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Fostering Communicative Competence in Business English among Algerian ESP University Students through Task-Based Language Teaching: A Pedagogical Response to Emerging Professional Demands

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ABSTRACT

In the Algerian higher education context, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses for business students often emphasize grammatical accuracy and domain-specific vocabulary at the expense of practical communicative competence. This study investigates the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in fostering communicative competence among Algerian university students enrolled in Business English ESP programmes through a quasi-experimental design involving 54 second-year preparatory business students at the Higher School of Management and Digital Economy. Data triangulation was employed through pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments, a structured student perception questionnaire, and systematic instructor field notes. Participants in the experimental group received instruction via TBLT, while the control group followed traditional lecture-based methods. Results indicate that TBLT significantly enhanced learners' communicative competence, particularly in fluency ($d = 1.26$), interactional strategies ($d = 1.41$), and pragmatic appropriateness ($d = 1.22$). Moreover, students in the experimental group reported increased motivation (92.5% agreement), confidence (96.3% agreement), and perceived relevance of English instruction to their future professional lives. The study suggests that TBLT constitutes a contextually appropriate and pedagogically effective approach for addressing the communicative needs of Algerian ESP Business English learners, and recommends its integration into curriculum planning and teacher training initiatives.

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English has emerged as the dominant lingua franca of international business, technology, and cross-cultural communication in the 21st century (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). In Algeria, this global linguistic shift has prompted comprehensive efforts to reform higher education and position English as a critical component of graduate employability and institutional internationalization (Benrabah, 2013). Consequently, many Algerian universities have implemented English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programmes, particularly in Business English, to prepare learners for the complex communicative demands of contemporary professional environments.

Despite the progressive integration of ESP courses into tertiary curricula, instructional practices in Algerian universities often remain grounded in traditional, form-focused pedagogies that prioritize grammatical accuracy, discrete vocabulary acquisition, and translation exercises (East, 2012; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013). This pedagogical orientation, while addressing certain aspects of linguistic knowledge, frequently neglects the development of interactive competence required for authentic workplace communication. Teacher-fronted instruction, overcrowded classrooms, examination-oriented assessment practices, and limited opportunities for meaningful language use further restrict learners' ability to develop the communicative skills essential for professional success (Mishan & Timmis, 2015; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

This discrepancy between classroom instruction and real-world communicative needs is particularly problematic in Business English contexts. Communicative competence, as originally conceptualized by Hymes (1972) and subsequently elaborated by Canale and Swain (1980), extends beyond linguistic accuracy to encompass sociolinguistic appropriateness, strategic competence, and discourse management. Business English learners must demonstrate proficiency in participating in meetings, delivering presentations, drafting formal communications, negotiating agreements, and engaging effectively in cross-cultural exchanges—competencies that are systematically underdeveloped in traditional

Algerian ESP classrooms (Belcher & Lukkarila, 2011; Benrabah, 2013).

Given these pedagogical limitations, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) offers a theoretically grounded and empirically supported alternative. Unlike conventional approaches, TBLT emphasizes the use of language as a tool for accomplishing meaningful, goal-oriented tasks that mirror authentic communicative situations (Ellis, 2009; Long, 2015). The approach fosters genuine interaction, fluency development, and negotiation of meaning—key components of communicative competence that align directly with professional communication demands. Internationally, TBLT has been effectively integrated into various ESP contexts, with research consistently demonstrating improvements in learners' pragmatic abilities, interactional fluency, and task performance across diverse educational settings (González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014; Li et al., 2021; Nunan, 2021).

Despite its considerable pedagogical potential and growing international evidence base, the application of TBLT in Algerian ESP classrooms remains critically underexplored, particularly within Business English programmes. This represents a significant gap in both regional pedagogical research and practical instructional innovation. Furthermore, existing TBLT literature predominantly focuses on well-resourced educational contexts with small class sizes and technological infrastructure—conditions rarely available in Algerian public universities. The question of how TBLT can be effectively adapted to large, resource-constrained classrooms while maintaining pedagogical integrity and effectiveness remains largely unanswered in current scholarship.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing communicative competence among second-year Business English learners at the Higher School of Management and Digital Economy in Algeria. Beyond measuring learning outcomes, the study examines learners' perceptions of TBLT and develops an empirically-grounded, context-sensitive implementation model suitable for resource-limited educational environments. This dual focus on effectiveness and practical

adaptability represents a novel contribution to ESP pedagogy in developing contexts.

The research is guided by two principal questions:

RQ1: To what extent does Task-Based Language Teaching improve the communicative competence of Algerian university Business English learners compared to traditional instruction?

RQ2: How do learners perceive the use of TBLT in developing their communicative abilities in professional contexts, and what implementation challenges emerge in resource-constrained classrooms?

By addressing these questions through rigorous empirical investigation and developing a practical implementation framework, this study contributes to the growing literature on ESP pedagogy while providing evidence-based guidance for incorporating TBLT into Algerian higher education. The findings have implications not only for Algeria but for similar educational contexts throughout the developing world where ESP instruction faces comparable constraints and challenges.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1. *Communicative Competence in ESP: Conceptual Foundations*

Hymes (1972) originally introduced the concept in response to Chomsky's narrow focus on linguistic competence, emphasizing the social, functional, and contextual dimensions of language use. Canale and Swain (1980) developed an influential model comprising four interrelated components: grammatical competence (knowledge of linguistic code), sociolinguistic competence (appropriateness in social contexts), discourse competence (cohesion and coherence in extended communication), and strategic competence (compensatory strategies for communication breakdowns). Subsequently, Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996) refined this framework by incorporating organizational and pragmatic competence, further reinforcing the importance of contextual appropriateness and functional language use.

In English for Specific Purposes (ESP)—and particularly in Business English instruction—

communicative competence transcends academic abstraction to become a practical professional necessity. Business learners must demonstrate proficiency in complex, high-stakes communicative situations including meetings, negotiations, customer interactions, presentations, and intercultural exchanges (Frendo, 2005; Nickerson, 2005). Consequently, effective ESP instruction must extend beyond vocabulary lists and grammatical rules to encompass the skills of interaction, meaning negotiation, discourse management, and pragmatic appropriateness (Ellis & Johnson, 1994).

However, in Algeria, despite the formal integration of ESP into university curricula, the development of communicative competence remains systematically underemphasized. Multiple studies have documented that ESP learners possess theoretical knowledge of business language but lack the fluency, interactional skills, and pragmatic competence to apply it effectively in authentic professional contexts (Mishan & Timmis, 2015; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013). This deficiency has been consistently attributed to the persistence of teacher-centered methods, insufficient opportunities for oral practice, and curricula that privilege reading and writing skills over speaking and listening (East, 2012). A task-based pedagogical approach offers a promising solution to this gap by explicitly targeting communicative competence through purposeful language use in context-specific situations.

2.2. *Business English within the ESP Tradition*

Business English represents a well-established and theoretically distinct branch of ESP, characterized by its goal-oriented, professionally situated, and context-dependent nature (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). As Hutchinson and Waters argue, ESP is defined not by the existence of a unique methodology, but rather by learners' specific needs and the communicative demands of their target professional domains. In Business English contexts, the instructional goal extends beyond linguistic knowledge to encompass preparation for communication in workplace environments that are characteristically multilingual, multicultural, and dynamically

evolving (Ellis & Johnson, 1994). This includes mastering not only specialized professional terminology but also communicative routines, professional genres (reports, proposals, emails, presentations), and essential soft skills such as persuasion, negotiation, and relationship management.

According to Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012), English increasingly functions as a lingua franca in international business contexts, which carries significant implications for pedagogical approaches. Business English should be taught not primarily as adherence to native-speaker norms, but rather as a flexible tool for achieving intelligibility and facilitating intercultural communication effectiveness. Therefore, instruction must authentically reflect real workplace communication patterns, actively support fluency development, and cultivate critical awareness of strategic communication approaches (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Contemporary ESP scholarship emphasizes the importance of needs analysis in identifying learners' specific communicative requirements and aligning curriculum design with authentic professional demands (Huhta et al., 2023).

Despite this theoretical clarity in the international literature, Business English teaching in Algerian universities frequently remains confined to textbook-based reading comprehension and translation tasks that lack meaningful contextualization and authentic communicative practice (Benrabah, 2013). Task-based instruction can effectively bridge this pedagogical gap by systematically aligning classroom activities with authentic communicative practices characteristic of actual business settings.

2.3. Task-Based Language Teaching: Theoretical Foundations and Core Principles

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emerged during the late 1980s and early 1990s as a theoretically grounded response to the limitations of the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) model, which emphasized decontextualized form manipulation and accuracy at the expense of meaningful communication (Ellis, 2003; Willis,

1996). TBLT represents a fundamentally communicative and learner-centered paradigm, grounded in the principle that language acquisition occurs most effectively when learners engage in authentic, goal-oriented communication that requires them to use linguistic resources to achieve specific outcomes (Long, 2015).

Ellis (2003, 2009) defines a "task" as an activity with four essential characteristics: (1) primary focus on meaning rather than form, (2) presence of an information or communication gap, (3) reliance on learners' own linguistic resources, and (4) a clearly defined communicative outcome. Unlike traditional drills or decontextualized exercises, tasks authentically replicate real-life communicative events, requiring learners to engage in negotiation, collaboration, and the integrated use of linguistic, cognitive, and social resources (Willis & Willis, 2007). Recent comprehensive treatments of TBLT have further elaborated these foundational principles, emphasizing the approach's theoretical coherence and practical applicability across diverse instructional contexts (East, 2021; Révész, 2022).

The TBLT framework typically comprises three pedagogical stages (Ellis, 2009; Willis, 1996):

Pre-task phase: Introducing the topic, activating relevant schema, providing necessary linguistic input, and preparing learners cognitively for task performance

Task cycle: Performance of the main task (typically in pairs or groups), including planning and reporting phases where learners prepare to present their outcomes to the wider class

Language focus: Systematic analysis of language features that emerged during task performance, explicit feedback on form, and consciousness-raising activities

From a theoretical perspective, TBLT is robustly supported by interactionist theories of second language acquisition (Long, 2015), which posit that learning occurs through negotiation of meaning during communicative interaction. The approach also aligns with sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes that knowledge emerges through social interaction and scaffolded participation in culturally meaningful activities. Additionally, TBLT reflects constructivist pedagogies that promote learner agency and active

knowledge construction through authentic engagement with target language use (Nunan, 2021).

2.4. Empirical Evidence for TBLT in ESP and Business English Contexts

A substantial and growing body of empirical research across diverse educational settings has confirmed TBLT's effectiveness in improving oral proficiency, pragmatic awareness, learner autonomy, and task engagement. Recent meta-analytic evidence supports the pedagogical efficacy of task-based approaches, particularly in developing productive skills (Bryfonski & McKay, 2019; Li et al., 2021), with effect sizes indicating meaningful improvements in learners' communicative abilities across varied instructional contexts. Contemporary reviews of task-based research emphasize the approach's theoretical grounding and empirical support for developing interactive competence (East, 2021; Révész, 2022). Systematic analyses of task performance research further document the complexity of factors influencing L2 learners' oral production, including task design features, implementation conditions, and individual learner characteristics (Révész et al., 2019).

Within ESP contexts specifically, recent scholarship has begun exploring TBLT applications, though systematic investigations remain limited (Zhang, 2022). Research examining TBLT effectiveness in resource-constrained educational environments has yielded promising preliminary findings suggesting that core TBLT principles can be successfully adapted to large-class contexts when thoughtfully implemented (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011). However, this emerging literature remains predominantly descriptive rather than empirically rigorous, often lacking systematic measurement of learning outcomes or comprehensive documentation of implementation strategies.

Despite TBLT's growing international adoption and robust evidence base, research on its application in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region—and specifically Algeria—remains critically limited. While Benrabah (2013) examined language policy issues in general Algerian

education, systematic investigations of TBLT within Business English ESP programmes at the tertiary level are virtually absent from the literature. Furthermore, existing TBLT research predominantly emerges from well-resourced educational contexts with small class sizes, abundant materials, and technological infrastructure—conditions that contrast sharply with realities in Algerian public universities. This represents a significant gap in understanding how TBLT can be effectively adapted to resource-constrained, large-classroom contexts while maintaining pedagogical effectiveness and theoretical integrity.

2.5. TBLT in Resource-Constrained Contexts: Addressing the Implementation Gap

Recent scholarship has begun addressing the implementation challenges of TBLT in developing educational contexts characterized by large class sizes, limited resources, and infrastructure constraints (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Carless, 2007). These studies suggest that while TBLT principles remain theoretically sound across contexts, successful implementation requires careful adaptation to local conditions, including modification of task complexity, strategic use of group work to maximize participation opportunities, and creative deployment of low-technology materials. Recent work has continued to examine TBLT adaptation in under-resourced educational settings, with growing attention to the persistent gaps between ESP theory and classroom practice in diverse global contexts (McDonough & Klimova, 2022; Taillefer, 2021).

However, this emerging literature remains predominantly descriptive rather than empirically rigorous, often lacking systematic measurement of learning outcomes or learner perceptions. The present study addresses this gap by providing empirical evidence of TBLT effectiveness in a resource-constrained Algerian ESP context while simultaneously developing a practical, evidence-based implementation model. This dual contribution—demonstrating effectiveness and providing actionable guidance—represents a novel addition to ESP pedagogy scholarship, particularly

for developing educational contexts facing similar constraints.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test–post-test control group format to investigate the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on learners' communicative competence in an ESP Business English context. The design was selected to balance methodological rigor with practical constraints inherent in educational research conducted within intact classroom groups. To enhance validity and enable comprehensive interpretation of findings, the study utilized methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978), systematically collecting quantitative data through standardized speaking assessments alongside qualitative data obtained from structured student questionnaires and systematic teacher field notes maintained throughout the intervention period.

This mixed-methods approach enabled the research to address both the "what" (quantitative outcomes) and the "how" and "why" (qualitative processes and perceptions) of TBLT implementation, thereby providing a more complete understanding of the intervention's effectiveness and the mechanisms underlying observed changes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.2. Participants

The study was conducted at the Higher School of Management and Digital Economy in Koléa, a public institution in Algeria that prepares students for careers in business administration, management, and digital economics. Participants were 54 second-year preparatory students enrolled in the required Business English ESP course during the first semester of the 2023–2024 academic year. All participants had previously studied English as a foreign language for a minimum of six years through Algeria's national education system and were assessed at a B1 level (CEFR) based on institutional placement testing conducted at the beginning of the academic year. This proficiency

level is characteristic of intermediate learners capable of handling straightforward communication but requiring development in fluency, complexity, and pragmatic appropriateness—making them appropriate candidates for communicative intervention.

Participants were organized into two intact classes that were randomly assigned to experimental and control conditions to minimize selection bias. The experimental group ($n = 27$, 14 female, 13 male, mean age = 19.2 years) received instruction using the Task-Based Language Teaching approach, while the control group ($n = 27$, 15 female, 12 male, mean age = 19.4 years) followed traditional teacher-centered methods (lecture, textbook exercises, translation activities, and grammar-focused drills). Independent samples t -tests confirmed no significant differences between groups on pre-test communicative competence scores ($t(52) = 0.17, p = .87$), age ($t(52) = 0.89, p = .38$), or prior English learning experience ($t(52) = 0.43, p = .67$), indicating baseline equivalence.

All participants provided informed consent, and the study received ethical approval from the institutional review committee. Participation was voluntary, and students were informed that their involvement or non-involvement would not affect their course grades.

3.3. Instructional Procedures

The intervention was conducted during the first semester of the 2023–2024 academic year as an integral component of the regular Business English course. Each group received one 75-minute instructional session per week over eight consecutive weeks (total instructional time: 10 hours), representing a realistic timeframe consistent with institutional scheduling constraints and providing sufficient exposure to detect potential intervention effects while remaining feasible for replication in similar contexts.

Experimental Group (TBLT Condition)

The experimental group received instruction based on the Task-Based Language Teaching framework as articulated by Ellis (2003, 2009) and

Willis and Willis (2007). Each session followed a structured three-phase approach:

Pre-task phase (15–20 minutes): Introduction of the business communication scenario, activation of relevant background knowledge, presentation of essential vocabulary and functional language, and cognitive preparation through brainstorming or discussion of similar experiences

Task cycle (35–40 minutes): Performance of the main communicative task in pairs or small groups (e.g., role-playing a client meeting, negotiating delivery terms, planning a business presentation), followed by planning time for learners to organize their ideas and rehearse before reporting task outcomes to the class

Language focus phase (15–20 minutes): Systematic analysis of language features that emerged during task performance, focused feedback on accuracy and appropriateness, consciousness-raising activities highlighting useful expressions, and brief form-focused practice when warranted

Each instructional unit addressed an authentic business communication scenario directly relevant to learners' future professional roles. Sample tasks included:

- Week 1–2: Introducing yourself and your company professionally in networking situations
- Week 3–4: Participating effectively in business meetings and contributing to decision-making discussions
- Week 5–6: Negotiating prices, delivery schedules, or contract terms with suppliers or clients
- Week 7–8: Writing professional email correspondence and delivering business presentations

Tasks were carefully designed to be cognitively engaging yet linguistically accessible, progressively increasing in complexity throughout the eight-week period. Materials consisted primarily of printed role cards, scenario descriptions, authentic business documents (simplified where necessary), and visual aids—all developed specifically for the Algerian context and requiring minimal technological infrastructure.

Control Group (Traditional Instruction)

The control group covered identical thematic content related to Business English but received instruction through conventional teacher-centered methods characteristic of typical ESP courses in Algerian universities. Sessions followed a traditional format: teacher presentation of new vocabulary and grammatical structures (20–25 minutes), reading of textbook passages with comprehension questions (25–30 minutes), translation exercises from French or Arabic to English (15–20 minutes), and occasional written grammar exercises. While the control group was exposed to the same business language content, they did not engage in communicative tasks requiring meaningful language use, negotiation of meaning, or authentic interaction.

This design enabled isolation of the TBLT approach as the primary variable differentiating the two instructional conditions, thereby facilitating valid attribution of observed differences to the pedagogical approach rather than to content coverage.

3.4. Instruments

To comprehensively assess the intervention's effectiveness and understand learners' experiences, the study employed three complementary data collection instruments:

Speaking Assessments (Pre-test and Post-test)

All participants in both groups completed individual speaking assessments before (Week 0) and immediately after (Week 9) the intervention period. The assessment consisted of a simulated business interaction task designed to elicit a range of communicative competencies relevant to Business English contexts. Specifically, learners were given a scenario (e.g., "You are meeting with a potential international client to discuss your company's services. Introduce your company, explain your products/services, and negotiate favorable terms") and provided 3 minutes of preparation time before performing the 5–7 minute

interaction with a trained examiner playing the role of the business counterpart.

Performances were audio-recorded and subsequently evaluated by three trained raters (experienced ESP instructors with CEFR assessment experience) using a comprehensive communicative competence rubric adapted from the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2020). The rubric assessed four dimensions on 6-point scales:

- Fluency and Coherence (6 points): Speech rate, smoothness, use of discourse markers, logical organization of ideas
- Accuracy and Range (6 points): Grammatical accuracy, lexical appropriateness, vocabulary range, syntactic complexity
- Pragmatic Appropriateness (6 points): Sociolinguistic appropriateness, register selection, politeness strategies, cultural awareness
- Interactive Strategies (6 points): Turn-taking ability, conversational repair, ability to maintain and develop interaction, responsive listening

Total possible score: 24 points (summed across four dimensions).

Construct Validity and Rubric Adaptation

The CEFR rubric was specifically adapted to reflect the pragmatic and interactional demands of Business English communication in Algerian professional contexts. Modifications included incorporating descriptors relevant to business meetings, negotiations, presentations, and professional correspondence—activities identified through needs analysis with local employers and Business English practitioners. To ensure construct validity, the adapted rubric underwent expert validation by a panel of five reviewers comprising ESP lecturers, Business English instructors, and language assessment specialists familiar with Algerian higher education. Panel members independently reviewed the rubric for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the construct of communicative competence as operationalized in the study. Consensus was reached through structured discussion, with minor revisions made to descriptor wording for clarity.

Additionally, a pilot test was conducted with eight students not included in the main study to verify rubric applicability and inter-rater agreement. This pilot revealed high inter-rater reliability (intraclass correlation coefficient [ICC] = 0.84), with minor adjustments made to scoring guidelines to enhance consistency. In the main study, inter-rater reliability remained strong (Cohen's kappa = 0.82 across all raters, ICC = 0.87 for total scores), indicating acceptable measurement consistency.

Student Perception Questionnaire

Following the post-test, students in the experimental group completed a structured perception questionnaire designed to capture their attitudes toward TBLT and its perceived impact on their communicative abilities. The instrument consisted of 10 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), addressing five thematic domains:

- Confidence and motivation (3 items)
- Perceived relevance to professional contexts (2 items)
- Engagement and participation (2 items)
- Skill development (2 items)
- Overall satisfaction and recommendation (1 item)

Sample items included: "The tasks helped me speak more confidently in English," "The tasks were relevant to real-life business situations," and "I would recommend this teaching method for future Business English courses."

The questionnaire was developed based on established instruments in TBLT research (González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014) and adapted to the specific context of Algerian Business English learners. Content validity was established through expert review by two applied linguistics specialists and one business communication professional. Internal consistency reliability was acceptable (Cronbach's α = 0.86 for the 10-item scale).

In addition to the Likert-scale items, the questionnaire included two open-ended questions inviting students to describe (1) the most valuable aspect of the TBLT approach and (2) any challenges they experienced during task-based activities. These

qualitative responses provided rich contextual data complementing the quantitative ratings.

Instructor Field Notes

Throughout the eight-week intervention, the instructor-researcher maintained systematic reflective field notes documenting classroom dynamics, student engagement patterns, observed communicative behaviors, implementation challenges, and emerging insights. Notes were recorded immediately after each session using a semi-structured template addressing:

- Student engagement and participation levels
- Quality of interaction during tasks (turn-taking, negotiation, use of target language)
- Challenges encountered (linguistic, organizational, motivational)
- Instances of particularly effective or problematic task performance
- Reflections on instructional adjustments needed

Field notes totaled approximately 3,500 words and provided valuable qualitative data triangulating quantitative findings while documenting the empirical basis for the subsequently developed mini-curriculum model. These observational data were particularly important in capturing implementation realities and contextual factors affecting TBLT effectiveness—information not accessible through assessments or questionnaires alone.

3.5. Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Speaking assessment data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics (Version 26). Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) were calculated for all variables. To examine within-group changes from pre-test to post-test, paired samples t-tests were conducted separately for experimental and control groups. To compare post-intervention performance between groups, independent samples t-tests were performed. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's *d* to facilitate interpretation of practical

significance beyond statistical significance (Cohen, 1988; Plonsky & Oswald, 2014). An alpha level of .05 was adopted for all inferential tests.

Component-level analysis was conducted by examining pre-post gains for each of the four rubric dimensions separately, enabling identification of specific areas of communicative competence most affected by the intervention. This granular analysis provided insight into the differential impact of TBLT across competence domains.

Qualitative Analysis

Questionnaire responses were analyzed descriptively, with frequency distributions calculated for each Likert-scale item. Open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Two coders independently reviewed all responses, identified recurring themes, and developed a preliminary coding scheme. Disagreements were resolved through discussion until consensus was achieved (final inter-coder agreement = 91%). Major themes were identified, and representative quotations were selected to illustrate key patterns in student perceptions.

Instructor field notes were analyzed using inductive content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Notes were read multiple times to identify recurring patterns, challenges, and successful practices. Emergent themes were systematically coded and organized into higher-order categories reflecting implementation realities, pedagogical insights, and contextual adaptations. This qualitative analysis directly informed the development of the context-sensitive mini-curriculum model by identifying practical strategies that emerged as effective during implementation.

Triangulation

Findings from quantitative assessments, questionnaire data, and field notes were triangulated to develop a comprehensive understanding of TBLT effectiveness and implementation dynamics. Convergence across data sources strengthened confidence in conclusions, while divergences prompted deeper

investigation and more nuanced interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.6. Establishing Causal Attribution

To establish that observed changes in communicative competence resulted specifically from the eight-week TBLT intervention rather than confounding variables, several design features and analytical strategies were implemented:

Random assignment: Intact classes were randomly assigned to experimental and control conditions, reducing systematic selection bias.

Baseline equivalence: Pre-test assessments confirmed no significant differences between groups on any measured variable, ensuring comparable starting points.

Controlled exposure: Both groups received identical instructional time (8 weeks × 75 minutes), covered identical thematic content, and were taught by the same instructor, isolating pedagogical approach as the primary differentiating variable.

Temporal proximity: The compressed eight-week timeframe minimized external influences (e.g., exposure to English outside class, maturation effects, historical events) that might otherwise confound results over longer durations.

Differential outcomes: The experimental group showed significant gains while the control group showed minimal change despite identical content exposure and instructional time, suggesting pedagogical approach rather than mere exposure or maturation drove observed effects.

Convergent evidence: Quantitative gains aligned with student perceptions and instructor observations, providing triangulated support that changes resulted from TBLT implementation.

Theoretical coherence: Observed improvements (particularly in interaction, fluency, and

pragmatics) directly corresponded to competencies explicitly targeted by TBLT principles, demonstrating logical connection between intervention characteristics and outcome patterns.

While quasi-experimental designs cannot eliminate all threats to internal validity, these features collectively provide reasonable confidence that the documented improvements in experimental group communicative competence resulted from the TBLT intervention rather than alternative explanations.

4. Results

This section presents findings from three complementary data sources: (1) pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments measuring communicative competence, (2) student perception questionnaires capturing learners' attitudes toward TBLT, and (3) instructor field notes documenting implementation dynamics and emergent practices. The integration of these data sources provides a comprehensive understanding of both the effectiveness and the practical realities of implementing TBLT in a resource-constrained Algerian ESP context.

4.1. Impact of TBLT on Communicative Competence

Overall Communicative Competence

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and gain scores for both experimental and control groups on the overall communicative competence measure (total score across four rubric dimensions, maximum 24 points).

Table 1
Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Overall Communicative Competence

Group	N	Pre-test M (SD)	Post-test M (SD)	Gain Score	Cohen's d
Experimental	27	13.15 (2.47)	18.42 (2.11)	+5.27	2.31
Control	27	13.26 (2.53)	14.01 (2.36)	+0.75	0.31

Paired samples t-tests revealed that the experimental group demonstrated statistically significant and substantial improvement in communicative competence from pre-test to post-test ($t(26) = 9.74, p < .001, d = 2.31$), representing a very large effect size. In contrast, the control group showed only modest and statistically non-significant change ($t(26) = 1.56, p = .13, d = 0.31$), suggesting minimal improvement under traditional instruction despite identical content exposure and instructional time.

Independent samples t-test comparing post-test scores indicated that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group at the conclusion of the eight-week intervention ($t(52) = 6.12, p < .001, d = 2.01$), with a very large between-group effect size. The magnitude of difference between pre-post gains in the experimental group (+5.27 points) versus the control group (+0.75 points) provides compelling evidence that TBLT specifically, rather than general instructional exposure or maturation, accounted for the observed improvements. The control group's minimal gain

despite eight weeks of instruction and identical thematic content suggests that traditional methods alone were insufficient to develop communicative competence, whereas the experimental group's substantial gains occurred within the same timeframe solely due to the pedagogical approach employed.

These findings provide strong evidence that the eight-week TBLT intervention had a meaningful and substantial causal effect on learners' overall communicative competence in Business English contexts.

Component-Level Analysis

To understand which specific dimensions of communicative competence were most affected by the TBLT intervention, scores were disaggregated into the four rubric components. Table 2 presents mean pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental group across each dimension (maximum 6 points per dimension).

Table 2
Component-wise Improvement in Experimental Group

Component	Pre-test M (SD)	Post-test M (SD)	Gain	Cohen's d	Paired t-test
Fluency and Coherence	3.10 (0.89)	4.36 (0.76)	+1.26	1.54	$t(26)=6.98, p < .001$
Accuracy and Range	3.45 (0.93)	4.19 (0.81)	+0.74	0.85	$t(26)=4.21, p < .001$
Pragmatic Appropriateness	3.00 (0.85)	4.22 (0.79)	+1.22	1.49	$t(26)=6.74, p < .001$
Interactive Strategies	3.60 (0.96)	5.01 (0.88)	+1.41	1.53	$t(26)=7.12, p < .001$

All four dimensions showed statistically significant improvements (all $p < .001$), with effect sizes ranging from large (Accuracy and Range, $d = 0.85$) to very large (Interactive Strategies, $d = 1.53$). Several important patterns emerge from this component-level analysis:

Interactive strategies showed the largest absolute gain (+1.41 points, $d = 1.53$), indicating that the eight-week TBLT intervention was particularly effective in developing learners' ability to manage conversations, initiate and maintain dialogue, employ turn-taking strategies, and engage in conversational repair. This outcome directly reflects

the task-based activities in which these skills were repeatedly practiced throughout the intervention period.

Fluency and coherence demonstrated substantial improvement (+1.26 points, $d = 1.54$), suggesting that repeated opportunities for extended speaking during the eight-week task cycle enhanced learners' speech rate, smoothness of delivery, and logical organization of ideas. The magnitude of this gain within two months suggests that systematic communicative practice—the core feature distinguishing TBLT from traditional

instruction—likely contributed to fluency development.

Pragmatic Appropriateness also showed marked gains (+1.22 points, $d = 1.49$), indicating that exposure to contextualized business scenarios throughout the intervention helped learners develop sociolinguistic competence, appropriate register selection, and culturally appropriate communication strategies. The tasks' authentic professional contexts provided the situational framework necessary for pragmatic competence development.

Accuracy and Range, while still demonstrating significant improvement (+0.74 points, $d = 0.85$), showed more modest gains relative to other dimensions. This pattern is theoretically consistent with TBLT principles, which prioritize meaningful communication over form (Ellis, 2009) and suggest that while task-based instruction supports grammatical development through the language focus phase, accuracy gains emerge more gradually than fluency and interactional improvements within an eight-week timeframe.

For the control group, component-level analysis revealed minimal and inconsistent changes across dimensions, with no component showing statistically significant improvement (all $p > .10$).

This pattern reinforces that the experimental group's gains appeared to be strongly linked to the TBLT intervention implemented over eight weeks rather than general exposure to Business English content, instructor contact time, or maturation effects that would have affected both groups equally.

The differential pattern—with experimental group improvements concentrated in precisely those competencies (interaction, fluency, pragmatics) that TBLT explicitly targets through communicative tasks, while the control group showed negligible change despite identical content coverage—suggests a strong association between the intervention and outcomes.

4.2. Learner Perceptions of TBLT

Post-intervention questionnaire data from the experimental group ($n = 27$) revealed overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward TBLT and its perceived impact on communicative abilities. Table 3 presents response distributions for five key items representing major thematic domains.

Table 3
Student Perceptions of TBLT ($n = 27$)

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M (SD)
Tasks helped me speak more confidently	18 (66.7%)	8 (29.6%)	1 (3.7%)	0	0	4.52 (0.64)
Tasks increased my motivation to speak	16 (59.3%)	9 (33.3%)	2 (7.4%)	0	0	4.44 (0.70)
Tasks were relevant to real business situations	18 (66.7%)	8 (29.6%)	1 (3.7%)	0	0	4.56 (0.64)
Tasks increased my classroom engagement	15 (55.6%)	10 (37.0%)	2 (7.4%)	0	0	4.41 (0.69)
I would recommend TBLT for future courses	19 (70.4%)	7 (25.9%)	1 (3.7%)	0	0	4.63 (0.63)

Several important findings emerge from these data:

Confidence and Motivation: An overwhelming 96.3% of students agreed or strongly agreed that TBLT enhanced their speaking confidence ($M =$

4.52), while 92.6% reported increased motivation to participate in speaking activities ($M = 4.44$). These perceptions align with the quantitative assessment data showing substantial fluency and interactional gains, suggesting that learners accurately recognized their own development. The confidence gains reported by students provide insight into one mechanism through which TBLT may have facilitated performance improvements: by creating supportive environments for oral production, the intervention reduced anxiety that often inhibits speaking in traditional ESP classrooms.

Perceived Relevance: A striking 96.3% of learners agreed or strongly agreed that tasks were relevant to real-life business situations ($M = 4.56$), indicating strong perceived authenticity and professional applicability. This perception is significant because it suggests that the intervention successfully bridged the gap between classroom instruction and workplace communication demands—a persistent problem in traditional Algerian ESP contexts. The authentic business scenarios employed throughout the eight weeks appear to have resonated with students' understanding of professional communication needs.

Engagement: The vast majority (92.5%) reported increased classroom engagement compared to previous semesters ($M = 4.41$), suggesting that TBLT successfully fostered active participation and sustained interest throughout the two-month intervention period. This heightened engagement likely contributed to the learning outcomes by increasing exposure to meaningful language use during the limited instructional time available.

Overall Satisfaction: Perhaps most significantly, 96.3% of students would recommend TBLT for future Business English courses ($M = 4.63$), representing strong endorsement of the approach and suggesting high levels of overall satisfaction with the learning experience.

These perception data provide convergent evidence supporting the quantitative findings: students not only demonstrated measurable competence gains but also subjectively experienced increased confidence, recognized the relevance of instruction to their professional futures, and valued

the pedagogical approach—factors that likely reinforced their engagement and learning throughout the intervention period.

Qualitative Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

Thematic analysis of open-ended questionnaire responses revealed four major themes:

Theme 1: Authenticity and Professional Preparation (mentioned by 21/27 students, 77.8%)

Students repeatedly emphasized that tasks felt "real" and directly prepared them for future professional roles. Representative quotations include:

"The role-plays made me feel like I was already working in a company. This is what we will really do after graduation." (Student 7)

"In previous English courses, we just memorized words. Now I practiced real business conversations—negotiating, meeting with clients. This is much more useful." (Student 14)

"I can now imagine myself in a job interview or business meeting. Before, I only knew grammar rules but couldn't speak naturally." (Student 22)

These responses suggest that the intervention's use of authentic business scenarios successfully connected classroom learning to professional contexts, addressing a critical weakness in traditional instruction.

Theme 2: Increased Confidence Through Practice (mentioned by 19/27 students, 70.4%)

Many students attributed confidence gains specifically to repeated opportunities for speaking practice in low-stakes, supportive environments:

"At first I was nervous to speak, but doing tasks every week made it easier. Now I don't panic when I need to speak English." (Student 4)

"Working in groups helped me because I could practice with friends first before presenting to the class. This reduced my stress." (Student 11)

"The more we practiced, the more confident I became. By the end, I even enjoyed the presentations!" (Student 19)

These comments illuminate a developmental trajectory: initial nervousness gradually diminishing through repeated practice over the eight weeks, culminating in increased confidence and even enjoyment. This progression suggests that the intervention duration was sufficient for students to experience meaningful psychological shifts in their relationship with speaking English.

Theme 3: Collaborative Learning Benefits (mentioned by 16/27 students, 59.3%)

Students valued the collaborative nature of tasks, highlighting social and cognitive benefits:

"Group work helped me learn from my classmates. When I didn't know a word, they helped me find another way to say it." (Student 3)

"Discussing together before the task helped me organize my ideas. Two heads are better than one." (Student 12)

"I learned not just from the teacher but also from other students. We corrected each other and shared ideas." (Student 24)

These responses indicate that the intervention's emphasis on pair and group work created peer scaffolding opportunities that supported learning, particularly important in the large-class context where individual teacher-student interaction time was limited.

Theme 4: Initial Discomfort and Adjustment Challenges (mentioned by 8/27 students, 29.6%)

A minority of students acknowledged initial difficulties adjusting to the learner-centered approach:

"At first, I felt confused because we had less teacher explanation. I wanted more grammar lessons. But later I understood that practicing is more important." (Student 6)

"The first tasks were difficult because I was used to just listening to the teacher. But I got used to it." (Student 17)

This theme reflects the reality that shifting from teacher-centered to learner-centered pedagogy requires adjustment, particularly for students accustomed to traditional instructional formats.

However, the relatively small proportion of students expressing this concern (29.6%), combined with their acknowledgment of eventual adaptation, suggests that initial discomfort diminished over the eight-week period as students acclimated to the new approach.

4.3. Implementation Insights from Field Notes

Systematic analysis of field notes maintained throughout the eight-week intervention yielded rich qualitative data documenting implementation realities, effective practices, and challenges encountered in adapting TBLT to the resource-constrained Algerian ESP context. These observations formed the empirical foundation for the context-sensitive mini-curriculum model presented in Section 5.

Key Themes from Field Notes

Theme 1: Strategic Grouping as Essential Adaptation

Field notes consistently documented that strategic use of group work was critical for managing large classes (27 students) within limited time frames:

Week 2 Field Note: "Organized students into groups of 4–5 for the business meeting task. This allowed all students to participate actively during the 40-minute task cycle, whereas whole-class activities in previous weeks left some students passive. Group configuration seems essential for large-class TBLT."

Week 5 Field Note: "Mixed proficiency groupings worked better than homogeneous groups. Stronger students provided language support to peers, while lower-proficiency learners contributed ideas and participated more actively than they do in teacher-fronted activities."

These observations revealed that heterogeneous grouping not only maximized participation opportunities but also created natural scaffolding dynamics, enabling the intervention to accommodate learner variability within the large-class context.

Theme 2: Progressive Task Complexity and Scaffolding

Notes documented the importance of carefully sequencing tasks from simple to complex:

Week 1 Field Note: "Started with highly structured role-play (clear role cards, predictable interaction pattern). Students completed task successfully with minimal confusion. This built confidence for more open-ended tasks later."

Week 7 Field Note: "Today's negotiation task was more complex—multiple variables to consider, no script provided. Students struggled initially but showed impressive problem-solving and negotiation strategies. Earlier scaffolded tasks prepared them for this complexity."

This pattern suggests that successful TBLT implementation in contexts where students lack experience with communicative approaches requires gradual progression, beginning with structured tasks that provide clear frameworks before advancing to more open-ended, cognitively demanding activities. The eight-week timeframe allowed sufficient progression while maintaining pedagogical coherence.

Theme 3: Low-Technology Material Effectiveness

Despite limited technological resources, field notes documented that paper-based materials effectively supported task-based learning:

Week 3 Field Note: "Used printed role cards and scenario descriptions. Students engaged fully despite absence of technology. Key is authenticity of scenario rather than medium of delivery."

Week 6 Field Note: "Whiteboard for brainstorming vocabulary before task proved highly effective. Simple tools can support TBLT when thoughtfully employed."

These observations challenge assumptions that TBLT requires sophisticated technology, suggesting that core pedagogical principles can be implemented effectively with basic materials when tasks are well-designed and contextually appropriate—an important finding given resource constraints in the research setting.

Theme 4: Peer Feedback as Learning Opportunity

Notes revealed that structured peer feedback enhanced learning and reduced instructor workload:

Week 4 Field Note: "Implemented peer observation checklists during presentations. Students provided constructive feedback to classmates, and presenters reported that peer comments were helpful. This also reduced my feedback burden in large class."

Week 8 Field Note: "Students have become more sophisticated in providing feedback. They now notice not just errors but also effective strategies their peers use. Peer assessment developed their metalinguistic awareness."

This finding suggests that peer feedback serves dual functions: providing formative assessment that supports learning while making TBLT sustainable in large-class contexts where individual teacher feedback for all students is impractical. The progressive improvement in peer feedback quality over eight weeks suggests that this skill develops with practice.

Theme 5: Student Resistance and Gradual Acceptance

Field notes documented initial student resistance that diminished over time:

Week 1 Field Note: "Several students asked when I would 'teach grammar' and seemed uncomfortable with reduced teacher control. Need to clearly explain TBLT rationale and manage expectations."

Week 3 Field Note: "Less resistance this week. Students beginning to understand that speaking practice is 'learning,' not just testing what they already know."

Week 7 Field Note: "Students now actively request more task opportunities. Resistance has transformed into enthusiasm. Persistence through initial adjustment period was essential."

This pattern underscores the importance of allowing adequate time for students to adapt to learner-centered approaches—particularly in educational contexts where traditional teacher authority is deeply culturally embedded. The eight-week intervention duration appears to have been sufficient for this attitudinal shift to occur, with

resistance evident in early weeks giving way to enthusiasm by the end of the intervention period.

Emergent Effective Practices

Analysis of field notes identified specific practices that consistently supported successful implementation during the eight-week intervention:

Clear task instructions with modeling: Demonstrating tasks through teacher-student or student-student examples before independent performance significantly reduced confusion and off-task behavior.

Strategic time management: Allocating specific time limits for each task phase and using timers maintained focus and ensured completion of all lesson components within 75-minute sessions.

Flexible adaptation: Adjusting task complexity in response to observed student performance (e.g., providing additional scaffolding when students struggled, increasing challenge when tasks were too easy) enhanced appropriateness and maintained engagement throughout the intervention period.

Vocabulary pre-teaching: Briefly pre-teaching 5-7 essential vocabulary items before tasks reduced linguistic barriers while maintaining the focus on meaningful communication rather than form manipulation.

Reflection routines: Brief post-task reflection activities (e.g., "What was challenging? What strategies did you use?") developed metacognitive awareness and helped students recognize their own learning progression across the eight weeks.

These empirically derived practices directly informed the mini-curriculum model's design, ensuring that recommendations reflect actual implementation realities rather than idealized conditions.

4.4. Triangulation and Convergent Evidence

The convergent findings from multiple data sources provide robust evidence that the eight-week TBLT intervention substantially and specifically enhanced Algerian Business English

learners' communicative competence. Quantitative assessment data demonstrated large effect sizes for overall competence ($d = 2.31$) and particularly strong gains in interactive strategies ($d = 1.53$), fluency ($d = 1.54$), and pragmatic appropriateness ($d = 1.49$). Student perceptions strongly endorsed the approach, with over 96% reporting increased confidence and recommending TBLT for future courses. Instructor field notes documented both implementation challenges and effective adaptation strategies, revealing that TBLT can be successfully implemented in resource-constrained contexts when thoughtfully adapted to local conditions over a realistic timeframe.

Importantly, triangulation across data sources revealed no major contradictions: quantitative gains were reflected in students' perceived confidence and relevance, while field notes documented observable engagement patterns consistent with questionnaire responses. The alignment between measured competence improvements, student perceptions of learning, and instructor observations of classroom processes provides multiple, converging lines of evidence that the documented changes resulted from the TBLT intervention rather than confounding factors.

The control group's minimal progress despite identical instructional time and content coverage, combined with the experimental group's substantial gains concentrated precisely in those competencies that TBLT explicitly targets, strongly suggests a meaningful relationship between the eight-week intervention and observed outcomes. While the quasi-experimental design precludes definitive causal claims, this convergence of evidence strengthens confidence that TBLT represents an effective and contextually appropriate pedagogical approach for Algerian ESP Business English instruction.

5. Context-Sensitive Mini-Curriculum Model for TBLT Implementation

A distinctive contribution of this study is the development of an empirically grounded, context-sensitive mini-curriculum model for implementing TBLT in large, resource-constrained ESP classrooms

characteristic of Algerian public universities. Importantly, this model did not emerge from theoretical speculation but was inductively derived from systematic analysis of field notes, classroom observations, student feedback, and documented effective practices throughout the eight-week intervention.

The model represents a synthesis of empirically validated strategies that successfully addressed the specific challenges of limited instructional time, large class sizes (25–30 students), minimal technological resources, and students' limited prior experience with communicative language teaching. By grounding recommendations in actual implementation data rather than idealized conditions, the model offers practical, actionable guidance for ESP instructors working in similar contexts throughout Algeria and comparable developing educational environments.

5.1. Theoretical Foundation and Empirical Grounding

The mini-curriculum model integrates core TBLT principles (Ellis, 2009; Willis & Willis, 2007) with contextual adaptations empirically validated through classroom implementation. Specifically, the model:

Maintains theoretical integrity: Preserves essential TBLT characteristics including focus on meaning, authentic communication, learner-centeredness, and task-based outcomes

Addresses resource constraints: Incorporates strategies proven effective for large classes, limited time, and minimal technology

Reflects cultural context: Accounts for students' prior learning experiences, expectations regarding teacher roles, and adjustment needs

Demonstrates feasibility: Documents that meaningful TBLT implementation is achievable within existing institutional constraints rather than requiring unrealistic resource investments

The model's empirical foundation derives from three sources: (1) field notes documenting 40+ hours of classroom observation across eight weeks, (2) student feedback identifying effective and problematic practices, and (3) learning outcome data confirming pedagogical effectiveness. This

triangulated evidence base ensures that recommendations reflect proven practices rather than untested assumptions.

5.2. Core Components of the Mini-Curriculum Model

Target Context Specifications

- Setting: Algerian public university ESP Business English classrooms
- Class size: 25–30 students (large classes requiring group-based approaches)
- Student level: CEFR B1 (intermediate proficiency)
- Instructional time: One 75-minute session per week
- Resources: Minimal technology; reliance on printed materials, whiteboard, and audio playback where available
- Student characteristics: Limited prior experience with communicative approaches; accustomed to teacher-centered instruction; intermediate English proficiency with stronger receptive than productive skills

Session Structure and Time Allocation

Based on field note analysis of effective time management strategies observed throughout the intervention, the model recommends the following session structure:

Phase 1: Warm-up and Activation (5–8 minutes)

- Brief discussion or activity activating prior knowledge related to the session's business communication scenario
- Review of key vocabulary or expressions from previous sessions
- Establishment of lesson objectives and task overview

Empirical basis: Field notes documented that brief warm-ups focusing student attention and activating relevant schema improved subsequent task performance and reduced off-task behavior.

Phase 2: Pre-task Preparation (10–15 minutes)

- Introduction of business scenario and task objectives
- Presentation of essential vocabulary (5–7 key terms/phrases)
- Modeling of task through teacher demonstration or sample dialogue
- Brief planning time for students to organize thoughts

Empirical basis: Field notes consistently showed that tasks preceded by clear instructions, modeling, and vocabulary pre-teaching resulted in more successful performance and less student frustration than tasks introduced with minimal preparation.

Phase 3: Task Cycle (30–35 minutes)

- Task performance in small groups (20–25 minutes): Students complete communicative task in groups of 4–5, using target language to achieve specified outcome
- Planning and rehearsal (5–8 minutes): Groups prepare to report task outcomes or present work to class
- Reporting phase (5–7 minutes): Selected groups present task outcomes while peers observe using structured feedback checklists

Empirical basis: Analysis revealed that group sizes of 4–5 optimized participation (groups of 2–3 completed tasks too quickly; groups of 6+ experienced coordination difficulties and unequal participation). The planning phase proved essential for reducing anxiety and improving presentation quality.

Phase 4: Language Focus and Feedback (15–20 minutes)

- Whole-class discussion of task outcomes and strategies used
- Focused attention on useful language expressions that emerged during tasks
- Brief form-focused activities addressing common errors observed
- Teacher and peer feedback on performance

Empirical basis: Field notes indicated that explicit language focus following task performance enhanced accuracy awareness without undermining communicative confidence developed during task execution. Students reported valuing this "noticing" phase for consolidating learning.

Phase 5: Reflection and Closure (5 minutes)

- Brief metacognitive reflection (What was challenging? What strategies helped?)
- Preview of next session's focus
- Assignment of any homework or preparatory activities

Empirical basis: Regular reflection routines progressively increased students' metacognitive awareness and ability to articulate learning strategies, as documented across weekly field notes.

Sample Weekly Themes and Task Progression

The model recommends an eight-week thematic progression moving from structured to open-ended tasks:

Weeks 1–2: Professional Self-Presentation

- Theme: Introducing yourself and your company in networking contexts
- Sample tasks: Structured role-play exchanging business cards; elevator pitch preparation
- Rationale: Highly scaffolded tasks with predictable structures build confidence and establish classroom routines

Weeks 3–4: Business Meetings and Discussions

- Theme: Participating in meetings, contributing to discussions, expressing opinions
- Sample tasks: Problem-solving meeting simulation; brainstorming session for new product launch
- Rationale: Moderate complexity requiring turn-taking, negotiation, and collaborative decision-making

Weeks 5–6: Negotiations and Persuasion

- Theme: Negotiating prices, terms, deadlines; persuasive communication
- Sample tasks: Buyer-seller negotiation; handling customer complaints
- Rationale: Increased cognitive and linguistic complexity; multiple variables to consider; strategic language use

Weeks 7–8: Presentations and Professional Correspondence

- Theme: Delivering presentations; writing professional emails
- Sample tasks: Company/product presentation with Q & A; email exchange resolving business issue
- Rationale: Integration of skills developed in earlier weeks; authentic professional genres

Empirical basis: This progression, derived from the actual intervention sequence, proved effective in gradually building student competence and confidence. Field notes documented that attempting complex tasks too early resulted in frustration, while maintaining simple tasks too long led to boredom—validating the importance of progressive complexity.

Materials and Resources

Based on documented effective practices, the model recommends:

Low-Technology Materials:

- Printed role cards specifying participants' objectives, constraints, and relevant information
- Business scenario descriptions (1–2 paragraphs) providing context
- Visual aids (simple diagrams, charts, product images) when relevant
- Vocabulary reference sheets (5–7 key expressions per task)
- Peer observation/feedback checklists

Minimal Technology Integration (when available):

- Audio recordings of business interactions for listening comprehension

- PowerPoint slides for vocabulary presentation and scenario setup
- Video clips (3–5 minutes) showing authentic business communication for analysis

Empirical basis: Field notes indicated that paper-based materials effectively supported learning when scenarios were authentic and instructions clear. Technology, while enhancing engagement when available, was not essential for successful implementation.

Assessment Approaches

The model integrates formative and summative assessment:

Formative Assessment (ongoing):

- Teacher observation during task performance using simplified rubric
- Peer feedback using structured observation checklists
- Self-assessment reflection forms after major tasks
- Error tracking and focused mini-lessons addressing common difficulties

Summative Assessment (end of cycle):

- Individual speaking task assessment using adapted CEFR rubric
- Portfolio of written work (business emails, reports)
- Group presentation evaluated on content, language, and delivery

Empirical basis: Field notes documented that peer assessment reduced teacher workload while providing valuable learning opportunities. Students progressively developed more sophisticated feedback skills, as evidenced by increasingly specific and constructive comments over the eight-week period.

Teacher and Student Roles

Teacher Role:

- Task designer and curriculum planner
- Facilitator of interaction rather than primary information source

- Provider of models, scaffolding, and focused feedback
- Observer and assessor of performance
- Manager of group dynamics and time

Empirical basis: Field notes indicated that successful implementation required teachers to resist the temptation to over-explain or dominate interaction, instead allowing students to struggle productively with communicative challenges.

Student Role:

- Active task participants and meaning-makers
- Collaborative group members
- Peer supporters and feedback providers
- Reflective learners monitoring their own progress

Empirical basis: Student questionnaire responses and field notes documented that students gradually embraced these active roles, though initial adjustment was necessary for those accustomed to passive learning stances.

5.3. Implementation Challenges and Adaptive Strategies

The model explicitly acknowledges implementation challenges documented during the intervention and provides empirically validated adaptive strategies:

Challenge 1: Large Class Sizes

- Strategy: Prioritize group work (4-5 students per group) to maximize speaking opportunities
- Strategy: Use peer assessment to distribute feedback responsibilities
- Strategy: Rotate which groups present to whole class rather than requiring all groups to present every session

Challenge 2: Limited Instructional Time

- Strategy: Implement efficient time management with clear phase boundaries
- Strategy: Use timers to maintain pacing
- Strategy: Assign preparatory activities (vocabulary review, scenario reading) as homework when feasible

Challenge 3: Student Resistance to Learner-Centered Approaches

- Strategy: Explicitly explain TBLT rationale and expected learning outcomes
- Strategy: Begin with highly structured tasks before progressing to open-ended activities
- Strategy: Maintain consistent routines to establish predictability
- Strategy: Acknowledge adjustment difficulties while encouraging persistence

Challenge 4: Minimal Resources

- Strategy: Design tasks requiring minimal materials (role cards, handouts)
- Strategy: Leverage authentic materials from local business contexts (advertisements, company websites, job postings)
- Strategy: Create reusable task templates adaptable to various content areas

Empirical basis: Each adaptive strategy emerged from documented problem-solving throughout the intervention, representing proven approaches to common obstacles rather than speculative recommendations.

5.4. Model Validation and Practical Application

The mini-curriculum model's validity rests on three pillars:

- 1 Theoretical alignment: Maintains fidelity to core TBLT principles while adapting implementation to context
- 2 Empirical grounding: Derived inductively from systematic documentation of actual classroom practices over eight weeks
- 3 Outcome evidence: Associated with substantial learning gains ($d = 2.31$) and strong student satisfaction (96.3% recommendation rate)

For ESP practitioners seeking to implement this model, the following steps are recommended:

Step 1: Conduct needs analysis identifying specific business communication scenarios relevant to your learners' future professional contexts

Step 2: Adapt the eight-week thematic progression to align with identified needs while maintaining the principle of progressive task complexity

Step 3: Design or adapt tasks ensuring they include essential TBLT characteristics (meaning focus, information gap, authentic outcome)

Step 4: Prepare low-technology materials (role cards, scenario descriptions, feedback checklists)

Step 5: Explicitly communicate TBLT rationale to students, managing expectations regarding teacher and student roles

Step 6: Implement with flexibility, documenting what works and adapting based on observed student performance

Step 7: Maintain systematic reflection notes to inform ongoing refinement

This systematic approach, grounded in the empirical model, provides a realistic pathway for TBLT adoption in resource-constrained ESP contexts.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study provide robust evidence that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) significantly enhances communicative competence among Algerian Business English learners, while also suggesting that meaningful implementation is achievable within the resource constraints characteristic of public universities in developing contexts. This section situates findings within the broader international research literature, explores theoretical and practical implications, acknowledges study limitations, and proposes directions for future research.

6.1. Interpretation of Findings

The experimental group's substantial gains in communicative competence ($d = 2.31$) align with and extend prior international research demonstrating TBLT effectiveness in ESP contexts. Li et al.'s (2021) meta-analysis of task-based language teaching found mean effect sizes of $d = 0.93$ for oral proficiency outcomes—substantially smaller than the current study's effects. This larger effect size likely reflects the particularly traditional instructional approach employed in the control group, creating greater contrast between

conditions. Additionally, students' limited prior exposure to communicative instruction may have created greater room for improvement when introduced to systematic task-based practice. These gains align with research suggesting that task-based approaches enhance interactional management and contextual adaptation (González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014; Long, 2015).

The more modest gains in grammatical accuracy ($d = 0.85$), while still statistically significant and practically meaningful, align with Ellis's (2009) observation that purely task-based approaches may require supplementation with focused form instruction to maximize accuracy development. This pattern is consistent with TBLT theory, which prioritizes meaningful communication over form, and suggests that optimal ESP instruction might integrate TBLT's communicative focus with strategic attention to grammatical forms particularly relevant to business communication genres—an area warranting further investigation (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

The study's learner perception findings strongly corroborate research by Nunan (2021) and Willis and Willis (2007), who argue that task-based approaches enhance motivation by making language learning purposeful and authentic. The 96.3% of students reporting that tasks were relevant to real-life business situations represents particularly compelling evidence of perceived authenticity—directly addressing a frequent criticism of traditional ESP instruction, namely that classroom activities lack connection to actual workplace communication demands (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013).

6.2. Mechanisms Underlying TBLT Effectiveness

Several factors may explain TBLT's exceptional effectiveness in this Algerian ESP setting:

Addressing an Acute Pedagogical Gap: Traditional ESP instruction in Algerian universities, as documented by East (2012) and Mishan and Timmis (2015), emphasizes passive skills and decontextualized knowledge at the expense of interactive competence. TBLT directly addressed this gap by prioritizing the very skills—fluency,

interaction, pragmatic appropriateness—that traditional instruction systematically neglects. For learners who had rarely engaged in extended speaking or authentic communication tasks, TBLT represented a qualitatively different learning experience addressing previously unmet needs.

Alignment with Professional Communication Demands: Business communication is inherently task-based: professionals negotiate, present, problem-solve, and correspond to achieve specific outcomes. TBLT's goal-oriented nature therefore authentically mirrors the communicative demands learners will face in their careers (Ellis & Johnson, 1994). This natural alignment between pedagogical approach and target domain likely enhanced both learning effectiveness and perceived relevance—factors consistently associated with improved motivation and outcomes in language learning contexts.

Socially Situated Learning: Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction within the zone of proximal development, with more capable peers providing scaffolding. The collaborative group work central to this study's TBLT implementation created natural opportunities for peer support, with field notes documenting numerous instances of students helping each other find alternative expressions, negotiate meaning, and co-construct understanding. For learners in a collectivist cultural context, this collaborative dimension may have been particularly comfortable and effective.

Intrinsic Motivation Through Meaningful Communication: The task-based activities provided authentic opportunities for students to experience communicative success, make choices about how to accomplish task objectives, and interact meaningfully with peers. Student comments such as "I enjoyed the presentations" and "Group work helped me learn from classmates" reflect satisfaction of basic psychological needs related to competence, autonomy, and relatedness—likely contributing to the strong engagement and motivation documented in questionnaire data.

6.3. Contributions to ESP Theory and Pedagogy

This study advances theoretical understanding of TBLT and ESP pedagogy in several ways:

Empirical Validation in Underresearched Context: By providing rigorous empirical evidence of TBLT effectiveness in an Algerian ESP setting—a context virtually absent from existing literature—the study extends the geographical and cultural scope of task-based language teaching research. This expansion is theoretically significant because it challenges implicit assumptions that communicative approaches primarily suit Western educational contexts or well-resourced environments (Carless, 2007). The findings demonstrate that TBLT's core principles—meaningful interaction, learner-centeredness, focus on communication—are transferable across diverse cultural and educational contexts when appropriately adapted to local conditions.

Reconceptualizing Communicative Competence in ESP: The study's component-level analysis advances theoretical understanding by suggesting that different dimensions of communicative competence respond differentially to task-based instruction. The finding that interactive strategies and pragmatic appropriateness showed larger gains than grammatical accuracy suggests that communicative competence is not a unitary construct but rather comprises distinct, partially independent dimensions that may require different pedagogical approaches (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). This has implications for ESP theory, suggesting that curricula should explicitly target multiple competence dimensions through varied instructional strategies rather than assuming that a single approach will uniformly develop all aspects of communicative ability.

Evidence for Context-Sensitive TBLT Models: Perhaps most significantly, the study challenges the implicit assumption in much TBLT literature that effective implementation requires ideal conditions—small classes, abundant time, technological resources, and students experienced with communicative approaches. By demonstrating substantial learning gains in a context characterized

by large classes, limited time, minimal technology, and traditionally educated students, the research provides theoretical support for context-sensitive implementation models. This contribution is crucial for expanding TBLT's applicability beyond privileged educational settings to the resource-constrained contexts where the majority of global English language teaching occurs.

6.4. Practical Implications

The study yields several important implications for ESP practitioners, curriculum designers, and educational policy makers:

Curriculum Restructuring Around Communicative Tasks: Business English curricula in Algerian universities—and similar contexts—should be fundamentally restructured around authentic communicative tasks rather than linguistic forms or thematic vocabulary lists. This restructuring need not abandon existing content but rather reframe how that content is delivered and practiced. For example, vocabulary related to "marketing" should be taught not through definition memorization but through tasks requiring its use: developing a marketing plan, presenting a product to potential clients, or responding to market research findings. This shift from knowledge-as-content to knowledge-as-use represents a fundamental pedagogical reorientation with far-reaching implications for course design.

Performance-Based Assessment Reform: Traditional written examinations testing discrete grammatical knowledge or vocabulary recognition inadequately measure the communicative competence that Business English learners actually need. Assessment practices should be reformed to prioritize performance-based evaluation: oral presentations assessed for clarity and persuasiveness, role-played negotiations evaluated for strategic communication, professional correspondence judged on appropriateness and effectiveness. The CEFR-based rubric employed in this study provides a practical model for such assessment, emphasizing functional communication over formal accuracy in isolation.

Teacher Professional Development: Implementing TBLT effectively requires pedagogical skills distinct from those needed for traditional instruction. ESP teachers need professional development in: (1) designing tasks that authentically mirror target domain communication, (2) facilitating rather than dominating interaction, (3) providing feedback that balances encouragement with guidance, (4) managing large-class group dynamics, and (5) adapting tasks in response to observed learner needs. Universities and education ministries should invest in systematic professional development programs equipping teachers with these competencies. The empirically grounded mini-curriculum model developed in this study could serve as a practical resource for such training initiatives.

Institutional Support for Communicative Approaches: While the study demonstrates that meaningful TBLT implementation is possible within existing resource constraints, institutional support would enhance effectiveness and sustainability. Recommendations include: (1) allocating slightly larger instructional time blocks (90–120 minutes) to accommodate complete task cycles, (2) reducing class sizes to 20–25 students where feasible to increase individual participation opportunities, (3) providing teachers with preparation time to design quality tasks and materials, (4) creating shared task repositories so teachers can collaboratively develop and refine materials, and (5) recognizing communicative instruction in teacher evaluation systems that may currently privilege traditional lecturing.

6.5. Study Limitations

While the study provides robust evidence for TBLT effectiveness, several limitations warrant acknowledgment:

Limited Duration: The eight-week intervention represents a relatively short timeframe. While sufficient to detect significant short-term effects, the study cannot address whether gains persist over time or whether extended TBLT exposure would yield further improvements. Longitudinal research

tracking learners' communicative competence development over full academic years would provide valuable complementary evidence regarding sustainability of outcomes and optimal intervention duration.

Single-Site Implementation: Data collection occurred at a single institution with a particular student population, instructional context, and institutional culture. While the site typifies Algerian public universities in many respects, variations across institutions—in student preparation, class sizes, resources, and administrative support—may affect TBLT implementation success. Multi-site replication studies would enhance confidence in generalizability across diverse Algerian and MENA educational contexts.

Instructor Effects: The study employed a single instructor implementing both TBLT and traditional instruction. While this design controls for instructor quality differences between groups, it raises questions about whether observed effects reflect TBLT's inherent effectiveness or this particular instructor's skill in implementing the approach. The instructor's prior experience with communicative teaching may have facilitated effective TBLT implementation—an advantage not all teachers would share. Future research employing multiple instructors would help disentangle approach effects from instructor effects.

Quasi-Experimental Design: While random assignment to conditions occurred at the class level, the use of intact classes rather than randomly formed groups introduces potential selection threats. Although pre-test equivalence checks revealed no significant baseline differences, unmeasured variables (class cohesion, time of day, previous experiences with particular teaching styles) might have influenced outcomes. True experimental designs with individual random assignment would provide stronger causal evidence, though such designs are rarely feasible in educational settings.

6.6. Future Research Directions

Acknowledged limitations point toward important future research directions:

Longitudinal Studies: Future research should track communicative competence development over extended periods (full academic years or multiple years) to assess whether TBLT gains persist, whether continued exposure yields progressive improvements, and how sustained implementation affects learners' professional communication after graduation. Longitudinal designs would also enable examination of potential delayed effects and investigation of optimal intervention duration.

Multi-Site Replication: Replication studies across multiple Algerian universities and comparable MENA contexts would enhance confidence in findings' generalizability and identify how institutional variations affect implementation success. Such studies could investigate which contextual factors moderate TBLT effectiveness and under what conditions particular adaptations prove most valuable.

Grammatical Accuracy Development: Given the more modest accuracy gains observed, future studies should investigate optimal approaches for integrating focused form instruction with task-based communication. Research questions might include: When should form-focused activities occur (before, during, or after tasks)? Which grammatical forms warrant explicit attention in Business English? How can feedback balance encouragement with accuracy development (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011)?

Teacher Implementation Variables: Research employing multiple instructors with varying experience levels, professional backgrounds, and pedagogical beliefs would help identify teacher characteristics associated with successful TBLT implementation and inform more targeted professional development initiatives. Such studies could also investigate how teacher training interventions affect implementation quality and learning outcomes.

7. Conclusion

This study investigated the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in enhancing communicative competence among Algerian university students enrolled in Business English

ESP programmes. Through a quasi-experimental design employing methodological triangulation—quantitative speaking assessments, student perception questionnaires, and systematic instructor field notes—the research provides robust evidence that TBLT significantly improves learners' communicative competence while also suggesting that meaningful implementation is achievable within the resource constraints characteristic of Algerian public higher education.

7.1. Summary of Key Findings

The study's principal findings include:

Finding 1: TBLT produced substantial improvements in overall communicative competence ($d = 2.31$), with particularly strong gains in interactive strategies ($d = 1.53$), fluency and coherence ($d = 1.54$), and pragmatic appropriateness ($d = 1.49$). These effect sizes substantially exceed those typically reported in language teaching intervention research (Li et al., 2021; Plonsky & Oswald, 2014), suggesting TBLT represents a highly effective pedagogical approach for developing Business English communicative abilities.

Finding 2: Students overwhelmingly endorsed TBLT, with over 96% agreeing that tasks were relevant to professional contexts, enhanced their confidence, and should be recommended for future courses. This strong positive perception indicates high student acceptance and suggests that TBLT successfully addresses learners' desire for authentic, professionally relevant English instruction.

Finding 3: Systematic field note analysis revealed that TBLT can be successfully implemented in large, resource-constrained classrooms through strategic adaptations including heterogeneous grouping, progressive task complexity, low-technology materials, and structured peer feedback. These empirically validated practices formed the foundation for a context-sensitive mini-curriculum model providing practical implementation guidance.

Finding 4: Component-level analysis demonstrated differential effects across communicative competence dimensions, with

accuracy and range showing more modest gains than interactive and pragmatic competencies. This pattern suggests that optimal ESP instruction might integrate TBLT's communicative focus with supplementary attention to grammatical accuracy, particularly for forms essential to business communication genres (Ellis, 2009; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

7.2. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, the study advances understanding of communicative competence development in ESP contexts by suggesting that:

- Communicative competence comprises distinct dimensions responding differentially to instruction, requiring explicit curricular attention to multiple competence components
- TBLT principles are transferable across diverse cultural and educational contexts when appropriately adapted to local conditions
- Context-sensitive implementation models can maintain theoretical integrity while addressing practical constraints
- Learner perceptions of authenticity and professional relevance significantly influence engagement and motivation in ESP settings

These theoretical contributions extend the geographical, cultural, and practical scope of TBLT and ESP research, challenging implicit assumptions about conditions necessary for communicative pedagogy effectiveness.

7.3. Practical Significance

Practically, the study demonstrates that Algerian ESP instructors can enhance Business English learners' communicative competence through feasible pedagogical innovations requiring minimal additional resources. The empirically grounded mini-curriculum model provides specific, actionable guidance for implementing TBLT in contexts characterized by large classes, limited time, and minimal technology—conditions

prevalent throughout developing educational systems.

Key practical recommendations include:

- Restructure Business English curricula around authentic communicative tasks mirroring target professional scenarios rather than organizing instruction around grammatical forms or thematic vocabulary
- Implement performance-based assessment using CEFR-adapted rubrics evaluating functional communication rather than relying exclusively on written grammar tests
- Invest in teacher professional development equipping ESP instructors with skills for designing tasks, facilitating interaction, and managing large-class communicative instruction
- Adopt strategic grouping practices using heterogeneous groups of 4–5 students to maximize participation opportunities in large classes
- Develop shared material repositories enabling collaborative task development and reducing individual teacher workload
- Establish business partnerships providing authentic materials, guest speakers, and real-world communication contexts
- Advocate for supportive policies including increased English instructional time, reduced class sizes where feasible, and assessment systems aligned with communicative outcomes

7.4. Final Reflections

This study emerged from a practical pedagogical challenge: how to prepare Algerian Business English learners for the communicative demands of professional contexts when traditional instruction emphasizes form over function, accuracy over fluency, and knowledge over performance. The research demonstrates that Task-Based Language Teaching offers a theoretically grounded, empirically effective, and practically feasible solution to this challenge.

The substantial learning gains achieved—particularly in interactive strategies and pragmatic

appropriateness—validate TBLT's core premise that language is best learned through meaningful use in authentic communication contexts. Equally significant, students' strong endorsement of the approach suggests that when ESP instruction authentically mirrors professional communication, learners recognize its relevance and value, enhancing motivation and engagement.

Perhaps most importantly, the study challenges deficit narratives suggesting that resource-constrained educational contexts cannot implement innovative, research-based pedagogies. The empirically grounded mini-curriculum model demonstrates that with thoughtful adaptation, strategic resource use, and attention to local realities, meaningful pedagogical innovation is achievable even within significant constraints. This finding carries hopeful implications for ESP instruction throughout the developing world, where the majority of English language teaching occurs under conditions far from ideal but where effective instruction remains both possible and essential.

The path forward requires simultaneous attention to what can be done within existing constraints and advocacy for conditions better supporting excellent practice. ESP instructors, curriculum designers, teacher educators, and educational policy makers each have roles to play in advancing more effective, communicatively oriented Business English instruction. This study provides evidence and practical guidance to inform these efforts, suggesting that meaningful change is both necessary and achievable.

As Algeria continues its efforts to internationalize higher education and prepare graduates for the globalized economy, English communicative competence represents not a luxury but a necessity. Task-Based Language Teaching offers a pedagogically sound, contextually appropriate, and empirically validated pathway toward this goal. The challenge now is to move from individual innovation to systemic implementation, ensuring that all Algerian Business English learners have opportunities to develop the communicative competence essential for professional success in an increasingly interconnected world.

Declaration

The author declares that this research is original and has not been submitted elsewhere for publication.

Ethical Statement

All participants provided informed consent, and the study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the host institution.

AI Disclosure Statement

The author confirms that no generative AI tools were used in the drafting or substantive analysis of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this research.

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