Journal of Education and Educational Research
ISSN: 2957-9465 | Vol. 10, No. 1, 2024

The Application of TBLT to English Listening Teaching in Junior High School

-- A Case Study in Chengdu XX Middle School

Yue Xie

School of Foreign Languages, Sichuan Normal University, Sichuan 610100, China

Abstract: As an integral part of English learning, listening teaching plays a significant role in the process of English teaching in junior high school. Since task-based language teaching was advocated in the English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022), its effects on English learning have been explored. However, the traditional approach is still commonly used in junior high school English listening teaching, which involves listening to a recording, completing listening exercises and checking answers. This leads to the inefficiency of English listening class and the decrease in students' motivation. Based on the theoretical study of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), the author tries to combine the theory of task-based approach with real English listening class. The author discusses the application of TBLT in listening teaching from the pre-task, task cycle and language focus stage based on Willis' (1996) framework for TBLT. In addition, a three-month empirical study is carried in the two classes of Grade Eight in Chengdu XXX High School, which aims to answer the following questions: 1) How does the implementation of TBLT in English listening teaching influence students' interest? 2) Does the application of TBLT in English listening teaching help students improve their listening ability? 3) Does the application of TBLT in English listening teaching help to enhance students' listening strategies? Through analysis of interview and listening test, the author finds that students' English listening interest, listening ability and listening strategies can be improved with TBLT. Finally, the author puts forward some suggestions on the application of TBLT to English listening teaching, aiming to help English teachers improve the teaching efficiency and encourage them to apply TBLT to English listening teaching.

Keywords: Listening; Task-based Language Teaching; English Listening Teaching in Junior High School.

1. Introduction

Listening is a crucial language skill in English learning because listening is an integral part of daily communication. Many linguists hold that listening is the core in the process of the second language acquisition (SLA), so the teachers are required to pay more attention to English listening teaching. However, current listening teaching in junior high school is not effective enough to enable students to communicate and interact with others in English smoothly. Generally speaking, the reasons for the weakness in English listening can be summarized into two aspects. The first reason is the teacher's teaching methods, and the other is the students' difficulties.

Against this background, it is urgent to figure out effective approach to teach English listening. Therefore, the author conducts the experiment during the three-month internship in Chengdu XX middle School, trying to prove that the TBLT is an effective approach to increase students' listening interest, improve students' listening ability and strategies. Students in Chengdu XX middle School have a good foundation in English, but sometimes they lack interest in English listening due to exam-orientated education. In addition, teachers mainly use the traditional approach to teach English listening, which leads to inefficiency of listening class and students' loss of interest. The thesis aims to study the effects of the application of TBLT to English listening teaching.

1.1. Research Background

Listening is one of the skills of English learning. The China National Ministry of Education emphasizes the importance of listening skills for the sake of effective teaching and teacher-student interaction, so it is obvious that more attention should be given to English listening teaching (Jiang, 2016). In addition, with the development of the new curriculum reform, the goal of English teaching is getting closer and closer to the core competence of English subject, among which language competence is the basis. It emphasizes the importance of developing students' listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing skills. Moreover, among the English skills, language learners find that listening is one of the most difficult skills to acquire. According to the data, the total time spent on communicating, the proportion of listening part takes up as high as 40-50%. Although listening plays an extremely vital role in daily communication, it is usually ignored in English classroom and the problems of "deaf English" and "dumb English" are common. The reasons for the weakness in English listening can mainly be summarized into two aspects. The first reason is the teacher's teaching methods, and the other is the students' difficulties.

There still exist many problems in listening teaching in junior high schools due to the teachers' teaching methods. First, little attention is paid to English listening teaching and teachers spend less time and energy on listening teaching. The scores of the listening part are lower than the writing and reading parts in the exam. Besides, it's more efficient to improve students' reading and writing abilities through reading, writing and grammar teaching. Second, teachers are unable to find the effective way to teach English listening. Plenty of teachers still prefer to use the traditional methods to teach, which would start by listening to the listening material and then answer some questions and finally check the answers. The traditional listening process mainly focuses on the answers rather than the improvement of listening skills and strategies. Third, many English teachers regard listening

exercises as listening tests. Students can hardly ever get improvement in listening skills through the "listen-check-answer" process because they have few opportunities to learn listening strategies, such as predicting based on pictures, making inferences and so forth. Fourth, it has always been teacher-centered, so students are provided with few opportunities to participate in meaningful listening tasks. Accordingly, students usually act passively in the listening class. In this way, the traditional way makes the learning atmosphere boring and students lose interest in the English listening class.

Students also are faced with the following problems in listening teaching. First, the listening process is quite challenging for students. Students quickly forget what is said because they have little or no control about the speed of the listening materials. Unlike reading, it's not allowed to pause or stop to figure out the meaning of the listening materials. Second, many students try to make clear of every sentence and word they've heard. Moreover, most students think in Chinese rather than in English when listen to the English listening material. Thus, they tend to translate English into Chinese, which may affect their listening comprehension (Yang, 2019). Third, some psychological barriers may hinder students' listening comprehension. For example, students may be nervous and anxious because listening is usually the first part of the English examination and the listening material can only be played once. Therefore, some key information may easily be neglected and students may get frustrated when they cannot recognize certain vocabulary or understand the meaning of the listening material. Fourth, students have a limited vocabulary. A wide range of listening topics and vocabulary in the listening materials make listening more difficult. The speakers may use words the listeners don't know or are not familiar with, which may cause them to stop and think about the meaning of that word and thus cause them to miss the next part of the speech.

1.2. Research Purpose and Significance

There are not many empirical studies which apply TBLT in listening teaching, particularly in junior high schools. Most of the research subjects related to task-based teaching methods are senior high students and college students in reading or speaking. However, it has received less attention in the listening class in junior high school. Besides, many teachers are still facing some problems in teaching listening. Therefore, finding an effective method to teach listening is conductive to improving the current situation of English listening teaching. Based on the background above, the author conducts an experiment during the experience of working as an intern in Chengdu XX middle School and applies TBLT to listening teaching, aiming to figure out the effective ways to improve students' listening ability and interest.

The significance of this thesis can be summarized as follows. First, after investigation and experiment, the attitude of the teachers and students on listening gradually changes and they pay more attention to TBLT. Second, the thesis examines that junior high school students' interest in English listening learning, their listening ability and listening strategies can be improved by applying TBLT. Third, the thesis can provide the front-line teachers with some significant suggestions and implications when they teach English listening. The present study is to explore an efficient way of listening by using task-based language teaching and practice its effectiveness in listening teaching. And the significance of the research is to improve English listening teaching in junior high school and promote the reform of English listening teaching.

1.3. Overall Framework of the Thesis

Six chapters are included in this thesis. Chapter one is the introduction. Three aspects are included: the research background, the research significance and purpose, and the overall framework of this thesis. Chapter two is the introduction of TBLT, which includes the definition and principles of TBLT, research of TBLT in listening teaching at home and abroad and the theoretical basis of TBLT. Chapter three is about the experimental study of TBLT. Chapter four discusses the application of TBLT in listening teaching from the pre-task, task cycle and language focus stage based on Willis' (1996) framework for TBLT. The fifth chapter is about the effects of TBLT on English listening in junior high school. Through the three-month experiment, the author finds that students' listening interest, listening ability and listening strategies improved with the application of TBLT. In the sixth chapter, some suggestions are put forward. Firstly, teachers should inspire the listening interest and motivation of students. Secondly, teachers should change their perception of TBLT and their roles. Thirdly, teachers should adjust the listening material of the textbooks. The last part is the conclusion of the whole thesis.

2. Defining Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT)

2.1. Definition of TBLT

Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a teaching method emerged in the 1980s, which emphasizes "learning by doing". It originates from Dewey's view about the importance of experience of effective learning (Ellis, 2019) and emphasizes purposeful and functional language use by performing real-life tasks in classrooms for students to experience learning (Hu, 2013). The definitions of tasks suggest that TBLT focus on the course of learning as on its products and it is organized for opportunity to use and learn language. Task-based language teaching method refers to the ability of students to master and use language by completing various specific tasks. It is a further development of communicative teaching approach and the goal of task-based language teaching is to combine the language classroom with the target language environment. The adoption of TBLT has changed the teacher-centred approach to foreign language teaching and students' passive learning. Students will learn how native speakers communicate with each other by completing various tasks. Ma (2019) notes that "This teaching method fully develops learners' cognitive ability by participating, experiencing, interacting, communicating a cooperating, carrying out two education ideas; 'student-centered' and 'human-oriented.'" (p. 24). TBLT, which emphasizes the use of language in real context, is the combination of form-focused teaching and communication focused teaching. Therefore, TBLT is worthy of being popularized as an effective language teaching method.

2.2. Principles of TBLT

Although different people have given different principles about TBLT, they have some similar points. The following principles are drawn from the common points summarized by Gong and Luo. These principles are regarded as the guideline

and clear direction for the application of TBLT.

(1) Principle of combining form and meaning

Most scholars believe that learners should learn the meaning as well as the form. Task designers should not neglect that meaning and function are as important as form. Therefore, a good task designer should fully consider these three aspects, which is conducive to improving learners' language ability.

(2) Principle of authenticity

Task-based language teaching emphasizes the authenticity of language and situation. Therefore, the language materials and tasks should be as authentic as possible. Some activities that will take place in real daily communication situations can be designed.

(3) Principle of recycling

The development of language proficiency requires frequent application and circular contact in various situations. In the process of completing different tasks, students are provided opportunities to repeatedly use the target language, which is beneficial to language learning.

(4) Principle of task dependence

Nunan (1999) proposes that task dependence means the difficulty of task design. He holds that the tasks ought to be from simple to complex. The easy tasks may reduce learners' psychological barriers, such as nervousness and anxiety. In this way, students' language ability can be improved through each task as learners complete tasks step by step gradually.

(5) Principle of learning by doing

Students should have sufficient time and energy to practice or participate in tasks. They can learn languages through completing different kinds of tasks, such as from imitative tasks to complex tasks.

(6) Principle of scaffolding

Students are supposed to get enough attention and support in learning. Scaffolding is a key factor of effective teaching, which includes providing hints, adapting material and so on. Students can acquire knowledge through teacher's support and more capable peers' help. For example, teachers should stimulate learners' existing knowledge or provide students with relevant background information before performing tasks.

(7) Principle of interaction

Interaction theory is one of the theoretical foundations of task-based language teaching. A good learning atmosphere in the process of completing tasks can be created through interaction and communication between the teachers and students and students.

2.3. Theoretical Basis of Application of TBLT to English Listening Teaching

Task-based teaching model is proposed based on certain theoretical foundation. Studying on the theoretical foundation of task-based language teaching model is beneficial to get a better understanding of task-based language teaching and apply it to practice.

2.3.1. Constructivism Learning Theory

In the 20th century, different perspectives emerged as the continuous development of the theory of constructivism and they were applied in education. The constructivists hold that knowledge is constructed by listeners' own learning when they communicate with others. Vygotsky (1986) is one of the representatives of social constructivist theory. In his view of point, individual' development is not a single activity. It takes place in a social context, in the social interaction and coordination of people's activities. In addition, Vygotsky emphasizes the interaction and contact with the target language in the a social context, and language learning is best achieved through the dynamic interaction between teachers and learners, as well as between learners. According to the concept of constructivism, learning is a dynamic process. Students' development is the core of teaching, thus teachers should provide students with lots of opportunities for learning and expose them to natural and meaningful cooperation. Meanwhile, creating a collaborative learning environment and offering a good environment for group learning as well as individual learning are of great importance. More opportunities ought to be created for students to acquire knowledge, identify problems and ask questions. Then students can construct a knowledge system of their own and use learning strategies.

2.3.2. Language Acquisition Theory

Language acquisition theory is of significance to theoretical source of TBLT. Language acquisition is a process. In the process, information transfers from the pattern of "the information of arousing attention" to "information understood" and "information absorbed", forming implicit knowledge and becoming explicit knowledge finally (Krashen,1970). Implicit and explicit knowledge is the major source of the second language competency. A stable language system established by understanding language input in the learning process is implicit language, which is the principal support to communicate with others in foreign languages. The main task of TBLT is therefore to enable students to master a number of language expression methods, to build their own language system during the process of study and to gradually improve their language skills by participating in language activities and completing different tasks in foreign languages.

Moreover, the four basic conditions relating to language study in language acquisition theory are also the main theoretical sources of TBLT. Generally, the four basic conditions are: first, it needs a large number of solutions of language input, and the language information occurs in certain language context; second, it is necessary to have the motivation of using language, which is the driving force of language learning; third, there should be the opportunities of using the language we learned, so that it can benefit the consolidation and updating of the language we learned; finally, there should be certain teaching conditions, including software and hardware.

2.3.3. Humanistic Psychology

Humanistic theory is also an important theoretical basis of TBLT. Humanistic psychology believes that the teachers and the learning environment are of great importance. Besides, the task can be completed only through the active participation of the learning when students with intrinsic learning potential carry out effective learning. Students' initiative can be fully brought out if the teacher can respect students' willingness and believe in their potential abilities. Meanwhile, a harmonious relationship between teachers and students can facilitate the learning process and the completion of tasks. Therefore, students can experience the joy of success in the process of completing tasks and give full play to their potential.

2.4. Research of TBLT in Listening Teaching

In the 1980s, the study of listening teaching and TBLT first emerged abroad and attracted increasingly scholars. The theory of task-based teaching as well as its application in

English listening teaching are paid much more attention by scholars. In Willis' (1996) book A Framework for Task-based Learning, the framework for TBLT is put forward. It shows how to apply TBLT, which includes three stages, pre-task, task cycle and language focus stage. Ellis (2019) makes a comprehensive introduction of the current research situations of task-based language teaching from the perspectives of other experts, combining theory with practice.

Researchers abroad conduct many research and experiments and prove the positive effects of TBLT in English listening. Harmer (2000) holds that TBLT has a positive effect on English listening and mentions the use of tasks and how to teach listening step by step. He suggests that there are some activities that can be used, such as jigsaw listening, arranging pictures and so on. Chou (2017) explores a task-based language teaching approach to developing metacognitive strategies for listening comprehension. The results show that the students in the experimental class have improved their metacognitive awareness of listening strategies, and their listening performance has surpassed that of the control class.

Lots of scholars at home and abroad have done many research on introducing TBLT to English listening teaching. From the above scholars' previous overview of task-based listening teaching, we can see that scholars have made significant discussions from different perspectives.

3. An Experimental Study of Task-based Language Teaching

The author conducts the experiment during the three-month internship in Chengdu XXX High School, trying to prove that the TBLT is an effective approach to increase students' listening interest and improve students' listening ability.

3.1. Research Questions

The thesis aims to study the effects of the implementation. The research questions are listed as follows:

(1) How does the implementation of TBLT in English listening teaching influence students' interest?

(2) Does the application of TBLT in English listening teaching help students improve their listening ability?

(3) Does the application of TBLT in English listening teaching help to enhance students' listening strategies?

3.2. Research Subjects

The research subjects of the listening test in the experiment are 94 students of Class 6 and Class 13, grade 8 in XX middle School in Sichuan. Class 6 with 48 students is the experimental class (EC) and Class 13 with students 46 is the controlled class (CC). The author has worked as an English internship teacher for three months. As for this study, Class 6 was taught with TBLT, while Class 6 was taught with the traditional method during the experiment.

According to the author's investigation, the two classes have something in common.

The number of a class. The number of Class 6 is similar to Class 13 and both classes are also equally divided between boys and girls.

The objective condition. Class 6 and Class 13 are taught by the same teacher and teaching materials used are the same in both classes. Moreover, both of the two classes have one listening class once a week.

The result of pre-test. Before the experiment, there was no significant difference in the listening ability of students in the two classes.

3.3. Research Methods

3.3.1. Test

Before the experiment began, the author conducts a listening test in the EC and the CC to investigate the English listening performance of the two classes before the experiment begins. The author uses the final exam for Grade Seven of XXX District as reference. The full mark is 30 points and the time of the test is 30 minutes. The test is conducted in the classroom and both classes are tested at the same time. After three months of the listening instruction experiment, the EC and the CC are given the English listening test again. The two classes answer the questions separately and the time is 30 minutes. The scores of the tests are both 30 points. The author uses the listening part of the mid-term exam of Grade Eight of XXX District to examine the effects and makes a comparison between the scores of the EC and the CC.

3.3.2. Interview

The interview method is a face-to-face survey of learners by the researcher and is a way of obtaining relevant information through verbal communication. The interview involves 6 interviewees in the EC. Each two students, one girl and one boy, are selected from different proficiency levels, advanced, intermediate, and low level according to students' listening scores of last semester assessment provided by the English teacher of Class 6. The questions in the interview are as follows.

(1) What do you think about this listening class? Is it interesting or boring? You can talk about the specific reasons.

(2) Can you use some listening strategies, such as making a prediction, taking shorthand while listening?

(3) What changes do you have after this mode of listening classes?

(4) How do you think teachers should improve in listening class?

3.4. Research Procedure

The research lasts for three months, from September 1st, to November 25, and it consists of three steps.

The first step consists of pre-test. The implementation of the pre-test aims to know whether students of Class 6 and Class 13 have the same English level. To ensure the validity and reliability of the test at the same time, the author chose the final exam listening test for Grade seven from XXX District as the pre-test paper. There are 30 items, and the total score is 30 points. The test form, location, equipment, and test content of the listening test are the same. What's more, the author had the first interview in the experimental class on their viewpoints of the present English listening teaching.

The second step, the experiment from September 1st, to November 25. During the implementation of the experiment, all students use the same timetable and materials. The difference is that task-based English teaching mode is applied in the CC, and the traditional teaching mode is used in EC.

The third step consists of the post-test, and interview. After a three-month experiment, the post-test is adopted in both two classes in order to test whether TBLT is more helpful to improve students' listening abilities. The author chooses the final exam listening test for Grade Eight from XXX District as the post-test paper (Appendix B). The purpose of interview is adopted to know students' is to find out whether students' listening interests and listening strategies in the EC have been improved.

4. Application of TBLT to English Listening Teaching

First, the author will first introduce Willis' (1996) framework for TBLT in detail. She points out the sequence and process for task-based activities into three stages: pre-task, task cycle and language focus. They are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Willis' framework for TBLT

Pre-task
Introduction of the topic and task
Activate language
Task instruction
Task-cycle
Task, do the tasks
Planning, prepare to present their tasks
Report, give a report on their tasks
Language Focus
Analysis
Practice

4.1. Pre-task Stage

In Rost's (1994) opinion, pre-task phase is actually a kind of work that is done to do some preparation for the whole task, which is supposed to make the context explicit, clarify purposes and establish roles, procedures and goals for listening. In the first pre-task stage, language learners should be explained and motivated to perform the task then be exposed to comprehensible language input (Ji, 2018). Meanwhile, the objective of this stage also includes raising students' awareness of practicing listening skills, such as predicting before listening, shorthand and note-taking and so on.

(1) Introduction of the topics and task

The teacher should introduce the learning aims, give the listening tasks, including the topic and the listening strategy they will use in the class. For example, before listening the materials about Easter, teacher should introduce the topic by showing some pictures or videos, sharing its history and traditions.

(2) Activate language

The teacher can introduce the background materials of the topic by using pictures, videos and personal experiences. For instance, when teaching Unit 6 I'm Going to Study Computer Science in the first book of the PEP edition, the author shows some pictures of her family, which note the professions of my family members. After looking at these pictures, students describe the professions of the teacher's family members.

(3) Task instruction

The teacher explains the concept of each listening strategy, such as making a prediction through the questions or pictures, writing down some key words, making an inference and so on. When students have a better understanding of the teaching objectives, they will be more confident in the process of completing tasks.

Moreover, teachers can provide a model or performing a similar task. Providing a model is actually a kind of presenting. In this phase, the students do not have to participate in the task. They can only observe how the task is completed instead. Moreover, some activities can be used to prepare students for the listening class and sufficient time should be left for them to plan how to complete the tasks in groups.

4.2. Task Cycle Stage

Roxon (1987) explains that it's unnecessary for students to spend their energy worrying about explaining long questions or giving complete answers at the task-cycle stage. That means that students should focus their attention on listening comprehension itself, rather than on worrying about grammar or spelling. The purpose of this stage is to build students confidence, stimulate their learning motivation, and focus on language fluency. In the process of completing the tasks, students' listening skills can be improved and teachers will develop their listening strategies at this stage (Hou, 2015).

(1) Task

During the task phrase, the students perform the task, typically in small groups. Tasks such as listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experiences and creative task can be designed. The teacher's task is to supervise or encourage the students to take part in the learning task.

(2) Planning

This is the most important step in the task process. What students should be doing is improving their listening skills, developing the use of listening strategies and acquiring the knowledge they should be learning as they complete the task. The teacher should pay attention to the cultivation of students' abilities in the following aspects: the ability to hear and identify words; the ability to distinguish between main ideas and details; the ability to take shorthand while listening; the ability to think in images; problem solving ability, etc.

(3) Report

Students can report the results of their learning tasks to the class orally, in writing or in recording. For example, their understanding of recording materials and the solutions to difficulties. During this phase, the students perform the task, typically limited to one of an observer or counselor. Thus the reason for it being a more student-centered methodology. Having completed the task, the students prepare a written or oral report to present to the class.

4.3. Language Focus Stage

This stage will help students to summarize and organize the listening skills and strategies used in the process of listening. It may include language items that the students are using, problems that students have. This stage not only aims to provide an opportunity for students to concentrate on key language items, but also cultivate students' language awareness in learning English.

Language analysis activities

The teacher can design tasks to help students explore and analyze language phenomena. Students do some linguistic activities related to listening in the task implement stage. The teacher can lead students to pay attention to key phrases and sentence patterns in the process of completing the listening tasks.

Language practice activities

Practice is usually a controlled exercise. Different activities such as chorus reading and memorizing exercises can be designed to help students get familiar with the fixed sentence patterns and expressions. For instance, the teacher asks students to review the language items they have learned in this stage.

In addition, activities in the language focus stage also provide students an opportunity to 'reflect' on the language items of the listening materials they hear from the aspect of sound, vocabulary and grammar (Roxon, 1987).

5. Effects of TBLT on English Listening in Junior High School

Firstly, the author uses test and interview as research instruments in order to prove that applying TBLT to English listening has positive effects on students' listening interest, listening ability and listening strategies in junior high school. Firstly, the interview involves 6 interviewees in the EC. Each two students, one girl and one boy, are selected from different proficiency levels, advanced, intermediate, and low level according to students' listening scores of last semester assessment provided by the English teacher of Class 6.

Secondly, the author collects some information and analyses the results of students' listening scores of the final exam for Grade Seven of XXX District. The author finds there is merely no difference between the EC and CC from the individual scores, passing rates, excellent rate and average points. Therefore, one can know that the listening ability of the two classes has merely no difference. After the experiment, the author uses the listening part of the mid-term exam of Grade Eight of XXX District to examine the effects and makes a comparison between the scores of the EC and the CC.

5.1. Increasing Students' Listening Interest

The interview of students in the EC in XX middle School at the end of the experiment proves that students' listening interest has increased. The part transcript of the interview can be seen in extract 1.

Extract 1:

Q1: What do you think about this listening class, is it interesting or boring? You can talk about the specific reasons.

The following are the transcripts of students' replies.

S1 (a girl from low level): I'm more expected to have an English listening class and I think it's really interesting to complete those listening tasks. In addition, I really like the videos at the beginning of the class.

S2 (a boy from middle level): The English listening class used to be boring, but now I really enjoy English listening class because we can have some interesting activities.

S3 (a boy from high level): I'm really interested in the listening lesson. It's quite different from the previous English listening class and the classroom atmosphere is relaxing. I'm not worried about answering questions in front of the class.

Through the interview, the author finds students in EC think English listening is not boring. S1, S2 and S3 express their love for English listening class to different degrees. In terms of listening tasks and activities, S1 and S2 think the activities in the listening class are interesting and attractive because the activities designed in task-based listening teaching are closely related to the real life of students and stimulate their awareness of active participation. S3 emphasizes the importance of learning atmosphere. Some English songs or videos are introduced and applied in listening class so students are interested in them and feel relaxed in the listening class. Therefore, students of different proficiency levels, advanced, intermediate, and low level benefit from listening tasks and effectively improve students' interest in English listening.

5.2. Enhancing Students' Listening Ability

Before the experiment, the author collects some information and analyses the results of students' listening scores of the final exam for Grade Seven of XXX District. The data are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis of pre-test

Class	Number of students	Full marks	24-29 marks	18-23 marks	0-18 marks	Average marks	Excellent rate	Pass rate
CC	46	4	20	15	7	23.3	33.3%	84.7%
EC	48	3	23	14	8	22.9	35.4%	83.3%

As shown in Table 2, there are four students in the CC and three students in the EC got full marks. The average marks in the CC and EC are 23.3 and 22.9 respectively, and the excellent marks, pass rate in the EC and CC are similar. Thus, we can know that the listening ability of the two classes has merely no difference.

Table 3. Analysis of post-test

Class	Number of students	Full marks	24-29 marks	18-23 marks	0-18 marks	Average marks	Excellent rate	Pass rate
CC	46	3	22	16	5	22.4	32.6%	89.1%
EC	48	9	25	11	3	24.8	43.7%	93.7%

From Table 3 above, one can find that there is an obvious difference between the test scores of the EC and the CC after a three-month experiment. Based on the average scores, one can clearly see that EC has made a progress of 1.9 points and CC has got an improvement of only 0.1 point compared with their performances before. Observed from the table and after a task-based language teaching for three months, one can clearly see that the average scores, the passing rates and excellent rates of the experimental class are higher than those of the students in the CC. In the process of implementing the task-based teaching method, the author designs different tasks to enable students to master and flexibly use different listening strategies, such as making a prediction based on the choice of questions, pictures and topic sentences, writing down some key words while listening, making an inference and so on. The listening ability of the students in the EC is obviously higher than those students in the CC. Besides, the application of TBLT to English listening teaching results in

the improvement of students' English listening scores.

5.3. Improving Students' Listening Strategies

The interview in the EC at the end of the experiment also proves that students' listening strategies have improved, such as making a prediction through the questions or pictures, writing down some key words, making an inference and so on. The part transcript of the interview can be seen in extract 2.

Extract 2:

Q2: Can you use some listening strategies, such as making a prediction, taking shorthand while listening?

The following are the transcripts of students' replies.

S4 (a boy from low level): I tried to write down all the information of the listening content while listening in the past, thus I always miss some key information. However, through learning some listening strategies, I know how to take notes while listening now.

S5 (a girl from middle level): I'm less nervous when listening because I can make predictions based on questions and pictures given. Besides, I really like listening to other different listening materials such as songs, programs and videos rather than just the exercises in the English textbook.

S6 (a girl from high level): I learned some useful listening skills, such as predicting, making inferences and so on. I think listening strategies are really effective for our English listening.

Through analysis of interview, the author figures out that students' listening strategies are improved. S4 knows how to make notes while listening and S5 realizes the importance of prediction. More importantly, all of the three students realize the importance of listening strategies. S5 expresses that she really likes listening to different materials. In the teaching process, besides the listening materials in the textbook, the author also selects other listening materials for the students in the EC. The listening materials are rich in subject matter and gradually deepen in difficulty, so as to conduct specialized listening training to improve listening strategies. S6 expresses that listening strategies are important. More attention should be paid to the training of listening strategies, then students can put listening skills or strategies into use through listening training, such as making a prediction through the questions or pictures, writing down some key words, making an inference and so on. After the experiment, students' self-confidence also increases as they master listening skills and strategies.

6. Reflection and Enlightenment

The task-based listening classroom is based on the active participation of students and the introduction of tasks, which increases the authenticity, interest and interactivity of listening learning. However, the classroom design of task-based listening teaching puts forward higher requirements for teachers' teaching quality. Before class, teachers need a lot of time to think about how to design listening tasks, the conditions for the implementation of the tasks, the schedule of the tasks and so on. Moreover, task-based listening teaching not only puts forward higher requirements for teachers, but also requires students to actively participate and cooperate. Thus, the author provides the front-line teachers some implications as follows to better apply TBLT to English listening class.

6.1. Changing English Teachers' Perception of TBLT and Roles

The traditional way to teach English listening leads to the inefficiency of English listening class and the decrease in students' motivation. Thus, changing teachers' perception of TBLT and their roles is extremely important, which will create a student-centred atmosphere. Therefore, the importance of listening teaching should be paid more attention and both the teachers and students should have reflections after completing listening tasks.

Firstly, the importance of listening teaching should be paid more attention and teachers should spend more time and energy on English listening teaching. The teacher plays the role of facilitator and guide and the centre of instruction in English listening class is the students. Task-based language teaching has changed the teacher-centered teaching method in traditional teaching. In the process of teaching, teachers take students' interest and needs into full consideration so that the student-centred atmosphere can be created and students' full potential can be brought out. In task-based language teaching activities, teachers are supposed to pay attention to the students' initiative in the learning process based on the knowledge and life experience they already have and reasonably extend to their experiences.

Secondly, teachers should have reflections after class and students also need to have self-assessment after task completions. In this way, teachers can be aware of their own merits and demerits during the process of teaching listening and then do some and make some adjustments and improvements according to the needs of students and the objectives of the listening class. As for teachers, for example, maybe they find some tasks are not appropriate for the students after practice, they should come up with better ones to take the place.

6.2. Inspiring Students' Listening Interest and Motivation

Inspiring the students' listening interest is of great importance and it is the first thing that a teacher should do in English listening class. Only when students are interested in listening class will they be willing to participate in listening activities and completing listening tasks. The following are the three suggestions. A relaxing learning environment should be created, group work can be used and the listening tasks should be related to real life.

Firstly, teachers need to focus on the importance of listening and providing students with a relaxing learning environment. For instance, in the pre-task stage, teachers can make good use of vivid pictures and videos to prepare and motivate students. Moreover, teachers can give students a sense of achievement from time to time so that the success-oriented atmosphere can be created. In this way, students can relive their nervousness and anxiety and are willing to listen and speak in English classroom and. Thus, students are no longer passive audience in the class and they are more willing to participate in listening tasks.

Secondly, group work can be used in listening class so that students' learning activeness and initiative can be explored. There are usually near fifty students in one class. Due to the large member of the class, the group leaders can help the teachers and play a part in supervision on other classmates. The rest of group members can cooperate with each other with more opportunities to use English to complete tasks.

Thirdly, the listening tasks should be related to real life. Activities in class should be as close to the real world as possible because language is a tool for communication. In addition, the teaching methods and materials used should be focused on language information rather than the media. For example, when teaching Unit 8 *How do You Make a Banana Milk Shake?* in the first book of Grade Eight, the author prepares the things of making a banana milk shake, such as two bananas, some milk, some plastic cups and a blender and brings them to classroom. Students are very interested in these activities and engage more in the listening tasks.

6.3. Adjusting Listening Materials of the Textbooks

Adapting and adjusting listening material is necessary in English listening class. Teachers ought to bear in mind that listening materials should not be limited only to exercises in textbooks and the authenticity is a vital factor when teachers choose listening material and design listening tasks.

Firstly, listening materials should not be limited only to exercises in textbooks. Teachers can find listening materials from other sources, which will expose students to a variety of topics and provide students with a lot of comprehensible input. In addition, the listening materials are rich in subject matter and progressively more difficult, so that students need to receive specialized training in listening strategies. For example, students are guided to use their background knowledge to construct unknown information in the listening materials, to guess the main gist of the listening material through the title or the questions given, to listen to the main idea of the listening text and master the key words and phrases.

Secondly, the authenticity of material should be stressed when teachers choose listening material and design listening tasks. Authentic materials can expose learners to real language situation as it is usually used in the real world. The listening materials can be the speech, the conversation on the phone, the video on the website, English songs or some monologues and so on. Besides, authentic materials can also improve listening classroom and students are motivated to take part in listening class. More importantly, organizing diversified games or other activities are recommended in order to make the listening class more attractive for the students, such as conveying agreements or disagreements, marking a picture or diagram according to instructions and so on.

7. Conclusion

Based on the record of interview, analysis of test, the author finds that the students have better performance in English listening class in the EC than those in the CC. Students can learn by doing through applying TBLT in listening teaching, which will benefit teachers' teaching and students' learning. Moreover, Students' listening interests, listening ability and listening strategies improved with the application of TBLT. Teachers should create a relaxing and comfortable atmosphere so that students have lots of opportunities to listen and speak in English listening classroom. Thus, students are no longer passive audience and they are more willing to participate in listening tasks in the class. Students can also experience the joy of success in the process of completing tasks thus their full potential can be brought out.

However, there are some limitations in this study. Firstly, the duration of the experiment only lasts three months, which is not long enough to make the results of the experiment convincing. If the experiment could have been longer, the influence on the students would have been more obvious. Secondly, the number of subjects is not large enough, which only includes 94 students in total and all of them are from Chengdu XX middle School. Therefore, we can know that the results from the current research might not be applicable to all the students of different language levels. Thirdly, listening test scores cannot directly determine a student's real English listening ability. Therefore, a more scientific assessment system should be adopted to assess students' real competence.

References

[1] Chou, M. H. (2017). A Task-based Language Teaching Approach to Developing Metacognitive Strategies for Listening Comprehension, International Journal of Listening, 31(1), 51-70.

[2] Ellis, R. (2019). Introducing Task-based Language Teaching. Shanghai: Foreign Language Education Press.

[3] Ellis, R. (2009). Task-based Language Teaching: Sorting out the misunderstanding. International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 19(3), 221-246.

[4] Hu, R. (2013). Task-based Language Teaching: Response from Chinese teachers of English. Tesl-Ej. 16(4), 1-21.

[5] Harmer, J. (2000). How to teach English. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

[6] Jiang, T. (2016). A Lesson Plan of TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching). International Journal of Secondary Education, 4(3), 32-38.

[7] Ji, Y. (2018). Enhancing Chinese EFL learners' participation in Task-based Language Teaching: A design-based research. International Journal of Languages, Literature and Linguistics, 4 (4), 265-271.

[8] Krashen, S. (1981). Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[9] Ma, L. (2019). Application of TBLT in Primary School Classes--A Case Study of the Fourth Primary School in Awati County. Asian Education Studies, 4(2), 24-29.

[10] Nunan, D. (1999). Second Language Teaching and Learning. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

[11] Rost, M. (1994). Introducing Listening. London: Penguin.

[12] Roxon, S. (1987). Listening. Oxford University Press.

[13] Tang, Z. F., & Liu, Q. (2019). Visible Teaching Design of Middle School English Listening and Speaking Class from the Perspective of Task-based Teaching. Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE), 6(8), 78-85.

[14] Vogtsky, L. S. (1986). Thought and Language. Cambridge, MA: The MTT Press.

[15] Willis, J. (1996). A Framework for Task-Based Learning. London: Longman.

[16] Yang, X. L. (2019). On the Obstacles and Strategies in English Listening Teaching. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 9(8), 1030-1034.