Investigating the Effectiveness of Task-Based Learning for Improving English Speaking Skills Among Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning (TBL) in enhancing Sanghar University undergraduate students' English-speaking abilities. Due to a lack of practical experience, students who are learning English as a second language sometimes find it difficult to communicate effectively and clearly. The effectiveness of TBL in university-level English classes in remote or underdeveloped areas like Sanghar, however, has not received sufficient attention. The purpose of this study was to determine whether giving students involving, interactive activities may improve their English communication skills. The study uses a quantitative descriptive methodology and involves 141 undergraduate students learning English for coursework from several academic areas. A validated questionnaire was used to gather data, and convenience sampling was used to choose participants. Fluency, vocabulary, accuracy, confidence, and engagement were the five main topics of the survey, which also included demographic questions and 15 statements with Likert scale ratings. In order to represent real-world communication, students took part in a number of TBL exercises over four weeks, including role-plays, conversations, and problem-solving exercises. SPSS was used to analyze the data afterwards the intervention, and the findings demonstrated definite improvements. Students expressed more confidence when speaking English, improved vocabulary usage, and enhanced communication abilities. Additionally, students were very satisfied with the TBL experience, stating that it was more fun, inspiring, and successful than conventional approaches. These findings imply that TBL is an effective strategy for assisting students in using English more comfortably and self-assuredly. According to the findings, TBL should be taught in English classes, and instructors should receive training on how to use it.

Keywords: Task-Based Learning, Motivation, Speaking Skills, Student-Centered Classrooms.

Introduction

According to Fan and Yan (2020), speech is a critical language skill that we use to convey our thoughts, demonstrate our individuality, and interact with others. Globalization has characterized the twenty-first century, necessitating that most countries throughout the world have strong and fluent linguistic abilities. The growing population has raised demand and competition in the domains of education, economy, and employment.

Task-based language instruction is centered on having students do meaningful tasks in the target language while utilizing real language (Gan & Leung, 2020). Fluency in communicating is a vital requirement for achieving one's goals. English is the predominant language used for daily communication worldwide. English is the global language. Fluency in the language is crucial for efficient contact with industrialized nations in Pakistan due to various reasons. In a country like Pakistan, effective communication enhances the ability of educators and students to focus on teaching and cultivating the given skill. According to Shah et al. (2025) English language learners should be provided with teaching both within and beyond the confines of the classroom to guarantee their ability to communicate in the language in any given situation effectively. English teachers can utilize a range of teaching tactics at the school to assist pupils. These exercises help students acquire new vocabulary and get familiar with its significance and applications, resulting in improved verbal communication skills. English has played an important role in the everyday life of Pakistanis. English is significant due to its essential role as a primary language for communication in domains such as education and research. The presence of language barriers is ultimately overcome, leading to the promotion and establishment of a worldwide community through the use of English. The national curriculum developed by the Pakistani Ministry of Education (The Ministry of Education, 2008) dictates that a basic English education at the primary and secondary levels should include instruction in four essential skills. Proficiency in the English language is necessary for all levels till graduation. As per a Ministry of Education paper from 2008, students are urged to employ the English language in diverse settings, encompassing both their classes and interactions with local and foreign cultures. Speaking is an essential skill for communication. The source of this information is a publication by Bailey and Savage in 1994. According to Nurdin (2020), when people communicate, they articulate their ideas, opinions, methods, and objectives, and listeners pick up on their sense of who is speaking. We succeed in our goals by employing appropriate words. Additionally, speaking is a very common human ability. Speaking usually refers to completing tasks, conducting business, discussing concepts, or just spending time together and conversing.

Problem Statement

The problem is that Pakistani universities mainly focus on traditional grammar methods rather than speaking and communication. The current syllabus and curriculum design in Pakistani universities tend to neglect the practical language skill requirements, focusing predominantly on a text-based environment and teaching English as a subject rather than as a communicative language has resulted in students being less proficient in the language (Rehman,2020). Reading and writing skills are valued more highly in Pakistani universities than listening and speaking abilities. The traditional educational system prioritizes vocabulary, grammar, and written tests above the communicative components of language acquisition. The state of educational and instructional English procedures in Pakistan is deteriorating as a result of conventional methods of instruction.

The curriculum and syllabus design focus only on the text-based context, ignoring the language proficiency needs. In Pakistani colleges taught English is taught as a subject, not as a language, which makes the learners less proficient in the English language itself. Moreover, teaching methods increase this deficiency even more. Therefore, the need is to focus more on proficiency in language, especially spoken, because speaking is the most neglected skill in the Pakistani context. Speaking skills should be taught by using methods that increase learners' interest and help them improve their speaking skills. This study used a task-based language learning approach as an attempt to measure its effectiveness in improving English speaking skills. This challenge is made worse by traditional educational approaches that fail to stress language ability, especially for spoken shapes, which remain one of Pakistan's most undervalued abilities (Khan,2024).To deal with this issue, it is necessary to emphasize speaking skills through interactive teaching approaches that assist students in acquiring communicative competence. As a consequence, this study investigates the effectiveness of a task-oriented learning method in helping students improve their ability to speak English. The study aims to examine the effectiveness of task-based learning in improving English speaking skills among undergraduates at Sanghar University.

Research Questions

1. Investigate the effect of Task-Based Instruction (TBI) on undergraduate students' English-speaking skills.
2. Assess the students' satisfaction with their experience using the TBI approach.

Hypothesis

TBL helps undergraduate students become more fluent in English by boosting their self-esteem, vocabulary, and ability to communicate in authentic situations.

Literature Review

According to Hussain et al. (2023), the Findings of this study showed that task-based learning has a substantial impact on the enhancement of speaking skills among senior high school students. TBL provides students with the opportunity to enhance their speaking skills through the completion of tasks. The study concluded that task-based learning successfully enhanced students' speaking and listening skills. With the task-based learning environment and lesson structure, learners were free to express themselves and used real-world language than would often be the case. According to Skehan (1998), a task is an activity that emphasises meaningful communication in the actual world. According to Breen (1989), a job should adhere to predetermined procedures that will stimulate one's understanding with the aim where the primary objective not only to impart knowledge but also to help people build skills in a way that makes sense. According to Long (1985), a task may be referred to as a daily routine. Typical daily tasks with constructive goals include painting a fence, completing paperwork, purchasing shoes, making a hotel reservation, locating a street destination, assisting someone in crossing a street, and more. Task-based learning classes were successful partly because the teacher encouraged students with a grin and a warm demeanor (Jittisukpong,2022). Students believe that the tasks of the TBLT approach have encouraged them to improve their speaking ability. This finding was clearly justified through their statements as "these activities are interesting. They helped us to improve not only our speaking, but we also learned new words (Dilini & Prahalathan, 2021). Based on the findings, the researcher concludes that task-based learning improves the students' speaking skills. According to Crookes (1986), an assignment is an action that has a goal and demands a certain result. It might be professional or casual. According to Prabhu (1987), a task

is an item of work that requires specific procedures to be completed in order to produce a particular outcome, with the instructor acting as the facilitator. After the use of task-based learning in teaching speaking, the students "get better scores and also better in speaking, especially when performing English, they used various kinds of vocabulary and enjoy learning speaking (Afifah & Devana, 2020). This method includes two elements: task-based learning and simultaneous English speaking. There are two parts to the task-based learning segment: theory and practice. Task-based learning activities usually encourage the development of English-speaking abilities via both theoretical and real-world integration. According to Nunan (2004), a task is any classroom exercise or activity that consists of the following elements: a language-based goal that can only be achieved through participant contact; a system for organising and sequencing engagement; an emphasis on meaning exchange; learning process in which students must understand, use, and generate the target language while following a predetermined work schedule. Interaction with an emphasis on meaning exchange. According to Bygate et al. (2001), it is the method that necessitates that learners utilise language with a focus on meanings in order to accomplish a goal.
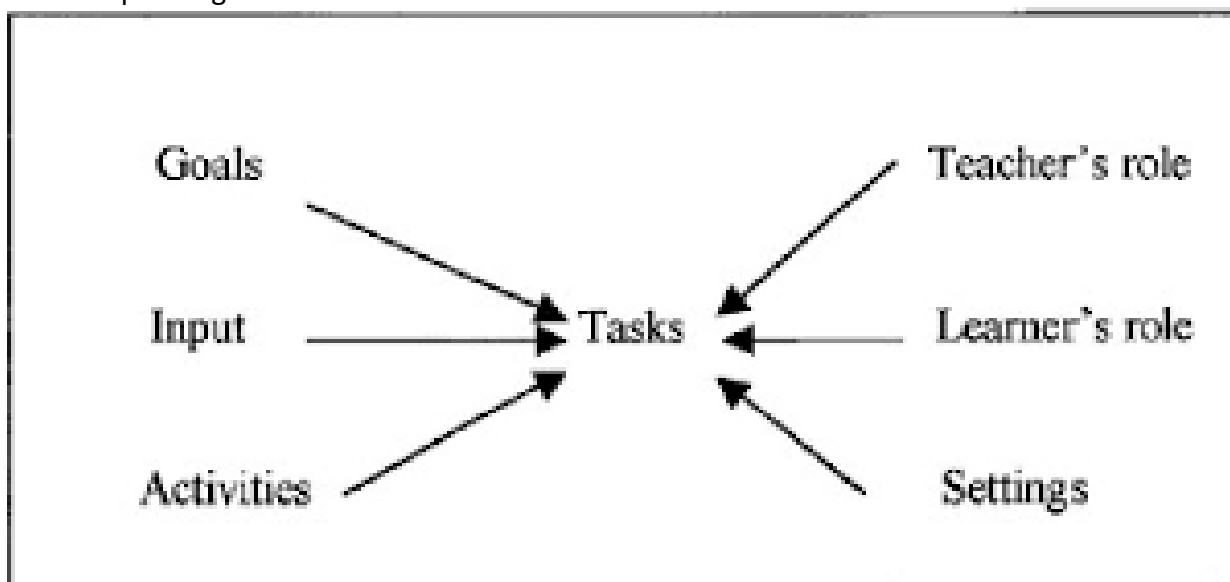
A framework for analyzing task-based learning components (Nunan, 2004).

Objectives

These are the general goals of the language program, or what students should be able to do in terms of language usage and communication.

Input

This comprises the language information and resources (texts, audio, images, etc.) that serve as the task's foundation. Learners get the language foundation they require from input.

Procedures and Activities

Refers to the assignments that students are expected to complete. Usually, these consist of:

Pre-task (planning and introduction)

Task cycle (interaction and performance)

Post-task (linguistic attention, reflection, and feedback)

The Role of the Teacher

Outlines the teacher's role during the assignment, including that of a monitor, facilitator, or language model. The instructor facilitates communication and directs engagement.

The role of the learner:
Explains how students interact with the assignments. Through interaction and teamwork, students in TBLT become active participants who take ownership of their education.
Settings
Discusses how language practice is influenced by the social and physical setup of the classroom (e.g., individually, group, and pair work).
Research Methodology
The impact of Task-Based Learning (TBL) in enhancing the ability to speak English among 141 undergraduate learners at Sanghar was examined in this study using a quantitative descriptive methodology. Participants represented a range of academic areas and were specifically chosen from English language classes. A systematic questionnaire including demographic enquiries and 15 Likert-scale items evaluating vocabulary, accuracy, fluency, confidence, and engagement was used to gather data. After expert validation, the instrument was tested with a score for reliability of 0.86. Students engaged in TBL activities, including role-plays, discussions, problem solving, and challenges, over four weeks. Questionnaires were used to assess perceived gains in speaking abilities following the training. SPSS version 25 was used to analyses descriptive statistics, such as medians, standard deviations, and frequencies. To show how TBL affected students' speaking ability, the results were displayed in tables and graphs.
Research Finding
Q1. Investigate the effect of Task-Based Instruction (TBI) on undergraduate students' English-speaking skills.
Descriptive Statistics

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Improved communication skills.	141	1.00	5.00	4.09	0.92,
More speaking opportunities.	141	1.00	5.00	3.99	1.06
More grammar and vocabulary practice.	141	.1.00	.5.00	4.04	1.03
Better retention of language.	141	1.00	5.00	3.93	0.99
Real-life tasks increased motivation.	141	1.00	5.00	3.94	1.06
Belief in learning through frequent use.	141	1.00	5.00	3.92	0.9911
Enjoyed learning through TBL..	141	1.00	5.00	3.93	0.89
Willing to share ideas in groups.	141	1.00	5.00	3.91	0.95
Prefer more TBLT in teaching.	141	1.00	5.00	3.89	0.98
Increased willingness to speak.	141	1.00	5.00	3.88	1.11
Enjoyed collaborative work.	141	1.00	5.00	3.87	1.11
TBL met needs and interests.	141	1.00	5.00	3.76	1.05
Noticed speaking improvement.	141	1.00	5.00	3.76	0.95
Relaxed learning environment.	141	1.00	5.00	3.69	1.04
TBLT is more interesting than others.	141	1.00	5.00	3.60	1.01

The findings imply that TBI improves students' ability to communicate in English. Students felt that group discussions and presentations enhanced their communication skills, as indicated by

the highest mean score (4.09). The effectiveness of TBI in improving fluency, vocabulary use, and speaking confidence is further supported by other relevant criteria, including more speaking chances (M = 3.99), improved language retention (M = 3.93), and a discernible improvement in speaking (M = 3.76). Overall, the evidence shows that TBI helped the participants strengthen their practical speaking skills.

Q2. Assess the students' satisfaction with their experience using the TBI approach.
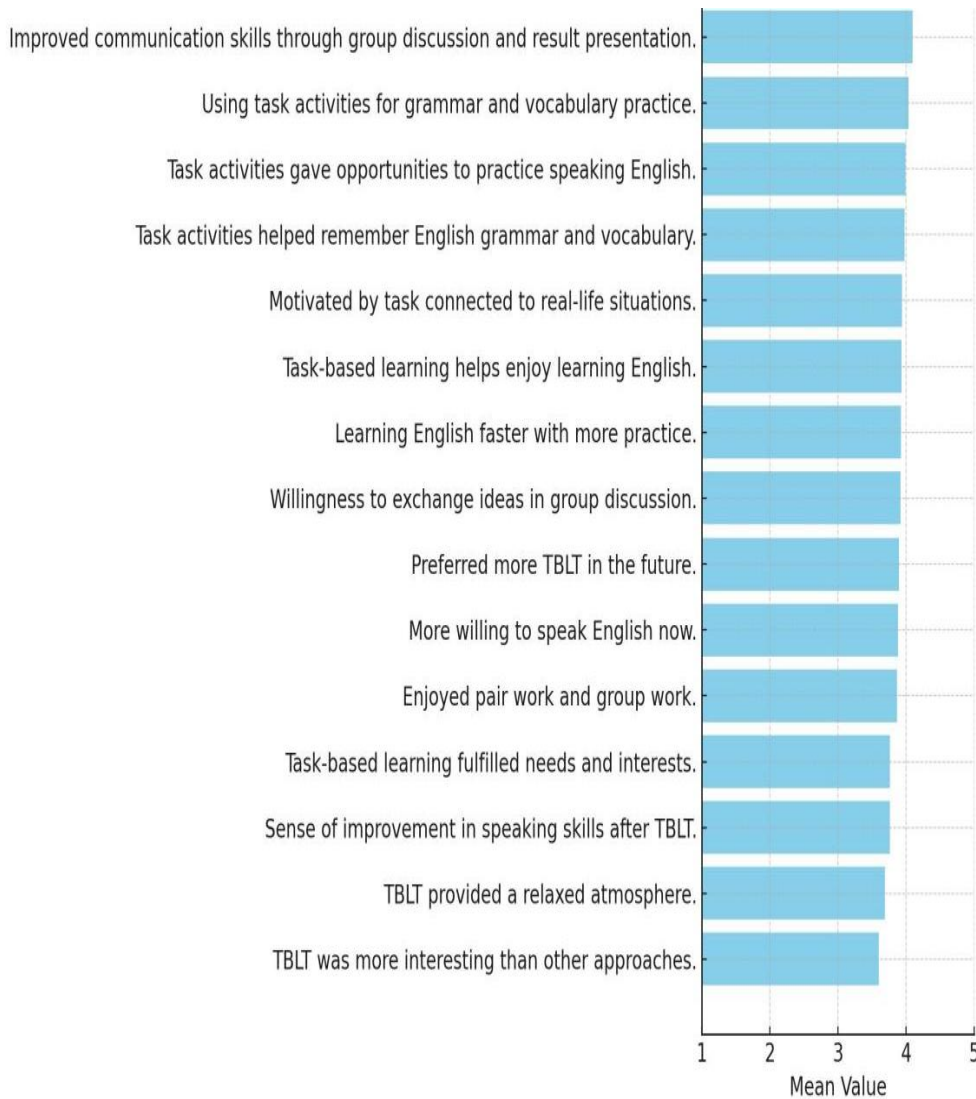

Table 1.1

High levels of student satisfaction with the TBI technique are also evident from the responses. Positive opinions towards the approach are indicated by items that convey satisfaction (M = 3.93), motivation from real-life tasks (M = 3.94), readiness to participate in group work (M = 3.91), and preference for more TBI in future instruction (M = 3.89). Furthermore, students thought TBI was more engaging than conventional methods (M = 3.60) and thought the learning environment was laid back (M = 3.69). These results show that students were generally pleased with and interested in the TBI approach.

The descriptive statistics from 141 participants reveal that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) generally had a positive impact on language learning:

- **Communication & Speaking Skills**: Participants agreed that TBLT improved communication skills (mean = 4.09) and provided opportunities for speaking practice (mean = 3.99).
- **Grammar & Vocabulary**: TBLT helped with grammar and vocabulary retention (mean = 3.98) and was motivating, especially with real-life tasks (mean = 3.94).
- **Enjoyment & Motivation**: Participants enjoyed group work (mean = 3.87) and felt more willing to speak English (mean = 3.88), but responses varied, indicating different levels of enthusiasm.
- **Preference for TBLT**: There was moderate interest in using TBLT more in the future (mean = 3.89).
- **Room for Improvement**: While TBLT was beneficial, it didn't fully meet all needs and interests (mean = 3.76).

Overall, TBLT was viewed positively, especially in communication, motivation, and practical English use, though with some variability in response.

Discussion

This study examined how well Sanghar undergraduate students' English-speaking abilities were improved by task-based learning, or TBL. The results show that TBL improved students' speaking confidence, vocabulary usage, and fluency. High mean scores across key categories demonstrate increased possibilities for speaking, contextual language practice, and active learning. Additionally, students expressed great satisfaction with TBL, particularly when it came to exercises that had real-world applications. They said they preferred using TBL in future lessons and appreciated working in groups. Although first appeared uneasy and having difficulty, the children seemed to enjoy the turn-taking exercise in pairs. Without reading a note, the pupils learnt to pose brief enquiries and provide concise answers. Assisting students in building a set of basic answers that they can utilise in many kinds of interactions is one approach to get them to start taking part (Marriam Bashir, Muhammad Azeem, Ashiq Hussain Dogar, 2016). Later, learners carried on talking in groups and couples throughout a brief role-play. In cycles 1 and 2, the pupils appeared to be considerably more comfortable playing a variety of roles and subjects. A range of role-playing subjects could help students expand their vocabulary (Krebt, 2017). It has been demonstrated that task-oriented activities are very motivating. This Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach is based on the core idea that students learn best when they concentrate on communication and actively use the language they are being taught (Oura, 1996). A key aspect of educational training, this characteristic, learners to successfully integrate their own experiences (Nunan, 1991). By discussing their knowledge and abilities, the students helped each other to become more proficient in the chosen language (Vygotsky, 1987). Vygotsky believed that the more skilled learners helped the less skilled ones in their search for knowledge. According to Hatip (2005), it can occasionally be challenging to keep control over task-based tasks, particularly when language is involved. In an attempt to understand problems, communicate clearly, and respond to tasks and assignments, students shared their thoughts. The pupils' ability to speak English as a second language has improved as a result of this process. As proposed by Willis (1996) and Carless (2001), teachers can use task-based language teaching (TBLT) to help students learn. The instructor took on the role of facilitator or monitor during the

activity to support students' use of the target language for timely assignment completion, reflective thinking, effective communication, and knowledge sharing.

These target-language-focused classroom activities were recommended by Willis (1996), Ellis (2000), and Nunan (2006), among other researchers. Throughout the exercises, the importance of students using the target language and engaging in cognitive procedures that support learning was emphasized. In the classroom, task-oriented language instruction frequently supported participants in applying English as a communicative language. The study demonstrates that TBL is a successful and entertaining way to improve English-speaking abilities and ought to be taken into consideration for broader application in university-level language classes.

Recommendation

1: Adopt Task-Based Learning as a Core Strategy: Through useful, real-world communication activities, language departments should use Task-Based Learning (TBL) as their main teaching strategy to improve students' speaking abilities.

2: Train Instructor for Successful Implementation: To ensure successful implementation, teachers should get training in developing and managing task-based learning activities. Learning results will improve, and student engagement will increase as a result.

3: Resign Contextually Relevant Assignments: Group projects, discussions, and presentations are all examples of assignments that should be contextually relevant in order to boost vocabulary retention, fluency, and confidence.

4: Integrate TBL Regularly into the Curriculum: Students are kept engaged and given continual opportunities to speak the target language in relevant contexts when TBL tactics are consistently implemented in the classroom.

5: Assess Speaking Skills Through Performance-Based Task: Use performance-based evaluations, such as role-plays, interviews, and presentations, to assess students' practical communication abilities in addition to their academic understanding.

Conclusion

The results clearly demonstrate that TBL is crucial in raising students' vocabulary practice, verbal proficiency, and general communication confidence. Throughout the process, the participants showed a high level of interest and satisfaction, especially while working on activities that were based on real-world situations. Better communication and more meaningful vocabulary use were encouraged by these hands-on exercises, which helped students connect with the language more naturally. The findings suggest that TBL provides a more active and student-focused learning environment alongside improving language proficiency. As a result, it is highly advised that TBL be used more widely in higher education as it can enhance academic performance and better prepare students for the communication needs of the real world.

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