

國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士在職專班碩士論文

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任務型教學活動對國小學童英語閱讀理解之成效
The Effects of Task-Based Activities on Elementary Students'
English Reading Comprehension

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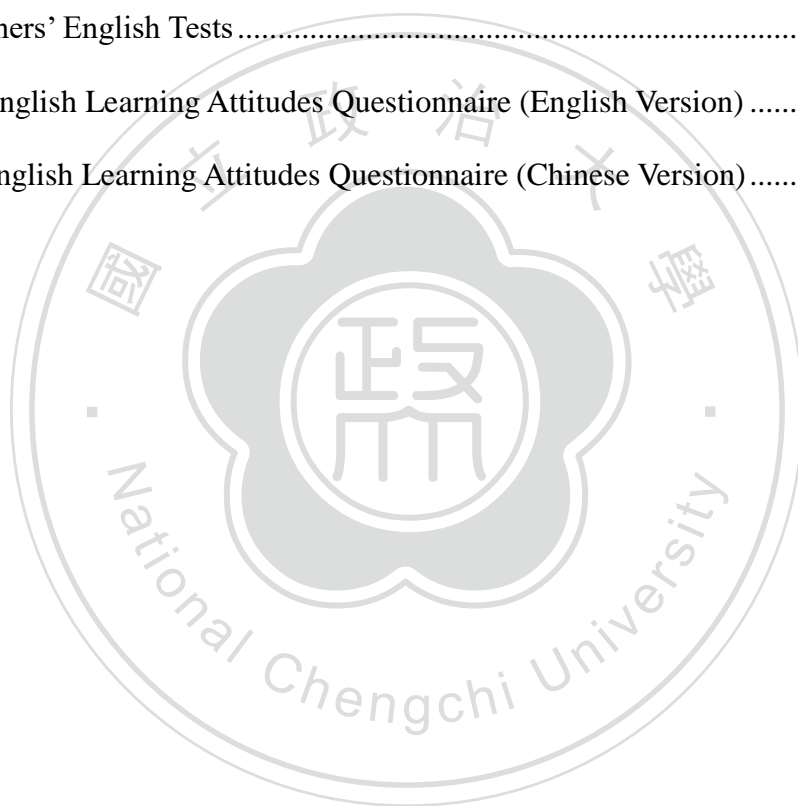
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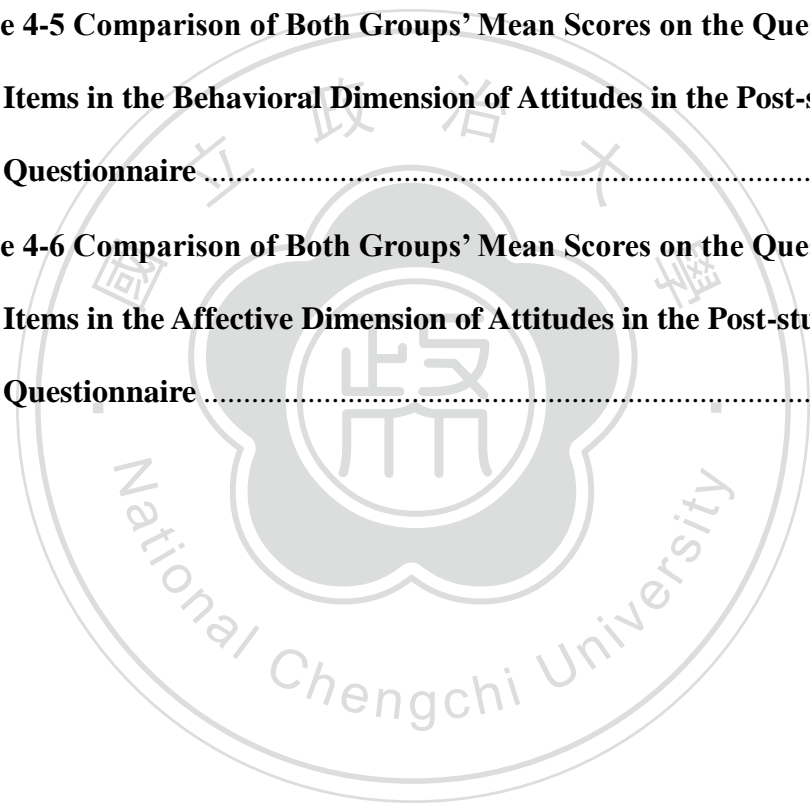
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國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士在職專班

碩士論文提要

論文名稱： 任務型教學活動對國小學童英語閱讀理解之成效

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論文提要內容：

本研究旨在探討任務型教學活動對國小學童英語閱讀理解以及學習態度的影響。本研究對象為五十位來自台北市某公立小學四年級學生。他們分為實驗組和對照組。兩組無論在人數、性別、先前正式英語課程學習經驗及實驗前的閱讀理解測驗表現和英語學習態度問卷結果皆相似。實驗組採用任務型教學而對照組實施傳統 PPP 教學。兩組學生接受每週八十分鐘的教學。經過十二週教學後，兩組學生皆實施閱讀理解測驗之後測和英語學習態度問卷之後測。所有自兩組學生蒐集到的閱讀理解測驗之分數以及學習態度問卷之後測分數皆以獨立樣本 t 檢定來進行統計分析。研究結果顯示實驗組學生和對照組學生在閱讀理解測驗及英語學習態度皆有顯著差異。接受任務型教學的實驗組學生之閱讀理解測驗成績明顯優於實施傳統 PPP 教學的對照組學生。另外，實驗組學生比對照組學生持有更正向的英語學習態度。希望此研究結果可以提供英語老師們一些如何使用任務型教學活動來增進國小學童的閱讀能力的實務上建議。最後，也提供未來的研究一些方向和建議。

Abstract

This study investigated the effects of task-based activities on elementary students' English reading comprehension and their attitudes towards English learning.

The participants were fifty fourth-grade students from a public elementary school in Taipei. They were divided into two groups. The two groups were similar regarding numbers, gender, prior experiences with formal English instruction, reading performance and English learning attitudes. The students in the experimental group received TBLT instruction while the students in the control group received PPP instruction. Both groups received 80 minutes instruction per week. After a twelve-week instruction, the post-test of the revised reading comprehension test (RRCTCYLE) and the post-study English Learning Attitudes Questionnaire (ELA) were administered to both groups. The mean scores gathered from the post-test of the RRCTCYLE test, and those of the post-study ELA questionnaire were analyzed through independent samples t-tests. The results showed the students in the experimental group performed significantly better on the post-test than the students in the control group. The experimental group also demonstrated more positive attitudes towards English learning than the control group. It is hoped that the findings of this present study could provide English teachers with some practical suggestions on how to use task-based activities to improve students' reading abilities. Last, some suggestions for future research were also offered.

Keywords: task-based teaching, reading comprehension, English learning attitudes

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to investigate the effects of task-based activities on fifty fourth-grade students' reading comprehension in a public elementary school in Taipei. There are five sections in this chapter, including the background and the motivation for the study, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the definitions of terms and an organization of the study.

Background and Motivation

Since the Ministry of Education (MOE) began to implement the General Guidelines of Grade One to Nine Curriculum of Elementary and Junior High School Education in 2001, English has been taught as one of the compulsory subjects in elementary schools. According to the Grade One to Nine Curriculum guidelines, the main goals of teaching English to elementary students in Taiwan are as follows:

- (1) To gradually build up students' abilities to communicate their ideas through the use of the four integrated skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English.
- (2) To develop students' interests in learning English.
- (3) To learn to appreciate western culture.

Based on the communication goal of the general guidelines of Grade One to Nine Curriculum, there is more emphasis on the teaching of listening and speaking skills rather than those of reading and writing to elementary school students. As a result, elementary students seem to perform better in listening and speaking tests rather than in reading and writing tests. For example, the results of the Basic

Competence Test in Taipei Elementary School held in 2009 and 2010 showed that the students who took the test obtained higher scores in listening tests than in reading and writing tests. The results suggest that elementary school English teachers need to help students improve their reading abilities, and enhance their learning of vocabulary and sentence structures as well as encourage their interests in learning English.

According to the Curriculum Guidelines of Elementary English Language Teaching and Learning (2010) of Taipei City Elementary Schools, Taipei elementary school graduates are expected to produce 320 oral production words, and to read and write 250 written production words as well as to read 65 commonly used English sentences. In reality, it is difficult for English teachers to teach all students to read English words and sentences effectively. In the elementary school where the researcher works as an English teacher, students whose average scores on paper and pencil tests, including unit quizzes, midterm and final examinations close to the average or below the average, often experience problems with reading in English. The common reading problems these students encounter when reading English include: having difficulties in repeating words but not understanding their meanings, having problems with reading and understanding the sentences, and having troubles reading dialogues or short stories in the textbooks. To help students deal with their reading difficulties and improve their reading comprehension, it is important for English teachers to teach students some basic reading strategies. It is believed that encouraging L2 learners to employ comprehension strategies with the use of text, context, and reading task can build up L2 learners' linguistic and schematic knowledge (Wallace 1992), and help L2 learners understand both spoken and written passages more effectively (Brewster, Ellis & Girard, 2002).

Given the emerging needs for improving students' English reading abilities, this current study seeks to explore the opportunities to teach reading in a more interactive and meaningful way by incorporating task-based language teaching (TBLT) activities in a textbook context (Willis, 1996, 2007).

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has been widely put into practice (Carless, 2004) in teenager or adult English classes in English as Second Language (ESL) contexts for the last decades. Nevertheless, it is still under-researched in public elementary school settings (Carless, 2003, 2004) in English as Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. In 2003, Carless discussed the factors that affected the implementation of TBLT with young children in Hong Kong (Carless, 2002, 2003), including the use of the mother tongue, classroom management and the amount of output produced in the target language (Carless, 2004; Littlewood, 2007). Few studies focused on the overall evaluation of TBLT instruction (Fan Chiang, 2005; Tseng, 2006). Some studies examined the effects of TBLT on particular aspects of language learning, for example, internet task-based learning program (Hsu, 2003), vocabulary learning (Tsai, 2007), grammar instruction (Carless, 2007) and L2 literacy development through task-based reading-to-writing instruction in a storybook context (Chou, 2007). Little research has centered on the study of using TBLT to teach a specific language skill, for example, reading skills (Astika, 2005; Schneider, 2004). Ellis (2003) argued that though most definitions made by the proponents of TBLT do not clearly state what specific language skills are employed for performing tasks; a task like 'make an airline reservation' may involve oral and written activities. Similarly, a task like 'ask and give directions' may include speaking, listening, and reading activities (Ellis, 2003), for example, asking students to read a map and find directions. Though many advocates of TBLT thought the primary focus of TBLT is on

the spoken language, Willis (2007) clarified that TBLT can be used to teach reading. Carless (2007) also suggested in his study of the suitability of TBLT for secondary schools in Hong Kong that if “an appropriate balance can be found between oral and other task modes” (p. 608), for example, reading and writing tasks, TBLT can be applied in diverse school contexts. As there is a lack of sufficient research on the effects of TBLT on elementary EFL students' reading comprehension, the researcher attempts to discover whether the use of task-based activities can improve elementary EFL students' reading comprehension as well as promote their interest in learning English.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of task-based activities on EFL elementary students' reading comprehension in a public elementary school in Taipei. To be more specific, the study attempted to find out whether the students in the experimental group who received task-based language teaching (TBLT) instruction could outperform the students in the control group who received the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) instruction. Moreover, the study examined if there was a significant difference in students' attitudes towards English learning between the experimental group and the control group. The two research questions are presented as follows:

(1) Do EFL elementary students who receive TBLT instruction perform better in reading comprehension performance than those who receive PPP instruction?

(2) Is there any significant difference in attitudes towards English learning among EFL elementary students who receive TBLT instruction and those who receive PPP instruction?

Significance of the Study

Task-based language teaching is becoming an increasingly popular teaching approach in ESL contexts nowadays, yet it is not widely used in elementary schools in Taiwan. Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP) teaching paradigm is still the main teaching approach used by most elementary English teachers in Taiwan. Though there is some research investigating the effects of Task-based instruction in Taiwan, there is a lack of research on the effects of task-based reading activities in a textbook context. It is hoped that the findings of the present study could provide English teachers with some practical ideas about how task-based activities could be used to teach reading to EFL elementary students.

Definitions of Terms

Tasks

In the present study, the term ‘task’ refers to the pedagogical tasks that are carried out in the classrooms. According to Nunan (2004), there are two types of pedagogical tasks: pedagogical task with rehearsal rationale and pedagogical tasks with activation rationale. As most of EFL elementary students do not have sufficient exposure to English outside the English classrooms, it is important for English teachers to create a supportive learning environment. According to Nunan (2004), to promote students' learning and to create opportunities for students to learn English through meaningful communications in the classrooms, teachers “must transform these real-world tasks into pedagogical tasks” (Nunan 2004, p. 19). In this study, the design of the reading activities involves the use of both types of pedagogical tasks.

Reading Comprehension

According to Roe & Smith & Burns (2005), comprehension means understanding. Reading comprehension means the understanding of a text, which requires the abilities to explain, interpret and apply the information obtained from the written text. In the present study, the reading comprehension refers to students' reading competence interpreted by the Middle-Grade Competence Indicators of Readiness stated in the Curriculum Guidelines of Elementary English Language Teaching and Learning (2010) of Taipei City Elementary Schools. Table 1.1 presents the indicators that describe the reading abilities of middle-grade students in Taipei.

Table 1-1 Middle-Grade Indicators of Readiness in Taipei Public Elementary Schools

Competence Indicators	Reading Comprehension
Reading	Refers to middle graders' reading Competence
R2-1	Being able to identify the vocabulary learned in class for middle-grade students.
R2-2	Being able to read and understand the commonly used English sentences for middle-grade students.
R2-3	Being able to identify the basic format for English writing.
R2-4	Being able to read and understand the sentences learned in class for middle graders.
R2-5	Being able to read and understand simple conversations.
R2-6	Being able to read and understand simple songs, chants and stories.
R2-7	Being able to read and understand simple children's stories.

Reading Tasks and Reading Skills

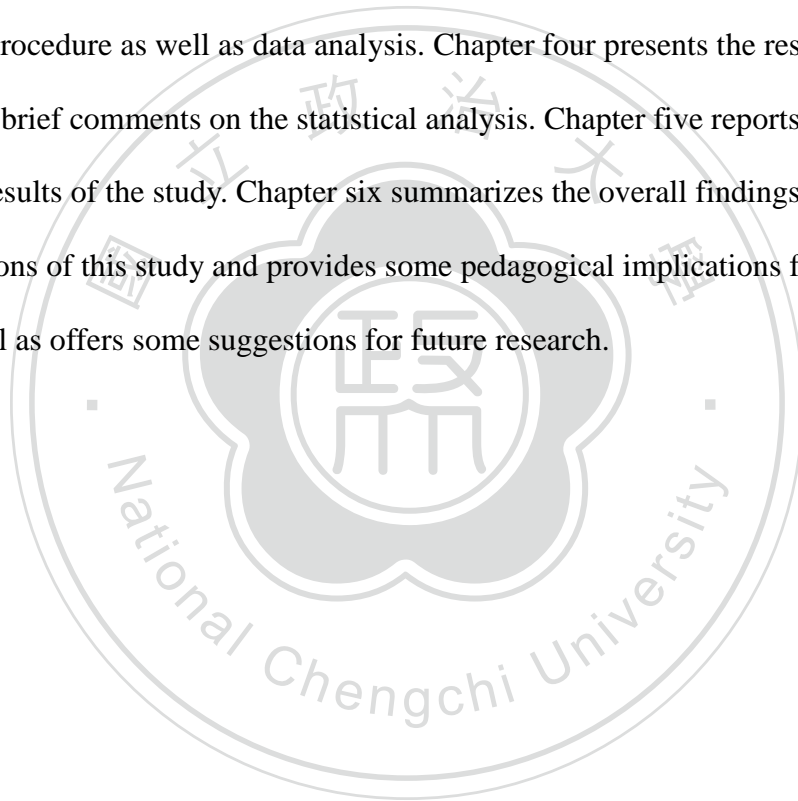
In this study, the tasks are designed based on Nunan's two pedagogical task rationales (Nunan, 2004). The design of the reading tasks involves reading skills adapted from Chu's (2003) reading objectives and skills for elementary students in Taiwan, some reading strategies adapted from Lai's (1997) typology and six types of task proposed by Willis & Willis (2007). The reading tasks and skills incorporated in the TBLT instruction are summarized and described in the following table (Table 1.2).

Table 1-2 Reading Tasks and Reading Skills Incorporated in the Present Study

Pedagogical Tasks	Reading Skills/Strategies
1. Prediction / problem solving task (Brainstorming/discussion)	Read for a purpose (i.e.: read and predict or work out a logic problem such as a maze).
2. Listing tasks (fact-finding, memory/guessing games)	Skim/preview the pictures/texts and identify the topic, the main idea, and the keywords.
3. Ordering and sorting tasks (sequencing pictures or sentences)	Scan through a text to find out specific information (odd one out games) or exchange information (information gap).
4. Matching tasks (1) understand the text: (read and match words and sentences to pictures) (2) inferring unknown words	Read actively- (1) Ask questions to remind students of what they know about the texts to understand new ideas. (2) For use at form focus stage: use context and parts of words to work out the meaning of unknown words.
5. Comparing and contrasting tasks	Integrate information-highlight or note-take, compare and do games (spot the differences).
6. Projects and creative tasks	Integrate information and do creative tasks, for example, do a weekly schedule or interview peers or tell a story.

Organization of the Study

This study comprises six chapters. Chapter One presents an introduction to the background of the study, the purpose and significance of the study and the organization of the study. Chapter Two reviews the literature related to the importance of teaching reading, reading skills and teaching approach, task-based language teaching, learning attitudes and previous studies on TBLT. Chapter Three describes the research method of this study, including the participants, the instruments, teaching materials and procedure as well as data analysis. Chapter four presents the results of this study with brief comments on the statistical analysis. Chapter five reports and discusses the results of the study. Chapter six summarizes the overall findings, points out the limitations of this study and provides some pedagogical implications for teachers as well as offers some suggestions for future research.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This present study aims to examine the effects of task-based activities on EFL elementary students' reading comprehension in a public elementary school in Taipei. This chapter reviews the literature related to the key issues addressed in this study in six sections. Section one describes the importance of teaching reading. Section two reviews the theories of reading. Section three proposes the reading skills and the teaching approach for elementary students in Taipei. Section four discusses learning attitudes. Section five introduces task-based language teaching, and the last section reviews previous studies on task-based instruction.

The Importance of Teaching Reading to L2 Young Learners

As “every aspect of life involves reading” (Roe, Smith & Burns, 2005, p. 3), being able to read is a vital life skill that one must have in order to communicate with other people, and to function effectively in today's society. However, not all of the children are aware of the importance of learning to read. Children who fail to see the benefits of being able to read are less likely to be motivated to learn. Thus, teachers should design activities that help students understand the importance of being able to read. For example, Anderson (1988) suggested the career education activity for middle-grade students. When conducting this activity, the teacher may ask students to list down the required reading skills of the occupations they are interested and invite people to speak to the class about why and how they needed reading in their jobs. While arousing students' awareness of the importance of reading and how reading relates to future success, teachers should also provide students with tasks that help them learn to read continually. However, learning to read in a foreign language has

never been an easy task for second language learners. Anderson (2003) pointed out the fact that the average second language learners' reading ability is lower than that of the first language; that explains the reasons why learning to read in English is challenging to EFL students. As reading is “an essential skill which is the most important skill to master for most of the learners of English in order to ensure success in learning” (Anderson, 2003, p. 2), reading is regarded as the primary skill for second language learners to succeed in academic contexts (Grabe, 1991). Since Taiwan has made English a required learning subject (Ediger, 2001) for elementary students, there is an increased focus on teaching children how to read in English in Taiwan. However, many elementary students are not aware of the importance of learning to read in English. When they become middle-grade students (e.g., fourth-grade) or high-grade students, they find the reading texts become difficult, and contain unfamiliar words and complex sentence structures. Some students may become demotivated because they have problems with reading in English (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). Given the emerging needs to teach reading to elementary students as well as to help students deal with their reading difficulties, English teachers should teach students basic reading skills to help them develop their reading abilities.

Theories of Reading

Reading is viewed as a cognitive activity that takes place in the human mind and is defined as “the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print” (Urquhart & Weir, 1998, p. 22). However, psycholinguists view reading as “a psycholinguistic guessing game” (Goodman, 1967, P. 127). The reading process is a “psycholinguistic process by which the reader, a language user, reconstructs, as best as he can, a message which has been encoded by a

writer as graphic display” (Goodman, 1971, p. 135). According to Goodman (1967), reading is a selective process, the reader reconstructs the meaning of a written message through the process of “sampling, predicting, testing and confirming” (cited in Coady, 1979, p. 5). Despite the readers' proficiency levels in that particular language, the readers need to actively involve themselves in the process of relating the meanings of printed texts to what the readers already know to gradually construct the entire meaning of a text. According to Coady (1979), “the most fluent readers may use a minimum sampling of text” (p. 6) while less skilled readers may need to select much more samples from the texts.

The Schema Theory

According to Carrell and Eisterhold’s (1983) schema theory, “comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader’s background knowledge and the text” (p. 553), Carrell and Eisterhold divided the schemata into two categories – formal schemata and content schemata. The formal schemata refer to the “background knowledge of the formal, rhetorical or organizational structures of different types of text” (p. 560), for example, the reader’s knowledge about the differences in the organizational forms of simple stories, poetry, and newspaper articles and so on. The content schemata refer to “the background knowledge of the content area of a text” (p. 560), for example, background knowledge about the topic or the content of a text. The notion of content schemata is similar to the background knowledge in Coady’s (1979) model of the ESL reader. In addition to these two categories, James (1987) proposed linguistic schemata, which include the linguistic knowledge of the target language such as the decoding skills for recognizing words and sentences. In conclusion, the

development of background knowledge is important to second language learners, and the familiarity with a schema will facilitate reading comprehension (Swaffar, 1988).

The Reading Models

According to Harris and Sipay (1985), the theoretical models of reading process can be categorized as bottom-up, top-down, or interactive. In the bottom-up model, reading is considered as a text-driven process in which the meaning is constructed from recognizing the printed letters and words, and then understanding phrases and sentences, and finally comprehending the entire reading passages. The bottom-up process is associated with the use of reading skills such as letter and sound correspondences, word recognition, word analysis and sentence parsing, and text comprehension skills, for example, identifying discourse linguistic relationships in the text (Barnet, 1989; Urquhart & Weir, 1998). Contrastingly, the top-down model refers to a reader-driven process, in which readers generate hypotheses or make predictions about the texts (Barnet, 1989; Urquhart & Weir, 1998). For example, the readers may use the visual cues or clues from sentences to predict what will happen next, and read the keywords that confirm their expectations. The interactive model views reading as a combination of the bottom-up and the top-down processes, and assumes that when the readers read, they process the information from the print they are reading as well as the information from their background knowledge (Roe & Smith & Burns, 2005). In the interactive process, reading is seen as an active and strategic process that allows the readers to use both of the bottom-up and the top-down processes to predicate, confirm and self-correct the means of words, sentences, and texts.

Teaching Reading to Elementary Students in Taipei

Teaching Reading Skills and Strategies

Readers comprehend a text with their existing background knowledge of the world as well as their linguistic knowledge. During the process of constructing meanings of the text, the readers use word recognition strategies and comprehension strategies to access the information supplied by the text (Roe, Smith & Burns, 2005).

However, insufficient linguistic input environment makes learning to read in English difficult for EFL elementary students. Hence, it is important for English teachers to provide students with reading instruction as well as diagnose the skill areas students experience difficulties with when they learn to read in English. Once students' reading problems are identified, teachers can design reading tasks to help students practice the missing skills. For example, if students have troubles in dealing with unfamiliar words, phrases or sentences, it is probably because students have not yet developed the strategy of guessing the meaning from the context. Teachers should then describe and model the strategy, and guide students to practice the strategy independently or cooperatively with other students (Roe & Smith & Burns, 2005) until it becomes an automatic skill.

Using a Balanced Approach to Teaching Reading

As Brewster, Elli and Girard (2002) claimed that the most effective way of teaching reading to children means using a balanced approach to teaching the bottom-up reading skills to lower-grade students and the top-down reading skills the higher-grade students. Considering that EFL elementary students do not have many opportunities to practice their reading skills outside of the classroom, in this study, the

teacher adopted the balanced approach to teaching reading to EFL elementary fourth-grade students. In other words, the teacher taught both of the top-down and the bottom-up reading skills to the students. For example, the teacher offered the students reading materials such as dialogues or stories extracted from English textbooks or picture books and used pre-reading tasks such as picture walks to introduce the topic, characters and vocabulary related to the written texts to activate students' existing background knowledge. Then, the teacher taught the bottom-up reading skills and basic reading strategies to help students read and comprehend the texts.

Learning attitudes

Allport (1935) defined attitude as “a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related” (p. 810). Based on this definition, attitudes are assumed to be private, formed and organized through individual's life experience; and have a direct impact on individual's behavior. Besides, attitudes are thought to comprise three components: affective which links with individual's feelings, cognitive which refers to individual's belief; and conative which is behavioral (Schwarz & Bohner, 2001). The affective component of attitudes, as described in Gardner's socio-educational model of second language acquisition, are the affective reactions towards learning a language. According to Gardner (1985), the affective component influences learners' motivation in language learning. Presumably, creating a rich and supportive English learning environment to promote positive learning attitudes among students may enhance students' motivation in learning English. Also, Brown (2000) claimed that the positive attitudes learners hold towards the target language group enhance the learners'

proficiency. In other words, second language learners who possess positive attitudes towards the target language, the people who speak the target language and the target language culture may make more progress in the language they are learning than those who hold negative attitudes. From this perspective, English teachers may design some cultural learning activities and materials to help students learn English as well as understand and appreciate Western culture. It is believed that the cultural learning activities can promote EFL students' positive feelings about learning English and encourage them to be more confident about their learning of English language.

Task-based Language Teaching and Learning

Definitions of 'a task'

The term 'task' is defined in many ways by the researchers (Long, 1985; Richards, Platt & Weber, 1985; Cookes, 1986; Breen, 1989; Nunan, 1989; Skehan, 1996a; Lee, 2000; Bygate, Skehan, and Swain 2001). As the concept of 'a task' is interpreted differently in the research and pedagogic literature, there seems to be no agreement on 'what a task is'. Ellis (2003) scrutinized the definitions of 'tasks', compared and analyzed their strands, and provided the following set of essential features of a task:

1. A task is a workplan.
2. A task involves a primary focus on meaning.
3. A task involves real-world processes of language use.
4. A task can involve any of the four language skills.
5. A task engages cognitive processes.
6. A task has a clearly defined communicative outcome.

(pp. 9-10)

Ellis (2009) examined the research on task-based language teaching (TBLT) and emphasized that “there is no single task-based language teaching approach” (p. 221). He explained that the advocates of TBLT including SLA researchers (Skehan, 1998a); (Ellis, 2003), and teacher educators (Prabhu 1987; Willis 1996; Nunan 2004) discuss the concept of ‘a task’ and ‘what consists of a task’ from different perspectives. Accordingly, they describe the design and the use of tasks based on various underlying principles. After reviewing the related research, Ellis (2009) proposed the following four criteria for considering a language teaching activity to be a task based on the six essential features of a task he suggested in 2003.

1. The primary focus should be on ‘meaning’.
2. There should be some kind of ‘gap’.
3. Learners should largely have to rely on their own resources.
4. There is a clearly defined outcome other than the use of language.

(Ellis, 2009, p. 223)

According to Ellis (2009), the above four criteria can be used to differentiate ‘a task’ from a teaching activity. For example, “a situational grammar exercise” (p. 224) may look similar to a task, but it is not a task. The focus of the grammar exercise is on the form, not the meaning, and the purpose of the exercise is to have learners practice the use of accurate linguistic forms.

As it comes to the design and implementation of tasks with children, Cameron (2001) pointed out the following features of tasks.

1. Tasks have ‘coherence and unity for learners’. When teachers introduce tasks to students, each step of the task, starting from the topic, activity to the outcome of the

task, must be consistent and clear to students. Coherent and clear explanations of the task procedure help students understand what they will be doing and how to do it.

2. The meaning and purpose of doing a task must be clearly explained to children.

Knowing the reason for doing a task can engage students in their learning.

3. The language-learning goals must be explicitly explained to children. Let students know that there are a beginning and an end in a task.

To help children conduct a task smoothly, teachers need to keep these features in mind, and carefully introduce the task and the task procedure to children.

As Ellis (2000) claimed, tasks are defined and used differently in different contexts. Carless (2007) suggested that tasks as well as task-based language teaching should be carefully defined and applied in public school contexts. As this study was conducted in an EFL public elementary school context where students rarely had opportunities to use English outside of the classroom, the present study adopted Nunan's (1989) definition of a task which considers 'a task' a 'piece of classroom work.' Nunan (1989) defined the task as:

A piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right. (p. 10)

More specifically, this study followed Nunan's definitions of pedagogical tasks. Pedagogical tasks are conducted in the language classrooms; they are different from the ordinary classroom activities and exercises of which the main focuses are the

practice of the language form. According to Nunan (2004), pedagogical tasks especially the ones with activation rational encourage students to activate as well as use their linguistic knowledge to communicate with others, the “communicative involvement in this kind of pedagogical tasks is the necessary and sufficient condition for successful second language acquisition” (p. 21).

Theories of Task-based Language Teaching and Learning

As Skehan (1998) claimed that “meaning is primary” in TBLT approach, language is viewed as a means of making meaning, not a set of displayed forms. Language is introduced to learners based on three models of language - structural, functional and interactional models, which underlie the planning of task-based instruction (Richard, 2001). For example, Skehan (1998) described language as ‘less-to-more’ complex in terms of the language structure and employed ‘structural criteria’ for deciding the linguistic complexity of tasks. Foster and Skehan (1996) proposed a three-way functional distinction of tasks including personal, narrative and decision-making tasks. Pica (1994) classified the interactional model into interactional activity and communicative goal.

It is believed that task-based language teaching (TBLT) is linked to the above language models, TBLT is motivated by a theory of learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) and TBLT draws on the nature of a language. For instance, Skehan’s view of the linguistic complexity and the function of language help us understand why the design of ‘tasks’ is sequenced from less-to-more difficult in a task-based syllabus, and why TBLT emphasizes the use of purposeful tasks which reflects learners’ needs in real life.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) summarized the learning principles of TBLT as follows: ‘Tasks’ play a very important role in the language acquisition process. ‘Tasks’ provide adequate opportunities for both input and output requirements, especially the process of “negotiation of meaning” (p. 228). When learners try to negotiate meanings, they monitor their use of the language and modify their language accordingly. This view explains why some ‘tasks’ are designed to facilitate the use and learning of particular aspects of language. Besides, TBLT is based on the assumption that language learners can learn better by working with other learners to complete a task. It is believed that the use of authentic language; and the interaction with others which occurs during the process can motivate learners to learn and enhance their language learning process (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Task-Based Language Teaching as an Approach

According to Richards and Rogers (2001), task-based language teaching refers to an approach, which considers ‘task’ as a central unit for planning and teaching. Nunan (2004) described the relationship between TBLT and CLT as follows: Communicative language teaching (CLT) is a broad and philosophical approach to the language curriculum, and that task-based language and teaching (TBLT) puts it into practice. While CLT is considered as a more general and theoretical teaching approach which emphasizes the importance of interaction and communication in language learning, TBLT realizes it and puts it to good use in terms of syllabus design and teaching method.

Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001) pointed out that “definitions of a task will need to differ according to the purposes for which tasks are used” (p. 11). Accordingly, the design of tasks will also need to be adjusted to achieve the meaning and the

purposes of the tasks. In a similar vein, Ellis (2009) claimed that “there is no single way of doing TBLT” (p. 224). He further pointed out the following important concepts for doing task-based language teaching.

1. Tasks can be unfocused; unfocused tasks are designed to ask learners to use the target language to communicate in general situations. Tasks can also be focused; focused tasks are designed to ask learners to use some specific linguistic forms such as particular sentence patterns to communicate with others. When conducting a task whether it is unfocused or focused, the learners should know that the main purpose of the learning activity is to get the meanings of messages across to obtain or convey some information or to express their ideas. The learners have to use their linguistic resources such as their target language skills and their non-linguistic resources such as body language to complete the activity and to achieve the outcome.

2. The task used in task-supported language teaching involves a presentation-practice-production teaching procedure and incorporates a ‘task’ at the final production stage. Ellis (2009) viewed this type of task a “situational grammar exercise” (P. 224), which is used to help learners reinforce the language patterns they have learned. Depending on how this kind of task-based language teaching is designed and operated, as long as it can engage learners in the use of the target language, it still has its place in language teaching. According to Littlewood (1981), the focus on form activities such as a situational grammar exercise provides learners with opportunities to develop their language skills and learning strategies so as to enable them to use the target language. Thus, there should be a need for incorporating the focus on form activities in TBLT. As Nunan (2004) claimed that “learners should not be expected to generate language that has not been made accessible to them in

some way” (p. 22); the use of focus on form activities can be beneficial to language beginners.

3. Tasks can be input-providing such as listening and reading tasks. Tasks can also be output-providing such as speaking and writing tasks. In other words, tasks can be used to practice any of the four language skills.

4. A task-based lesson consists of the pre-task phase, main task phase and the post-task phase, and only the main task phase is the must-have part of the lesson.

5. Tasks can be carried out in a whole-class context, in pairs, in groups, or individually.

In conclusion, as task-based language teaching is derived from the theories of communicative language teaching, it explains why a number of TBLT research is focused on oral practice such as speaking skill. Though many proponents of TBLT assumed that TBLT focuses almost entirely on the spoken language, Willis (2007) argued that TBLT could also be used to teach reading and provide valuable writing practice. In recent years, TBLT has been implemented in many places in East Asia such as Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan and Mainland China. TBLT researchers brought up the issues that affect the implementation of TBLT (Carless, 2004; Lee, 2005) and addressed the needs for adaptation of TBLT (Littlewood, 2007; Carless, 2007). For example, Carless (2007) proposed “a flexible situated version of task-based teaching” (p. 595) for school contexts. He suggested that the adaption of TBLT should also include: “clarifying or enhancing the role of grammar instruction; integrating tasks with the requirements of examinations; and emphasizing reading and writing tasks in addition to oral ones” (p. 594). Carless (2007) considered this adaption of TBLT a weak version of task-based teaching and argued that this kind of

context-sensitive approach might be most suitable for implementing TBLT in school contexts.

Classifications of Tasks

Richards and Rogers (2001) pointed out the fact that there are various views on ‘what constitutes a task’; accordingly, there are different ways to classify tasks. The following section presents some classifications of tasks that were proposed by the researchers or teacher educators of task-based teaching and learning.

Tasks Classified Based on the Analysis of Communicative Needs

(1) Prabhu (1987)

In the famous Bangalore project, Prabhu (1987) defined task as “an activity, which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process” (p. 17). Based on this definition, Prabhu claimed that it was possible to teach language through communication, and identified three types of tasks from a pedagogical perception:

1. Information-gap activity, which requires the learners to exchange information to complete a task.
2. Reasoning-gap activity, which requires learners to infer and reason through the processes of asking and giving information.
3. Opinion-gap activity, which requires learners to express and applies their attitudes or idea.

(2) Nunan (1989)

Nunan (1989) suggested that the following two types of tasks might be considered when designing a syllabus for TBLT:

1. Real-world tasks refer to tasks that are designed to resemble real life situations.

Having students practice real-world tasks in the target language may seem challenging for students, yet this kind of tasks can be interesting and useful because they are related to students' real life experience, for example, using the telephone.

2. Pedagogical tasks are designed based on the following two rationales.

(a) Pedagogical tasks with rehearsal rationale refer to tasks that relate to the things people will do in real world. For example, the teacher may guide the students how to write a resume and talk about it with a partner. This kind of task can help students rehearse the important thing they will need to do when finding a job in the real world.

(b) Pedagogical tasks with activation rationale refer to tasks that may not directly relate to what people do in their daily life. For example, having students do role plays or information gap can stimulate students' emerging language skills, and encourage students to make use of their language resources including language functions and structures in an integrated and creative way (Nunan, 2004).

Tasks Classified Based On the Cognitive Process

Willis & Willis (2007)

According to Willis and Willis (1996) a task is an activity “where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to

achieve an outcome” (p. 23). Task-based lessons follow a sequence of tasks that have different attributes and purposes, yet these tasks relate to one another (Willis & Willis, 2007), and are designed to encourage students to process language for meaning. Willis & Willis (2007) classified the following tasks according to cognitive processes.

(1) Listing tasks, for examples, brainstorming, fact-finding, and games based on listing such as quizzes, memory and guessing games.

(2) Ordering and sorting tasks, for examples, sequencing, ranking ordering and classifying and games based on classified sets such as ‘Odd word out’.

(3) Matching tasks, for example, listen and match or read and match activities such as labeling objects, matching words and sentences to pictures and so on.

(4) Comparing and contrasting tasks. For examples, games finding similarities and differences.

(5) Problem-solving tasks, for example, making a prediction or working out a logic problem.

(6) Projects and creative tasks, for examples, creating posters or editing a newspaper, doing a survey or interviewing and so on.

(7) Sharing personal experiences, for examples, storytelling, anecdotes, and reminiscence.

Willis & Willis (2007) claimed that cognitive classification could help teachers effectively generate a set of different types of task for one specific topic. Cognitive classification could also provide students with opportunities to learn vocabulary about the topic, to explore the topic from different angles, to express their ideas using the topic vocabulary, and to practice the cognitive skills.

Tasks Classified According to Strategies-based Typology

(1) Grellet (1981)

In addition to classifying tasks based on the analysis of communicative purposes (Prabhu, 1987; Nunan, 2004) or cognitive process (Willis & Willis, 2007), grouping tasks according to the strategies underpinning them is an alternative way to categorize tasks (Nunan, 2004). Grellet (1981) proposed the following three types of strategies for developing reading skills: sensitizing such as making inferences, improving reading speed and from skimming to scanning. As Nunan (2004) pointed out that classroom tasks such as “ordering a sequence of pictures, comparing texts and pictures, matching and using illustrations” (p. 62), exploit these reading strategies.

(2) Lai (1997)

Lai (1997) claimed that it could help second language learners read faster and improve their understanding of written texts through the process of matching strategies, text, and purposes (Lai, 1997). Thus, when teaching reading to EFL students, teachers can set a specific purpose for reading a text, design a task that uses the strategy that matches the purpose, and gradually guides students how to read for meaning. Lai (1997) proposed a set of twenty-one strategies with clear explanations. The following table (Table 2.1) presents fourteen of the twenty-one strategies (as cited in Nunan, 2004, pp. 62-63) adapted and revised from Lai's typology.

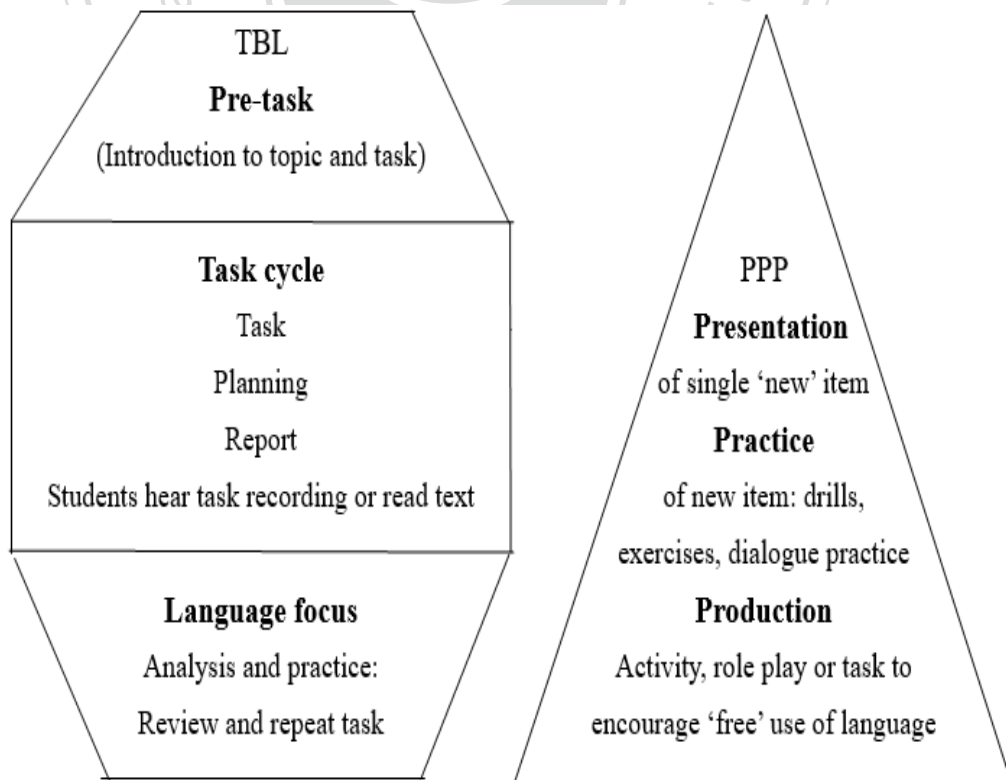
Table 2-1 Reading strategies, Lai (1997)

Strategy	Comment
1. Having a purpose	Have a clear purpose for reading a text.
2. Previewing	Conduct a quick survey of the text to identify the topic, the main idea, and the organization of the text.
3. Skimming	Look quickly through the text to get a general idea of what it is about.
4. Scanning	Look quickly through a text to locate specific information.
6. Predicting	Anticipate what is to come.
8. Reading actively	Ask questions and then reading for answers.
9. Inferring	Identify ideas that are not explicitly stated.
10. Inferring unknown vocabulary	Use the contexts as well as parts of words to work out the meaning of unknown words.
11. Using background knowledge	Use what one already knows to understand new ideas.
12. Integrating information	Track ideas that are developed across the text through techniques such as highlighting and note-taking.
13. Reviewing	Look back over a text and summarizing it.
14. Reading to present	Understand the text fully and then presenting it to others.

The Framework of Task-Based Language Teaching

The commonly used teaching paradigm – presentation, practice, and production (PPP) begins a lesson with the presentation of discrete language items, and follows by some controlled exercises such as drills to help students practice target vocabulary or sentences, and offers freer practice such as a role play at the final production stage. Unlike PPP, the task-based language teaching (TBLT) paradigm begins a lesson by offering students a holistic language experience, engaging students in using the target language they have learned previously to carry out a communication task. The lesson follows by a sequence of tasks in task cycle stage and helps students analyze the language to help them learn more effectively at the language focus stage. The following figure (Figure 2.1) presents the teaching procedures and classroom activities of a PPP lesson and those of a TBL lesson for comparison.

Figure 2-1 Comparison of TBL and PPP (adapted from Willis, 1996, p. 135)



“A PPP cycle leads from accuracy to fluency; a TBL cycle leads from fluency to accuracy (combined with fluency)” (Willis, 1996, p. 137).

According to Willis (1996), the design of TBLT framework includes three stages: pre-task, task cycle and language focus, and these are outlined and explained as follows:

(1) **Pre-task:** The teacher introduces the topic and task, and guides students to step-by-step complete a similar task to one that they will do later in groups or individually. At this stage, teacher-class tasks such as picture talks take place to activate students’ prior knowledge, and talk about the title, keywords or phrases.

(2) **Task Cycle:** **Task** → **Planning** → **Report**

(a) **Task:** The teacher assigns a task and asks students to start working on it in pairs or groups. Students are encouraged to use the target language to express their ideas; this may be in response to reading a text. The teacher helps with meanings of key words and phrases if asked; the teacher monitors students from a distance.

(b) **Planning:** Students discuss in groups about ways to carry out the tasks, and prepare to report their results to the whole class. The process of discussing how they complete a task and what they discover in groups enhances students-students interactions and promotes peer learning.

(c) **Report:** Students in groups present their final reports to the class, or exchange written reports, and compare results. To engage the students in the learning process, the teacher may set a purpose for others to listen. Normally, the teacher will make comments on the content of students' reports.

(3) **Language focus** –language analysis and practice: The teacher sets some language-focused tasks, and guides students to discuss and examine the text or transcript of recording as well as to practice new words, phrases and sentence patterns identified, either during or after the language-focus tasks.

Willis (1996) explained that this framework provides three conditions for language learning: exposure, use, and motivation” (p.40). The three conditions allow learners to learn from a variety of topics related to real-life situations. The scaffolding learning process provides students with supporting language forms and opportunities for them to recycle language and thus makes students feel secure about their learning.

The Overview of Previous Research on TBLT

Carless (2002) conducted a detailed qualitative case study of three teachers in different schools implementing a task-based innovation with children age between 6 and 7 in Hong Kong elementary schools. He pointed out several factors that influenced the results of the implementation, including the use of mother tongue, classroom management, and the extent of pupil involvement. Carless conducted a similar research in 2003 and discussed six factors that affected the implementation of communicative tasks in their classroom, including teacher's beliefs, teacher's understandings, the syllabus time available, the textbook and the topic, preparation and the available resources, and the language proficiency of the students. He proposed a tentative exploratory model of factors influencing the classroom implementation of TBLT for Hong Kong primary schools and hoped the framework might provide teachers and researchers some insight. Carless (2007) conducted another study and discussed the suitability of TBLT for secondary schools in Hong Kong. He constructed semi-structured interviews with eleven secondary school teachers and ten

teacher educators. He concluded from his interviews with the teachers and educators that the weak form of TBLT, which he called “situated task-based approach” (p. 604) is a more flexible but suitable method for secondary students in Hong Kong.

Hsu (2003) explored the impact of English task-based activities through internet geographic knowledge on the development of six-grade students' reading and writing skills. The experiment group participated in the Internet English task-based activities of Geogame conducted in the computer classroom for five months while the control group took the traditional course in the classroom. The results of Hsu's study showed that the students actively participated in the Internet task-based program performed better in English reading and writing tests than those taught in the traditional way. The results of this study also indicated that the use of task-based activities and Internet learning program could enhance students' learning attitudes.

Fan Chiang (2005) investigated the effectiveness of implementing task-based instruction with third-grade students in Taiwan and discussed in which aspects of learning students benefited most from TBLT instruction. The results of her study revealed that both of the experimental group and the control group improved after the instruction. Furthermore, the students' responses to questionnaires showed that TBLT enhanced their motivation and attitudes toward learning English. This study concluded that time limitation, classroom discipline, and lack of task-based teaching materials were the factors that affected the implementation of TBLT.

Tseng (2006) conducted a similar research with third-grade students in Taiwan. The results of Tseng's study showed that TBLT had a positive impact on high achievers' four-skill performance, and low achievers' speaking performance. Besides,

most students in the experimental group agreed that TBLT enhanced their emotional development and social skills.

Chen (2006) and Chao (2006) studied the impact of L2 literacy development through task-based reading-to-writing instruction in storybook contexts. These two studies focused on using storybooks to teach students vocabulary and to write a summary of a story. The results of these two studies showed that reading short stories could enlarge students' vocabulary size, the use of English writing tasks could improve students' reading efficiency and the use of reading tasks such as watching text-related film could enhance students' reading comprehension (Chen, 2006; Chao, 2007). Furthermore, the results indicated that the task-based reading-to-writing instruction could improve students' attitudes and motivate them to learn English.

In brief, there are several studies on the implementation of TBLT in Taiwan. The results of previous studies showed that TBLT had positive effects on students' learning of English language. A recent study carried out in Iran claimed that TBLT could effectively improve EFL young learners' reading skills (Keyvanfar & Modarresi, 2009). Another study conducted in Iran also showed that TBLT could enhance EFL adult learners' reading comprehension (Nahavandi, 2011). As these two studies were implemented in private institutions, there is a lack of empirical study on the effects of TBLT on EFL public school students' reading comprehension. Thus, this study attempts to discover whether the use of task-based learning activities can improve EFL public elementary school students' reading comprehension and their learning attitudes.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study investigated the effects of task-based instruction on EFL elementary fourth-grade students' reading comprehension and their learning attitudes by addressing the following questions:

- (1) Do elementary EFL students who receive TBLT instruction perform better in reading comprehension performance than those who receive PPP instruction?
- (2) Is there any significant difference in attitudes towards English learning among EFL elementary students who receive TBLT instruction and those who receive PPP instruction?

This chapter presents the research design of this study, including the following five sections: Section one describes the characteristics of the participants. Section two introduces the instruments employed in this study. Section three illustrates the procedure of this study. Section four elucidates the teaching process. Section five explains the quantitative methods used for analyzing the data.

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of fifty fourth-grade students from two classes at a public elementary school in Taipei. There were 25 students (13 boys and 12 girls) in each class. The participants were placed in a normal S-type distribution and assigned to their current classes based on their overall test performance in their first and second years' study at this school. They have received two periods, total 80 minutes, of English instruction per week at school for three years since they were first graders. The two classes were similar to each other regarding numbers, gender and

prior experiences with formal English instruction; they were selected as the participants of the study for two reasons. First, the analytical results of the pretest showed that the students in these two classes had more or less the same reading performance. Second, the results of the pre-study English learning attitudes questionnaire indicated that the students in the two classes had similar attitudes towards English learning.

The following procedures describe the processes for choosing the participants. In this study, the Revised Reading Comprehension Test of Cambridge Young Learners' English (RRCTCLYL) Test (See Appendix A) and The English Learning Attitudes (ELA) Questionnaire were used as the tools for selecting the participants.

At the beginning of the study, the pretest of the RRCTCLYL test was given to four fourth grade classes. The scores of the four classes were calculated and compared. The mean scores of two classes (hereafter referred to Class A and Class B) were close. To examine if there was any significant difference in the pretest between Class A and Class B, an independent samples t-test was employed to analyze the mean scores. As shown in Table 3.1, the mean score of Class A was 80.96 (N=25) with a standard deviation of 13.06, and that of Class B was 79.92 (N=25) with a standard deviation of 15.01. The t-test for equality of means ($t=0.261$, $p=0.795>0.05$) indicated that there was no significant difference between the two classes. In other words, Class A and Class B had similar performance in reading comprehension before the instruction.

Table 3-1 Comparison of Mean Scores on the Pretest of the Reading Comprehension Test (RRCTCYLE) between Class A and Class B

Group	Number	Mean	S.D.	t	p
Class A	25	80.96	13.06	0.261	0.795
Class B	25	79.92	15.01		

* $p < 0.05$

In addition to the pretest of the RRCTCLYL test, the pre-study ELA questionnaire was administered to four fourth-grade classes. The data gathered from the pre-study ELA questionnaire were computed and analyzed. Among the four classes, the mean scores of Class A and Class B were relatively close. To discover whether there was any significant difference in English learning attitudes between Class A and Class B, an independent samples t-test was utilized to compare the mean scores. As presented in Table 3.2, the mean total score of the pre-study ELA questionnaire of Class A was higher than that of Class B. Nevertheless, the t-test for equality of means ($t=1.428$, $p=0.16 > 0.05$) showed that there was no significant difference in attitudes towards English learning between the two classes.

Table 3-2 Comparison of Mean Scores of on Pre-study Questionnaire between Class A and Class B

Group	Number	Mean	S.D.	t	p
Class A	25	90.00	10.48	1.428	0.16
Class B	25	85.48	11.85		

* $p < 0.05$

Based on the statistical results showed in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2, there were no significant differences in the pretest of the RRCTCLYL test and the pre-study ELA questionnaire between Class A and Class B. That is to say, Class A and Class B had similar reading performance and English learning attitudes before the instruction. Accordingly, Class A was randomly assigned to the control group, and Class B to the experimental group. The control group was taught in the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) instruction while the experimental group received Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) instruction.

Instruments

The instruments employed in this study included the Revised Reading Comprehension Test (RRCTCLYL) adapted from the Cambridge Young Learners' English Tests (CYLE), the English Learning Attitudes Questionnaire (ELA) and the teaching materials.

The Revised Reading Comprehension Test (RRCTCYLE)

The Revised Reading Comprehension Test (RRCTCYLE) adapted and revised from the Reading and Writing Component of Cambridge Young Learners' English Tests (CYLE) was used as the pretest to test the participants' reading comprehension before the study. This test also served as the instrument for selecting the participants of the present study and the posttest for evaluating the participants' reading comprehension after the twelve-week TBLT instruction.

The Starters Level of Cambridge Young Learners' English Tests (CYLE) was chosen as the basis for designing the reading comprehension test for three reasons. First, the CYLE tests are worldwide standardized examinations, held by University of

Cambridge Examinations for Speakers of Other Languages. Second, CYLE examinations are designed to test English performance of elementary school students adapted the reading and writing component of Starters Level of the CYLE tests for this study. The researcher replaced five spelling test items in the writing section with five reading test items. The original writing section required students to look at the picture clues and unscramble letters into words. The revised reading section required students to look at the picture clues, read and match five sentences to their corresponding pictures (see Appendix B) to test students' ability in understanding sentences and identifying the keywords.

The face validity (see Appendix C) of the Revised Reading Comprehension Test of Cambridge Young Learners' English Tests (RRCTCYLE) was examined by some experts and experienced elementary English teachers in Taipei. Few minor changes were made accordingly, for example, the researcher replaced the pictures that might cause ambiguity. To ensure the internal reliability of this reading comprehension test, the researcher gave this reading comprehension test to another 52 fourth-grade students who were taught by another English teacher at the same elementary school. The researcher conducted a statistical analysis of the internal consistency reliability of the RRCTCYLE test through Cronbach's alpha using SPSS. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), in most social science research situations, a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient (see Table 3.3) for this reading test was .835 which was acceptable.

Table 3-3 Internal Consistency Reliability of the RRCTCYLE Test

Cronbach's α Value	Standardized Cronbach's Value	N
.835	.870	52

The revised reading Comprehension Test of Cambridge Young Learners' English Tests (RRCTCYLE) included five parts; the specification of this test was summarized and shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3-4 The Specification of the RRCTCYLE Test

Part	Main skill focus	Item type	Items
1	Reading for prediction with pictures cues and identifying the keywords.	Indicate true with a tick or false with a cross	5
2	Reading for understanding meanings of the sentences and specific information (lexis, number, local and grammar)	Write 'Yes/No' next to the sentences	5
3	Reading for understanding meanings of the sentences and identifying the keywords.	Read and match the sentences to the pictures	5
4	Reading for prediction with pictures cues, identifying the keywords and guessing what the title of the story is.	Gap-filling (with picture clues) one-word answers	5
5	Reading for prediction with pictures clues, guessing the meaning of a story.	Read and circle the correct answers	5

The English Learning Attitudes Questionnaire (ELA)

To find out the participants' attitudes towards English learning before and after the instruction, the researcher adopted the English Learning Attitudes (ELA) questionnaire (see Appendix E) in this study. The ELA questionnaire was developed by Li (1999) based on the assumption that attitudes consist of three components:

cognitive, behavioral and affective components. The three components of attitudes may interact (Gagne, 1985) and the interactions among the components will influence learners' decisions about their learning (Chu, 2003). The ELA questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section one was designed to obtain background information about the students. Section two was the formal ELA questionnaire; containing 25 questions that were categorized into cognitive, behavioral and affective dimensions (see Table 3.5).

Table 3-5 Three Dimensions of the English Learning Attitudes Questionnaire

Dimensions	Definition	Positive	Negative	Item Numbers
Cognitive	thought about the functional value of learning English	1,2,3,4,5,8	6, 7	8
Behavioral	willingness to learn and participate in classroom activities	9,10,11,12,13 14,15,16,17,18		10
Affective	feelings about learning English	19, 20, 21, 22, 25	23,24	7

The 25 questions of the ELA questionnaire were measured by a four-point Likert Scale with four items in each question. The total score of the ELA questionnaire ranged from 25 to 100 points. The questions were answered by degrees of participants' attitudes towards English learning - "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," "strongly disagree." The responses to the positively worded questions were scored 4 points-"strongly agree," 3 points-"agree," 2 points-"disagree," 1 point -"strongly disagree" respectively. Contrastingly, the responses to the negatively worded questions, including items 6, 7, 23 and 24, were scored 1 point-"strongly

agree,” 2 points “agree,” 3 points “disagree,” and 4 points “strongly disagree,” respectively.

It is believed that the higher total scores the participants obtain, the more positive attitude they are likely to have. The reliability and the validity of the ELA questionnaire were already tested in Li’s (1999) research. However, before the experiment, the face validity of the ELA questionnaire was examined by some experts and experienced English teachers. In addition to that, a pilot test of the ELA questionnaire was given to 52 fourth-grade students who were taught by another English teacher at the same elementary school. Each of the 25 questions was read and explained to make sure the statements of the questions were comprehensible to the students.

Teaching Materials

This study was conducted in a public elementary school to examine the effects of incorporating task-based activities into a textbook context. The main teaching materials (see Table 3.6) included the textbook, the workbook and the e-book provided by the publisher. In addition, some songs, short stories, and reading worksheets were used as supplementary teaching materials.

Table 3-6 Teaching Materials: Sentences and Stories Selected from the Textbook

Topic	Read Sentences and Stories	Other Reading Materials
I Feel Sad (Pinocchio)	1. You look sad. I feel great. I don't feel lonely. 2. Revised Story of Pinocchio	1. You Look Terrible! 2. Look and describe feelings. (Self-designed worksheet)
What Day Is Today? (Candy House)	1. What day is today? It's Sunday. Is today Saturday? Yes, it is. No, it isn't. It's Friday. 2. Story - Lost in the dark.	1. Great! Today Is Friday! 2. Busy Everyday (song). (Self-designed worksheet)
A Girl Is Talking (Candy House)	1. Who is talking? A girl is talking. 2. Story – In the Candy House	Who Is Talking?
What Does She Do in the Morning? (Candy House)	1. What does he/she do at night? He / She cooks at night. 2. Story – Please Help My Sister.	Read daily activities. (Self-designed worksheet)

Procedure

The Revised Reading Comprehension Test of Cambridge Young Learners' English Tests (RRCTCYLE) and the English Learning Attitudes Questionnaire (ELA) were the two major instruments employed in this study. To ensure the face validity of the RRCTCYLE test and that of the ELA questionnaire, the test and the questionnaire were examined by some experts and experienced elementary English teachers before the experiment. The RRCTCYLE test was served as the tool for selecting the participants as well as the pretest to evaluate the participants' general reading

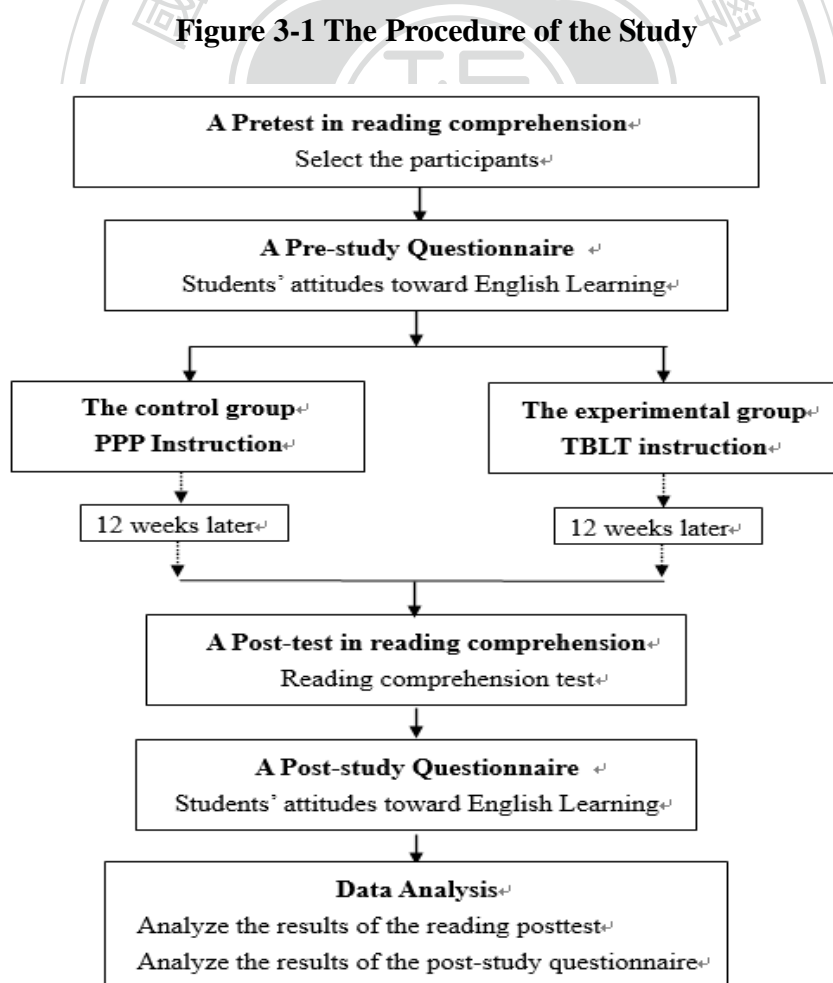
performance. Thus, before the experiment, the RRCTCYLE test was given to 52 fourth grade students taught by another English teacher as a pilot test. The results of the test were investigated through the use of SPSS to ensure the internal reliability of the RRCTCYLE test. Similarly, the English Learning Attitudes Questionnaire (ELA) was used as another tool for choosing the participants; it was also employed as the pre-study questionnaire to explore the participants' attitudes' towards English learning before the experiment. Both of the internal reliability and the validity of the ELA questionnaire were examined in Li's (1999) study. However, a pilot test of the ELA questionnaire was conducted to avoid any possible confusion caused by the misunderstandings of the statements. Before the instruction, the ELA questionnaire was administered to the same group of 52 students as the pilot test to clarify the wordings and the meanings of the 25 questions.

Before the teaching instruction, two fourth-grade classes of students were selected as the participants. The participants were divided into two groups. The two groups were similar to each other regarding numbers, gender and prior experiences with formal English instruction. Besides, the statistical analysis of the results of the pre-test of RRCTCYLE and that of the pre-study English Learning Attitudes Questionnaire (ELA) indicated that the participants in the two groups had similar reading performance and learning attitudes towards English.

The teaching instruction consisted of two different sets of teaching plans. The lesson plan for task-based learning was prepared for the experimental group while the PPP lesson plan was designed for the control group. The teaching instruction lasted for twelve weeks; during this period, both groups received 80-minute English instruction per week and were taught using the same textbook and workbook. The

teacher incorporated task-based reading activities into the textbook for the experimental group following the task-based learning cycle. The teacher gave reading exercises to the control group following the teaching procedure of PPP cycle.

After the twelve-week instruction, both groups took the RRCTCYCLE test again to evaluate their reading performance; they also took the post-study ELA questionnaire to help the researcher find out if there were any changes in the participants' attitudes towards English learning. Lastly, all the mean scores collected from the posttest of the RRCTCYCLE and the post-study ELA questionnaire were computed and analyzed quantitatively. The procedure of this present study is illustrated in figure 3.1.



The Teaching Process

The study was conducted in a public elementary school, and therefore, the teacher- researcher designed the teaching plans for the experimental group and the control groups following the syllabus of the school for fourth-grade English course. As this study aimed to examine the effects of task-based activities on elementary students' reading comprehension, the teacher incorporated the teaching of reading skills such as 'predicting with visual clues,' 'identifying keywords,' 'skimming for gist,' 'scanning for specific information' and 'identifying the main idea' into the teaching plans for the experimental group and the control group.

The control group was taught following the PPP cycle. The teacher gave directed teaching and controlled practice in the presentation stage and the practice stage and guided the control group to conduct less-controlled practices at the production stage. A sample of the reading lesson taught through the PPP cycle is shown as in Table 3.7.

The experimental group was taught following the task-based learning cycle. Initially, the teacher provided important input related to the topic and encouraged the students to predict what the topic was about from the pictures at the pre-task stage. The teacher then demonstrated how to do a task and guided the students to plan and complete the task. Compared with the students in the control group, the students in the experimental group had more chances to use English when they performed the tasks. For example, a 'read and write' task might require them to read a simple instruction, discuss and complete the task in English. A sample of reading lesson following a sequence of tasks is illustrated in Table 3.8.

Table 3-7 A Sample of Reading Lesson Taught Through the PPP Cycle

<p>Presentation</p>	<p>XX Textbook: Unit (1) He Is Smart (p1-4)/Instruction Time: 40 minutes.</p> <p>Pre-reading: (<i>prediction with visual cues / identify the keywords</i>)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review or pre-teach some vocabulary. 2. Do Q&A - ask questions about the pictures of the story.
<p>Practice</p>	<p>While reading: (<i>predict what happen next; word decoding/analysis</i>)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce the title of story and guess what the story is about. 2. Do Q&A: ask students to predict what happens next in the story by giving picture cues or asking questions. 3. Read the story and deal with unfamiliar words. i.e.: Teacher guides the students to do word decoding/analysis practices.
<p>Production</p>	<p>After reading: (<i>skimming / scanning/ identify the main idea</i>)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guide the whole class to read the story out aloud. 2. Ask questions to check students' understanding of the story. i.e.: Read and answer the question-True or False Read and identify the main idea of the story Match the pictures to the words or the texts Sequence the sentences or match causes & effects 3. Students read the story themselves - in groups or paired reading.

Table 3-8 A Sample of Reading Lesson Taught Through a Sequence of Tasks

<p>Pre-task</p>	<p>XX Textbook: Unit (1) He Is Smart (p1-4)/Instruction Time: 40 minutes.</p> <p>Pre-reading → Stage 1: Priming for prediction – Willis, 2007-P34</p> <p><i>(Guess what the story is about from the context: words/picture cues.)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce the topic and task (Teacher provides a clear demonstration.) 2. Students read the title of the story and refer to the pictures. 3. Students work in groups: talk and share their ideas.
<p>Task Cycle</p>	<p>While Reading → <i>(Predict, read, guess and confirm their guesses.)</i></p> <p>Stage 2: Prediction task <i>(Predict & guess meaning from the context.)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write key words/phrases or the 1st sentence of the text on the board. 2. Write few questions and ask students to discuss <i>(read for a purpose)</i>. For example, list down 3 questions which will be answered in the text. 3. Ask students to guess the answers to the questions in groups. <p>Stage 3: Report preparation <i>(Prepare and report)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give students some blank paper and ask them to write their answers. 2. Ask each group to assign one student to be the reporter; the reporter has to tell the answers to the class. 3. The reporter can practice reporting the answers to the group members. All group members should take turns to be the reporter. <p>Stage 4→ Report <i>(Report and talk about the main ideas/others' answers.)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The reporters take turns to tell their answers to the class. 2. Students in groups compare their answers with others.

<p>Task</p> <p>Cycle</p>	<p>Stage 5 → Reading (<i>Skim/scan/identify the main idea the text.</i>)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students read the story in class and check if their guesses are correct. 2. Teacher asks students to do a ‘read and match’ task in groups. Students look at the pictures of the story and read a set of sentences. Then they match the pictures with the correct sentences. 3. Teacher writes some questions on the board and asks students to skim the text to find the main idea or to scan the text and find some specific information. Students in groups answer the questions. 4. Students read out loud the story in groups or individually.
<p>Language</p> <p>Focus</p>	<p>After Reading</p> <p>Stage 6 → Focus on form (<i>read & work on meanings of words/sentences</i>)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher leads students to work on the unfamiliar words, phrases and sentences taken out from the story at the pre-reading stage. 2. Students practice how to make new questions or sentences using these words, phrases, and sentences. 3. Read & comprehend the text (<i>skimming/scanning/identify the main idea</i>) Teacher further works with students on reading comprehension tasks, for example, a ‘read and choose’ or ‘read and tell true or false’ task. <p>Stage 7 → Evaluation</p> <p>Students provide feedback to the reading text, words, and tasks.</p>

Willis (1996) points out “a PPP cycle leads from accuracy to fluency; a TBL cycle leads from fluency to accuracy (combined with fluency)” (p.137). As the goal and the learning process of the PPP cycle differed from that of the TBL cycle, in this study, the teacher played two different roles in the two groups. The teacher gave a more teacher-led direct teaching and pre-taught the vocabulary and provided the sentence patterns to the control group at the presentation stage. Then, the teacher guided the students in the control group to conduct some controlled practices such as substitution drills to make sure the students could produce the words and the sentences correctly at the practice and the production stages. By contrast, the teacher served as a facilitator in the experimental group. The teacher showed the students how to discuss, plan and carry out a task that was similar to the one the students were going to do later, and then let the students work out the task in pairs or groups. The teacher checked the accuracy of students' productions and helped students deal with vocabulary or grammatical problems at the form focus stage. Similarly, the students' roles were different. The students in the control group were taught step-by-step. They did drills, and controlled practices at the practice stage and they were given some time to do less-controlled practices at the production stage. On the contrary, the students in the experimental group learned through a sequence of task-based activities. They were encouraged to use English to complete the tasks, and they could ask for the teacher's support whenever it was necessary.

Data Analysis

The researcher used the statistical software, the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) Version 20, to analyze the data collected from the pretest and the posttest as well as the pre-study and the post-study questionnaires quantitatively.

In this study, the RRCTCYLE test served as the first tool to select the participants. This test was also used as the pretest and the posttest to evaluate the participants' reading performance before and after the instruction. An independent-samples t-test was utilized to compare the mean scores of the pretest of the RRCTCYLE to ensure there was no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group before the instruction. To answer Research Question One, the researcher used an independent-samples t-test to analyze the mean scores of the posttest of the RRCTCYLE test to examine if there was any significant difference between the two groups to investigate the effects of task-based activities on EFL elementary students' reading comprehension. The significance level was set at $< .05$.

In addition to the RRCTCYLE test, the pre-study ELA questionnaire was used as the second tool to choose the participants. An independent-samples t-test was employed to compare the mean scores of the pre-study ELA questionnaire to make sure there was no significant difference in English learning attitudes between the two groups before the instruction. To answer Research Question 2, an independent-samples t-test was used to analyze the mean scores of the post-study ELA questionnaire to discover which instruction had a more positive effect on EFL elementary students' learning attitudes.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analysis of the data collected from the pretest and the posttest as well as the pre-study and the post-study questionnaires to answer the two research questions of this study.

The results are described in two sections. The first section reports the statistical analysis of both groups' mean scores on the posttest of the RRCTCYLE test to investigate the effectiveness of the TBLT instruction and that of the PPP instruction. The second section illustrates the results of the post-study ELA questionnaire to examine the differences in the attitudes towards English learning between the two groups to discover which instruction has a more positive effect on the participants' attitudes towards English learning.

Results of the post-test of the Reading Comprehension Test (RRCTCYLE)

To answer Research Question One, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores on the posttest of the RRCTCYLE test of the experimental group with that of the control group to find out if there was any significant difference in reading comprehension between the two groups. The results are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4-1 Comparison of Both Groups' Mean Scores on the Posttest of the Reading Comprehension Test (RRCTCYLE)

Group	Number	Mean	S.D.	t	p
Experimental Group	25	92.96	4.65	2.291	0.029*
Control Group	25	86.80	12.60		

Note: * $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 4.1, the mean score of the experimental group was 92.96 (N=25) with a standard deviation of 4.65, and that of the control group was 86.80 (N=25) with a standard deviation of 12.60, indicating that the participants in the experimental group obtained higher scores than those in the control group. According to Table 4.1, the t-test for equality of means showed that there was a significant difference in the posttest scores ($t=2.291$, $p=0.029<0.05$). In other words, the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group on the posttest of the RRCTCYCLE test. The results suggested that the task-based learning cycle was more effective than PPP instruction on reading comprehension.

Results of the English Learning Attitudes Questionnaire

To answer Research Question Two, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean total score on the post-study ELA questionnaire of the experimental group with that of the control group to discover whether there was any significant difference in English learning attitudes between the two groups.

After the twelve-week instruction, all participants took the post-study ELA questionnaire. As there was no statistically significant difference in the pre-study ELA questionnaire between the two groups in their attitudes towards English learning, the researcher used the independent-samples t-tests to examine the data gathered from the post-study ELA questionnaire to explore if there was any significant difference between the two groups in their attitudes towards English learning.

Table 4.2 presents the mean scores on the post-study ELA questionnaire of the two groups. As pointed out in Table 4.2, the mean total score on the post-study questionnaire of the experimental group was 92.96 (N=25) with a standard deviation

of 7.48, and that of the control group was 84.60 (N=25) with a standard deviation of 11.97. The experimental group scored on average 8.36 points higher than the control group. The t-test for equality of means showed that there were significant differences in both groups' attitudes towards English learning after the instruction ($t=2.960$, $p=0.005<0.05$). The results indicated that the task-based learning cycle had a more positive impact on elementary students' attitudes towards English learning than the PPP cycle.

Table 4-2 Comparison of Both Groups' Mean Scores on Post-study Questionnaire

Group	Number	Mean	S.D.	t	p
Experimental Group	25	92.96	7.48		
				2.960	.005**
Control Group	25	84.60	11.97		

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.005$

As there was a significant difference between the two groups in their post-study ELA questionnaires, the independent-samples t-tests were conducted to further investigate if there was any significant difference in the three dimensions of attitudes: cognitive, behavioral and affective dimensions. Table 4.3 reports the results of the t-tests. As shown in Table 4.3, in addition to gaining a significantly higher mean total score on the post-study ELA questionnaire, the experimental group also obtained significantly higher scores in the behavioral dimension ($t=2.471$, $p=0.017<0.05$) and the affective dimension ($t=3.594$, $p=0.001<0.05$) of attitudes. In other words, the statistical results showed there were significant differences in the behavioral and the affective dimensions of attitudes between the two groups. However, there was no

significant difference in the cognitive dimension ($t=1.893$, $p=0.064>0.05$) of attitudes between the two groups. In brief, the results suggested that task-based learning activities had positive influences on students' attitudes towards English learning in the behavioral dimension and the affective dimension of attitudes.

Table 4-3 Comparison of Both Groups' Mean Scores on the Three Dimensions of Attitudes in the Post-Study Questionnaire

Dimension	Group	Mean	S.D.	t	p
Cognitive	Experimental	30.68	2.28	1.893	.064
	Control	29.16	3.30		
Behavioral	Experimental	36.20	3.93	2.471	.017*
	Control	32.64	6.03		
Affective	Experimental	26.08	2.27	3.594	.001**
	Control	22.80	3.95		
Total	Experimental	92.96	7.48	2.960	.005**
	Control	84.60	11.97		

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.005$

As shown in Table 4.3, there was no significant difference in the mean total scores on the cognitive dimension of attitudes between the two groups, implying that the students in both groups might have similar thoughts about the functional value of learning English. To find out more about how the students in these two groups thought about learning English, the researcher used an independent-samples t-test to compare both groups' mean scores on the eight items in the cognitive dimension of attitudes.

Table 4.4 presents the results of the t-tests. Despite the fact that there was no significant difference in the mean total scores between the two groups, there was a significant difference found in Item 1 ($p=0.04<0.05$). This result indicated that the students in the experimental group agreed with question Item 1. That is, they felt that they could learn English better if they could have started learning English earlier. As shown in Table 4.3, the experimental group's mean total score (30.68 points) and that of the control group (29.16) were high and near the total score (32 points) of the cognitive dimension of attitudes. Besides, both groups gained more than 3.5 points for each item in this dimension. The results indicated that both groups felt quite positively about learning English. As explained in Chapter Three, the responses to the negatively worded question items such as Items 6 and 7 were scored 1 point—"strongly agree," 2 points "agree," 3 points "disagree," and 4 points "strongly disagree," respectively. According to Table 4.4, both groups' mean scores on Items 6 and 7 were higher than 3.5 points, indicating that both groups disagreed with the statements that 'English is not useful for my future life.' and 'Learning English is not generally useful for broadening one's knowledge.' To put it another way, the students in both groups felt that English was useful for their future life and learning English could broaden their knowledge.

To sum up, the statistical results of the cognitive dimension of attitudes showed that though there was no significant difference in the mean total scores on this dimension between the two groups, there was a significant difference in Item one. The results indicated that both groups had positive thoughts about the functional value of learning English. Nevertheless, TBLT instruction had a slightly more positive impact on cognitive dimension of attitudes than that of the PPP one.

Table 4-4 Comparison of Both Groups' Mean Scores on the Question Items in the Cognitive Dimension of Attitudes in the Post-Study Questionnaire

Questions	Group	Mean	S.D.	t	P
Q1: I feel that the earlier we start learning English, the better the learning result is.	E.G.	3.84	.374	2.125	.040*
	C.G.	3.52	.653		
Q2: I feel that I need to learn English for my job in the future.	E.G.	3.80	.408	.543	.590
	C.G.	3.72	.614		
Q3: I think English is important.	E.G.	3.84	.374	1.865	.070
	C.G.	3.56	.651		
Q4: I think English is useful.	E.G.	3.92	.277	1.644	.109
	C.G.	3.72	.542		
Q5: I suppose that when I grow up, English can be used for many purposes.	E.G.	3.80	.408	.543	.590
	C.G.	3.72	.614		
Q6: English is not useful for my future life.	E.G.	3.84	.374	1.639	.110
	C.G.	3.56	.768		
Q7: Learning English is not generally useful for broadening one's knowledge.	E.G.	3.76	.436	-.696	.490
	C.G.	3.84	.374		
Q8: Learning English is helpful for understanding Western thinking and culture.	E.G.	3.88	.332	1.844	.075
	C.G.	3.52	.918		

Note: (1) * $p < 0.05$; (2) E.G.: Experimental Group, C.G.: Control Group

Since there were significant differences in the behavioral dimension of attitudes between the two groups, the researcher conducted an independent-samples t-test to discover if there was any significant difference in the items in the behavioral dimension of attitudes. Table 4.5 shows the comparison of both groups' mean scores on the ten items in the behavioral dimension of attitudes.

As shown in Table 4.5, there were significant differences found in Item 12 ($p=0.035<0.05$), Item 13 ($p=0.011<0.05$), Item 15 ($p=0.023<0.05$), Item 18 ($p=0.04<0.05$) and Item 14 ($p=0.008<0.01$) between the two groups. The analytical results of the behavioral dimension of attitudes indicated that after the twelve-week instruction, the experimental group who received the task-based activities demonstrated more positive attitudes towards English learning than the control group who received the PPP instruction. The results of Items 12 and 13 indicated the experimental group felt more interested in learning English and listening to English songs than the control group. The results of Items 14, 15 and 18 showed that compared with the control group, the experimental group hoped to attend more English classes, they were more willing to do demonstrations or act in class and less worried about learning English. The results provided the evidence that the task-based learning activities could arouse students' interest in learning English and motivate them to participate in classroom activities.

Table 4-5 Comparison of Both Groups' Mean Scores on the Question Items in the Behavioral Dimension of Attitudes in the Post-study Questionnaire

Questions	Group	Mean	S.D.	t	P
Q9: I like to learn English.	E.G.	3.68	.476	1.930	.060
	C.G.	3.32	.802		
Q10: I hope to continue learning English.	E.G.	3.72	.458	.945	.349
	C.G.	3.56	.712		
Q11: I am glad to do English homework.	E.G.	3.44	.583	.218	.828
	C.G.	3.40	.707		
Q12: I am very interested in learning English.	E.G.	3.56	.583	2.164	.035*
	C.G.	3.12	.833		
Q13: I like to listen to English songs.	E.G.	3.72	.458	2.670	.011*
	C.G.	3.16	.943		
Q14: I hope to attend more English classes.	E.G.	3.60	.577	2.777	.008**
	C.G.	3.00	.913		
Q15: I'm willing to do demonstrations or act in class.	E.G.	3.48	.653	2.350	.023*
	C.G.	2.92	.997		
Q16: I like to converse with my classmates in English.	E.G.	3.44	.651	1.834	.073
	C.G.	2.96	1.136		
Q17: I am pleased to answer questions in English class.	E.G.	3.72	.458	.257	.798
	C.G.	3.68	.627		
Q18: I am not worried about learning English.	E.G.	3.84	.374	2.125	.040*
	C.G.	3.52	.653		

Note: (1) * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; (2) E.G.: Experimental Group, C.G.: Control Group

The results of Table 4.3 indicated there was a statistically significant difference in the mean total scores on the affective dimension of attitudes between the two groups. To discover more about both groups' feelings towards English learning, the researcher used an independent-samples t-test to analyze both groups' mean scores on the seven items in the affective dimension of attitudes. As shown in Table 4.6, there were significant differences found in Item 20 ($p=0.003<0.01$), Item 21 ($p=0.004<0.01$), Item 22 ($p=0.019<0.05$), and Item 25 ($p=0.012<0.05$) between the two groups. The results of Items 20 and 25 indicated that the experimental group who received task-based instruction felt happier and unafraid to learn English than the control group who received the PPP instruction. The results of Items 21 and 22 showed that the experimental group felt more relaxed and more comfortable in English class than the control group.

As Items 23 and 24 were negatively worded, the responses to these two question items were scored 1 point-“strongly agree,” 2 points “agree,” 3 points “disagree,” and 4 points “strongly disagree,” respectively. Since the experimental groups' mean scores on Items 23 and 24 were higher than 3.5 points, indicating that the students in the experimental group disagreed with Items 23 and 24. That is, they did not feel bored or nervous about learning English. In short, the analytical results of the affective dimension of attitudes showed that there were significant differences in English learning attitudes between the two groups. That is to say, after the twelve-week instruction, the experimental group had more positive reactions towards English learning than the control group. The results suggested that the task-based learning activities were more effective in promoting students' positive feelings towards English learning than the PPP teaching activities.

Table 4-6 Comparison of Both Groups' Mean Scores on the Question Items in the Affective Dimension of Attitudes in the Post-study Questionnaire

Questions	Group	Mean	S.D.	t	p
Q19: I hope I can speak English fluently to others.	E.G.	3.72	.542	.851	.399
	C.G.	3.56	.768		
Q20: I feel happy learning English.	E.G.	3.76	.436	3.139	.003**
	C.G.	3.16	.850		
Q21: I feel comfortable in English class.	E.G.	3.76	.436	3.123	.004**
	C.G.	3.12	.927		
Q22: I feel relaxed in English class.	E.G.	3.80	.408	2.481	.019*
	C.G.	3.24	1.052		
Q23: I feel bored learning English.	E.G.	3.72	.458	1.490	.143
	C.G.	3.44	.821		
Q24: I feel nervous about learning English.	E.G.	3.52	.770	1.588	.119
	C.G.	3.08	1.152		
Q25: I feel unafraid to learn English.	E.G.	3.80	.408	2.683	.012*
	C.G.	3.20	1.041		

Note: (1) * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; (2) E.G.: Experimental Group, C.G.: Control Group

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study is to discover whether task-based activities could improve EFL elementary students' performance in reading comprehension as well as enhance their attitudes towards English learning.

This chapter reports the discussions of the results by addressing two research questions of this study. The results of this study are discussed based on literature. The findings of this study are compared with those of the previous studies and possible explanations for the findings are proposed based on relevant literature.

Research Question (1):

Do EFL elementary students who receive TBLT instruction perform better in reading comprehension performance than those who receive PPP instruction?

According to the results of this study, the students who received task-based language teaching instruction performed better than those who received presentation-practice-production teaching instruction.

Before the instruction, both groups had similar reading performance. After the twelve-week instruction, the experimental group outperformed the control group on the post-test of the RRCTCYCLE test. The results indicated that the TBLT instruction improved the experimental group's performance in reading comprehension.

The results of this study were in line with the previous findings (Keyvanfar & Modarresi, 2009; Nahavandi, 2011) that TBLT was effective in teaching reading to EFL students. In this study, that the experimental group did significantly better on the

posttest than the control group might be due to the essential features of a task-based lesson and the use of reading tasks. Below are some possible explanations for the results.

The Essential Features of a Task-Based Lesson

According to Ellis (2009), ‘focusing on meaning’, ‘bridging a gap’, ‘making use of learners' language resources’, and ‘reaching an outcome’ are four important criteria for considering a teaching activity as a task. This set of criteria points out the four essential features of a task-based lesson that are necessary for developing students’ language skills and communicative competence. However, these features were less emphasized in the PPP instruction. The following sections described how these four features were captured to underlie the design of the task-based activities in this study.

Focusing on Meaning - Receiving Meaningful Input at the Pre-task Stage

As Skenhan (1998) claimed, ‘meaning’ is the primary focus in TBLT. In this study, the experimental group who received TBLT instruction began a lesson by receiving meaningful input in the pre-task stage. For example, the teacher presented a set of pictures and asked the students in the experimental group to preview the pictures and make predictions about the topic and the text. While the teacher provided the experimental group with as much input about the topic as possible, the teacher also tried to elicit topic related vocabulary which the students had learned previously. After the first few weeks’ practice, the experimental group became familiar with the process of conducting a pre-task. They could quickly work on a pre-task and try to use the information they obtained from the pre-task to work on the follow-up tasks. The findings corresponded to Swaffar’s (1988) claim that the process of developing background knowledge and the familiarity with a schema will facilitate reading

comprehension. In this study, the pre-task helped the experimental group build up their background knowledge for a given topic and helped them process the reading tasks more efficiently.

Focusing on Meaning, Bridging a Gap, Making Use of Learners' Language Resources and Reaching an Outcome

In this study, the students in the experimental group were encouraged to use English (referred to 'make use of learners' language resources') to communicate with others to carry out the reading tasks (referred to 'an outcome'). When they started to work on the reading tasks using the language resources they had, they became aware of the language they needed for processing the task. The process of performing a task in English aroused their needs for learning the English words and sentences required for communicating their ideas. The process also enhanced the interactions among the students and between the teacher and the students so as to stimulate the students to actively participate in the reading task. For example, in this study, when the experimental group read and re-arranged a set of sentence strips to unscramble a story (referred to bridging 'a gap'), they had to discuss which sentence should go first and which one should follow next. Even though they used a simple English sentence like 'I think this one goes first' (referred to 'focusing on meaning'), they were trying to express their ideas in English. Though Seedhouse (1999) questioned that "there is a general tendency to minimize linguistic forms" (Seedhouse, 1999, p.152) in learners' interactions, the researcher found that the interactions of the students in the experimental group facilitated the process of learning English. The findings corresponded to Ellis's (2009) claim that the interactions of the beginning learners helped them improve their conversations. Furthermore, the process from discussing

the order of the sentences to reaching an agreement on a final order of a story was indeed a process of negotiating meaning. That is, when the students in the experimental group engaged themselves in this kind of interaction, they were trying to make the best use of their language resources to construct meanings and get their messages across. The findings lent support to Richards and Rodgers's (2001) claim that the process of "negotiation of meaning" (p. 228) in a task could facilitate the learning and the use of the second language. In this study, when the experimental group worked on a reading task such as a read-and-do task, they had to read and sequence the sentences several times before they came up with a final version of a story. By the time they reported their answers or read the stories to the class, they had practiced the language many times. Accordingly, they could perform the final task such as 'retelling the story' (referred to 'the outcome') more accurately and fluently than they did before. This finding was in consonant with Ellis's (2009) view that task-based approach facilitated "the development of communicative fluency while not neglecting accuracy" (p. 242).

In conclusion, the students in the experimental group who received task-based reading activities had more opportunities to practice their language skills in meaningful contexts than the students in the control group who normally did freer practices at the production stage of the PPP instruction. As a consequence, the experimental group seemed more willing to participate in freer practices and more confident in completing the reading activities than the control group. To sum up, the task-based reading activities which captured the four essential features enhanced the development of the experimental group's language skills and their communicative competence. Consequently, they could perform better in the post-test than the control group. The results of the study suggested that encouraging the students to convey

meaning by making use of their language resources to bridge the reading gaps and reach the outcomes could promote active learning and improve the learning results.

The Use of Reading Tasks

The results of this study suggested that the use of reading tasks seemed to have a positive impact on the experimental group's performance in reading comprehension. The results were compatible with Keyvanfar & Modarresi's (2009) findings that task-based reading activities could improve EFL young learners' reading abilities. In this study, the students in the experimental group who received task-based reading activities developed their reading skills through the processes of completing different types of reading tasks (see Table 1.2). The results that they made significant progress on the post-test could be explained by Lai's (1997) claim that second language learners could read faster and improve their understanding of written texts through the process of matching strategies, text, and purposes (Lai, 1997). For example, 'reading for a purpose' was one of the most frequently used strategies in this study. 'Reading for a purpose' means "reading for meaning" (Willis & Willis, 2007, p. 33). Reading tasks such as a discussion or a prediction task engage students' interest in a text and gives them a reason for reading. In this study, the teacher listed down the questions related to the topic, the pictures or the main event of a given story and encouraged the students to discuss in groups. Meanwhile, the teacher tried to elicit some words or phrases the students might encounter in the story. When the students in the experimental group started to read the story, they read and found answers to the questions that were raised in the prediction task. This kind of task facilitated the experimental group's reading comprehension because it aroused the students' interest

to read the story and urged them to read for meaning throughout the reading process (Willis & Willis, 2007).

Besides, the reason that the experimental group made significant progress on the posttest might be due to the use of a balanced approach to teaching both the top-down and the bottom-up reading skills. The reading tasks such as the prediction task and the listing task were used to practice the top-down reading skills at the pre-task and the task-cycle stages. The bottom-up reading skills were practiced at the language focus stage using tasks such as sorting, matching, comparing and contrasting tasks. According to Roe, Smith and Burns (2005), the process of comprehending a text is a combination of the bottom-up and top-down process. When the readers read, they process the information from the print they are reading as well as the information from their background knowledge. In this study, the use of the balanced teaching approach in the task-based reading instruction offered the experimental group many opportunities to practice the top-down and the bottom-up reading skills so as to improve their reading comprehension skills. The scaffolding learning process provided the experimental group with plenty of opportunities to predicate, confirm and correct the meanings of words, sentences, and texts through completing reading tasks in the task-based learning cycle. At the last few weeks of this study, the experimental group appeared to be more confident in using reading skills, for example, guessing meanings of words and sentences from the contexts, than the control group. Consequently, the experimental group did remarkably better in the posttest of the reading comprehension test than the control group. The results of the study suggested that using the balanced approach to teaching reading to elementary students could enhance the development of students' reading skills.

In brief, the essential features of a task-based lesson and the use of the reading tasks might explain the reasons the experimental group did significantly better than the control group on the posttest.

Research Question (2):

Is there any significant difference in attitudes towards English learning among EFL elementary students who receive TBLT instruction and those who receive PPP instruction?

Based on the results of this study, there was a significant difference in attitudes towards English learning among EFL elementary students who received TBLT instruction and those who received PPP instruction after the instruction.

At the beginning of the study, there was no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in their attitudes towards English learning. After the twelve-week instruction, both groups took the post-study ELA questionnaire. The data gathered from the two groups was analyzed. The statistical results showed that there were significant differences in the mean total scores as well as the mean scores of the behavioral dimension and that of the affective dimension of attitudes between the two groups. However, there was no significant difference in the mean total scores of the cognitive dimension of attitudes. The results might be due to the fact that the students in both groups, who had received formal English instruction for three years, were highly aware of the functional value of learning English and thought positively about learning English.

The analytical results showed that the experimental group obtained 30.68 points while the control group gained 29.16. The mean scores of the two groups were high

and near the total score of the cognitive dimension of attitudes which was 32 points. The results revealed that the experimental group and the control group both recognized the functional value of learning English. The students in both groups had received, 80-minute per week, formal English instruction since they were first graders. They had learned quite a few English words, sentences, and daily conversations. They had also read some English stories and experienced several cultural events such as Christmas and Halloween through the use of E-books and films at school. As they had experienced the use of English and were introduced to western cultures in English class for three years, it was not surprising that both groups thought English was important and useful. However, it was surprising to discover that there was a significant difference in question Item 1 ($p=0.04<0.05$). This result of Item 1 indicated the students in the experimental group felt that they could learn English better if they could have started learning English earlier.

To sum up, although there was no significant difference found in the mean total scores on the cognitive dimension of attitudes between the two groups, the results showed that the experimental group had slightly more positive thoughts about learning English than the control group. Furthermore, the result of Item 1 indicated the task-based activities might positively influence the experimental group's thoughts about learning English.

What's more, the statistical results of the behavioral dimension and the affective dimension of attitudes revealed that the experimental group showed more positive attitudes in the behavioral dimension and the affective dimension of attitudes than the control group. The results were similar to the findings of previous research (Fan Chiang, 2005; Tseng, 2006) that TBLT instruction could enhance the students'

positive attitudes towards English learning. The findings of this present study were also in agreement with Gardner's (1985) claim that the affective reactions towards learning a language would influence the learners' motivation in language learning. The results of the post-study ELA questionnaire indicated the students in the experimental group seemed to feel more relaxed, more comfortable, happier and unafraid in English class than the students in the control group. The experimental group seemed to have more positive affective reactions towards English learning. Their affective reactions might positively influence their learning behaviors because they appeared to be more interested in learning English and more willing to participate in classroom activities. Here are some possible explanations for the results.

Encouraging Students to Use English

In this study, the teacher encouraged the students in the two groups to express their ideas without being afraid of making mistakes in class. The students in the control group who received the PPP instruction did quite well at the practice stage. However, they seemed not very interested and less confident in doing freer practices at the production stage. There were two possible reasons the control group seemed reluctant to do further practices. First, they had enough drills at the practice stage and second they still worried about making mistakes. By contrast, the experimental group was accustomed to using words and phrases they knew to communicate their ideas from the pre-task stage throughout the task-based learning cycle. They seemed less worried about making mistakes in class. When the students made mistakes, the teacher tried not to correct their mistakes immediately, especially when they were performing a task. Instead, the teacher noted down the students' mistakes and dealt with the mistakes as well as recapped the vocabulary and sentence patterns at the

language focus stage. Besides, the teacher provided the students with some classroom English and commonly used English sentences to promote the use of English. For example, the teacher put posters of classroom English around the classroom as the supporting language for students to use. The teacher found that when she tried to provide the students with as much supporting language as possible, for example, common English expressions and not to interrupt their conversations, the students seemed more willing to do the tasks and more confident with presenting their work. The findings corresponded to Willis & Willis's claim (2007) that "TBLT promotes learners' confidence by providing them with the opportunities to use the language in the classroom without being constantly afraid of making mistakes" (p 2).

Creating Contexts for Students to Communicate

The reading tasks used in this study such as a 'read and unscramble a story' created a context for students to read and reorganize the sentences and put them into a correct order. This kind of task was similar to solving a puzzle and was typically followed by the 'retelling the story' task as the final work which was associated with 'a storytelling event' in real life situations. According to Nunan (2004), tasks such as the ones mentioned above could activate the students' emerging language skills because these kinds of tasks created meaningful contexts for students to communicate their ideas.

In this study, the researcher found that when the students began to talk, they tried to convey meaning even though their language was limited. When they began their conversations, they became aware of what words or phrases they needed to learn in order to get their meaning across. They started to ask the teacher for help. Under the circumstances, the teacher helped the students with their language so that they could

find the right words and produce more complex and more grammatical sentences. The findings provided evidence for Willis and Willis's (2007) claim that TBLT encouraged learners to engage in meaningful activities using the language resources they had so as to stimulate the students to actively participate in the learning process.

Engaging Students in the Learning Process

The reading tasks required the students in the experimental group to read and do something (hereafter referred to 'read-and-do task') to complete a reading task and thus engaged the students in the learning process and enhanced their interests in learning. For example, the read-and-do tasks required the students to read and sequence a set of sentences, read and guess the meaning from the context, or read and write a sentence. The read-and-do tasks offered the experimental group many opportunities to expose themselves to rich input so as to arouse their interests in learning the new language, and at the same time, develop their reading skills through the process of performing tasks. In this study, the read-and-do tasks, just as "listen-and-do tasks" (Ellis, 2009, p. 235), provided the students with new vocabulary and offered them with plenty of opportunities to practice the language skills. As a consequence, the read-and-do tasks facilitated the learning process and motivated the students to learn. The students in the experimental group appeared to be interested in doing the 'read-and-do' tasks and were willing to demonstrate how to do the tasks in class.

Making the Tasks Appropriate and Comprehensible to Students

The findings of the study suggested that making the read-and-do tasks appropriate and comprehensible to the students could enhance students' interests and motivate them to learn.

The Appropriateness of a Task

Carless (2002) pointed out that tasks such as drawing and coloring may not be appropriate because these tasks are time-consuming and do not elicit sufficient linguistic output from the learners. In this study, there was always a clear goal for a given read-and-do task. That is, the reading task and its follow-up activity were used to develop the experimental group's reading abilities. Hence, when the students in the experimental group read and did a follow-up activity, they were expected to produce some linguistic output whether in spoken or written form. For example, the students looked at a set of pictures and answered questions regarding the pictures. Then, they read a set of sentence strips, matched the sentences to the pictures, and read out loud a story. Last, they might need to read some questions and write down their answers on a reading comprehension worksheet. In most occasions, the students were eager to share their answers with others because they were happy that they resolved the tasks. The sense of achievement gave them confidence and motivated them to learn. The findings of the study suggested that making the read-and-do task appropriate for use and comprehensible to the students' English level could motivate the students to learn.

The Difficulty of a Task

The findings of the study also suggested that to build up the students' confidence in performing the read-and-do tasks, the reading tasks, and the follow-up activities

should be appropriate to students' English level. For example, in Chou's (2007) study, the experimental group agreed that the follow-up writing activity enhanced their reading efficiency. However, they thought the writing activity that required them to write a summary of a story was too difficult, and they felt anxious about it. In the present study, the writing activity was doable for the experimental group. The writing activity was, in fact, a part of a given reading task. The purpose of the writing activity was to check students' understanding of the story, the content of the writing activity was related to the story in the textbook, and the types of the writing activity were to fill in the gaps or to write one or two sentences to answer a question. As the follow-up writing activity was related to a given story in the textbook, it was doable for the students. In the study, the experimental group seemed to gain lots of confidence from carrying out the read-and-do tasks. Accordingly, they made significant progress on the post-test of the reading comprehension test. This finding suggested that the difficulty of a reading task and its follow-up activity should be adjusted to the students' English level to be comprehensible and doable.

Enhancing Classroom Interactions and Students' Learning

In the study, the task-based reading activities such as the read-and-do tasks offered the students in the experimental group many opportunities to work with other students, and therefore enhanced the interactions among the students. The interactions occurred during the process of carrying out a task promoted the use of English. In this study, the language output derived from the students' interactions might not be complex and sophisticated. However, according to Ellis (2009), the interactions might be beneficial to the beginning learners. That is, the interactions might, in fact, encourage the language beginners such as the students in the experimental group to

make the best use of their limited language resources and help them develop their strategic competence (Ellis, 2009). The findings of the study revealed that the task-based reading instruction could enhance the interactions among students and facilitate students' learning of English language.

To enhance the classroom interactions, the teacher encouraged the students to use English without being afraid of making mistakes so that the students would try to speak more English with others. First, the teacher told the students that they would not be punished for making mistakes. In contrast, they would gain extra points for giving a correct answer in English. Second, the teacher provided the students with some supporting language such as classroom English and commonly used English sentences for them to use. Third, the teacher asked the students questions to make sure they knew what the goal was and what they were going to do before they started to work on a given task. Once the students began to work on a task, they were encouraged to use English to carry out the task with others. After several weeks' practice, the experimental group seemed more comfortable using English to communicate with others than they were before. The findings corresponded to Larsen-Freeman's (2000) claim that the interactions could facilitate language learning process as the learners have to work to understand each other and to express their ideas.

In conclusion, the results of the study indicated that the task-based instruction had a positive impact on the experimental group's attitudes towards English learning. After the twelve-week task-based reading instruction, the experimental group felt more interested in learning English and hoped to attend more English classes than the control group. Also, the experimental group seemed more willing to participate in class and were not worried about learning English than the control group. The

findings of the study supported Ellis's (2009) claim that task-based approach was "intrinsically motivating" (p. 242). In brief, the results of this study suggested that task-based reading instruction could improve EFL elementary students' English learning attitudes.



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This chapter includes the following four sections: Section One summarizes the findings of this present study. Section Two provides pedagogical implications based on the research findings to elementary teachers who are interested in incorporating task-based learning activities in their teaching. Section Three discusses the limitations of this study. The last section provides some suggestions for future research.

Summary of Major Findings

The current study was carried out to investigate the effects of task-based reading activities on EFL elementary students' reading comprehension and their attitudes towards English learning. This section summarizes the main findings and discussions reported in chapter four and chapter five as follows:

First, the findings of this present study provide empirical evidence supporting the assumption that the use of task-based reading activities could effectively improve EFL elementary students' performance in reading comprehension. The results of both groups' mean scores on the posttest of the RRCTCYLE test showed that there was a significant difference in the EFL elementary school students' reading comprehension between the experimental group who received the TBLT instruction and the control group who received the PPP instruction. The experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group on the posttest, indicating that task-based learning cycle could be beneficial to teaching reading to EFL elementary students. The results that the experimental group made significant progress on the posttest could be explained

by the essential features of a task-based lesson and the use of reading tasks.

In this study, the reading instruction was taught following the task-based learning cycle, and the reading tasks were designed based on Ellis's (2009) four criteria for a task. According to Ellis (2009), a task should have its focus on 'meaning', engage students in bridging 'a gap', offer students with opportunities to make the best use of their language resources and have a clear 'outcome'. During the twelve-week instruction, the experimental group practiced the reading skills through the use of different reading tasks given in the task-based learning cycle while the control group received the reading instruction following the PPP cycle. Accordingly, the experimental group performed significantly better on the post-test than the control group. Besides, that the experimental group made significant progress on the posttest might be due to the practice of purposeful reading tasks. The findings of this study lent support to Lai's (1997) claim that the process of matching reading strategies with the content of the written texts and the purposes for reading could improve students' understanding of the written texts. What's more, the task-based reading instruction offered the experimental group the opportunities to learn the top-down reading skills through the process of completing different tasks and practice the bottom-up reading skills at the form focus stage. The result of the posttest provided evidence for Brewster, Ellis and Girand's (2002) claim that using the balanced approach to teaching the top-down and the bottom-up reading skills to students could facilitate students' learning of reading skills. In sum, the findings of this study suggested that the use of reading tasks could enhance the development of reading skills and reading comprehension.

Second, the statistical results of both groups' mean scores on the post-study questionnaire showed that there were significant differences in both groups' attitudes towards English learning. The English learning attitudes questionnaire consisted of three dimensions: cognitive, behavioral and affective dimension. The mean total score of the experimental group's questionnaire was significantly higher than that of the control group. The results indicated that the TBLT instruction was more effective in enhancing students' English learning attitudes than the PPP one.

Although there was no significant difference in the mean total scores on the cognitive dimension of attitudes between the two groups, the results showed that both groups obtained high mean total scores in this dimension of attitudes. That is, both groups had positive thoughts about the functional value of learning English. Both groups felt English was important and useful. Furthermore, the result of Item 1 indicated the task-based activities might positively influence the experimental group's thoughts about learning English. The result of Item1 showed that the experimental group felt that they could learn English better if they could have started learning English earlier.

Moreover, there were significant differences found between the two groups in the behavioral dimension and the affective dimension of attitudes. The statistical results of both groups' mean scores on these two dimensions revealed that the experimental group had more positive attitudes towards English learning than the control group. The results of the behavioral dimension of attitudes showed that the students who received the task-based instruction were more interested in learning English, they hoped to attend more English class and seemed more willing to participate in English class than the students who received the PPP instruction. What's more, the results of

the affective dimension of attitudes indicated that compared with the students who received the PPP instruction, the students who received the task-based instruction seemed to feel more comfortable and more relaxed in English class, and they seemed happier and unafraid to learn English. The overall findings of the study indicated that the experimental group had more positive attitudes towards English learning than the control group. The findings suggested that TBLT instruction could improve students' attitudes towards English learning and motivate them to learn.

Pedagogical implications

The findings of this study suggest the following pedagogical implications.

1. According to the findings of this study, the TBLT instruction could have positive effects on EFL elementary students' reading comprehension. Given that TBLT provides learners with "exposure, use and motivation" (Willis, 1996, P. 40), the findings of the present study suggest that TBLT could be used to teach reading skills in an interesting and meaningful way. For examples, the topics of the tasks can be drawn from students' life experience. The task-based learning cycle and the use of the reading tasks can provide students with the opportunities to use English in meaningful contexts and motivate them to learn English (Willis, 1996; Ellis, 2003).

2. In this study, the reading tasks referred to a set of reading tasks. The results of the present study showed that teaching reading skills through completing reading tasks in a task-based learning cycle could enhance the development of students' reading skills. The findings suggest that when planning a task-based reading lesson, the teacher can design the reading tasks based on the topic and the purpose for reading. Meanwhile, the teacher can provide students with meaningful input and the

opportunities to practice the topic vocabulary and sentence patterns as well as the reading skills through completing the reading tasks such as the read-and-do tasks.

3. The findings of the study suggest that task-based learning cycle and the use of the read-and-do tasks could promote students' interests in learning English. To encourage students to use English to complete the tasks, the teacher may create a supportive learning environment for students. For example, the teacher may provide students with some classroom English and commonly used English sentences for them to use. The teacher may also develop some strategies such as designing a rewarding system to promote students' use of English in class.

4. In this study, the reading tasks were designed to help students understand the meanings of the written texts, the students had to read and do something to check, confirm and complete the task. For example, the students might need to read several sentences and match the sentences with the corresponding pictures. It is hoped that the students could learn the language as well as the reading skills from carrying out the reading tasks. However, if the task is too complicated or difficult for students, it may cause students' worries and frustrations. Therefore, depending on the students' English level, the teacher may need to adjust the difficulty and the complexity of the tasks, and make the tasks appropriate and comprehensible to the students so as to facilitate their learning process.

5. The findings of the study suggest that when conducting a task-based reading lesson with elementary school students, the teacher needs to carefully introduce the task to students. The teacher should let students know the purpose of doing a task, and gives clear and consistent instructions on the task procedures to help students carry out the task more smoothly.

Limitations of this Study

The findings of this study revealed that TBLT could have an effective impact on elementary students' reading comprehension. The findings of this study also showed that the TBLT instruction could promote students' attitudes towards English learning and motivate them to learn English. However, several limitations regarding the study should be noted and hopefully can be overcome in future research.

1. The sample size of fifty participants in this study was not big enough. There were twenty-five participants in the experimental group and the control group respectively. As the numbers of the participants in the two groups were small, the statistical results could be biased.
2. The time allowed for the teaching intervention in the experiment was insufficient. The task-based reading instruction lasted twelve weeks. Though the findings showed that the task-based reading instruction had positive effects on students' reading performance and their attitudes towards English learning, the entire instructional period might not be long enough to fully investigate the effects of the TBLT approach. To examine the long-term effects of the TBLT approach, a longer period of instructional time should be considered in future research.
3. Due to time constraints, the design of the present study was not as thorough as desired. Though the results of the study suggested that the task-based reading instruction had a positive impact on the experimental group's attitudes towards English learning, the findings could not offer more detailed information on how the students thought about the task-based reading activities and which reading task they liked the most and why.

4. The results of the current study may not be generalized to other students as the participants of this study were confined to two fourth-grade classes at a public elementary school.

Suggestions for Future Research

Some suggestions drawn from the limitations are offered for future research.

First, to overcome the issue of small sample size in this study, future researchers may explore the effects of task-based reading activities on a larger group of students.

Second, future researchers may design a longer period of task-based reading instruction to investigate the long-term effects of task-based reading activities on students' reading comprehension. Third, future researchers may include the use of an additional instrument such as an interview to further discover students' perceptions of the task-based reading activities. Finally, future researchers may conduct a relevant study on a larger and different group of participants in the public elementary school context so that the results could be generalized and applied to other populations.

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Appendix A: Reading Comprehension Test

(Revised from Starters Level, the Cambridge Young Learners' English Tests)

Grade: 4 Class: _____ Number: _____ Name: _____

Part 1 (5 Questions) – (每題 4 分)

Look and read. If the sentence matches the picture, put a tick (✓) in the box. If not, put a cross (X) in the box. 請看圖並仔細讀句子，句子符合圖片意思，請在□內打✓，不符合，請打X。

Examples (例子)

(例子一)



This is an eye.



(例子二)

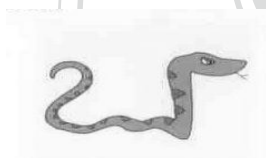


This is a television



Questions (試題)

1



This is a turtle.



2



This is a pear.



3



This is a skirt.



4



This is a doll.



5.



This is a bike.



Part 2 (5 Questions) - (每題 4 分)

Read and write. If the sentence describes the picture, write, "Yes". If not, write "No". 請看圖並仔細讀，如果句子符合圖片，請在虛線上寫上 Yes，如果不符請寫上 No。



Examples (例子)

- 例子一 The coconuts are on the trees. Yes
 例子二 The children are swimming in the sea. No

Questions (試題)

- 1 Two horses are on the beach. _____
- 2 The small girl is between the horses. _____
- 3 The big boy is playing tennis. _____
- 4 The small boy is flying a kite. _____
- 5 The dogs are playing with a ball. _____

Part 3 (5 Questions) - (每題 4 分)


Read and match. 請仔細讀並看圖，然後將符合圖片及提示的答案連起來。


Example :


Do you like  ? Yes, I do.  I like bread.

Questions:

Do you like  ? Yes, I do. I don't like rice.

Do you like  ? No, I don't. I like hot dogs.

Do you like  ? No, I don't. I like hamburgers.

Do you like  ? Yes, I do. I like apples.

Do you like  ? Yes, I do. I don't like bananas.

Part 4 (5 Questions) - (每題 4 分)

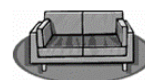
Read the story and write. 請仔細閱讀以下的短文，並依圖示將正確的答案填入空格內。

What am I?

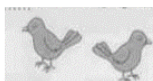
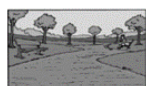
birds sofa fish cat park



I live in a house with a family. There are mice in the house, and I catch them.



I eat meat and _____, and I drink milk or water. In the day I sleep on a _____,

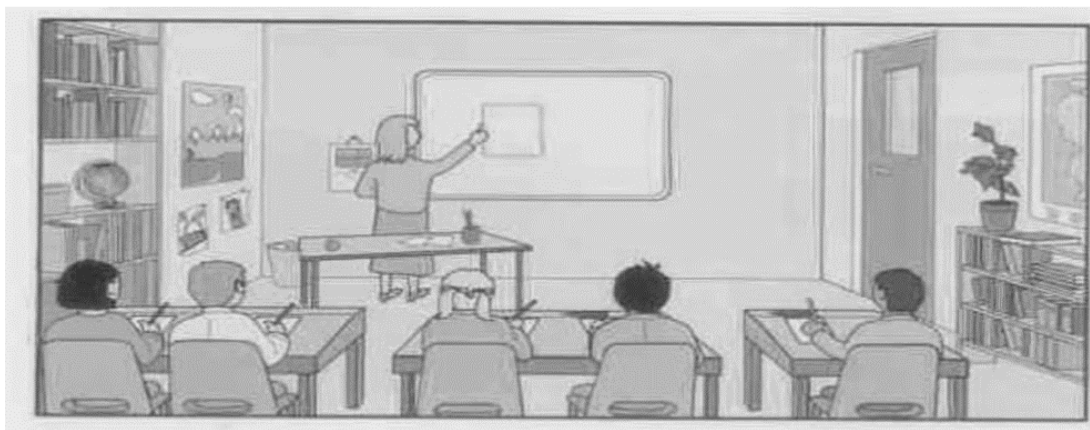


or I play in the _____. I watch the _____ in the trees. I can see at night.

I am a _____.

Part 5 (5 Questions) - (每題 4 分)

Look at the pictures, read and circle the correct answers. 請看圖並仔細讀，然後將正確的答案圈起來。



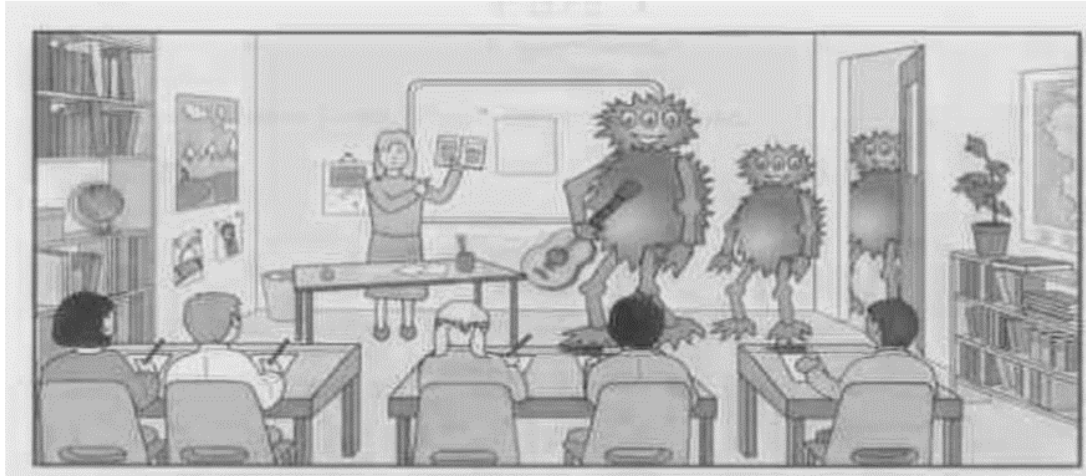
Examples

Who is writing on the board? The (student ,) is writing.

How many children are there? There are (, six).

Questions

1. Where are the children? They are in a (living room, classroom).

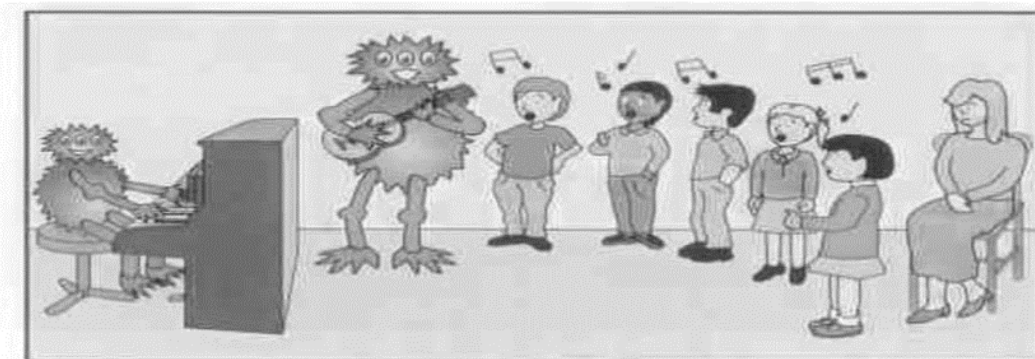


2 How many monsters are there in the classroom?

There are (two , three) monsters in the classroom.

3 What does the teacher have in her hand?

She has a (box , book) in her hand.



4 What is the small monster playing?

The small monster is playing the (guitar , piano).

5 What are the children doing now?

They are (singing , studying).

Appendix B: Replacing ‘Read and write’ section with ‘Read and Match’ section

Main skill focus: Reading and Writing	Item type	Items
Read and writing (vocabulary)	Read and unscramble the letters	5
<p>Read and write:</p>		



Main skill focus: Reading	Item type	Items
Understanding meanings of the sentences and identifying the keywords.	Read and match the sentences to the correct sentences.	5

Read and match :

Example :

Do you like ? Yes, I do. ● ——— ● I like bread.

Questions:

Do you like ? Yes, I do. ● ● I don't like rice.

Do you like ? No, I don't. ● ● I like hot dogs.

Do you like ? No, I don't. ● ● I like hamburgers.

Do you like ? Yes, I do. ● ● I like apples.

Do you like ? Yes, I do. ● ● I don't like bananas.

Appendix C: Face Validity of the Revised Reading Comprehension Test of Cambridge Young Learners' English Tests

(For Experts & English Teachers' Review)

(1) Purpose of the test:

This test is to assess the fourth graders' reading comprehension performance.

This test serves as the pretest and the posttest in this study.

(2) The design of the test:

This content of the test is adapted and revised from the Reading and Writing component in the Starters Level of the Cambridge Young Learners Tests.

As the main goal of the pretest and posttest is to evaluate students' reading comprehension, the researcher revises the content of the original test by focusing on testing students' reading abilities.

(3) The specification of the test:

Parts	Main skill focus	Item type	items
1	Reading for prediction with pictures cues and identifying the key words.	Indicate true with a tick or false with a cross	5
2	Reading for understanding meanings of the sentences and specific information (lexis, number, local and grammar)	Write 'Yes/No' next to the sentences	5
3	Reading for understanding meanings of the sentences and identifying the key words.	Read and match the sentences to the correct sentences	5
4	Reading for prediction with pictures cues, identifying the key words and guessing what the title of the story is.	Gap filling (with picture clues)	5
5	Reading for prediction with pictures cues, guessing the meaning of story.	Read and circle the correct answers	5

(4) Answer Key

	Part (1)	Part (2)	Part (3)	Part (4)	Part (1)
1	X	Yes		fish	teacher
2	X	Yes		sofa	two
3	✓	Yes		park	book
4	✓	No		birds	piano
5	✓	No		cat	singing

(5) Face Validity (For Experts & English Teachers' Review)

題號	合適	不合適	宜修改	建議
Part 1 - Indicate true with a tick or false with a cross				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
Part 2 - Write 'Yes/No' next to the sentences				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
Part 3 - Read and match the sentences to the sentences with picture clues				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
Part 4 - Read and write with picture clues (Gap-filling)				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				
Par 5 - Read and circle the correct answers				
21				
22				
23				
24				
25				

Thank you in advance for your kind review and your comments.

Appendix D: English Learning Attitudes Questionnaire (English Version)

English Learning Attitudes Questionnaire

Dear students,

This questionnaire is to understand your attitudes toward learning English. It is not a test and there is no correct answer to the questions. Please answer each question according to your own experiences. Thank you very much for your help!

A. Background information

1. Class: _____ Number: _____ Name: _____

2. Gender: boy girl

3. Do you learn English in a private cram school now?

Yes, I do.

No, I don't.

B. Survey (Read each question and choose the most appropriate answer according to your own experiences.)

1. I feel that the earlier we start learning English the better the result is.

2. I feel that I need to learn English for my job in the future.

3. I think English is important.

4. I think English is useful.

5. I suppose that when I grow up, English can be used for many purposes.

6. English is not useful for my future life.

7. Learning English is not generally useful for broadening one's knowledge.
8. Learning English is helpful for understanding Western thinking and culture.
9. I like to learn English.
10. I hope to continue learning English.
11. I am glad to do English homework.
12. I am very interested in learning English.
13. I like to listen to English songs.
14. I hope to attend more English classes.
15. I am willing to do demonstrations or act in English class.
16. I like to converse with my classmates in English.
17. I am pleased to answer questions in English class.
18. I am not worried about learning English.
19. I hope I can speak English fluently to others.
20. I feel happy learning English.
21. I feel comfortable in English class.
22. I feel relaxed in English class.
23. I feel bored learning English.
24. I feel nervous about learning English.
25. I feel unafraid to learn English.

Appendix E: English Learning Attitudes Questionnaire (Chinese Version)

英語學習態度問卷

親愛的同學們：

謝謝你們幫忙填寫這一份問卷！這不是考試，也沒有標準答案。

老師希望能透過這一份問卷瞭解你對學習英語的想法和學習狀況。

請務必每一題作答。謝謝你的合作！

一、基本資料

1. _____ 學校 _____ 年 _____ 班 _____ 號
2. 你的性別是： 男 女
3. 你目前有在補習班學英語嗎？
 有。
 沒有。

二、問卷部分（單選題）

請仔細讀每一題的題目，依據你上英語課的經驗，在內打✓。

請勾選出一個你覺得最適當的答案。（注意：每一題都要作答！）

	非常同意	有點同意	有點不同意	非常不同意
1. 我覺得越早開始學英語越好。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. 為了我未來的工作我需要學英語。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. 我認為英語很重要。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. 我覺得英語很有用。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. 長大後，在很多方面我都用得到英語。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	非常同意	有點同意	有點不同意	非常不同意
6. 英語與我以後的生活無關。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. 學了英語，對增加知識沒幫助。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. 學英語對於瞭解外國的事物有幫助。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. 我喜歡學英語。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. 我希望能繼續學英語。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. 我很樂意做英語作業。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. 我學英語的興趣很高。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. 我喜歡聽英語歌曲。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. 我希望常常上英語課。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. 我願意在英語課中示範或表演。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. 我喜歡和同學用學過的英語對話。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. 上英語課時，我樂意回答老師的問題。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. 我對學習英語一點也不害怕。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. 我希望能以流利的英語與別人交談。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. 學習英語讓我很快樂。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. 上英語課讓我覺得很自在。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. 我覺得上英語課很輕鬆。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. 我覺得學英語很無聊。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. 想到要上英語課，我就很緊張。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. 我認為英語沒什麼好怕的。	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

請再檢查一遍是否每一題都有作答!謝謝!