Scaffolding Blended Listening Task: A Learner-Centred Approach

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Abstract
Task-based language teaching (TBLT) promotes second language learning in a communicative way. Research on low proficiency level learners with regard to TBLT in the Asian context is new and needs to be explored further. The task phases in the blended mode of teaching and learning need to be connected well and learners need to be motivated from the initial phase itself which will add more meaning to student's learning process. This paper briefly discusses the concept of scaffolding strategies with reference to previous research and also proposes a model with a sample task. The study adopted a quasi-experimental design in order to see the practical implementation of the model. For this reason, 60 pre-service teachers from different teacher education colleges, in Warangal, India are selected. All of them were given a listening test. Through random purposive sampling a sample of 30 pre-service teachers with A1-A2 proficiency levels, from 60 teachers was selected. All of them are given a task motivation questionnaire and then they are randomly categorised into experimental (N=15) and control groups (N=15). The experimental group that received the scaffolding strategies in blended mode outperformed the control group in the post-test listening test. Also, their motivation levels improved compared to the control group. The study has got implications for second language proficiency improvement through TBLT and the role of blended language teaching and learning in improving motivational levels.

Keywords: Task-based language teaching, language proficiency levels, scaffolding strategies, formative self-assessment,

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Introduction

Modern language learning methodologies and approaches are learner-centered and learning-centric. The learners need to be actively involved in the learning process which needs to consider many factors such as learners' interests/needs/preferences, learners' motivation, and learners' attitudes/beliefs. Any language learning approach or methodology will be successful in a classroom if learners find it interesting and useful (Dörnyei,2019). The teacher has to consider the future needs of the learners before introducing a particular methodology in the classroom. From that, perspective some of the popular methodologies to be used with language learners at higher education levels is communicative language teaching, project-based learning, and cooperative learning. All of the above approaches at one point or the other deal with the idea of 'task' which involves collaboration and Interaction (Best & MacGregor 2017). As per the present research, students of lower proficiency levels will be benefitted from TBLT if they are convinced of the benefits of the approach in a practically possible way.

In order to know the importance of language proficiency it is necessary to know the differences between 'more proficient learners' and 'less proficient learners' as advocated by Berne (2004).

Word to word processing of information, use of translation, find it difficult with meanings of words, don't related what they hear to their previous experiences

Table 1
Differences between 'more' and 'less proficient learners'

More proficient learners	Less proficient learners
• Use wide range of strategies more often and interactively • Use their previous experiences • Use current linguistic knowledge • Understand 'larger chunks of Input'	• use of translation process information word to word • find it difficult to know the meanings of words • find it difficult to connect the information they receive to their previous experiences

Berne (2004)

As the present research is related to listening comprehension skills improvement, the listening strategies which can be scaffolded can be known from Teng (1998). He mentioned different listening strategies under six categories: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social. Each category comprises mini strategies (refer to appendix section).

Kayi-Aydar (2013) brings out a few suggestions for teachers to make scaffolding an effective process- 1. Teachers need to show examples of effective

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scaffolding which will help in learners' learning process. Whenever students' pair work or group work went well, the teacher can highlight the factors involved in their being effective collaborators. 2. A teacher should be aware of the learner's beliefs about group work and discuss the benefits of peer scaffolding explicitly. 3. Encourage learners to interact in order to improve their collaborative learning by asking questions. 4. Teachers can encourage learners to keep a scaffolding journal.

Pentimonti et al., (2017) mentioned two types of strategies to teach reading comprehension to children pre-school level. The researcher mentions two types of strategies- Low scaffolding strategies and High scaffolding strategies. Low scaffolding strategies include recollecting experiences, exploring reasons, and predicting. High scaffolding is related to pair work which involves teacher and learner or only learners, using quizzes, and modeling. Ahmadi Safa & Rozati (2017) discussed the importance of scaffolding strategies to improve the listening comprehension of EFL learners of the Intermediate level. The researchers identified around 23 scaffolding strategies used by the participants. They suggested that through collaboration and Interaction learners can help each other in improving listening comprehension through scaffolding strategies.

Ellis (2019) has mentioned that preparing learners for actual task phase matches with the important principles that guide TBLT which is providing chances to learners to use the language resources they are provided instead of limiting their choices. Such (2021) discussed the use of rubrics to assess online collaborative writing. The assessment is given for groups rather than for Individuals. The researcher also discusses the challenges involved in the process but highlights the fact that this process will take 'meaning' into consideration.

Li & Zhang (2022) quote wo types of scaffolding adapted from the authors (Walqui, 2006)- 1. helping learners to learn something new through verbal and non-verbal means, making evident the connections among the topics, and explicit strategic instruction. 2. demonstrating, simplification of the activity, and highlighting a phase of the task. Mahan (2022) shares observations through their research that the scaffolding strategies adopted by Content and Language-Integrated Learning) (CLIL) teachers need to move beyond text comprehension.

The current research considers Weaver's (2012) formative assessment in TBLT and also (Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction) ARCS model of motivation (Keller & Subhiyah, 1993) for scaffolding. This process will help in facing challenges that will arise in the implementation process of TBLT, especially with low proficiency level learners. An idea regarding the ARCS model and Weaver's formative assessment is provided below:

Molaee & Dortaj (2015) used ARCS model as an instructional design for L2 learning. The researchers observed an improvement in the motivational levels and performance of the learners. Zhang (2015) states that ARCS model can be used to help learners with their listening skills by providing relevant materials, positive feedback, and improving their confidence levels. Ma & Lee (2021) used ARCS

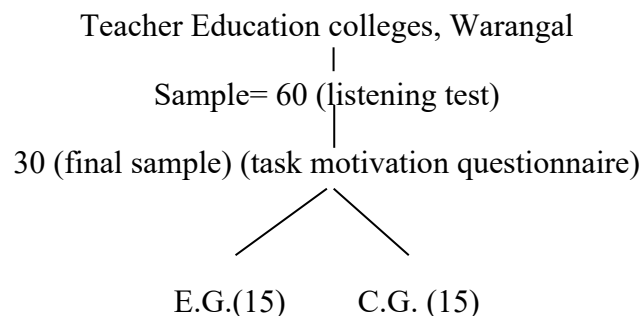model to develop a questionnaire to know the motivational levels of learners for their study purposes.

Weaver (2012) states that formative assessment can be used as an aspect of feedback which can be used to know the ability of the learner to perform the task, the difficulty level of the pedagogical task, and ways to improve learners' task performance. Panadero & Jonsson (2013) signifies the uses of rubrics as building the self-efficacy of learners, achieving trust in the learning process, reducing anxiety levels, and helping learners with their goals. Along with these two scaffolding strategies other strategies are employed in the intervention phase.

Research questions:
1. How does the use of scaffolding strategies improve the listening task motivation levels of learners in blended mode?
2. How does the use of scaffolding strategies improve the listening comprehension levels of low language proficiency learners?

Method

The sampling technique adopted for the study is random purposive sampling (Sandelowski, 2000; Teddlie & Yu, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). The selection process of the sample is provided below:

Teacher Education colleges, Warangal
|
Sample= 60 (listening test)
|
30 (final sample) (task motivation questionnaire)

E.G.(15)   C.G. (15)

For the present study, a sample of 30 pre-service teachers from different teacher education colleges in Warangal, India is selected. A pre-test post-test control group design is adopted for this study. The sample is given a task motivation questionnaire and is randomly categorised into the experimental (n=15) and control group (n=15). In the Intervention phase, the experimental group is provided the instruction based on the model whereas the traditional group received normal instruction.

Tools used: Listening test based on Aptis, Task motivation questionnaire (Agnesia, 2010), learner feedback questionnaire (Ma & Lee, 2021).

Aptis test is a language proficiency test developed by British Council. The Aptis listening test comprises of questions which includes A1 (listen to a short

monologue to answer questions), A2 (listen to short monologues to identify specific pieces of Information), B1 (listen to short monologues and conversations to identify factual information), B2 (listen to a dialogue between two speakers and identify whose opinion matches with the statement given). The task motivation questionnaire used for the study was adapted from the questionnaire provided by Agnesia (2010). Learner feedback questionnaire is adapted from the questionnaire developed by Ma & Lee (2021).

Intervention procedure:

The Intervention phase follows Willis (1996) model. One full task phase was implemented throughout the intervention. The task focused on listening strategies and also followed the model mentioned in this paper. The descriptors of the scored rubrics are discussed with the sample and practiced before using them. The intervention lasted for two weeks excluding the pre-test.

Inputs: The learners were given some videos selected from YouTube (ted talks, Educational videos, short moral stories) in order to acquaint them with listening to the language in different contexts.

Pre-task: As part of the pre-task the learners were made into groups and the learners continued in the same groups throughout the intervention. The listening strategy chosen as per CEFR for this listening task was, 'understanding the main points (ideas) of any given video'. The learners were provided a topic 'dehydration and problems' through the whatsApp group. They were asked to gather words and ideas related to the topic.

Actual pre-task phase:

In this phase learners were shared the video related to the topic and also given a list of words and asked to fill-in a classification table and then they were given an objective test through Google form. Learners completed both the activities after interacting with each other. After completing the activity, they self-assessed their performance using scoring rubrics and also responded to feedback questionnaire.

while-task phase: Learners were asked to recheck their answers by reading the transcript of the video. Then they were asked to explain the classification table to their group members. For which the peers provided feedback. After that, the learners were asked to choose a YouTube video of their choice from a selected list of 5 videos based on the theme 'balanced diet'. At the end of the phase, learners completed the feedback questionnaire.

Post-task phase: students were asked to pay attention to the vocabulary in the video they have selected and were asked to use online dictionaries to check the meanings of the words. Then they have to draw a mind map to write the main points of the video they have selected. Then they were asked to explain the main points of the video to their peers whoever selected the same video. For that they will be provided peer feedback. After that Learners were asked to self-assess their performance for the second time.

As a follow-up activity, the learners were given another listening objective test through Google form. The learners are asked to listen to the video twice and answer the objective test. At the end of the phase learners' feedback is collected through Mentimeter application.

The control group is given normal instruction and learners are just given information about the listening strategy and also provided inputs. They are also encouraged to ask questions in the WhatsApp group.

Results

The results section include:
a. Intervention scores of the experimental group
b. Pre-test and post-test listening comprehension scores and pre-test and post-test task motivation scores of experimental and control groups.

Objective test scores of the experimental group during the intervention period are presented as follows:

Table 2:
Objective tests' mean scores of experimental group participants

Objective test no	Marks allotted	Mean scores
1	6 marks	5.31
2	6 marks	3.8
3	6 marks	4.9

The self-assessment and peer-assessment rubric scores of the experimental group are presented as following:

Table 3

Self-assessment	Mean scores	Peer-assessment	Mean scores
Pre-task phase	2.26	while-task phase	2.53
Post-task phase	2.46	post-task phase	2.8

As per the research questions 1 and 2 the data collected from the respondents is presented below.

The task motivation questionnaire has 10 questions. The Cronbach analysis was done for the questionnaire and the internal consistency is 0.93. In order to show the improvement in the task motivation levels of experimental group and control groups from pre to post-test levels a Wilcoxon signed rank test is used. The results are shown below:

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Pre and post task motivation scores of experimental group are given below:

Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Summary

Total N	15
Test Statistic	120.000
Standard Error	17.564
Standardized Test Statistic	3.416
Asymptotic Sig.(2-sided test)	<.001

Table 4:
pre and post task motivation results of experimental group

N=15	N=15
Min= 22.00	Min = 39.00
Max= 32.00	Max= 44.00
Mean= 25.133	Mean= 41.600
Std. dev = 3.2921	std. dev = 1.9198

Pre and post task motivation scores of control group are given below

Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Summary

Total N	15
Test Statistic	54.000
Standard Error	17.103
Standardized Test Statistic	-.351
Asymptotic Sig.(2-sided test)	.726

Table 5:
pre and post task motivation results of control group

N=15	N=15
Min= 22.00	Min = 22.00
Max= 37.00	Max= 35.00
Mean= 25.400	Mean= 25.267
Std. dev = 4.1369	std. dev = 3.2616

The overall mean scores (task motivation) of the participants in the experimental group improved in comparison with the mean scores of the control group participants.

Independent sample t-test is used to show the pre and post mean scores in the listening test of experimental and control groups. Pre-test listening mean scores of experimental group (n=15) is 3.4 and control group (n=15) is 4.4 is shown below-

Group Statistics					
	VAR00001	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
VAR00002	1.00	15	3.4000	.82808	.21381
	2.00	15	4.4000	1.50238	.38791

Table 6: pre-test listening mean scores of EG and CG

Post-test listening mean scores of experimental group (n=15) is 6 and control group (n=15) is 4.8 is shown below-

Group Statistics					
	VAR00003	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
VAR00004	1.00	15	6.0000	.65465	.16903
	2.00	15	4.8000	1.52128	.39279

Table 7: post-test listening mean scores of EG and CG

There is a significant improvement in the pre and post-test mean scores of the experimental group whereas the improvement in the pre and post-test mean scores of the control group is negligible.

Indeed the respondents used a range of strategies in general and the two scaffolding strategies in particular in order to successfully use the main listening strategy which is 'understanding the main points of any given video' as mentioned in CEFR.

Addressing research questions:
1. How does the use of scaffolding strategies improve the task motivation levels of learners in blended listening comprehension?

This question is answered by collecting feedback from respondents in all three task phases:

The learners' feedback questionnaire consists of 4 statements which is provided in all the task phases. The responses to all the questions are analysed with the help of Likert scale ratings:

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1. I enjoy working on this listening task.
   For this statement, all the participants chose 'neutral' option in pre-task phase, 'agree' option in the while-task phase and 'strongly agree' in the final task phase.
2. I think I will benefit from this task-based learning
   For this statement, all the participants chose 'agree' option in the pre and while-task phases and 'strongly agree' in the final task phase.
3. I feel confident that I will do well in this listening task
   For this statement, learners who scored more marks in the pre-test remained 'neutral' whereas learners who scored fewer marks in the pre-test chose 'disagree' option in the pre-task phase. In the while-task phase all the learners chose 'neutral' option and in the final task phase all the learners chose 'agree' option.
4. The strategies which I am learning will be useful to me
   For this statement, all the learners chose 'strongly agree' option in all the task phases.

Throughout the task the following strategies are used by the learners: Memory strategies: grouping, semantic mapping cognitive: formally practicing with writing system (using transcript), repeating. Metacognitive strategies: paying attention Social: co-operating with others. Affective strategies: discussing feelings Social: co-operating with peers.

It is important to improve the listening skills of learners so that they can comprehend and explain what they have listened to. This process will improve the motivational levels of learners which will impact their learning levels. With self and peer assessment, the learners can get feedback on their own performance. The instructor is able to offer support accordingly. This process will help learners to overcome their L2 listening problems (Ahmadi Safa & Motaghi, 2021). Simultaneously, they can use their listening skills in a productive way. In the present study, the learners self-assessed their performance twice and received peer-assessment feedback twice. The self-assessment rubrics also served the purpose of reflection. The Instructor guided learners to focus on their challenging areas 'grammar in context, vocabulary in context, finding the main details, and explaining all the details. The learners are encouraged to listen to the video again till they laid focus on the meaning. Slowly, the learners came to know that they can communicate the meaning with the help of language they have listened to. They came to understand that language learning and communication go together. With this understanding, their motivational levels improved.

2. Does the use of scaffolding strategies improve the listening comprehension levels of low language proficiency learners?

The results (See Tables 6 & 7) indicated an improvement in learners' listening comprehension levels. Along with this self-assessment and peer-assessment rubrics helped learners to improve their listening skills in a communicative way. The teacher support is possible and meaningfully done with this kind of Intervention. Even the learners can help each other with feedback in the form of peer-assessment rubrics. In this process, learners can work together as per their comfort, trust and also motivational levels. This will help the instructional process to be flexible (teacher and learners, among learners) and effective (Milliner & Dimoski, 2021).

Conclusion

The study has two important views to share with the teaching community about the implementation of TBLT in blended classrooms. The teacher has to focus on the motivational levels of learners along with their needs and design tasks accordingly. Along with that, scaffolding strategies are needed for low proficiency learners or learners who are new to TBLT approach. These strategies can be planned as per the classroom requirements and as per the mode of Instruction. The study has discussed two such strategies which will improve blended classroom instruction.***

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Appendix:
Task motivation questionnaire (pre-post) (Agnesia, 2010)
Autonomy
I do a listening task because I wanted to
I do a listening task because it is required
Competence
I feel competent doing a listening task
I always want to better myself by analysing my performance through listening tasks
Relatedness
I am able to communicate by giving feedback and comments to my classmates" posting.

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When I had a problem doing the listening task, I was able to ask the instructor for help

Listening tasks help me to improve my listening strategies which is helpful to improve my listening skills

Listening task help me to improve listening strategies which is helpful for my teaching profession

Intrinsic Motivation (Enjoyment/Interest)

I enjoy doing listening tasks

Effort/Importance

I try to get more information and help in order to be able to do the listening task.

Listening comprehension strategies list (Teng, 1998)

Memory strategies: Grouping, Associating/Elaborating, Placing new words into a context, Using imagery , Semantic mapping, Using keywords, Representing sounds in memory, Structured reviewing, Using physical response or sensation, Using mechanical techniques. Cognitive strategies: Repeating, Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems, Recognizing and using formulas and patterns, Practicing naturalistically, Getting the idea quickly, Using resources for receiving and sending messages , Reasoning deductively, Analyzing expressions, Analyzing contrastively across languages, Translating, Transferring, Taking notes, Summarizing, Highlighting. Compensation strategies: Using linguistic clues, using non-linguistic clues. Metacognitive strategies: Overviewing and linking with already known material, paying attention, Delaying speech production to focus on listening, Finding out about language learning, Organizing, Setting goals and objectives, Identifying the purpose of a language task, Planning for a language task, Seeking practice opportunities, Self-monitoring, Self-evaluating. Affective strategies: Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation , Using music, Using laughter, Making positive statements, Taking risks widely, Rewarding yourself, Listening to your body, Using a checklist, Writing a language learning diary, Discussing your feeling with someone else. Social strategies: Asking for clarification and verification1, Cooperating with peers, Cooperating with proficient users, Developing cultural understanding, Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings.