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EFFECT OF TASK BASED INSTRUCTION ON ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English speaking skill is considered more difficult than teaching any other language skill. It has been found that despite receiving good scores, students' speaking proficiency in the English language is not very good. This is also due to our syllabi, assessment system and traditional teaching methods. The objective of the current study was to find out the effect of Task Based Instruction (TBI) on the English-speaking skills of eighth-class students. Matching only pre-test posttest group design was used. Experimental group was selected randomly. Speaking test developed by the researchers was used for the collection of data. Independent sample t-test and repeated measures paired sample t-test were used to find the mean difference between two groups. Data analysis showed that the TBI significantly improved the speaking skills of the experimental group. In the end suggestions for future researches have also been provided.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is the channel via which one communicates with others, transfers information, responds to other people and events, influences others, and expresses thoughts, feelings, and emotions (Fulcher, 2003). Speaking entails, the application of linguistic knowledge and abilities in the creation of linguistic utterances. The former is referred to as 'competence,' while the latter is referred to as 'performance,' (Canale & Swain, 1980). When assessing a learner's ability to speak, depending on their language ability or knowledge, it is essential to request that someone speak or demonstrate a talent (Bygate, 1987). As a result, identifying the construct of oral language competence is crucial in order to

conduct successful and complete tests. Because of this variance, designing in all subject areas, a speaking exam that can effectively assess a speaking skill of a student is essentially impossible to create. As a result, the speaking construct's operationalized definition must be determined.

According to McKay (2006), to guarantee that the test's objectives are accomplished, the curriculum, the context in which students engage with the use of the student's target language used in class, as well as instructor assessment of their verbal skills competency should all be considered when determining the content or range of spoken language to be assessed.

Understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and phonology is referred to as grammatical competence, or language proficiency (pronunciation and intonation) (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980). According to Bachman and Palmer (1996) one of the most crucial aspects of spoken communication skill is linguistic competence. The ability to produce the proper language sounds and structures via these linguistic processes is referred to as having motor perceptual abilities. When overcoming or resolving difficulties in verbal communication, one applies interaction skills. Combining motor-perceptual and social skills could help the user become proficient (Bygate, 1987).

Since the introduction of communicative language teaching (CLT) in the 1970s, the primary goal of language education had already shifted from teaching grammar as a fundamental subject to imparting vocabulary knowledge to students, or the capacity to employ grammar and other language features for communicative goals like making the request, offering suggestions, and so on (Richards, 2006, p. 9). The operational construct of speaking skills, which included grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, interaction, and fluency, was employed for this study based on this justification. Howatt (1984) distinguished between two types of CLT: "weak" and "strong."

Communicative tasks were incorporated into linguistic-based teaching approaches in the weak form (i.e. into the Presentaiton, Practice , Production (PPP) manufacturing stage). To put it another way, learners were given opportunities to apply their English for communicative reasons but the approach remained mostly unchanged (Ellis, 2012, p. 60; Howatt, 1984, p. 279). Language was learnt through conversation, according to the strong form of CLT (Howatt, 1984), It means that students picked up communication skills through communication (Nunan, 2004). The educational content was no longer linguistically centered as a result. Instead, communication activities took over as the basic teaching and course structure (Ellis, 2003a, 2012). With the passage of time, the strong version evolved into teaching methods that focus on tasks (TBLT) (Ellis, 2012; Nunan, 2004; Richard, 2006; Santos, 2011).

TBI, often referred to as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), is a method of language instruction that involves students in fruitful discussion and participation while also providing them with opportunities to apply grammar in real-world situations (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). TBI, as one of CLT's offshoots, has a comparable distinction to its ancestor, similar to those of the powerful and weak variants. Task-supported teaching, a weak version of TBI,

views tasks as a tool to give students communicative practice with language skills taught in a conventional, grammar-based setting, like PPP. In the design and delivery of instruction in the strong form, known as TBI, tasks are seen as crucial building blocks. Tasks are both necessary and sufficient in and of themselves according to this concept (Ellis, 2003b; Nunan, 2004). TBI, according to Willis (1996), is the solution to the challenges that the standard PPP strategy has since it creates appropriate settings for language development. As a result of their exposure to real-world spoken and written language usage, opportunities using the language to fulfil tasks, encouragement to process usage and exposure, and the ability to concentrate on forms, students can effectively acquire language through TBI. Others even propose TBI as a fresh approach to language instruction that would be suitable for the demands of language learners in the twenty-first century with regard to psycholinguistics and communicative abilities (Long, 2014).

TBI implementation is not without its difficulties. The first is due to teachers' lack of knowledge of TBI, it keeps them from effectively putting the tactic into practice in their classrooms. Additionally, because TBI emphasizes communication skills in general, whereas traditional, grammar-based exams are valued in many countries, this seems unsuitable. Because the task activity may improve fluency at the price of accuracy, TBI may present a difficulty with linguistic accuracy. Learners' aversion to adopting another issue is the use of English as a teaching language. The students' excessive usage of their native tongue may undermine the teacher's initial goals as well as assumptions that learning English implies speaking it. Another issue is the use of English as a teaching language. The students' excessive usage of their native tongue may undermine the teacher's initial goals as well as assumptions that learning English implies speaking it (Richards, 2006; Meas, 2010).

Nunan (2004) differentiating between problems in the actual world and academic challenges. The tasks that are finished outside of the classroom are known as real-world or target tasks. Real-world tasks become pedagogical tasks when they are modified for use in the classroom. According to Breen (1987), a pedagogical task is a set of structured work plans with a defined target, content, technique, and end that tries to facilitate language learning, whether they are brief and basic exercises or more complicated and lengthy tasks. A task differs from an exercise in that it has a clear communication objective, according to Ellis (2000). An activity, on the other hand, involves learners constructing precise grammatical structures. Tasks should be selected for a task-based course based on task categories and subjects or themes (Ellis, 2003). Activities from textbooks that met certain requirements, such as an emphasis on meaning, a connection to the real world, an observable result, and relevant to students' demands, might be turned into tasks (Willis, 2006).

Different types of tasks (Willis, 1996), gape of information (Richards, 2006; Prabhu, 1987), gap of reason (Prabhu, 1987), sharing of individual experiences (Willis, 1996), problems puzzling or problem-solving (Richards, 2006; Willis, 1996; Pattison, 1987), Sorting and order (Willis, 1996), comparing skill (Willis, 1996), decisions and discussions or opinion exchange or opinion gap (Prabhu, 1987; Pattison, 1987). These examples express that there some various referred

to these tasks contain certain basic characteristics whether categorized using terms or methods or shared qualities. The gap of information (Richards, 2006; Prabhu, 1987), picture stories and photographs (Pattison, 1987), jigsaws (Richards, 2006), or matching are examples of tasks concerning reorganization differences between images and sequencing of images to tell a story (Willis, 1996). It may not be possible or beyond from the scope of this research to collect a list of different types of tasks. As a result, the current research used synthetic lists that included seven types of tasks: lists, information gaps, ordering, inference gaps, dialogues, opinion gaps and mappings.

Willis (1996) presents a three-stage instructional structure for introducing new activities. This instructional architecture begins with the Pre-Task stage, where the subject and task are introduced by the teacher. Students may also get the opportunity to read or hear about others doing a similar job at this level before attempting it themselves. Students use their available language resources to complete the task(s) (Work), get ready to report what they might have learned or done about the work (Planning), and present their findings to the class in the second stage. In the last stage, the teacher emphasizes the crucial linguistic components that are present in earlier stages (Analysis) and provides students with more practice that is more form-focused, language focus (Practice). The TBI framework proposed by Willis (1996) is considered as a challenge to the traditional PPP patterns (Oxford, 2006). In the PPP, a new grammatical structure is first introduced by the teacher in a conversation or brief text, and then students practice the structure under both controlled and uncontrolled conditions (production). Through this process, language development in students is said to advance from correctness to fluency. In the TBI framework, students use their current language skills to complete the task, particularly during the task stage (task, planning, report), which is essentially free of language management. Since they are already familiar with the most important language components, students only participate in form-focused activities at the final level (language focus). Students move from fluency to accuracy using the TBI cycle Willis (1996).

Statement of the Problem

Speaking is a social skill that is essential to one's social growth. But due to the strong influence of the grammar-translation technique, the scarcity of native speaker instructors in EFL programmes, and the size of the classes, it is a talent that is frequently ignored in the EFL classroom (Nation, 2011). Although Pakistan has long used traditional methods like syntax and practice, presentation, and production (PPP), students rarely reach a proficient level of communicative language ability. New teaching strategies concentrating on enhancing students' communicative skills, such Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), have been established in response to current criticisms of conventional approaches like PPP (Richards, 2006).

Task-based instruction (TBI) or task-based language teaching (TBLT) is one of the methods used in the CLT extensions (Santos, 2011; Richard, 2006). In order to accomplish communicative objectives, TBI engages students in a range of interactive activities that foster meaningful conversation. The interest in it has

grown steadily over the past few years, and among foreign language teachers, it is now the most widely used instructional pedagogy (Oxford, 2006; Santos, 2011). A significant volume, there is also realistic data about the effectiveness of applying the TBI or TBLT. This approach maximizes the fluency of the learner speaking, improving the accuracy of grammar, and elaborating on their ideas, interactional language development and utterances (Albino, 2017). The following research goal was established in order to set the background for this investigation.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Following was the research objective of the study; What variations in speaking test results can be found between the control and experimental groups?

HYPOTHESES

On the basis of the objective of the current study, the null hypothesis stated below was developed.

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of tasked-based instruction on students' English-speaking skills at the elementary school level.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The Matching-Only pretest-posttest control group design was applied in the current study.

Table 1.1

The Matching-Only Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design

Treatment Group	M	O	X	O
Control Group	M	O	C	O

Note. Table 1.1 explains using a control group design with matching-only pre- and post-tests, where first row shows the experimental or treatment group and the second row is about the control group. M represents matching-only phase, first O is pre-test, X is treatment or intervention, C control or traditional methodology for teaching English speaking skill and second O is for post-test. Data for study were collected on pre-test and post-test basis.

Setting and Participants for the study

A public school from Multan district was purposefully chosen for current study. A school that was technologically sophisticated was needed for the intervention planned for this study, i.e., a school with an LCD, Internet, audio-visual aids, and uninterruptible power supply. The sampled school in the current study did not permit the researchers to assign groups at random. This was a serious limitation of the present study. Thus, the researchers randomly chose two intact groups for intervention. The school had created the groups in Grade VIII in accordance with policy based on the annual student results from Grade VII. In Grade VIII, there were five sections (A through E). There were 35–40 students per section. Two sections, C and E, were chosen at random by the researchers. Experimental group was chosen through the toss of coin.

The Speaking Test

The researchers developed the speaking test using a Grade Eight textbook published by the Government of Punjab. The students were assessed in pairs, with two evaluators using the same criteria to assess their performance. The scores of both assessors about the results of the combined and divided by two performances of each student. After that, the test was divided into three sections. In first section, the researchers asked some questions from personal information (age, name, residence address etc.), in second section, some types of general questions were asked such as beverages, leisure activities, school activities and favorite foods. In the last section, the teachers used flashcards with visuals and questions to complete information-gap exercises.

The speaking rubric:

A speaking rubric that was modified from Ulster University (2018) and Cambridge English was used to assess the students' speaking performances (2011). Pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and interaction were the five divisions. The five-point total for each category was multiplied by a different weighting factor to determine its relative weight. Experts assessed the content validity using the Index of Items-Objective Congruence (IOC). When the IOC equivalent was 1, which was 1, the instrument's content validity was found to be satisfactory. Additionally, a review of the test results revealed that the inter-rater reliability of the rubric was $r = 0.80$.

The lesson plans:

There were two sets of nine lesson plans. Total 18 lesson plans were planned using some of the fundamental elements proposed by Haynes (2010) such as objectives, aims, pedagogical techniques etc. The period of intervention was six weeks. Three sessions per week were conducted. Each session was of 45 minutes. The TBI lesson plans were based on Willis' (1996) framework. The beginning and end of the framework were expanded by two additional phases (Opening and Closing), as well as two job cycles was used, to accommodate the 90-minute sessions. The six stages of instruction the opening, the pre-task, the first and second task cycles, the language focus, and the closing. The Task Cycles' "tasks" were comprised of 18 activities drawn from the English Grade 8 course book based on Willis' (2006) criteria (relevance to students', a strong emphasis on meaning, requirements, a connection to the real world, and an obvious result). These were consisted of 7 types of tasks such as reasoning gap (x2), information gap (x1), dialogues (x5), opinion gap (x4), ordering (x2), listing (x1) and matching (x3). Students were chosen based on their ability to communicate with learners assisting the students acquire a second language in a way that required a two-way flow of information (Ellis, 2000). The control group was taught by using the identical content and parts from the course book, but with the use of PPP lesson plans created using the PPP lesson style, which consists of three stages: Practice, Production and presentation. Three experts were requested to evaluate the lesson plans. The experts were from the field of English Language. The content of the lesson plans was significantly valid but some specific modifications were made based on the experts' opinion.

DATA ANALYSIS

Following was the null hypothesis of the present study;

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of tasked-based instruction on students' English-speaking skills at elementary school level.

Table 1.1

Comparison of English-speaking skills on the basis of pre-test and post-test scores

Groups	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Experimental group pre-test	114.47	2.289	-14.860	39	.000
Experimental group post-test	139.75	7.362			
Control group pre-test	114.34	2.314	-1.324	39	.150
Control group post-test	115.38	2.353			

Note.: $N=40$, $p=0.05$

Table 1.1 compares the same group's English-speaking abilities based on pre- and post-test results. According to the data in this table, the experimental group performed better on the post test (mean=139.75, SD 7.362) than on the pretest (mean=114.47, SD 2.289). Statistics from the repeated measures paired sample t-test show a statistically significant difference between the experimental group's pre- and post-test results, with a value of $t(39) = -14.860$ and a p-value of 0.001. The intervention of task-based education was expected to contribute to the experimental group's increased score on the post-test for English speaking ability.

The scores for the control group, however, differed between the pre- and post-tests on the English speaking skills. This was seen in pair 2 in table 1.2. Statistics revealed that the control group's posttest scores (mean=115.38, SD=2.353) were only slightly higher than their pretest scores (mean=114.34, SD=2.314). Repeated measurements revealed a statistically insignificant difference between the control group's pre- and post-test scores ($t(39) = -1.324$, $p > 0.001$). This modest increase was not a result of any teaching efforts but rather was anticipated by chance. The null hypothesis, "There is no substantial effect of task-based training on students' English-speaking skills at primary school level," was not supported by the figures mentioned above.

Table 1.2

Comparison of Independent Groups Based on English Speaking Test Scores Before and After.

Groups	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Sig.(2-tailed)</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Experimental group pre-test	114.47	2.289	.237	78	.705	
Control group pre-test	139.75	7.362				

Experimental group post-test	114.34	2.314	14.160	78	.000	3.4
Control group post-test	115.38	2.353				

Note: $p=0.05$ and $n=40$

Table 1.3 compares the English speaking skills of different independent groups based on the results of the pre- and post-test. According to the values in this table, the pre-test performance of the experimental and control groups was equal. Control group's mean was 115.38, SD was 2.353, and experimental group's mean was 114.47, SD was 2.289 Independent sample t-test results show that there is statistically no difference between the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups; $t(78)=.237, p>0.001$.

Comparing the results of the experimental and control groups based on the results of the post-test was shown in pair 2 in table 1.3. Statistics indicate that the experimental groups performed better than the control group in the posttest (mean=139.75, SD=7.362; and mean=115.38, SD=2.353). Independent sample t-test results revealed a statistically significant difference in the performance of the experimental and control groups, $t(78)= 14.160, p 0.001$. This difference is statistically significant, as shown by Cohen's d value of 3.4.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The students of the experimental group did better on the posttest than they had on the pretest. The amount of language work that the experimental group's TBI students had to complete—either on their own, in pairs, or in groups—had a significant impact on how well they spoke. Students had the opportunity to try exercising the language to explain their meaning after being introduced to the assigned work. Ellis (2000), who focused on the possibility for pupils to engage in meaning negotiation and Long's (1996) and Long's (2014) interaction hypothesis in order to receive understandable feedback that aids in the acquisition of a second language (p. 199). Specific types of assignments may have had a positive impact on students' speaking skills, especially their interactional abilities. such as opinion gaps, knowledge gaps, reasoning gaps dialogues and so on., which required students to exchange information in detail with the peers.

According to Ellis (2000), the kind of interactional adaptation or modification that potentially L2 acquisition is more probable to happen in actions that: (1) include a two-way information exchange, (2) result in a closed system, (3) demand the sharing of information. Additionally, since in order to express their meanings through the Task Cycles, students had to complete assignments, plan, and deliver their reports. To do this, they had to apply their linguistic knowledge in conjunction with their interaction and communication skills, including self-correction, rephrasing, repetition, and others. According to Bygate (1987, p. 20), these might help to the students in becoming more fluent. Furthermore, students were introduced to extra language tasks in the language focus stage after using throughout the Task Cycles, they used their linguistic resources to clarify meanings. This provided them additional opportunity to concentrate on the forms of the linguistic that they were previously familiar with, ensuring that

fluency did not come at the expense of correctness (Willis, 1996). This might be one of the causes for their remarkable improvement in grammatical accuracy in their speaking skills (Pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary).

The results of the present study are in line with the results presented by Albino (2017), Nget (2017), Torky (2006), and Muhsin & Muhsin (2017). (2015). They discovered that following a TBI, students increased their accuracy of speaking in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation. As well as, for this aim, it can be stated that TBI contributed significantly to the enhancement of All speaking sub-skills, including fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and interaction, and also students' overall speaking abilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the current study showed that TBI, which uses to overcome frequent difficulties in the teaching and learning of English-speaking skill, pair work and group work activities can be employed to provide students with more thorough and sufficient language practice. Therefore, it is advised that Teacher Education Programmes include the TBI in their EFL teacher preparation curriculum. TBI can be adapted for use in the classroom by teachers who are having problems teaching their students how to speak English. Other researchers who wish to replicate this TBI trial should do so in order to ascertain whether a longer study period might result in greater effects on the children's language speaking skill. However the future research is required that TBI is effective in boosting students' speaking, listening, writing, and reading abilities in Public and Private schools at different levels such as secondary and higher secondary.

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