



**AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TASK-BASED  
AND PRESENTATION-PRACTICE-PRODUCTION APPROACHES IN THE  
TEACHING-LEARNING OF THE SIMPLE PRESENT AND PRESENT  
CONTINUOUS TENSES BY SECOND FORM PUPILS AT LYCÉE NYAKAVOGO,  
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**Abstract:** This work analyzes the effectiveness of the Task-Based Learning (TBL) approach comparatively to the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) approach in the learning of grammar by second form secondary school pupils. The purpose is to investigate which of the two approaches can help the adolescent learners improve their learning achievement in learning grammar, specifically the simple present and present continuous tenses. To carry out this study, we have used the comparative experimental design. We administered a pre-test and post-test to subjects of both the experimental and control classes. The participants in each class were 35 second form pupils from Lycée Nyakavogo. The SPSS statistical program helped to analyze the arithmetic mean, standard deviations, t-test and associate probability. The results show that in the pre-test, the experimental group achieved a mean score of 13.31 while that of the control group was 14.00. The t-test applied to compare these two means was not significant i.e. both groups were heterogeneous. In the post-test, the experimental class achieved a mean score of 23, 05 with a standard deviation of 3, 52 while the control class achieved a mean score of 16, 57 with a standard deviation of 3, 69. The t-test applied to these average scores showed a highly significant difference between the performance of both classes. The t-test was 6, 654 with the associate probability 0,000 which is less than 0,05. It is obvious that the experimental class outperformed the control class on the post-test i.e. task-based learning activities helped pupils of the experimental class to improve their learning achievement on the simple present and present continuous tenses. These results prove that the task-based approach is more effective than PPP in the learning of English grammar by these adolescent pupils.

**Key words:** Experimental study, TBL, PPP, Effectiveness, Grammar.

**ÉTUDE EXPÉRIMENTALE DE L'EFFICACITÉ DE L'APPROCHE  
D'APPRENTISSAGE BASÉ SUR LES TÂCHES ET L'APPROCHE  
PRÉSENTATION-PRATIQUE-PRODUCTION DANS L'ENSEIGNEMENT-  
APPRENTISSAGE DU PRÉSENT SIMPLE ET PRÉSENT CONTINU PAR LES  
ÉLÈVES DE 2<sup>ÈME</sup> SECONDAIRE AU LYCÉE NYAKAVOGO, BUKAVU**

**Résumé :** Ce travail analyse l'efficacité de l'approche de l'apprentissage basé sur les tâches (TBL) par rapport à l'approche présentation-pratique-production (PPP) dans l'apprentissage de la grammaire par les élèves de deuxième secondaire. L'objectif est de déterminer laquelle des deux approches peut aider les apprenants adolescents à améliorer leurs résultats dans l'apprentissage de la grammaire, en

particulier le présent simple et présent continu. Pour bien mener cette étude, nous avons utilisé un modèle expérimental comparatif. Nous avons administré un pré-test et un post-test aux sujets de la classe expérimentale et la classe contrôle. Les participants de chaque classe étaient 35 élèves de deuxième secondaire au Lycée Nyakavogo. Le programme statistique SPSS a permis d'analyser la moyenne arithmétique, les écarts types, le test t et les probabilités associées. Les résultats montrent qu'au pré-test, le groupe expérimental a obtenu un score moyen de 13,31 alors que celui du groupe témoin était de 14,00. Le test t appliqué pour comparer ces deux moyennes n'était pas significatif, ce qui signifie que les deux groupes étaient hétérogènes. Au post-test, la classe expérimentale a obtenu un score moyen de 23,05 avec un écart-type de 3,52 alors que la classe témoin a obtenu un score moyen de 16,57 avec un écart-type de 3,69. Le test t appliqué à ces scores moyens a montré une différence très significative entre les performances des deux classes. Le test t est 6,654 avec une probabilité associée de 0,000, ce qui est inférieur à 0,05. Il est évident que la classe expérimentale a obtenu de meilleurs résultats que la classe contrôle au post-test, c'est-à-dire que les activités d'apprentissage basés sur les tâches ont aidé les élèves de la classe expérimentale à améliorer leurs résultats d'apprentissage. Ces résultats prouvent que l'approche d'apprentissage basé sur les tâches est plus efficace que l'approche présentation-pratique-production.

**Mots clés :** Etude expérimentale, TBL, PPP, Efficacité, Grammaire.

## Introduction

English is an international language which people from all over the world learn today in order to communicate with each other. Grammar is one of the lessons taught in EFL classes as it can help learners to achieve meaningful and effective communication. Thornbury, S. (1999:3) says: "*without grammar, words hang together without any meaning*". In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, English is learned as a foreign and second language at primary, secondary and higher education levels. In secondary school, pupils learn many lessons such as vocabulary, grammar, dictation, reading for pronunciation, reading for comprehension, conversation, etc. in order to develop the four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing as postulated by the Congolese national program of English (2007: 3-4). As such, this investigation is restricted to the teaching of grammar lessons to second form pupils. Grammar can be taught in many different ways one of which is the PPP approach which stands for Presentation-Practice-Production. In order to teach grammar successfully, the Congolese national program of English recommends the use of the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) approach. It specifies clearly the exact grammatical structures that should be taught at each level of secondary school (Program National d'anglais, 2007: 3-5). This method is popular because the teacher can simply present the grammar rules to the pupils before letting them practice by doing exercises (Scott Thornbury, 1999 :128). However, people react negatively against the PPP approach in favor of the TBL (Task-based learning) approach. Scott argues that although this method is easy to apply, it can be boring for both teachers and learners. Woodward (1993: 3) states that the PPP approach was clearly teacher-centered and therefore sits uneasily in a more humanistic and learner-centered framework. Michael Lewis (1993: 190) also writes that PPP was inadequate because it reflected neither the nature of language nor the nature of learning. Hammer, J. (2007: 67) writes that the PPP approach represents an accuracy model of instruction; it



encourages accuracy over fluency. All these critics argue that PPP is useful in a focus-on-form lesson, but it is irrelevant in a skills lesson. Consequently, pupils can get bored, lost and confused during grammar explanation and fail to achieve communicative competence. As a response to these criticisms, Lindsay (2004) cited by Watcharin, S. et al (2014: 4) states that task-based activities are another types of language learning provided in the task-based learning approach (TBL). Researchers believe that if task-based instruction takes place, language learning is more meaningful and natural rather than focus on forms. Scott Thornbury (1999 :18-19) claims that “*by means of activities that engage the learner in life-like communication, the grammar will be acquired virtually unconsciously. Therefore, Studying the grammar rules is simply a waste of valuable time*”. According to Richards and Rodgers (2004: 223), “*engaging learners in task work provides a better context for the activation of learning processes*”. Tembue, Z. (2021:9) also writes that “*a task-based approach assumes that speaking a language is a skill best perfected through practice and interaction, and uses tasks and activities to encourage learners to use the language communicatively in order to achieve a purpose*”. Nunan (2014: 4) speaks about a pedagogical task as a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. According to Brown 2009 quoted in Watcharin S. et al (2014 :5), students' learning abilities are most effective when they focus on the task rather than the language they are using. David Nunan (2014:13) also writes that grammar exists to enable the language user to express different communicative meanings. He emphasizes the use of tasks as they provide a clear and useful context for teaching and learning grammar and other language features and skills. All these researchers argue that the use of task-based learning activities to teach grammar is an alternative teaching method to motivate pupils to learn grammar and to use it communicatively. The Task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach has attracted the attention of many researchers in the teaching of English as a foreign language. For example, Abdullah Sarani and Leila Farzaneh (2012) published an article titled *The impact of Task-based Approach on Vocabulary learning in ESP Courses*. The study attempts to investigate whether task-based approach is appropriate for vocabulary development in an ESP course. The study was conducted on students of Persian literature aging from 18 – 25 in Birjand University of Humanities in Iran. The results of the research show that Task -based approach was effective in teaching technical vocabularies. Watcharin S. et al (2014) wrote an article titled *Learning Grammar through task-based activities: A case study of First-year English Majors at Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University*. The purpose of the study is to investigate whether the use of task-based activities helped students improve their learning achievement in learning English grammar. The results of the study show that learning English grammar through task-based activities highly helps the students to improve their learning achievement (Watcharin S. et al, 2014: 1). Tombola, B. J. (2019) investigated *Cognitive activation by complex tasks in English textbooks: case of English for Africa Pupils' books in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. As results, he found that the type of tasks designed in English for Africa reflects simple tasks as all the requirements for task complexity are not visible in this books. Bulonza, S. J. (2021) conducted *a study on English Grammar task-based*

*teaching in some Bukavu secondary schools: case of Horizon2 and Maendeleo.* His objective was to make an analysis of the tasks assigned to pupils during grammar lesson. He wanted to check whether the tasks were simple or complex. He found that most of the tasks assigned to pupils were simple tasks which intended to evaluate pupils' mastery of grammatical forms. It is revealed that many previous researches attested the effectiveness of the task-based approach in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language.

The problem is that there is absence of evidence that attests the effectiveness of task-based learning approach over the PPP approach. Although some studies were conducted on the task-based learning approach, none of them attempted to compare the two approaches in order to attest the effectiveness of the task-based learning approach over the PPP approach. Therefore, this work is an experimental study which seeks to study which of the two approaches is more effective than the other in the learning of grammar by second form secondary school pupils. The study is restricted to a few specific grammar points, namely the simple present and the present continuous tenses. As a practitioner of the English language teaching, I realize that pupils confuse the simple present with the present continuous not only in forms but also in meaningful communication. With regard to the above objective, this study aims at answering the following question: *How effective is second form pupils' learning of grammar through the task-based learning approach comparatively to the PPP approach?* Following the theories about the task-based learning approach, it is hypothesized that task-based learning activities may help the second form secondary school pupils improve their learning achievement comparatively to the PPP approach.

## **1. Methodology**

The trustworthiness of a scientific investigation is based on appropriate methods applied to the study. The present study seeks to compare the effectiveness of two different grammar teaching models, namely PPP and TBL. Therefore, it is an experimental study which follows the before-and-after (pre-test / post-test) study design as proposed by Kumar, R. (2005: 107). It means that for this study, I had a control class and an experimental class. The former was taught grammar through the PPP-teaching model and the latter was taught with the TBL model. The students from both groups were administered a pre-test before the treatment to check their background knowledge on the use of simple present and present continuous (10<sup>th</sup> September, 2023). I trained the teacher of the experimental class on the task-based language teaching approach. After the pre-test, the treatment of the experimental group started. It means that the teacher of the experimental class started teaching grammar lessons with the task-based learning approach while the teacher of the control class was encouraged to teach grammar lessons with the PPP approach. After the treatment, the learners of both classes were administered a post-test in order to study the gain obtained by the experimental class comparatively to the control class (28<sup>th</sup> January, 2024). The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, t-test and coefficient of variation thanks to the SPSS computer program. Then, the scores were compared in order to evaluate the gains obtained after the treatment.



## 2. Results

### 2.1. Results of the pre-test of September 10th, 2023

At this stage, I intend to compare the results of the control class to those of the experimental class at the pre-test of grammatical knowledge on simple present and present continuous. The objective is to check whether both groups were homogeneous before the treatment. The results are present in the table below:

**Table 1 Results of the pre-test of September 10th, 2023**

Group	N	Mean	SD	CV	t-test	P-value	Decision
Control	35	14,00	2, 62	18, 7	-0,922	0, 360	Non-significant
Experimental	35	13,31	3, 52	26, 4			

This table indicates that the mean score of the control group in the pre-test was 14.00 with a standard deviation of 2.62 while the experimental group achieved a mean score of 13.31 with a standard deviation of 3.52. The t-test applied to compare these two means is not significant. The associated probability (0.360) at the t-value (-0.922) is greater than 0.05. Considering the coefficients of variation for the two groups, it was found that coefficients are higher than 15% but lower than 30%. It implies that the students in both groups were homogeneous, the dispersion between them is less pronounced. Therefore, these two groups were not different in terms of grammatical knowledge on simple present and present continuous.

### 2.2. Results of the post-test of January 28th, 2024

This point seeks to compare the results of the control group to those of the experimental group in the post-test on grammatical knowledge on simple present and present continuous after the treatment. The results are presented in the table below:

**Table 2 Results of the post-test of January 28th, 2024**

Group	N	Mean	t-Student	P-value	Decision
Experimental	35	23, 05	6, 654	0, 000	Significant difference
Control	35	16, 57			

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor (Fieldwork / primary data 2023)

As revealed in the above table, Student's t-test applied to compare the two groups' means shows a very significant difference between the experimental and control groups. The test has a value of  $t = 6, 654$  with its associated probability or P-value of 0, 000 which is less than 0.05. These results show that pupils who learned grammar (simple present and present continuous tenses) through the task-based learning approach achieved higher scores than their peers who learned the same lessons through the Presentation-Practice-Production approach. These results assume that TBL is more effective than PPP.

### 2.3. Calculation of the relative gain

Although the experimental class outperformed the control class in the grammar post-test, it does not suffice to assume that TBL is more effective than the PPP approach. It is important to calculate the relative gain which is the ratio of what was gained and what could be gained. A positive learning effect is considered to exist when the relative gain is greater than 30-40%.

**Table 3 Study of the relative gain**

Group	N	Max.	Mean pre-test	Mean post-test	Relative Gain	Learning effect
Experimental	35	40	13,31	23,05	36,4 %	Positive, no equity
Control	35	40	14	16,57	9,88 %	Positive, no equity

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor (Fieldwork / primary data 2023)

❖ Experimental class:

$$\left( \frac{23,05 - 13,31}{40 - 13,31} \right) * 100 = 36,4$$

❖ Control class:

$$\left( \frac{16,57 - 14}{40 - 14} \right) * 100 = 9,88$$

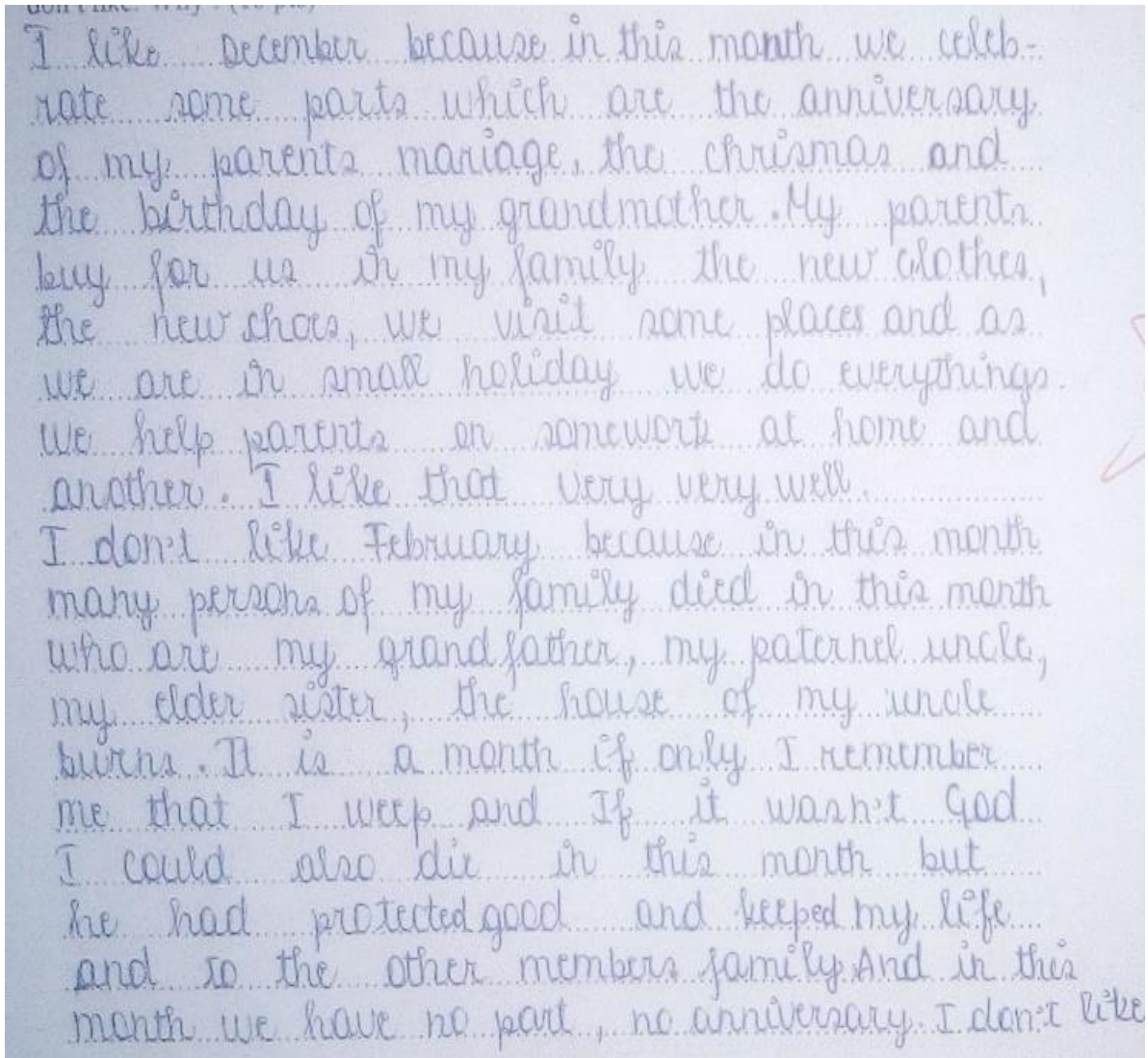
The analysis of this table informs that the experimental group made a relative gain of 36,4 %. On the other hand, the control group made a progress of 9,88 %. The progress made by the control group compared to their previous average was about 2,57 while that of the experimental group was 9,74. Comparing the relative gains of these two groups, it is noticed that the experimental group had 26,52 % more gain than the control group. The relative gain obtained (36.4%) is greater than 30%. Thus, the learning effect is positive but not of equity because the standard deviation after (4.42) in the experimental group is higher than the standard deviation before (3.52) the introduction of the task-based learning approach. It implies that the task-based learning approach is more effective than the PPP approach. However, it did not reduce the gaps or differences between learners. For more effectiveness, teachers applying the task-based approach should take into account the individual needs and difficulties of the learners.

### 3. Discussion of the results

The results of this study assume that the task-based approach helps the pupils of experimental class to develop their grammatical knowledge on simple present and present continuous in particular and their language competence in general, comparatively to the pupils of the control class. This effectiveness is due to the fact that the grammar task-based learning lessons were learner-centered. The teacher was initially focusing on meaning and learners were engaged in practical assignments for language usage. The different task-based learning activities helped pupils achieve meaningful communication with reflective ideas. They were able to use the forms of

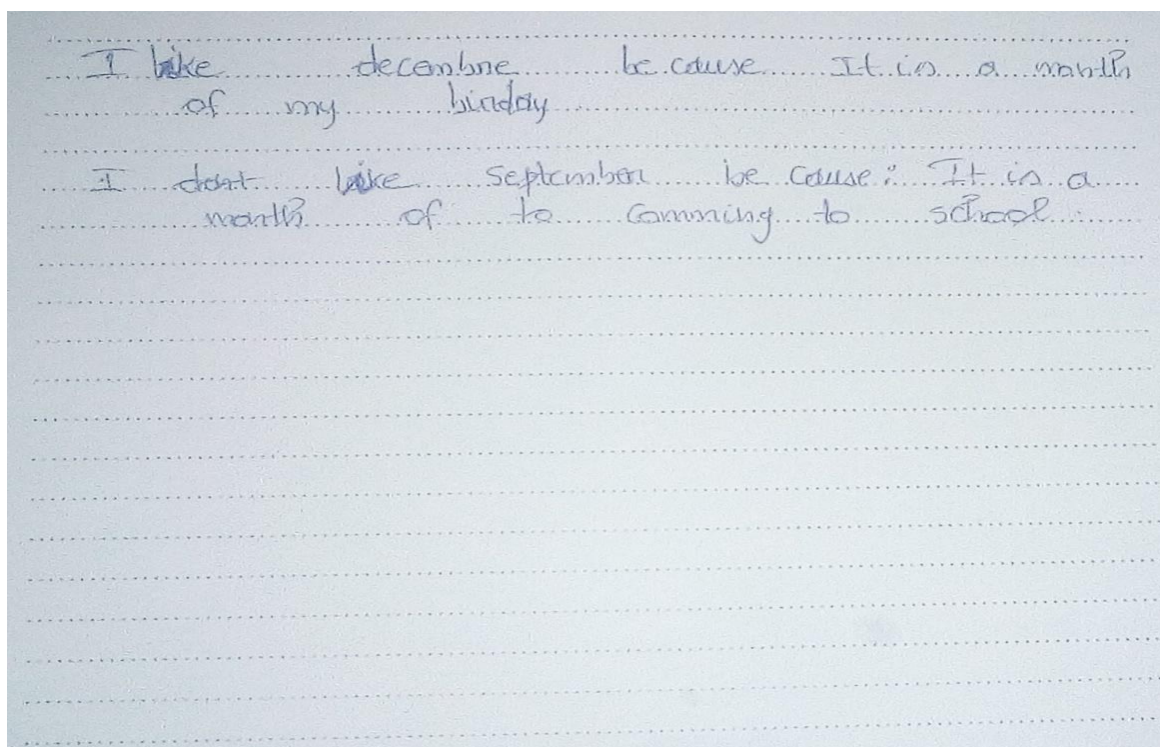


the simple present and present continuous to communicate freely and effectively. This fact brings to believe that the task-based learning is a fluency-to-accuracy oriented approach. For example, to the question: "Describe two months of the year, one which you like the best and another which you dislike and say why", many pupils of the experimental class were able to produce fluently messages such as the following:



**Figure 1 Sample work of pupil of the experimental class**

In contrast, many pupils of the control class failed to respond to the question because they had difficulties to communicate. The impression is that they were not able to think critically and produce some communicative sentences using the grammatical forms learned about simple present and present continuous. It was noticed that most of them left the sheet empty. Below is presented a sample of their work:



**Figure 2 Sample work of pupils of the control class**

These results firstly agree with Harmer J. (2007: 84) who insists that adolescent pupils must be given learning tasks in grammar instruction. They must be encouraged to respond to situations with their own thoughts and experiences, rather than just being answering questions and doing abstract and form-focused exercises. The results also agree with the findings of Watcharin S. at al. (2014) who investigated whether the use of task-based activities help students improve their learning achievement in learning English grammar. The results of the study reveals that learning English grammar through task-based activities highly helped the students to improve their learning achievement. They helped the students keep particular grammar points in their memory and use them when needed. In addition, the results agree with Lilly Golda (2019: 2) who argues that when a person learns the grammar of a language before he can use the language itself, the gets no further than the grammar. Lilly Golda supports that meaningful tasks should precede the learning of grammatical structure so that pupils are able to acquire the grammar and use it in meaningful contexts instead of just presenting and explaining the forms and doing related exercises. However, although the task-based learning approach helped the experimental class outperform the control class, it is noticed that some pupils still failed. Their failure may be explained by the fact that they were used to the PPP approach and found more difficult the task-based learning approach. For this reason, we can agree with Frost (2004) cited in Watcharin S. at al. (2014) who says that learning grammar is a skill which takes times to master. It is worth reminding that this study was conducted in a limited time and probably it could not sufficiently help low proficient pupils reach or gain sufficient improvement. Equally important, the new approach might have demotivated some pupils to learn English grammar as they found it unfamiliar.





#### 4. Recommendations

The results of this research have revealed that the Task-based learning approach is more effective than the PPP approach in teaching English grammar to young adolescents of the second form at secondary school. Therefore, it should be implemented during English grammar lessons in conciliation with the PPP approach. The following suggestions are made to:

##### 4.1. Secondary school teachers of English

Secondary school teachers of English are recommended to use the task-based learning approach while teaching English grammar following the Task-Teach-Task (TTT) procedure. Since it is found that this approach offers a clear setting for teaching and learning grammar in context and meaning rather than only focusing on forms, there a way teachers can re-order classroom activities to convert sometimes PPP into TBL. Generally, grammar points to be learned from texts are always described in grammar and text books starting with forms or structures that teachers are first supposed to explain; then come exercises for practice. In order to create a learner-centered lesson and help pupils achieve meaningful communication, teachers are recommended to find how to re-order activities in order to focus initially on meaning. For example, in a PPP grammar lesson where new language is to be introduced, presented and practiced, the teacher can start with the final stage – the production stage- by turning it into a task. In the class, the teacher brainstorms words, phrases and ideas related to the task (pre-task preparation). After that, pupils do the task but at this stage they do not have to focus on one specific grammatical form or function. During this stage, the teacher moves in different groups to monitor and pupils give feedback on their task (task cycle). Then, the teacher says for example: *“Let’s look at some of the forms you might have used when doing your task, and do the form-focused exercises quickly”* (Teaching stage – language focus or analysis). After this stage or next lesson, the teacher asks pupils to repeat the task or gives a similar one in a different group (task – language practice). It is clear that although teachers should emphasize meaning during task-based grammar lessons, it does not mean that they have to leave forms aside. Each of the task -based grammar lesson has a moment in class to focus on form. Teachers have to identify useful language from the text and prepare form-focused activities in advance for dealing with from the task. It implies that teachers should give tasks which involve a combination of structures, words and meanings because meaningful tasks imply meaningful learning and communication as learners are closer to real-life communicative situations. However, in order to apply successfully the TBL approach, teachers are recommended to develop a sense of creativity and imagination. These skills will serve them to find different teaching materials which will help pupils to use meaningfully the language structures or forms. For example, a teacher can decide to use videos or audios recorded, contextualize dialogues, stories, etc.

##### 4.2. Congolese textbook and syllabus designers

Textbook and syllabus designers have to begin with the assessment of learners’ needs. It means, they should know what do pupils have to do with the language. So, they should plan and propose texts that cover all the most important real life topics as a way to make the pupils have general knowledge or ideas about the different real life

situations. This can also make the learning of English very interesting because the pupils will be learning texts and their related grammar points for real life contexts.\*

#### **4.3. Congolese government or Primary and Secondary School Education ministry**

The Congolese government through the primary and secondary school education ministry should make sure that English lessons in general and grammar in particular is taught through the task-based approach in order to reach the objective of the teaching of English as stipulated by the Congolese national program of English, which reads, - *the teaching of English aims first to enable students to correctly understand, speak, read and write in English*. In addition, they should improve the national curriculum of English and written in English. It is disappointing to see that the national program of English is in French even if French is the administrative language in the DRC.

#### **Conclusion**

This article mainly intends to study how effective is the task-based learning approach comparatively to PPP in teaching grammar to second form secondary school adolescent pupils. The results of the pre-test indicate that the mean score of the experimental group was 13.31 with a standard deviation of 3.52 while the control group achieved a mean score of 14.00 with a standard deviation of 2.62. The t-test applied to compare these two means is not significant. The associated probability (0.360) at the t-value (-0.922) is greater than 0.05. Considering the coefficients of variation for the two groups, we found coefficients higher than 15% but lower than 30%. The students in both groups were homogeneous. In contrast, the results of the post-test show that the experimental class achieved a mean score of 23, 05 i.e. a performance of 57, 6 % with a standard deviation of 3, 52. This performance is beyond the 50% threshold for educational success in the Democratic Republic of Congo. On the other hand, the control class achieved a mean score of 16, 57 i.e. a performance of 41, 4 % with a standard deviation of 3, 69 in the post-test. This performance is below the 50% threshold set for educational success in DRC. The t-test applied to these average scores shows a highly significant difference between the performance both classes. The t-test is 6, 654 and the associate probability or P-value is 0, 000 which is less than 0, 05. Therefore, it is obvious that the experimental class outperformed the control class in the grammar post-test on the simple present and present continuous. These results confirm the hypothesis that the task-based learning approach is more effective than PPP in the teaching of English grammar to second form secondary school adolescents. It helped the pupils to move out of the classroom and bridge the gap between language study and language use communicatively.

This research is neither exhaustive nor perfect. Being experimental, it might bear some shortcomings which might have escaped our attention and good will. The research was conducted in only two classes of adolescent learners and with one school whereas Harmer J. (2007: 81) states that the age of learners is a major factor in our decisions about how and what to teach because learners of different ages have different needs, competences and cognitive skills. He distinguished four kinds of learners namely, young children (those who are up to the age of ten or eleven), older children (those



who are twelve and fourteen years old), adolescents (those who are fifteen and seventeen years old) and adult learners (those who are 18 years old and beyond). Therefore, I believe that the task-based learning approach must undergo further experimentation in other classes of young children of basic classes and adult pupils of the fourth forms (finalists) in order to see how this teaching approach works at all levels for its definitive elevation to the rank of a pedagogical practice in secondary schools of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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