J-CEKI : Jurnal Cendekia Ilmiah
Vol.4, No.2, Februari 2025

The Impact of Task-Based Language Teaching on English Speaking Proficiency

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Article History:
Received: 15 Desember 2024
Revised: 11 Januari 2025
Accepted: 15 Januari 2025

Keywords: *Task-Based Language Teaching, English Speaking Proficiency, Teaching Methods, Fluency, English Language Teaching.*

Abstract: *This study examines the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in enhancing students' speaking skills. Using a pre-experimental design, the research involved 25 students in an experimental class engaging in TBLT activities. Pre-test and post-test data revealed significant improvements in their speaking performance, affirming TBLT as an effective method for developing speaking proficiency. Gratitude is extended to my advisor, family, and friends for their invaluable support throughout this research.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a vital tool for human communication, enabling cooperation and interaction. Chomsky (1950) defines language as an innate ability governed by universal principles. Among communication skills, speaking holds a pivotal role, especially in English, the global language facilitating cross-cultural communication. English proficiency is increasingly demanded due to its importance in education, business, science, and international relations. Speaking, as a critical language skill, requires more than vocabulary and grammar. It involves fluency, pronunciation, and confidence, all influenced by cultural and linguistic factors (Ur, 2012; Lazarton, 2013). However, students in EFL contexts, such as Indonesia, often face challenges like limited exposure, fear of mistakes, and inadequate speaking practice (Marcellino, 2008; Manurung, 2015). These barriers hinder their ability to effectively express themselves in English.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emerges as a promising approach to enhance speaking skills. Focusing on meaningful tasks, TBLT fosters linguistic accuracy, fluency, and confidence through active engagement and real-life application (Richards, 2006; Suzuki, 2018). Research highlights TBLT's effectiveness in addressing communication challenges and improving speaking performance (Ellis & Najjari, 2014). By integrating well-structured, relevant tasks, TBLT creates a supportive environment for learners to develop their speaking abilities, making it an essential method in EFL education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking

Speaking is one of the most critical skills in language learning and everyday communication. It involves the verbal expression of thoughts, emotions, and ideas to convey meaning effectively. Fulcher (2013) defines speaking as the verbal use of language for communication, while Richard (2002) emphasizes its complexity as a cognitive and linguistic process involving the production, reception, and interpretation of information. Bailey and Nunan

(2005) underline its centrality in language learning, whether for a second or foreign language, highlighting its role in developing learners' communication skills. Effective communication requires both a speaker and a listener, focusing on mutual understanding and clarity (Smith, 2015). Speaking extends beyond casual interactions to include public speaking, where individuals present ideas and opinions to an audience. This skill is essential for daily life, where activities like expressing feelings, asking questions, sharing opinions, and giving instructions all depend on speaking. Mastery in speaking encompasses pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (De Jong et al., 2012).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a learner-centered approach that places meaningful tasks at the heart of the language learning process. Developed as a response to traditional, grammar-focused teaching methods, TBLT emphasizes real-world communication and authentic language use. This approach encourages students to engage in purposeful activities, enabling them to develop their communicative competence naturally through interaction and practical application. TBLT is grounded in the belief that language learning occurs most effectively when learners use the language to achieve specific objectives. Scholars such as Ellis (2003) define tasks as goal-oriented activities that involve meaningful communication, such as solving problems, planning events, or exchanging information. Unlike traditional methods that prioritize explicit grammar instruction, TBLT integrates linguistic forms into the context of task completion, allowing learners to acquire language implicitly while focusing on the task at hand.

One of the key features of TBLT is its learner-centeredness. The approach is designed to align with the needs, interests, and real-life experiences of learners. This ensures that the activities are relevant and engaging, motivating students to participate actively. Additionally, TBLT emphasizes the importance of meaningful communication, encouraging learners to prioritize the exchange of ideas and the construction of meaning over rigid adherence to grammatical accuracy. The implementation of TBLT typically follows a structured yet flexible framework consisting of three phases: pre-task, task, and post-task. In the pre-task phase, the teacher introduces the topic, explains the task, and provides any necessary language support. During the task phase, students work individually or collaboratively to complete the assigned activity, focusing on using the language for authentic communication. In the post-task phase, learners reflect on their performance, discuss challenges, and receive feedback on language use. This cyclical process balances fluency and accuracy, allowing learners to refine their skills in a supportive environment. Techniques commonly used in TBLT include problem-solving, role-plays, information-gap activities, storytelling, and project-based tasks. For example, a problem-solving activity might involve students working together to devise solutions to a real-world challenge, such as planning a community event. Role-plays allow learners to practice language in simulated scenarios, like job interviews or customer interactions, while storytelling encourages creativity and narrative skills. These techniques provide opportunities for students to use language in dynamic and meaningful ways, fostering both linguistic and cognitive development. TBLT offers numerous benefits for language learners. By engaging students in tasks that mirror real-life communication, the approach enhances their ability to use language in authentic contexts. It also promotes learner autonomy, as students take an active role in their learning process, and fosters collaboration through group and pair work. Furthermore, TBLT accommodates diverse learning styles, making it an inclusive and adaptable teaching method. In conclusion, Task-Based Language Teaching is a powerful approach to language instruction that prioritizes meaningful interaction and practical application. By

focusing on tasks rather than isolated language forms, TBLT equips learners with the skills needed for effective communication in real-world situations. Its emphasis on learner engagement, authentic tasks, and balanced skill development makes it a valuable methodology for educators seeking to create dynamic and impactful language learning experiences.

METHOD

The methodology of this study was quantitative, involving objective data collection and statistical analysis to test hypotheses. According to Creswell (2012), quantitative research examines relationships between variables and employs numerical data and mathematical models for analysis. Originating from the physical sciences, this approach is widely used to investigate variable interactions. In this study, a pre-experimental design was employed due to the limited class size at SMP Tri Dharma, utilizing pre-tests and post-tests to assess the effects of the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) technique on students' speaking skills. The research population consisted of 50 ninth-grade students (classes 9.A and 9.B) at SMP Tri Dharma Palembang during the 2023/2024 academic year. The experimental group comprised 25 students from class IX A, selected using convenience sampling. This non-probability sampling technique, described by Etikan and Alkassim (2016), was chosen for its simplicity and practicality in accessing participants, given the constraints on class selection. The study aimed to evaluate whether TBLT significantly improved students' speaking skills by comparing pre-test and post-test results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study investigated the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on ninth-grade students' speaking skills at SMP Tri Dharma Palembang. Using a pre-experimental design, pre-tests and post-tests were conducted with 25 students in the experimental group. Statistical analysis revealed a significant improvement in speaking skills following TBLT intervention.

Table 1. Normality and Statistical Testing

	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-Test	0.922	25	0.128
Post-Test	0.978	25	0.312

Normality tests using the Shapiro-Wilk method confirmed that pre-test and post-test data were normally distributed ($p > 0.05$). Paired samples t-tests demonstrated a statistically significant increase in mean speaking scores from 12.72 (pre-test) to 17.72 (post-test) with a mean difference of 5.00 ($t = -15.309$, $p < 0.001$). This improvement validated the effectiveness of TBLT as an instructional method.

Table 2. Pre-Test Scores Analyses in Experimental Group

Score Range	Category	Experimental Group (Pre-Test)		
		Frequency/Percentage	Mean	SD
17-25	A(Very good)	1 (4%)	17.00	-
14-16	B(Good)	10 (48%)	14.58	0.67
11-13	C(Fair)	9 (36%)	12.33	0.50
8-10	D(Poor)	5 (20%)	10.00	0.00
0-7	E(Very poor)	0 (0%)	0	
Total		25 (100%)	12.72	2.11

Table 4. Post-Test Scores Analyses in Experimental Group

Score Range	Category	Experimental Group (Pre-Test)		
		Frequency / Percentage	Mean	SD
17-25	A (Very Good)	15 (75%)	19.4	2.26
14-16	B (Good)	10 (25%)	15.2	0.79
11-13	C (Fair)	0 (0%)		
8-10	D (Poor)	0 (0%)		
0-7	E (Very Poor)	0 (0%)		
Total		25 (100%)	17.72	2.73

Table 5. Descriptive analysis

Variable	Experimental Group		Mean Difference	T-Value andSig. Within
	Pre-Test	Post-Test		
Speaking	12.72	17.72	5.00	15.309

Pre-test results categorized students mainly as "Good" (48%) and "Fair" (36%), with a mean score of 12.72. Post-test scores showed substantial progress, with 75% of students achieving the "Very Good" category and an increased mean score of 17.72. These findings highlight a notable shift in students' speaking abilities.

Questionnaire Analysis

Student perceptions of TBLT were overwhelmingly positive, with 79.2% strongly agreeing that the method enhanced their learning experience. The favorable responses supported the effectiveness of TBLT in fostering engagement and improving speaking skills.

Hypotheses Testing

The null hypothesis that there was no significant difference in speaking skills before and after TBLT was rejected. The alternative hypothesis, indicating a positive impact of TBLT, was accepted. These results underline the potential of TBLT to improve speaking proficiency and align with prior research advocating task-based approaches for language instruction. In conclusion, TBLT proved effective in significantly enhancing students' speaking skills, as evidenced by statistical and perceptual analyses. This supports its integration into language teaching curricula for skill development.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on students' speaking abilities by testing two hypotheses: the Null Hypothesis (Ho), which suggests no significant difference in speaking abilities before and after TBLT, and the Alternative Hypothesis (Ha), which posits a significant difference. The hypotheses were tested using paired samples t-tests, with the significance level set at 0.05. The results showed that the t-obtained value was significantly higher than the critical t-value, and the Sig. (2-tailed) value was below 0.05, leading to the rejection of Ho and acceptance of Ha. This indicated a significant improvement in students' speaking abilities after TBLT implementation, with a substantial increase in mean scores from pre-test to post-test, confirming TBLT's effectiveness in enhancing speaking skills. The findings suggest that TBLT is a valuable pedagogical approach for improving students' speaking abilities, with implications for educators and policymakers to incorporate TBLT into curricula. Based on these findings, recommendations for enhancing English learning through TBLT include

encouraging students' active participation in task-based activities, guiding teachers to use TBLT to foster interactive learning, supporting schools with resources and professional development, and encouraging future research to explore various task types and their impact on different language skills.

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