TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AS A SUITABLE DIDACTIC METHOD FOR THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF SECOND AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Abstract

This research seeks to highlight that Task-Based Language Teaching is a suitable didactic method for the teaching and learning of second and foreign languages. The development and implementation of a teaching module for Spanish as a foreign language, in the face to face environment, is contemplated. The primary objective is to portray how methodological principles from Task-Based Language Teaching can be combined effectively in designing activities for face to face contexts. In this regard, empirical evidence is analysed in order to determine the effectiveness of the mixed methodology in the teaching-learning of Spanish as a foreign language, in the said settings, in a study based on a longitudinal experimental design with pre-test and post-test, but without control group. The results show an increase in the acquisition of specific knowledge in Spanish as a Foreign Language, thus improving the students' linguistic and communicative competence.

Keywords: task-based language teaching and learning, task-based approach, face to face method, teaching module, linguistic and communicative competence.

Running Title: Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning

Introduction

In the ambit of Language Teaching & Learning, today, one of the principal concerns of researchers, educators and teachers revolves around the teaching methodology that is being implemented, or that which should be used, to execute the work units in the classroom to teach Spanish as a Foreign Language (FL) or Second Language (SL). They all agree that the methodological processes implemented should equip the students to substantially improve their linguistic and communicative competence in a determined language. In relation to this, language teachers should update and improve their teaching practises – which would influence the students' learning process in one way or another – by experimenting with new teaching methods and approaches as it relates to Spanish as a FL/SL like the Communicative Method, Task-Based Language Teaching & Learning (TBLT), Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), among others.

The interest in Task-Based Instruction and Co-operative Language Learning is due to the potential that they offer for the design and implementation of courses that respond to learners' specific communicative needs. In didactic modules, the task is seen as the vertebral and primary axis of the pedagogic "input" in teaching.

It must be signalled that the fundamental aim of these two methodological approaches is to enable the pupil to develop and to improve functional competence in a foreign language without sacrificing grammatical accuracy. These methods harmonize the way in which languages are taught with what Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Research has revealed about how they are learned (Lee, 2000; Sheen, 1994; Willis, 1996; Skehan, 1998). It is necessary to highlight that the said teaching methodologies constitute a movement of evolution within the Communicative Method and it would therefore not be so difficult to experiment with them by means of designing teaching modules

incorporating the practice of the four language skills (speaking, writing, reading and listening) might be considered.

The present study deals with the suitability of Task-Based Language Teaching for the teaching and learning of Spanish as a Foreign Language (FL). The objective of this model is to improve linguistic and communicative competence of intermediate-level students at the University of Guyana, Guyana, South America.

The research data have been collected through a quasi-experimental longitudinal study with pre-test/post-test without control group. The purpose of the two tests is to collect valuable information about the skill levels of students before and after the intervention. Through this research it is expected that clear and accurate information be obtained in regard to the linguistic and communicative competence of the participants in this study, before and after implementing a teaching module for Spanish as a FL. Similarly, we want to emphasize how effective TBLT is in the learning and acquisition of specific knowledge.

Outline of the Problem

As it relates to teaching Spanish as a FL, it is now evident that teachers are making significant efforts to ensure that their students are linguistically and communicatively competent. However, students do not always demonstrate that they have the communicative competence to perform in real life outside the classroom. In fact, their competence in the target language is sometimes more linguistic than communicative.

In terms of methodology, over time, different approaches have emerged to support second and foreign language teaching (SL/FL). One of the first to be developed was the Grammar-Translation Method. This is based on the goal of studying a language to learn it and to be able to read its literature, or benefit from the intellectual development, which results from this study.

In the traditional methodology, there have been some limitations in defining the cognitive processes involved in the development of inter-language, which include the progressive resolution of forms and functions and the restructuring of the existing SL knowledge (Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007).

It seems clear that the traditional view that identified the teacher as an instructor of Spanish who transmitted his knowledge to the students and who took all decisions relating to the progress of the class is no longer adequate. It is no longer adequate because it does not cater for the development of the cognitive skills of the student or for the communicative competence that is pivotal to language learning.

Another approach that has emerged to support language teaching is the Communicative Approach. Since the genesis of this method, it has been asserted that the objective of teaching-learning process of a SL/FL is for students to achieve a certain level of communicative competence in that language (Skehan, 1998; Zanón, 1999; Willis, 1996). The constant evolution of the Communicative Method has led to the development of two teaching methodologies: Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning and Cooperative Language Learning. In an attempt to turn the classroom into a scenario of real-life communication processes, the realisation of tasks is proposed in a collaborative manner, as the articulating axis of the teaching-learning process.

Given the emergence of these new methods and approaches for teaching language in the world, and the increasing use of them, the need to evaluate these methodologies to observe its effect on learning is becoming increasingly clear. Experience has shown that what is taught in language lessons are not learned the same way and in the same order by the students. Clearly, there are different teaching methods to learn a foreign language and consequently, teachers must find ways and means of upgrading their teaching.

Face to Face Teaching

This style refers to two criteria: The temporal simultaneity of the processes of

teaching communication and physical presence of instructors and students in the communication process. This means that in the "face to face" mode, most of the teaching-learning processes coincide in space and time. The teacher and students share the physical space where the teaching communication processes are carried out simultaneously in time.

By using this 'face to face' teaching model, a distributed learning is created, i.e. the terms for knowledge are structured so that each linguistic skill obtains optimal development. Both the productive and receptive skills can therefore be improved by taking a form that can help reinforce each of them in a more balanced manner. It also promotes closer contact between teacher and students, which is vital in the process of teaching and learning languages.

Language Teaching Methodologies

The birth of the communicative approach in the 1980's brought a shift in the conception of language and its teaching. Before its appearance, language was conceived as a system of signs to convey ideas. Methods of teaching foreign languages (FL) such as audio oral and audio-lingual rested in the formal teaching of grammar and translation. Linguistic and language correction were essential. These had arisen as a direct result of the need to have a good command of oral and aural language. Language was conceived as a system of signs to convey ideas. The central elements of investigation were repetition exercises, drills and building habits.

Advocates of this approach saw the need to put emphasis on linguistic precision, arguing that a continuous repetition of errors would lead to the acquisition of incorrect structures and mispronunciation. The lessons were organized around a grammatical structure presented in short dialogues. Students often heard a series of recordings of conversations again and again and then tried to repeat the exact pronunciation and grammatical structures of these dialogues. These activities highlighted the use of receptive skills (listening and reading) subordinated to productive skills (speaking and writing).

The Communicative Approach was taking new forms while it continued reflecting on language, communicative competence, learning and language acquisition, and educational aspects that facilitated this process. Language began to be conceived primarily as a tool for communication and therefore the emphasis of teaching was directed towards developing communicative competence of students. One of the new forms which emerge from the Communicative Approach is Task-Based Language Teaching. A brief discussion of this didactic method will take place immediately below.

Task-Based Language Teaching

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is based on the use of tasks as the central axis of planning and instruction in language teaching. The tasks are proposed as a useful vehicle for implementing these principles. The participation of learners in the work of tasks provides a better context for the activation of the processes of learning than activities based on form. Breen (1987) defines task-based learning as: "any effort of learning the language that has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specific work, and a range of outcomes for those who are responsible for the task".

According to Zanón (1999), it deals with organizing the teaching in communicative activities that promote and integrate various processes related to communication. While realizing the task in the classroom, students have to deploy a number of useful strategies to solve specific problems (fluency, meaning, etc.). Regarding the proposed task, Ellis (2003: 276) argues that "the general purpose of the task-based methodology is to create opportunities for language learning and for developing skills through the collaborative construction of knowledge".

Estaire (2004-2005) highlights that it is an approach geared towards the construction of the communicative competence of students in all its dimensions. It focuses on action, developing the capacity of students to "do things" through language. This approach is based on a cognitive-constructivist conception of SL/FL learning in

which the student is an active player in his own learning: he finds himself in a continuous process of constructing and restructuring knowledge. It is a conception of learning in which significant learning, work focused on student learning strategies, and self learning are particularly important. This approach is also based on a social conception of FL/SL learning which considers the classroom as a social context, and offers a wealth of opportunities for the development of language.

A Framework for Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning

In task-based teaching, the lessons are focused on teaching units centred on a theme. This model uses the task as the organizing unit for planning the lesson. It is precisely the task that determines the content to be worked in the unit (Estaire & Zanón, 1990). Skehan (1998) emphasize that "the task involves solving a problem or filling a gap of information by activating a mental process using the foreign language and it is considered that through that mental process SL is internalised and acquired. The student concentrates on solving the task and "forgets" that he is in a SL classroom and thus he learns distractedly, unconsciously, playing, thinking and/or creating. This model enhances work in groups and pairs, which is indicative of Cooperative Learning (Livingstone, 2008, 2009, 2010).

Ellis (2003:238) emphasizes that Estaire & Zanón (1994) proposed a framework for planning work units or teaching units. These have two stages: The first phase involves a general statement and is responsible for providing what is hoped to achieve through the work unit. The general statement is accomplished in three steps in this order.

The first stage:

1. The determination of the topic or area of interest for the teaching unit; 2. Planning for the final task to be carried out at the end of the unit, and 3. The specification of the objectives of the work unit.

The second phase consists of the details and stipulates how the teaching unit will be carried out. There are three additional sequential steps as follows:

The second stage:

1. The specification or determination of the content (thematic and linguistic) necessary for performing the final task;
2. Planning and sequencing of the communication and language support tasks to enable students to perform the final task;
3. Planning and evaluation procedures throughout the unit.

Task-Based Instruction, in all its variants, has been and remains the guiding light of the teaching work of many educators. It has been decided that the only way to make a balance between the ideal and the real of a theoretical framework is to develop it in the classroom. In this way, teachers and educators can be guided in the techniques for developing teaching modules for their classes.

Longitudinal Experimental Study

In relation to the hypothesis of this research a longitudinal experimental study was carried out with pre-test/post-test, without control group, to determine empirically whether the mixed methodology, grounded in the task-based teaching and cooperative learning, was effective for learning specific knowledge in Spanish as a FL. The results should reflect that the mixed methodology, using the face-to-face method, based on the task-based and cooperative approaches is effective for increasing their learning in Spanish and thus optimize their linguistic and communicative skills.

Hypothesis

In this present work, the assumptions that guide this research are:

1. Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning techniques will be effective in learning and acquiring determined knowledge in Spanish as a FL/SL.
2. The students will be able to increase their

knowledge in Spanish, as it relates to a specific subject matter, and therefore become linguistically and communicatively competent in that body of knowledge.

Objectives

The specific objectives of this research are:

1. Designing a methodological model for teaching and learning of Spanish as a FL supported by task-based techniques for intermediate-level students.
2. Verify whether the work in pairs and in groups is effective in performing tasks and learning Spanish in a defined area of knowledge.

Methodology

Sample: This teaching module for Spanish was aimed at students from the University of Guyana. These were first year students pursuing the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Modern Languages who were at an intermediate level in Spanish as a Foreign Language (FL). Thus, it was necessary for them to improve their linguistic and communicative skills.

Selecting the Sample: In order to obtain empirical evidence of the learning process, and to evaluate the linguistic and communicative competence in Spanish, a sample group of 18 students from the University of Guyana was selected. The average age of the participants in the sample ranged between 20 and 25. Of the total number of the sample, 33.3% (6) were males and 66.7% (12) of them female.

They all spoke English as their mother tongue. In fact, all the students were studying Spanish driven by two needs: they wanted to have a better degree of linguistic and communicative competence, and they had an interest in learning more about Latin American culture and custom.

Design of the Experiment: To design the mate rials and procedures for the combined learning model that was developed for this study, we conducted a review of the theoretical affirmations of the TBLT methodology as well as the components of face-to-face teaching. The

Hispanic cultural context was also considered for the design of all activities that supported the practice of the four language skills to facilitate language learning. The said activities were used to activate the processes of meta-cognition, reflection, analysis and opportunities for contact with the target language, thus allowing learning to be internalized, and achieved favourably.

It has been considered that the only way to make a balance between the real and the ideal of a theoretical framework is to develop it in the classroom. To this end, a teaching module for Spanish as a FL was designed and developed based on the mixed methodology already signalled. The aim then was to test the effectiveness of this mixed methodological model which, ultimately, could help to train teachers in techniques for developing teaching modules for their classes.

Description of the Teaching Module: The module for this experimental study was designed along the lines indicated by Zanón and Estaire (1990) for Task-Based Approach as it relates to Spanish as a FL/SL. These guidelines are based on the Framework for Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning which enable the creation of teaching units in six steps and will combine compatible elements from several proposals:

(1) The theme/topic of interest , (2) The final task, (3) The Objectives, (4) The linguistic and thematic contents which will be carried out throughout the teaching module, (5) The sequencing of tasks (micro tasks) leading to the final task (macro task), (6) The evaluation.

Manuals

Two manuals were designed: a Teacher's Manual and a Student Support Manual. These are described briefly below:

Teacher's Manual: This consists of the six steps proposed by Zanón & Estaire (1990) well-planned and specified, i.e. specification of the area of interest/theme, a final task, objectives, linguistic and thematic content, sequence of tasks that lead to the final task,

and evaluation processes. It also has electronic links and additional reading. Thanks to this, the language teacher may fulfil his role as a guide and facilitator of the student.

Student Support Manual: This consists of an open letter, an introduction to the learning module, the tasks to perform, a list of useful vocabulary relating to the topic, a Grammar summary, and the same readings and additional links found in the Teacher's Manual, through which the learner could become more familiarized about the subject. The purpose of giving a manual to the students was for them to have some autonomy and to take control of their own learning, one of the main objectives of the Task-Based Approach

Time-period for the Intervention Module: The theme of the teaching unit was "Guyanese and Hispanic Eating Habits" (Los Hábitos Alimenticios Hispanos y Guyaneses). It lasted 23 hours 25, spreading over five weeks of classes, and for two days a week, two hours each day. This module was implemented in October, 2009.

This module consists of 9 communication tasks and 7 language support tasks. In other words, they were developed based on clear grammar and communicative objectives to help to promote contacts and opportunities for interaction in the target language. All of them were executed within a maximum period of 18 hours 35 minutes. The two tests, the pre-test and post-test, which form part of the evaluation, had a duration of 4 hours 50 minutes.

The duration of the mixed methodological model was 18½ sessions of face to face contact and the activities created for the said model were done during the allotted time period. The activities were divided into micro tasks, (Ellis, 2003), and these had the objective of helping and guiding the student to carry out the macro task (final task).

Structure of Pre-test and Post-test: It is important to note that the structure of the pre-test

and post-test, which integrates the receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and written) have been adapted in some ways in accordance with the general objectives of assessing general communicative competence in Spanish. "If the rates of assessment are a total of 100%, 60% is allocated to the assessment of productive skills, and 40% to receptive skills" (Germany Germany Ferreira & Cabrera, 1999, p. 4).

The design of these tests were realised according to the parameters and format of the Modern Languages Examinations (MLE) of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC)[1]. This evaluation scale is the same one that is being used currently in the Caribbean. Furthermore, this pattern of assessment was adopted for the pre-test and post-test applied; i.e., the scores used for the two tests were as follows: Listening Comprehension 20 points, Reading Comprehension 20 points, Oral Production 30 points and Written Production 30 points, giving a total of 100 points or 100%.

The pre-test consisted of a written test to measure language proficiency and an interview to measure communicative competence in terms of objectives, content and skills related to the topic of the teaching module. The post-test consisted of a test and an interview equivalent to pre-test, with the same format, which measured the same objectives, content and skills, but with different texts to the pre-test so as not to influence the results.

Implementation of the Teaching Module: A decision was taken to give the students the material in part, instead of giving them the entire manual all at once, throughout the implementation period of the learning module. This was done in order to prevent the students from trying to complete all the tasks at home and not participating actively in their execution. Given this probability, which would undoubtedly jeopardize the effectiveness of the mixed methodology and the entire teaching module, we chose to give them the first two tasks, namely the pre-task and task 1, then task 2, etc.

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[1] Entity responsible for evaluating Spanish as a FL/SL in the Caribbean.

The communication tasks (pre-task, tasks 1-7) as well as the language support or focus on form tasks (these were designed and woven in such a way that students would execute them immediately after carrying out the communication tasks), were executed just as they appear in the Student Support Manual.

Analysis and Discussion of Results

This experiment considered an independent and a dependent variable. The independent variable referred to the face to face mode and the teaching methodology – task-based and cooperative approaches. By exposing students to this type of methodology, the development of language skills in Spanish would be greatly enhanced in contexts of face to face teaching. The dependent variable corresponded to the increase in learning that is observed in the results obtained by the participants, when comparing the pre-test with the post-test. The *Student t* statistical test was used to establish significant differences in the results.

The quasi-experimental longitudinal study, which was conducted to test the effectiveness of a mixed methodological model, based on task-based teaching and cooperative learning techniques, yielded very favourable results. The results of two tests (pre and post) were analyzed in terms of the mean, median, mode, variance, standard deviation, percentage of variability and correlation in order to describe the behaviour of the sample and make a comparison between them.

Regarding the hypotheses, Table 1 presents the different results observed in the pre-test of the group. These are illustrated for each subject (S) of each group, by language skill (according to the test used, CXC).

Table 1

Total Store Obtained in the Pre-test (The 4 Language Skills)

S	Listening Comprehension (20%)	Reading Comprehension (20%)	Oral Production (30%)	Written Production (30%)	Total (100%)
1	16	12,5	22	23	73,5
2	9	10,5	27	22	68,5
3	12	14	23	23	72
4	18,5	16,5	27	25,5	87,5
5	13,5	14	20	24	71,5
6	13,5	10,5	23,5	20	67,5
7	10	12	18	14	54
8	11	13,5	20	20,5	65
9	16,5	15,5	28,5	21	81,5
10	15,5	10,5	25,5	20	71,5
11	12	12	25	21	70
12	14,5	18	28	24	84,5
13	11,5	15	23	20	69,5
14	7,5	10,5	19,5	19	56,5
15	10,5	15	23	21,5	70
16	11,5	9	21,5	19,5	61,5
17	11,5	15	23	20	69,5
18	16,5	16,5	24,5	22	79,5
Average	**12,83**	**13,36**	**23,44**	**21,11**	**70,75**

To determine the median, the students were distributed according to the percentage of achievement with an amplitude of 2. The calculation by the formula for linear interpolation gives a figure of 70. This means that 9 students (50% of the sample) had a score less than or equal to the median (54-70), while the remaining (50% of shows) achieved a score greater than or equal to the median (70 -87.5). In the pre-test, it can be seen that the average yield was 70.75 points out of 100. It is noted that of a total of 18 students, 10 (56% of the sample) are below the average obtained.

As for the average performance of the sample by language skill, the following results can be observed in Figure 1: (1) in relation to Listening Comprehension (item 1) the average gained is 12.83 points of a maximum of 20 (64% of achievement), (2) in terms of Reading Comprehension (item 2) is achieved by half 13.36 for a total of 20 points (67% of achievement), (3) with respect to Oral Production (item 3) the average is 23.44 of a maximum of 30 points (78% of achievement) and , (4) as it relates to Written Production (item 4) the average obtained is 21.11 of a total of 30 points (70% of achievement).
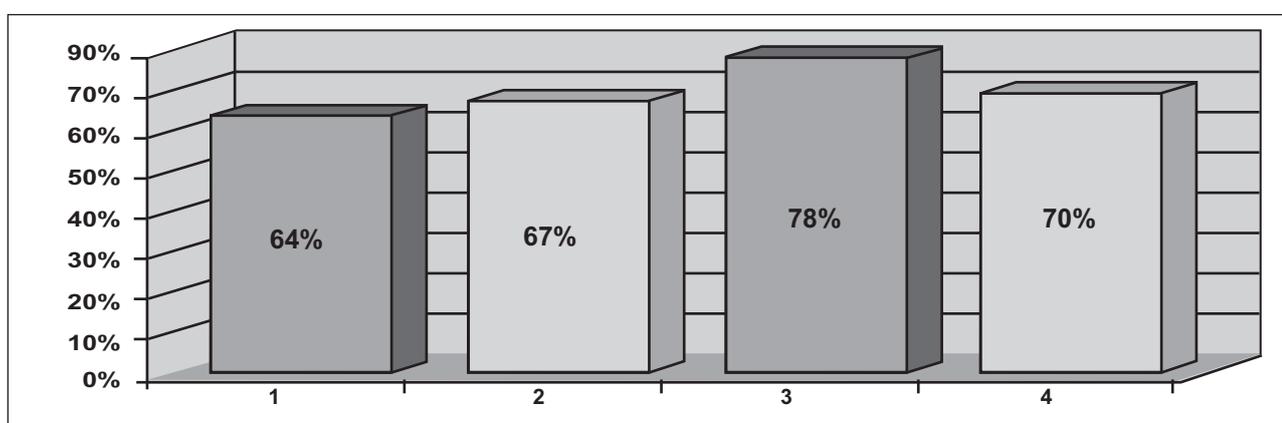

Figure 1
Average Performance by Language Skill in the Pre-test

It should be noted that the distribution of pupils in percentage ranges of achievement in the pre-test sample intervals show that 61-70% and 71-80% present the highest number of students. In other words, most of the students were between these ranges: i.e., 8 students (44% of the sample) had an average of 61-70%, while 5 students (28% of the sample) had an average of 71-80%. It can therefore be summarized that 13 students (72% of the sample) were found between 61-80%. The remainder (28% of the sample) were below this range.

Regarding the hypotheses, Table 2 illustrates both the scores obtained in the post-test by linguistic skill and the total score for each of the students in the sample (according to the test used, CXC)

Table 2

Total Store Obtained in the Post-test (The 4 Language Skills)

S	Listening Comprehension (20%)	Reading Comprehension (20%)	Oral Production (30%)	Written Production (30%)	Total (100%)
1	17,5	17	27	26	87,5
2	13	14,5	26	26	79,5
3	12	8,5	22,5	24	67
4	19	17,5	28,5	28,5	93,5
5	15,5	15	27	25	82,5
6	16,5	14	20,5	17	68
7	9	11,5	19,5	17	57
8	12	14,5	23	22,5	72
9	16,5	18,5	28,5	22	85,5
10	15	16	23	24,5	78,5
11	17,5	17,5	25,5	27	87,5
12	14	15	27	26,5	82,5
13	20	17,5	26	26	89,5
14	19	15	23	20	77
15	17,5	13	25	24	79,5
16	17	16,5	24	19	76,5
17	13,5	15,5	25,5	24,5	79
18	16	15,5	27,5	27	86
Average	**15,58**	**15,14**	**24,94**	**23,69**	**79,36**

In determining the median of the post-test, the students were distributed according to the percentage of achievement with an amplitude of 8. The calculation by the formula for linear interpolation gives a figure of 79.5. This indicates that 9 students (50% of the sample) achieved a score less than or equal to the median (57-79.5), whereas the other students (50% of shows) had a score greater than or equal to the median (79.5-93.5). The average yield in the post-test is 79.36 points out of 100. Furthermore, it appears that the 18 students, 8 (44% of the sample) were under the average: i.e., a lesser number than those presented in the pre-test.

As for the average performance of the sample by language skill, the following results are observed in Figure 2: (1) in relation to Listening Comprehension (item 1) the average gained is 15.58 points of a maximum 20 (78% of achievement), (2) in terms of Reading Comprehension (item 2) an average of 15.14 is achieved out of a total of 20 points (76% of achievement), (3) with respect to Oral Production (item 3) the average is 24.94 of a maximum of 30 points (83% of achievement), and (4) in terms of Written Production (item 4) the average obtained is 23, 69 out of 30 points (79% of achievement).
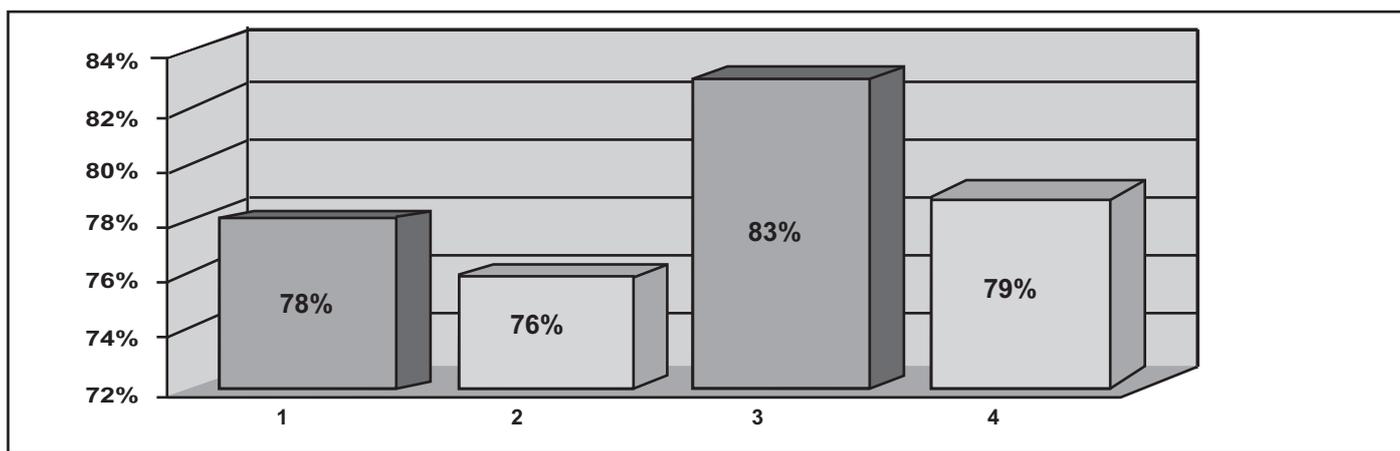
Figure 2
Average Performance by Language Skill in the Post-test

The distribution of pupils in percentage ranges of achievement in the post-test shows that the ranges of 71-80% and 81-90% present the highest number of students. In other words, most of the students were between these ranges: i.e., 7 students (39% of the sample) had an average of 71-80%, while 7 students (39% of the sample) had an average of 81-90%. It can be therefore summarized that 14 students (78% of the sample) were found between 71-90%. The remainder (22% of the sample) were below this range.

From the results in terms of the median obtained in the pre-test (70%) and the median reached in the post-test (79.5%), one can observe an increase in it by 9.5.

As it relates to the average, if we contrast the values between the pre-test and post-test the number of students that fall short of it is 6 (33% of the sample). These students are the same ones who are below the pre-test average.

As for the average yield achieved in the pre-test and in the post-test, Figure 3 shows that the average in the pre-test is 70.75% while the average obtained in the post-test is 79.36%. As you can see the results, the mean of the post-test (79.36%) exceeds that of the pre-test (70.75%) by 8.61%.
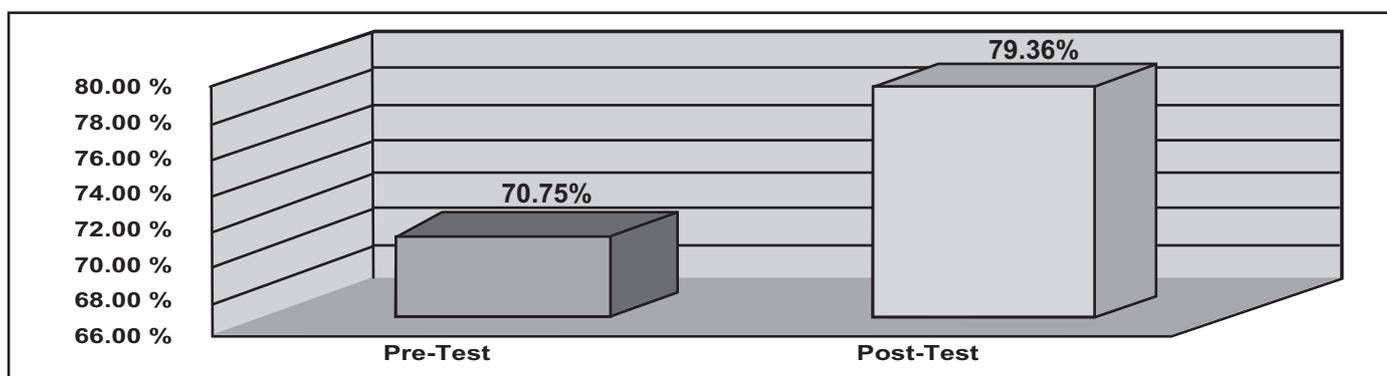

Figure 3
Averages Achieved in the Pre-test and the Post-test

The difference established between the pre-test and post-test, according to the percentage scores also can be seen in the results obtained in each of the 4 language skills. The students performed better in the post-test than in the pre-test: (1) with respect to "Listening Comprehension", the average achieved in the post-test (15.58) is above the average obtained in the pre-test (12.83) by 2.75; (2) in regard to "Reading Comprehension", the average in the post-test (15.14) exceeds the average achieved in the pre - test (13.36) by 1.78; (3) with respect to the "Oral Production", the average obtained in the post-test (24.94) exceeds the average in the pre-test (23,44) by 1.5; (4) as it relates to "Written Production", the average achieved in the post-test (23.69) is greater than the average obtained in the pre-test (21.11) by 2.58.

In Figure 4, there is an increase in the average percentage obtained in each of the four skills: Listening Comprehension (1) that is by 14% (64% to 78%), followed by Reading Comprehension (2) and Written Production (4) by 9% (from 67% to 76% and 70% to 79%, respectively), and Oral Production (3) by 5% (from 78% to 83%)
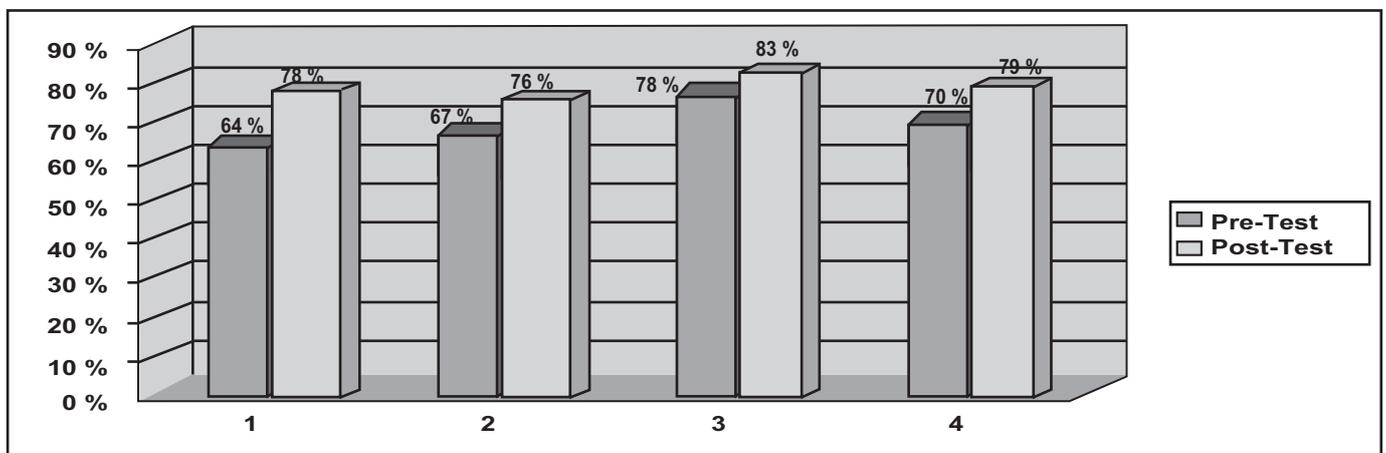

Figure 4
Difference between Performance by Language Skill in Pre-test and Post-test

Regarding the distribution of students according to the percentage of achievement, it is noted that the tendency in the pre-test to concentrate the students in the range of 61-80% changes, placing the post-test range above it (71-90%). As a result, students achieved a better performance in the post-test than in the pre-test.

To calculate the average percentage improvement in relation to the knowledge acquired by the 18 students, the difference in final percentage scores was divided (ΣD) by the number of students leaving a result of 8.61%. Nine students (50% of the sample) are above this average. 4 students (22.2% of the sample) are between 6-7%, and 5 students (27.8% of the sample) fall below these averages.

To determine whether the improvement in the learning and acquisition of a certain body of knowledge by the students was statistically significant, the difference between the average results of the pre-test and post-test was calculated using the paired *Student t* test. The purpose of this was to quantify the difference between the average of the two tests, to verify if it was significantly different and to objectively establish the correlation between the variables. In order to establish the critical value, an error margin of 1% N-1 degrees of freedom (17) was considered, which is equal to 2.567. Any value above it would allow us to decide on the effectiveness of the mixed methodology used.

With regard to the statistical analysis, it was found that two of the critical values obtained were quite high, exceeding the critical value at

1% for a one-tailed test with N-1 g.1 which is 2.567 (*Listening Comprehension 3289 p> 0.01 and Written Production 4.801 p> 0.01*). One can appreciate here a noticeable increase in these language skills. According to the above figures, we can validate the hypothesis in this investigation, indicating the success of the treatment as the values obtained are considered to be statistically significant. They can not be attributed in any way to random or to chance or external stimuli. These are due to the intervention process carried out.

In relation to the critical values obtained for Reading Comprehension and Oral Production, the statistical analysis showed that these were *2.257 p <0.01* and *2.500 p <0.01*, respectively. These did not exceed the critical value of 2.567. In accordance with the data, we can not confirm the hypothesis established of this experimental study as the values have no statistical validity. It should be made clear that the value obtained does not mean that the experiment did not influence them. The pre-test analysis demonstrated that in general the average scores achieved were quite good (Reading Comprehension -13.36 and Oral Production - 23.44). The results of the post-test scores showed that the averages went up (Reading Comprehension - 15.14 and Oral Production - 24.94). The increase was not significant and therefore a significant critical value could not be obtained.

It should be stressed that when adding the averages of each of the 4 language skills, to get the total percentage score for the initial test and final test, it became clear that the value of t was exceeded the critical value of 2567 *(5120 p> 0.01)*. Here, a noticeable increase must be valued in the analysis of the said tests. According to the above, the research hypothesis can be verified, revealing that this value is considered statistically significant. There is no doubt about the effectiveness of the mixed methodological model based on the results obtained.

Conclusion

This research has focused its attention on answering the question with regard to improving the linguistic and communicative competence through practicing the 4 language skills in Spanish as a Foreign Language in the context of TBLT.

But as the treatment period was relatively brief (18½ sessions) and also the small numbers of subjects (18), there will have to be further studies to confirm the trends that have been observed in this work.

Currently in Guyana, one of the teaching methodologies being used mostly for teaching Spanish as a FL/SL is the Communicative Approach, so this study is an important contribution to language teaching. Indeed, this research is a pioneer research in this country because to date there is no empirical evidence of this mixed methodology being tested for teaching Spanish as a Foreign or Second Language.

Undoubtedly, this research approach will enrich the area of language teaching and learning with respect to the language specified. There is no doubt that this study has a lot of importance and scope for researchers, educators and language teachers. Moreover, this mixed methodology could be successful the classrooms of secondary and tertiary institutions in those countries not yet using these new teaching methods for Spanish as a FL/SL.

Through this study it was possible to reach conclusions which contribute to the area of language teaching and learning and more specifically to the teaching of Spanish as a foreign or second language. The effectiveness of a mixed methodological model for teaching Spanish as a FL/SL for the purpose of improving the linguistic and communicative competence of a specific body of knowledge was proven.

This research may form part of the existing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of these methodological approaches emphasising the fact that the TBLT is concentrated on meaning and the development of the student's instrumental and formal knowledge.

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