis?*, etc. orally, and then she will write them on the board.
2. The students will repeat the examples on the board chorally.
3. The teacher will write some other examples such as *Do you usually go out shopping at weekends?*, *Do your parents sometimes come home late?*, *Do you often go to the movies?*, etc. and next, the teacher will ask the students to underline the frequency adverbs in the questions.
5. The teacher will give the students a chance to work out the rules by themselves. The teacher will listen to the students' ideas about the rules and give the rule about the use of frequency adverbs in questions in the Simple Present Tense.
6. The students will write down the sentences on the board.
7. Next, the teacher will give some other examples such as *I don't always cook*, *My sister doesn't usually get up late*, *We don't often eat fish*, etc. on the board and ask the students to analyze the frequency adverb usage in negative sentences.
8. After the students have discussed the rule, the teacher will give the rule about the use of frequency adverbs in negative sentences in the Simple Present Tense.
9. The students will write down the sentences on the board.

Practicing the New Material by Drills: (30 minutes)

1. The teacher will produce some other sample sentences such as *Do you sometimes wash the dishes?*, *They don't always eat out* and *Does he often go to the movies?*, etc. and will ask the students to repeat these sentences chorally.

BREAK

2. The teacher will instruct the students to perform a transformation drill. The teacher will say the sentence and a frequency adverb. The students will include the frequency adverb in the sentences such as, *(always) Mary doesn't get up early*, *(often) Do you visit your grandparents?*, *(sometimes) He doesn't watch TV*, *(usually) Do your brothers help you?* etc.

3. The teacher will hand out a worksheet of exercises containing choosing appropriate sentences for pictures, re-writing sentences using the words in parentheses and choosing synonymous sentences.

Production of the New Material: (20 minutes)

1. The teacher will hand out a sheet of paper containing a series of pictures about *what Jane does at weekends*. The students will write a passage about Jane's weekend using these pictures in groups of four.

2. The teacher will listen to these passages and give feedback.