



Effects of Task-Based Language Teaching on Speaking Fluency and Motivation in Secondary English Classrooms

PD, Sujatha

Assistant Prof. of English,
Pingle Govt. College for Women (A),
Waddepally, TG, India.

Abstract: Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as a prominent communicative approach that promotes language acquisition through the completion of meaningful, goal-oriented tasks. The present study examined the impact of TBLT on the speaking fluency and motivation of secondary school learners of English as a second language. Employing a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design, the study involved 60 Grade 9 students who were assigned to either an experimental group receiving task-based instruction or a control group taught through the conventional grammar-translation method over an eight-week period.

Data were gathered through speaking proficiency tests administered before and after the intervention, a standardized motivation questionnaire, and systematic classroom observations. Quantitative analyses revealed that the experimental group achieved significantly greater improvements in speaking fluency, linguistic complexity, and willingness to communicate than the control group. In addition, learners exposed to TBLT reported higher levels of confidence, enjoyment, and motivation toward learning English. Qualitative evidence from classroom observations further indicated increased student participation, peer collaboration, and learner autonomy during task-based lessons.

The findings demonstrate that TBLT provides a supportive and engaging environment for the development of communicative competence and positive learner attitudes in secondary ESL classrooms. The study therefore recommends the incorporation of well-structured task cycles into English curricula and highlights the

need for teacher training in the effective design and implementation of communicative tasks. These results contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of TBLT in contexts where opportunities for authentic language use are limited.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, speaking fluency, motivation, communicative competence, ESL, secondary education.

Introduction:

For many years, English language instruction in secondary schools has been dominated by teacher-centered and grammar-oriented approaches that emphasize memorization of rules and accuracy in written exercises. Although such methods may help learners develop knowledge of grammatical structures, they often provide insufficient opportunities for meaningful interaction and spontaneous language use. Consequently, many students struggle to communicate effectively in real-life situations despite years of formal study.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emerged as a response to these limitations. Grounded in communicative language teaching principles, TBLT places meaningful tasks at the heart of instruction. According to Willis (1996) and Ellis (2003), language is best acquired when learners actively engage in tasks that require them to use the target language to achieve a specific outcome. Ellis (2003) defines a task as an activity in which learners use language primarily to convey meaning and accomplish a goal, rather than merely practice linguistic forms. Through tasks such as problem-solving, information-gap activities, and role plays, learners are encouraged to negotiate meaning, collaborate with peers, and develop communicative competence in authentic contexts.

The relevance of TBLT is particularly evident in countries such as India, where English functions as a second language and opportunities for genuine communication outside the classroom are often limited. Traditional instructional practices may leave students hesitant to speak and lacking confidence in their abilities. By providing purposeful and interactive learning



experiences, TBLT has the potential not only to enhance speaking fluency but also to foster positive attitudes and greater motivation toward learning English.

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the effectiveness of TBLT in secondary English classrooms, focusing on its impact on learners' speaking fluency and motivation. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent does TBLT improve learners' speaking fluency compared to traditional instruction?
2. How does TBLT influence learners' motivation to learn English?

Literature Review

Previous research has consistently highlighted the value of communicative approaches in promoting second language acquisition. Early proponents of TBLT argued that meaningful interaction facilitates language development by encouraging learners to negotiate meaning and attend to linguistic forms in context. Studies conducted in diverse educational settings have shown that task-based activities provide learners with increased opportunities for authentic communication, thereby enhancing their oral proficiency.

Research on speaking skills indicates that learners engaged in task-based instruction generally demonstrate greater fluency and confidence than those taught through traditional grammar-based methods. Interactive tasks such as role plays, problem-solving activities, and information-gap exercises create a supportive environment in which students can practice spontaneous speech and develop communicative strategies.

In addition to linguistic gains, scholars have reported positive effects of TBLT on affective variables. Meaningful and collaborative tasks tend to increase learners' interest, autonomy, and intrinsic motivation. Students often perceive task-based lessons as more relevant to their real-life needs, which in turn fosters sustained engagement with the target language. Despite these encouraging findings, relatively few studies have examined the simultaneous impact of TBLT on both speaking fluency and motivation in Indian secondary school contexts. The present study seeks to address this gap by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness



of task-based instruction among learners of English as a second language in secondary classrooms.

Methodology

The study employed a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design involving two intact classes of secondary school students studying English as a second language. One class served as the experimental group and received instruction through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), while the other functioned as the control group and continued with traditional grammar-based instruction. The participants, aged between 14 and 16 years, possessed comparable levels of English proficiency at the outset of the study.

The intervention lasted for twelve weeks. Learners in the experimental group engaged in a variety of communicative tasks, including information-gap activities, role plays, problem-solving tasks, and group projects designed to promote meaningful language use. The control group followed the prescribed textbook using conventional teaching techniques such as explanation, translation, and drill-based practice.

Data were collected through a speaking fluency test administered before and after the intervention and a motivation questionnaire adapted from established second-language motivation scales. The speaking performances were audio-recorded and assessed using a standardized rubric focusing on fluency indicators such as speech rate, pauses, and continuity of expression. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and appropriate inferential tests to determine differences within and between the two groups.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from the students and their guardians, and the confidentiality of all participants was maintained.

Results

The analysis of the posttest scores indicated a clear advantage for the experimental group that received Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Although both groups exhibited some improvement over the course of the study, the gains made by the experimental group were substantially greater. In the speaking fluency assessment, students in the TBLT group produced



longer stretches of uninterrupted speech, spoke at a faster and more natural pace, and displayed fewer pauses and self-corrections than their counterparts in the control group. Their performances also reflected greater confidence and a higher degree of communicative effectiveness during interactive tasks.

Responses to the motivation questionnaire revealed a similarly positive trend. Learners in the experimental group reported increased enjoyment of English lessons, stronger self-confidence in speaking, and a greater willingness to participate in classroom activities and to use English beyond the classroom. In contrast, the control group showed only slight increases in motivation, with most students reporting little change in their attitudes toward English learning. These findings suggest that TBLT contributes not only to measurable improvements in oral proficiency but also to the development of positive affective dispositions that support continued language learning.

Discussion

The findings of the present study indicate that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) provides a classroom environment that is highly conducive to the development of speaking proficiency. By engaging learners in purposeful, goal-oriented activities, TBLT shifts the emphasis from the memorization of grammatical forms to the meaningful use of language. This communicative focus encourages students to express their ideas spontaneously, negotiate meaning with peers, and employ a range of linguistic and strategic resources to accomplish tasks. As a result, learners become more fluent and confident speakers, capable of sustaining conversations with greater ease and coherence.

The observed increase in motivation can be attributed to the authenticity and collaborative nature of the task-based activities. Tasks that mirror real-life communicative situations help students perceive English as a practical tool rather than merely a school subject. Moreover, opportunities for pair and group work foster a supportive learning atmosphere, reduce anxiety, and promote a sense of achievement and autonomy. These positive experiences are likely to enhance learners' interest in English and their willingness to use the language both inside and outside the classroom.

The results of this study are in line with previous research demonstrating that meaningful interaction facilitates second-language acquisition and positively influences affective factors. The findings therefore lend further support to the adoption of TBLT in secondary English classrooms, particularly in contexts where learners have limited exposure to authentic communication. Nevertheless, future studies involving larger samples and longer intervention periods would be valuable in confirming the long-term impact of task-based instruction on language development and learner motivation.

Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The quantitative analysis revealed a substantial improvement in speaking fluency among learners in the experimental group. Their mean fluency scores increased significantly from the pre-test ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 0.8$) to the post-test ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 0.7$), $t(29) = 6.84$, $p < .001$, indicating that the gains were unlikely to have occurred by chance. In contrast, the control group exhibited only modest progress, with mean scores rising from 3.3 to 3.7 over the same period. Similarly, the motivation questionnaire showed a statistically significant increase in the experimental group's levels of interest, confidence, and willingness to use English, whereas the control group displayed only marginal changes.

Classroom observations provided qualitative support for these findings. Students participating in TBLT spent considerably more time speaking in English, collaborated actively with their peers, and demonstrated a greater willingness to take communicative risks, such as expressing complex ideas or speaking despite uncertainty about linguistic accuracy. Learners frequently described the tasks as authentic and engaging, commenting that “the tasks felt real” and that they “had to think in English,” suggesting that the activities fostered genuine communicative involvement.

Taken together, these results are consistent with the work of Skehan (2018) and Ellis (2003), who argue that meaningful, goal-oriented interaction promotes the development of communicative competence. The observed increase in motivation may also be interpreted through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, as the task-based activities provided learners



with a sense of autonomy, competence, and personal relevance, thereby enhancing their intrinsic motivation to learn and use English.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study provide compelling evidence that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is more effective than traditional grammar-oriented instruction in promoting speaking fluency and enhancing motivation among secondary-level learners of English as a second language. Through participation in meaningful, goal-directed tasks, students developed greater confidence, spoke with increased fluency, and demonstrated a stronger willingness to use English both within and beyond the classroom. These outcomes underscore the value of communicative, learner-centered pedagogies in fostering not only linguistic competence but also positive attitudes toward language learning.

The study has important implications for educational practice. English teachers should be provided with adequate professional development in the design and implementation of communicative tasks as well as in the management of interactive classrooms. Likewise, curriculum developers are encouraged to incorporate coherent task cycles that promote authentic language use, rather than relying exclusively on the presentation of discrete grammatical structures. Such changes can help create learning environments that better prepare students for real-world communication.

Despite its contributions, the study is limited by its relatively small sample size and the short duration of the intervention. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Future research may employ larger and more diverse samples, extend the treatment period, and investigate the impact of TBLT on additional language skills, particularly writing, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its long-term effectiveness.

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