

## **Effects of Information Gap Tasks on Saudi Arabian EFL Extrovert and Introvert Learners' Reading Comprehension Performance**

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**Abstract**

The current research aims to explore the efficacy of using information gap activities in raising reading comprehension performance of Saudi Arabian EFL extroverted / introverted students. To that end, an Oxford Placement Test and EPQ Personality Questionnaire were administered to 40 intermediate EFL students. The subjects of the research were those that scored one SD above and below the mean for the placement test. The subjects were allocated into two experimental groups and a control group. A pre-test reading comprehension test was then given prior to treatment. The treatment was based on two kinds of assignments related to information gap activities: a) a text-based puzzle and b) a cloze passage. Finally, a reading comprehension post-test was given. The findings showed that tasks with information gaps have no important impact on extroverts and introverts. The results also showed that the assignment with regard to information gaps had an important difference to the quality of understanding between the three groups. The results of this research have given language teachers distinct kinds of work in the language classroom environments a number of educational consequences.

## Introduction

Language as a means of communication allows individuals to send information or messages and express themselves with thoughts and feelings. In addition, it is used to convey our ambitions, hopes and ideas. In addition, in all fields of culture, industry, company, tourism, transportation and especially education, language can serve the human requirements in communications. English is used extensively as an international language in two formats: ESL and EFL. Language education must acknowledge and promote communication as the main objective of language learning is communication. Consequently, different techniques and approaches have been popularized throughout the history of language education and learning, aiming to discover the best way to speed up language learning. Task-based language teaching is one of the important and prominent techniques that is currently accepted for language education and learning. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an important methodology that has been developed in line with communicative language teaching (CLT). Real communication is the fundamental foundation of the communicative strategy. Ellis, (2018) notes that TBLT focuses on the use of genuine language in meaningful roles. It implies that educators should offer students possibilities in the linguistic classroom and use it communicatively (Ellis 2018). Florze and Burt (2001) emphasize that "pair work and group job activities can enable learners to share data and create a feeling of community". Prabhu (1987) has classified tasks into three categories: information gap, opinion gap, and reasoning gap functions. The information gap tasks, according to Bell, E., Bryman and Harley (2018), offer students the opportunity to freely interact in school situations to seek the information that is lacking. Various studies have been carried out on language tasks and information gap tasks in particular. Fallahi, Malayeri and Bayat (2015), for example, performed a survey to study the consequences of information gap and opinions gap activities on enhancing the understanding of Saudi EFL students in reading. A quasi-experimental concept was used for the purpose of the study. The findings of pre-tests and post-tests in statistical analyses, including One-Way ANOVA, verified the superiority of the experimental groups to the monitoring group and task oriented instruction used was shown to have improved the students' reading comprehension.

Extrovert / introversion has been taken into consideration as a dichotomy and another variable. Extraversion / introversion characteristics are a significant psychological dimension of human personalities. The role of these buildings in various fields in language teaching and learning, according to Hyland and Hyland (2019), was taken into account. This dichotomy affects the learning of languages. Eysenck (1981) says that an extravert individual is driven by their intrinsic excitement to participate in social activity. Introverts are unlike extroverts, either because such actions are superfluous or they may rapidly lead introverts to over stimulation. In the context of Saudi Arabia, one of the major gaps is that, due to the TBLT principle, most language institutes and schools in their classrooms use traditional methods and cannot be efficient in the teaching of languages. This implies that language learners do not have sufficient chance to use communication skills. In addition, some important differences in individuals such as intelligence, extroversion / introversion, gender etc. cannot be taken into account in these contexts. The current research has tried to explore the different impacts of information gap tasks on EFL students in their reading comprehension performance.

### Concept and Origin of Task

In the past few decades, TBLT has been popular and taken care of. Numerous academics and applied linguists have described and developed the task idea. Crooks, Exner-Cortens, Siebold, Moore, Grassgreen, Owen and Rosier (2018) described tasks as job or activity, generally with a specified purpose, which were carried out as part of instructional courses, or were used to obtain information for studies. In the definition by Hadfield and Dörnyei, (2013), a job is an activity that requires people who use language to achieve a specific objective (referred to by David, 2015). According to Ellis (2018), a task is described as a work plan requiring students to pragmatically process their vocabulary in order to reach an impact assessable by means of the right or relevant propositional content transmitted. To that end they need to focus primarily on the significance and use their own language resources, although they can choose specific types by designing the assignment. According to Fiske (2017), a job is to mobilize their grammatical understanding so that they are able to express significance and in which their intent is not to manipulate form but to give significance to them, to understand, to manipulate, to make or to interact. This job should also have a feeling of completeness, so that it can stand alone, with a start, a middle and an end, as a communication act itself (Fiske, 2017).

### Origination of TBLT

However, Task-based Language Learning (TBLT) is one of the most notable techniques in teaching methodology worldwide. In his communication teaching project in Bangalore, India, starting in 1979, he described a task-based attitude to secondary school courses. In the early 1980s, US Government Language organizations shifted to task-based foreign language training (TBI) for adolescents. TBLT is generally obtained from the methodology for communicative approaches and teaching in communicative languages (CLT) and the work of Hymes (1971) and Wilkins (1976), in specific. The aim of this strategy is to concentrate all school activities on meaningful communication and language. In particular, British linguists created this strategy as a response to grammar methods such as situation teaching and audio-lingual methods. With TBLT, the goal is to put "real-world" contexts in the classroom and to focus instead on the complete tasks. The advocates of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), as stated by Butler (2017) support the use of genuine materials in the work of communications, as well as the opportunity to offer students language abilities in realistic circumstances to exercise.

### Tasks' Criteria

To promote the acquisition of the language of learners in a TBLT classroom context, teachers, curriculum designers need to have a clear and more detailed understanding of what a task underlies. Some criteria for a job were presented below. A task is 1) a work plan; 2) involves a primary focus on meaning; 3) involves real-world processes of language use; 4) A task can involve any of the four language skills; 5) engages cognitive processes; 6) and has a clearly defined communicative outcome (Ellis, 2018). Based on other researchers' interpretations Skehan proposes five key characteristics of a task (Skehan, 1998).

Skehan (1998), drawing on several other authors, listed five main features of a task:

1) Meaning is primary 2) Learners are not given other peoples' meaning to regurgitate 3) There is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities 4) Task completion has some priority 5) The assessment of the task is in terms of outcome.

### Elements of Tasks

Tasks have several parts in the following segment, according to Shavelson's and Stern (1981):

- a) Content: the subject matter to be taught.
- b) Materials: the things that learners can observe/manipulate.
- c) Activities: the things that learners and teachers will be doing during a lesson.
- d) Goals: the teachers' general aims for the task (these are much more general and vague than objectives).
- e) Students: their abilities, needs and interests are important.
- f) Social community: the class as a whole and its sense of „groupness“ (Shavelson& Stern 1981, as cited Nunan, 2004).

### Types of Tasks

Various academics have described various kinds of tasks. There are three key categories of tasks according to Prabhu (1987), namely information gap and reasoning gap. Information gap activity includes a transfer of information from individual to another type or from one location to another, usually requiring that data be decoded or encoded in or from English language. The information gap, in other words, is a type of organized production activity. These are like finishing a job by acquiring information that is missing, such as by transmitting a telephone message and giving a view. It establishes the practice of certain language elements. One instance is pairing job, in which each member of a couple has a part (e.g. of a complete image) of the overall data and tries to pass it verbally to each other. A table representation with information in a specified piece of text is another instance to complete. The exercise often includes the selection, and the students may have to satisfy requirements that are both complete and accurate to carry out the transfer. Reasoning gap is an activity that includes the derivation of some current information from specified information via inference procedures, deduction, practical reasoning, or a view of interactions or patterns. A teacher's schedule is drawn up based on certain class schedules, for instance. Another one is to decide which course of action to take for certain purposes and within certain limitations (for instance, cheapest or fastest). The activity requires the understanding and transfer of information, as in information gap activity, but the information to be communicated is not the same as the information that was originally understood. The two are connected by a piece of argument. Opinion gap, opinion gap activity, where a personal preference, sense, or attitude is identified and articulated in reaction to a specific scenario. One instance is the completion of the tale; another participates in the social debate. There can be no objective

method of showing results as correct or false, nor reason to expect the same results of distinct people, nor on various occasions. The activity involves using factual information and formulating arguments to explain one's view.

### **Ability and importance of reading Comprehension**

Reading Comprehension (RC) is an essential and important part of learning and reading skills in particular in a foreign language. Although it can be said that language can be learned by listening and talking, without RC, the language learner has restricted hope that fresh vocabulary can be learned and remains stagnant with the linguistic oral productive information they have acquired. According to Grabe and Zhang (2016), reading comprehension is "a well-documented method that allows readers to better understand texts when texts are culturally familiar or when they refer to the reader's understanding of a disciplinary field".

Buehl (2017) said that it is essential to develop an understanding for all students so that they understand what is read in many fields. This implies that language learning and teaching play an important part. It has been expressed from past to present concerning the RC. Buehl (2017) believes that when RC training involves learning methods, it will become more important for learners to come to the sense of what they read and also facilitate learners to use strategies of distinct genres to become metacognitive and knowledgeable. He emphasized that as the learners become more strategic, a teacher can increase understanding help.

### **A Framework for Reading Comprehension**

Understanding occurs when the reader builds an intellectual representation of a text's message. The situation model demonstrates a picture of what the text is all about (Israel & Duffy, 2014). Visualizing procedures take place on a number of levels: level of phrase, (lexical processes), level of phrase, and level of text. At this level, word identification, parsing, reference mapping and several processes of inference all contribute to the creation of a mental model of the text, interacting with the conceptual knowledge of the reader. In other words, this is based on an interaction initiating with the "decoding," that is, this process is linked to a cognitive perspective. The fresh data will be synthesized with previous data in the "text-information construction" stage. Others believe that the RC is (a) word level, (b) proposal level, (c) local coherence level, (d) text macrostructure level and (e) superstructure level including reading event context (Elwér, 2014; Harwood, 2013; Oakhill, Cain, & Elbro, 2014). In this perspective, the RC level is (a) word level.

### **ELT empirical Studies on information gap studies**

Task-based teaching of the language is a significant way of studying the language. Information gap assignments are one sort of task. Few studies have been conducted in this area. The impact of task-based instruction on understanding Saudi Arabian EFL teachers was examined by Alshammari, Parkes and Adlington (2017). The research was attended by 120 female students from Saudi Arabia, who were chosen in a pre-test post-test quasi-experimental design from the high schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. There were four groups, two control groups (CG) and two experimental groups (EGs). TBI was taught to respondents in EGs, whereas the CGs were subjected to traditional instruction. A comparison of the performance of the respondents in the CGs and the EGs was produced by paired samples t-tests. The findings showed that learners in EGs exceeded CGs. An independent sample t-test also examined the distinction between first grade and fourth grade respondents and the findings showed that first grade learners were above grade 4. In another research, Nahavandi (2012) looked at a research based on EFL reading understanding task-based operations. 60 respondents in one of the private organizations in Tabriz were chosen for the study. According to task-based learning, the experimental group was trained. This therapy was not given to the control group. A post-test was provided after 18 meetings. By analyzing the information, t-test, it was discovered that the control and experimental groups differ significantly from the variable's dependent understanding.

Based on the main purposes of this study, the following research questions were posed: RQ1: Does information gap tasks have any significant effect on the reading comprehension performance among extrovert learners? RQ2: Does information gap task have any significant effect on the reading comprehension performance among introvert learners?

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

An Oxford Placement Test was carried out at intermediate schools in Rumah School in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, among 60 intermediate EFL learners out of 70 learners that were randomly selected. Two experimental groups (extroverts group, N=20, introverts group, N=20) and a control group (N=20) were set up based on the Oxford Placement Test and Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ).

### **Instrumentation**

In this research, various tools were used. First, the participants' level was detected using an Oxford Placement Test (Syndicate, 2001). This test was used in order to homogenize the sample of language students in the study. In this exam, 60 questions were asked in three sections: vocabulary, reading and grammar. This research was conducted on the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ). The questionnaire can measure three personality variables: extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism. The key was used to isolate and give the participants 21 items linked to extraversion. The questionnaire contains two options; yes or no. Extrovert student those who had 12 or greater grades and those who had 11 or lower grades, were the introverted student. The survey was conducted by 60 intermediate EFL students at the intermediate schools in Rumah.

This questionnaire have been converted into Arabic as the first language of the respondents. The reliability coefficient was calculated after translation and distribution of the questionnaire. The Saudi sample questionnaire therefore has a reliability 0.92 which shows that the reliability coefficient is large and acceptable. The third tool was to read pre-and post-test understanding. Thirty multi-choice items and true and false items were chosen for testing the comprehension questions of the teachers in two texts from the textbook New Interchange 1 by (Richards 2005), and tests were conducted on the basis of teacher tests. In this regard, the most practical and reliable formulation of both tests was used KR-21 to analyze the reliability of two tests. The last instrument of this study was information gap tasks. Information gap tasks had two sections: a) cloze passage; and b) puzzle form based on the reading texts.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

This research was conducted in 11 meetings throughout. The first phase was to clarify to the participants the aim and whole processes of the study. Sixty intermediate EFL students were split into three groups: two test groups (extroverted female students (N=20) and introverted female students (N=20) and a control group (N=20). The next stage was to perform a reading comprehension pre-test. After the pre-test, treatment was provided to the experimental groups. The respondents in both these groups were split into small groups of 3 to 4. The teacher provided the treatment which consisted of information gap activities (IGA) to the experimental groups in four class sessions. Two kinds of information gap assignments were used as the treatment: a) a puzzle type, which is based on a reading text and b) cloze text. During each session, the teacher provided the students with some form of information gap that the required the students to interact in order to share information. For instance, the teacher read out a short story and raised one or two general questions about the subject. The professor subsequently split the text and gave each portion to every tiny group. The allocated portion was read by each group and a puzzle replied. The last stage was to answer questions of reading understanding. A traditional method involving reading aloud was used for the control group. The post-test reading comprehension test was administered at the end of the four sessions.

### **Data Analysis**

A package of SPSS version 21 was used to analyze the data. The data were collected and analyzed on a one-way ANOVA in each session and in the pre- and post-test scores.

## **Results**

### **Research Question One**

A one-way ANOVA has been performed to examine the first study issue that shows whether the interpretation performance of extroverted / introverted EFL students differs significantly based after being given lessons using on information gap activities. As shown in Table (1), the sig value is greater than .05 (Sig.>.05), so the variance for each of the 3 groups in the results is the same. The homogeneity test shows therefore that we can operate ANOVA one way securely.

Table 1 Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Score				
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig	
.233	3	30	.601	

The data were analyzed in descriptive and inferential statistics to verify the impact of information gap tasks on learners' performances in understanding readings before they got the assignment. The descriptive information statistics for the post-test are presented in table (2). The mean of the three groups after the test is distinct. The test for homogeneity of the variations and single One-way ANOVA was used in order to determine whether the mean difference is statistically important/significant.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Three Groups in the Post-test

	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max	Between - Component Variance
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
Introvert	13	18.271	1.0319	.302	15.57	16.89	15.00	18.00	
	3	.08	.3	.85	.09	.06			
Extrovert	13	12.175	1.6255	.400	15.51	17.25	14.00	19.00	
	3	.46	.9	.94	.11	.82			
Control	13	14.470	1.2295	.493	13.92	16.07	13.00	19.00	
	3	.00	.1	.55	.47	.53			
Total	39	15.871	1.5590	.249	15.36	16.37	13.00	19.00	
	9	.18	.1	.64	.64	.72			
Modell Fixed Effects			1.4661	.234	15.39	16.34			
			.4	.77	.57	.79			
Random Effects				.438	13.98	17.75			.41059
				.15	.66	.70			

Introverted students ( $x=18.27$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ), Extrovert ( $x=12.17$ ;  $SD=1.62$ ) and control group ( $x=14.47$ ;  $SD=1.22$ ) have the mean standard deviation of three categories as described in Table 2. A one-way ANOVA was performed at the results of the three groups to see whether the median distinction between the three groups is statistically significant and meaningful. After receiving information gap assignment, Table 3 shows the results of a One-way ANOVA in one-way based on the after reading the post-test of the three organizations/groups.

Table 3 One-way ANOVA for the Posttest of Reading Comprehension of Three Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	18.673	2	8.497	4.353	.021
Within Groups	85.489	30	3.133		
Total	88.391	33			

The analysis in this table shows that the efficiency between the introvert, extrovert and control groups in the understanding of reading is important/significant ( $p=(0.021) < 0.05$ ). Thus, the three groups had significant differences. The following table provides the results in order to find the precise distinctions.

Table 4 Multiple Comparisons for the posttest

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Introvert	Extrovert	-.17335	.59504	.965	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	Ccontrol	1.43178	.68504	.216	-2.6221	2.3144
Eextrovert	Iintrovert	.17392	.68504	.765	-.3375	2.4590
	Ccontrol	1.23468	.68504	.048	-1.7174	1.8821
Ccontrol	Iintrovert	-1.53051	.68504	.136	-.0233	2.3924
	Eextrovert	-1.47461	.68504	.028	-2.2920	.3371
					-2.6579	.0925

### Analysis of Research Question 2

The second research question: Does information gap task have any significant effect on the reading comprehension performance among extrovert learners? is to be answered by comparing the performance of students from pre-test to post-test. The Shapiro-Wilk normality test was initially used to monitor the normality of the information and outcomes are shown in table 5. As the findings show, pre-and post-test information are normal ( $p > .05$ ), parametric statistical testing can therefore be used.

Table 5 Tests of Normality for Extrovert Group

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk	
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df
Sig					
Extrovert_ pretest	.146	20	.170*	.926	12
.303					
Extrovert_ pretest	.214	20	.155	.926	12
.301					

Table 6 presents descriptive statistics on the performance of extrovert students in both pre and post-test lesson comprehension. As can be observed, the mean scores of the students were 16.49 and 17.37 before and following the information gap tasks respectively. The paired sample T-test was used to verify if the mean difference is substantial and statistically important.

Table 6 Descriptive Statistics of Extrovert Group in Pretest and Posttest of Reading Comprehension

		Mean	N	SD	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Extrovert_pre-test	16.491 5	20	1.96494	.56194
	Extrovert_post-test	17.379 2	20	1.77108	.53821

The findings of the paired samples t-test of the extrovert student's reading understanding performance are provided in the table below (Table 7). Since sig (2 tails) is larger than  $\pm .05$ , the mean difference between pre-and post-test cannot be said to be significant and the performance of extrovert learners is not significantly enhanced as a consequence of the information gap task.

Table 7 Paired Samples t-test of Extrovert Group in Pretest and Posttest

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig.(2 tailed)
		Mean	SD	SD. error mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Extrovert_pre test	-.4849	3.06628	.67283	- 1.2319	.9643	- .67	1	.639
	Extrovert_post test	2			6	1	3	2	

### Analysis of Research Question 3

RQ3: Does information gap task have any significant effect on the reading comprehension performance among introvert learners?

Table 8 Tests of Normality for Introvert Group

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk	
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df
Sig					
Introvert_ pretest	.373	20	.196*	.881	20
.413					
Introvert_ pretest	.331	20	.181	.881	20
.401					

Descriptive statistics of the introvert learners' performance on both pre and post-tests reading comprehension are presented in Table 9.



Table 9 Descriptive Statistics of Introvert Groups in Pretest and Posttest

		Mean	N	SD	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Introvert_pre-test	17.338 5	20	1.33012	.46881
	Introvert_post-test	15.620 8	20	1.07113	.41215

As can be seen, the average number of students who have received data gaps before and after is 17.33 and 15.62, respectively. The paired t-testing sample has been run in order to see if the mean difference is statistically significant and meaningful.

Table 10 Paired Samples Test for the pretest and posttest of introvert group

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig.(2 tailed)
		Mean	SD	SD. error mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Introvert_pre test	-.7913	1.13631	.29891	-1.6235	.1868 9	-1.93	1	.416
	Introvert_post test	1			8	2	5	2	

The findings of the combined t-testing test of the performance of introverted students in reading understanding are provided in the table below (Table 10). As the sig (2 tailed) is larger than .05, the mean difference from previous to post-test cannot be considered and the output of the introvert learner does not enhance because of the lack of information.

### Research Question One

A one-way ANOVA was performed to examine whether the performance of extroverted / introverted EFL students differs significantly after being given lessons using information gap activities. As shown in Table 1, the sig value is greater than .05 (Sig.>.05), so the variance for each of the 3 groups in the results is the same. The homogeneity test shows therefore that we can operate ANOVA one way securely.

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Control	Introvert	-1.53051	.68504	.136	-.0233	2.3924
	Extrovert	-1.47461	.68504	.028	-2.2920	.3371
					-2.6579	.0925

## Discussion

This research tested the differential impacts of information gap activities on the reading efficiency of extroverted / introverted EFL students. Tasks have a major impact on the language education and learning process. In the language school, meaningful situations and tasks were created through working together within the group and is an essential characteristic of communicative language teaching. In reality, the involvement of learners, especially in pairs or in group work, could be one of the issues of English educators in TBLT courses. The data gap assignment is a kind of task involving the transfer of the data from individual to person–or from form to shape or location to location (Prabhu, 1987).

The findings based on the first and second research questions showed that information gap assignments had no impact on the reading comprehension performance of extrovert and introvert students. The following trials were carried out in accordance with the above outcomes (Gholami, Sermanshahi, Azadi, Periannan & Vaseghi, 2015; Mall-Amiri & Nakhaie, 2013). The studies are not designed to provide important reading efficiency in teaching styles (as extrovert or introverted) based on assignments based upon information gap. Nevertheless, there was a difference in the reading performance among three groups, especially between the extrovert group and the control group, This indicates that information gap activities can have an effect especially on learners who are extroverted. Kim (2017), has shown that the teaching graduate of EFL students improves when they discover fresh phrases by means of information. The students of the experimental team also gradually became less dependent on teacher's support, which was learned through information gap tasks. The results of this study therefore suggest that more extroverted learners create approaches to interpret and understand the language as genuinely used by native speakers.

## Conclusion

EFL learners were exposed to real language usage from the start of this language research by using task-based methods in a language classroom. In general, the reading skills of EFL learners were improved by exposure to task-related input according to the outcomes acquired. In particular, the kinds of "student master's tasks " not only influenced and enhanced the reader's understanding, they also assumed that these tasks correspond to sophisticated levels of linguistic skill and would suit all respondents at this stage. In the current research, information gap activities have demonstrated their beneficial impact on the capacity to understand and can enhance the language learning process. This research has had little impact on linguistic educators and curriculum developers. They were: a) a mission to improve the co-operation between learners. They were: This gives students an opportunity to work on the significance of the negotiations. In other words, the quantity of communication exercise received by the learners is maximized when they are working in tiny organizations; b) it also has some consequences for designers of the syllabus. Curriculum developers should examine possible methods of designing suitable tasks and show the feasibility of generating actions that connect form to classroom interaction; and c) being extroverts-introverts is essential because one of student differences. It is not widely regarded in EFL situations like Saudi Arabia. Teachers, scientists and textbook designers can take this phenomenon into account.

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