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Improving Students' Speaking Skills in Engineering Colleges Through Task-Based Language Teaching

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***Abstract*—This paper explains the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing the speaking skills of engineering undergraduates in select colleges in the East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. In the contemporary educational landscape, particularly in Engineering Institutions, strong communication skills are essential for students' professional success. However, Traditional language Teaching Methods often fall short of addressing the practical communication needs of students. TBLT, with its focus on real-world Tasks and communicative competence, offers a promising alternative. The findings reveal that students in the TBLT group improved significantly in their speaking abilities compared to those in the control group, who were taught using traditional techniques. The tasks for the TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) sessions were designed to closely align with students' real-life communication needs, including group discussions, presentations, and interviews. This alignment made the learning process more relevant, practical, and engaging. Furthermore, the TBLT approach fostered a collaborative learning environment, which enhanced students' confidence and reduced anxiety about speaking skills.**

***Index Terms*—task-based language teaching, speaking skills, engineering students, communication skills, language education**

I. Introduction

Speaking is an important ability in English, along with listening, reading, and writing (Ur, 2006). It is a vital tool for communication, essential for achieving success in life. Speaking encompasses several components: morphology, pronunciation, lexis, semantics, grammar, syntax, pragmatics, fluency, discourse, and topicality (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Nunan, 2001). Despite its relevance, students in rural locations sometimes lack an atmosphere suitable for improving their speaking abilities as compared to their urban counterparts. Studies have highlighted the difficulties that learners have while attempting to improve their speaking abilities in such situations (Albino, 2017; Boonkit, 2010; Buriro & Hayat,

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2010; Khan & Khattak, 2011; Murad, 2009; Masuram & Sripada, 2020; Nget et al., 2020; Safitri et al., 2020; Tawil, 2018; Torky, 2006). Nonetheless, establishing speaking abilities is critical for students from rural regions, as good communication in the target language is a major predictor of successful language acquisition (Bunkart & Shepherd, 2004; Nunan, 1999). Although there were several new approaches accessible to build speaking abilities, task-based language education has emerged as the most recognized and effective way since 1970. It was introduced by Prabhu (1987) after recognizing its potential for enhancing language development. TBLT has been widely accepted over time, and in recent years, scholars, teachers, and syllabus designers have pushed for its use in language instruction more and more (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 1989; Prabhu, 1987). According to Nunan (2004), the TBLT approach demonstrates the use of language in organic, interactive contexts, frequently involving students exchanging ideas in groups or pairs. This framework allows students to practice language in relevant contexts by creating assignments that mimic real-life scenarios. TBLT operates on the belief that effective language learning occurs when the classroom environment mirrors real-life situations, engaging students in authentic task-based practices (Tawil, 2018). Tasks form the core of TBLT, serving interactional and communicative purposes. Willis (1996) proposed a widely recognized framework for TBLT, which includes distinct phases and has attracted the attention of ELT practitioners and curriculum developers globally. This framework provides learners with a structured platform to achieve fluency in the target language. TBLT is thus rooted in a strong theoretical foundation, utilizing tasks as the primary medium to help in language learning and initiate learners' learning process (Shehadeh, 2001; Tawil, 2018). TBLT encourages the comprehensive use of the target language by covering all four language skills, including vocabulary growth. Its emphasis on task-based learning ensures learners engage in practical, communicative scenarios that bridge classroom instruction with real-world application (Ellis, 2009).

II. Literature Review

In a quasi-experimental study conducted on 20 first-year students from Socotra Faculty Education, Hadhraout University, the researchers investigated speaking problems of Yemeni EFL students through interviewing and aimed to improve their skills using task-based instruction. The posttest scores revealed improvement in their communicative competence (Al-Tamimi et al., 2020).

In another study conducted using TBLT involving 60 first-semester non-English department students, results indicated significant improvement in speaking accuracy and fluency in the pre & posttest analysis carried out based on SPSS software (Panduwangi, 2021).

A study at Cihan University-Erbil explored the impact of group oral presentations, using a task-based approach, on the speaking skills of second-year architectural engineering students. Data from a survey revealed positive student attitudes toward group presentations and increased participation in speaking activities. However, teachers observed no significant improvement in pronunciation or grammatical accuracy in students' presentations, except providing motivation for more participation (Azizifard, 2024).

A study conducted at PUNIV-Cazenga high school in Luanda examined the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in improving the speaking fluency of ninth-grade EFL learners. Using a case study design, learners engaged in picture-description tasks, with their speech's audio-recorded before and after an 8-week intervention that included recasts and prompts as feedback tools. The findings revealed improvements in speech production speed, grammatical accuracy, utterance elaboration, and interactional language (Albino, 2017).

The study conducted using picture stories, spotting differences, speaking on a topic in goal-oriented situations, they concluded with the results that task-based teaching fosters interaction, motivation, and exposure, enabling learners to enhance their speaking abilities and engage effectively in real-world communication.

III. Research Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative data were incorporated into the study using a mixed-methods approach. An experimental methodology comprising a pre-test and a post-test was used to evaluate the progress in the students' speaking ability. To find out more about students' perceptions of TBLT and how it impacted their confidence and communication abilities, surveys and interviews were also conducted. The study sample consisted of students from several engineering institutes in the East Godavari region. They were divided into groups for the experiment and the control. A preliminary questionnaire was completed to get more information about the profiles of the participants. Using a post-study questionnaire, participants' opinions on how well they performed the oral communicative tasks were also obtained.

A. Sampling Process of Participants in the Pilot Study

In the primary process of the research, a pilot study was conducted to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of implementing the TBLT method. The pilot study aimed to fine-tune the research methodology and ensure that the TBLT instructional approach proved to yield meaningful results.

For the pilot study, a random sampling method was employed to select a limited number of participants representing both the experimental (exp) and control groups. The researcher randomly selected 5 students for each group to serve as an initial sample. These participants were chosen from the pool of eligible candidates within the target population, ensuring that each participant had an equal chance of being selected.

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B. Sampling Process of Participants in the Main Study

Following the successful completion of the pilot study, the researchers proceeded to the main study, which involved a larger sample size to provide more robust and generalizable results to assess and prove the effectiveness of the TBLT interventions in developing the speaking skills of engineering graduates.

C. Data Analysis and Interpretation

In the main study, the researcher utilized random sampling techniques to select participants. A total of 100 students were chosen, with 50 allocated to the experimental group and 50 to the control group. By employing these sampling techniques, the researcher aimed to create a representative and balanced sample for the main study, allowing the study to find meaningful conclusions about the impact of TBLT on language learning outcomes while controlling for potential confounding variables. The use of randomization and stratification helps enhance the reliability and validity of the research findings.

IV. Results

A. Pre-Test of the Main Study

The primary purpose of a pretest in a TBLT research study is to establish a baseline measurement of the outcome variable or variables of interest before the intervention takes place. This baseline provides a reference point for assessing the changes that occurred as a result of the intervention.

Criteria for CEFR Speaking Assessment

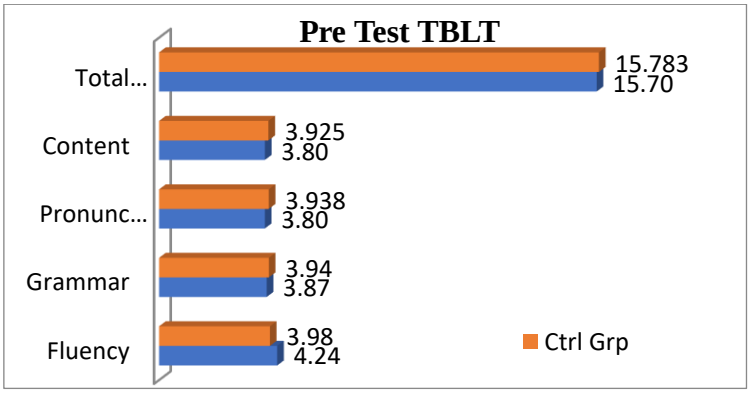
Components	**Weightage of the Marks**
Fluency	10 M
Grammar	10 M
Pronunciation	10 M
Content	10 M
Maximum Score	**40 Marks**

This procedure outlines the criteria used for assessing speaking skills according to standard language proficiency skills i.e. CEFR. This assessment considers four components: Fluency, Grammar, Pronunciation, and Content. Each component carries a weightage of 10 marks, making the maximum achievable score for a speaking assessment 40 marks in total. These criteria help to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of speaking skills by examining various aspects, including the ability to speak fluently, use correct grammar, pronounce words accurately, and convey meaningful content in the targeted language.

In the context of the study, the researcher uses the CEFR-based criteria to evaluate participants' speaking skills before and after the TBLT intervention, which helped to assess the effectiveness of the intervention in improving the English language components. Comparing pre-test and post-test scores provided insights into the impact of TBLT on the participants' language proficiency.

Table 1
Results of Pre-Test in TBLT Study- Main Sample Study

Pre-Test TBLT					
Mean	Fluency	Grammar	Pronunciation	Content	Total (40M)
Exp Group	4.24	3.87	3.80	3.80	15.70
Ctrl Group	3.98	3.94	3.938	3.925	15.783



The findings of a pre-test given to two participant groups—the Experimental Group and the Control Group—are shown in the table and bar chart above. The pre-test evaluates the student's language proficiency in several areas, including content, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. With a maximum possible score of 40, the total score is the sum of the

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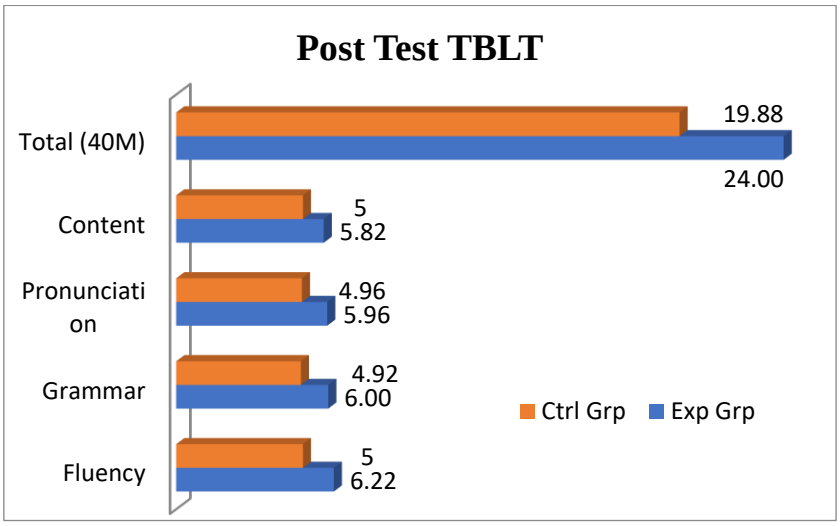
scores earned in these four categories. With a total score of 15.70 (39.36%), the Experimental Group outperformed the Control Group, which scored 15.783 (39.46%). The overall scores of both groups are comparable, providing an identical starting point for administering interventions in further research.

B. Post-Test of the Main Study

The post-tests serve important purposes in research studies, especially in educational and intervention research. The study results are used to assess participants' characteristics or performance before and after an intervention or treatment. Post-tests are mostly used to evaluate the impact or efficacy of interventions. The researcher can ascertain that the intervention significantly impacted the outcome variables by comparing post-test and pre-test results.

TABLE 2
RESULTS OF POST-TEST IN TBLT STUDY

Post Test TBLT					
Mean	Fluency	Grammar	Pronunciation	Content	Total (40M)
Exp Group	6.22	6.00	5.96	5.82	24.00
Ctrl Group	5	4.92	4.96	5	19.88



The above table and the bar chart represent the results of a post-test conducted after implementing the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) intervention in two groups: The Experimental Group (Exp Group) and the Control Group (Ctrl Group). The post-test is designed to assess the participants' language skills in various components, including Fluency, Grammar, Pronunciation, and Content. The "Total" column represents the sum of scores obtained in these four components, with a maximum achievable score of 40 marks.

V. DISCUSSION

Fluency: The Experimental Group attained a higher average fluency score of 6.22, compared to the Control Group's average score of 5.00. This indicates that the TBLT intervention positively influenced the speaking fluency of participants in the experimental group.

Grammar: The Experimental Group also exceeded the Control Group in grammar, achieving a mean score of 6.00 compared to 4.92. This suggests that the TBLT method improved grammatical accuracy among the Experimental Group participants.

Pronunciation: Although both groups' pronunciation improved, the Experimental Group's mean score was marginally higher (5.96) than the Control Group's (4.96). Given that the Experimental Group made more progress, it appears that the TBLT intervention improved pronunciation abilities. Even while the score difference is small, it suggests that the task-based method might have offered better engagement or more productive practice opportunities, which would have improved pronunciation. Furthermore, TBLT's interactive and communicative elements may have contributed to the Experimental Group's development by providing more practical speaking practice than the Control Group's more conventional approaches. It would be easier to determine whether this difference is significant and not the result of chance with additional research, including statistical testing for significance.

Content: The Experimental Group's mean content score was 5.82, slightly higher than the Control Group's score of 5.00, indicating that the TBLT approach helped the Experimental Group communicate content more effectively. When considering the total scores, which reflect performance across all components, the Experimental Group achieved a total score of 24.00, while the Control Group earned a total score of 19.88. This notable difference suggests that the TBLT

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intervention had a significant positive impact on overall language proficiency in the Experimental Group compared to the Control Group.

In summary, the post-test results indicate that the TBLT intervention positively influenced various aspects of speaking skills, including fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and content. The Experimental Group, which participated in the TBLT intervention, consistently outperformed the Control Group, highlighting the effectiveness of the TBLT method in enhancing speaking skills among participants in the study.

Triangulation of data in research is the process of studying a topic or research question using several approaches, sources, or viewpoints. Triangulation method is useful in reducing bias and increasing credibility of the study. The researchers used triangulation of data in the TBLT study, gathering information from surveys, interviews, pre-test and post-test assessments, classroom observations, and perhaps even document analysis (e.g., reading course materials). By combining these methods and sources, the researcher obtains a more comprehensive and reliable understanding of TBLT's impact on speaking skills in engineering colleges, reducing the risk of drawing inaccurate or one-sided conclusions.

T-Test results comparison of Exp Group and Ctrl Group.

i) Fluency Component:

TABLE 3
T-TEST: PAIRED TWO SAMPLE FOR MEANS IN POST-TEST FLUENCY OF EXP GRP VS CTRL GRP

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means in Post Test Fluency of Exp Grp Vs Ctrl Grp		
	Exp Group	Ctrl Group
	Fluency	*Fluency*
Mean	6.22	5

The post-test fluency scores of the Experimental Group and the Control Group show a statistically significant difference, according to the t-test results. In terms of Fluency, the Experimental Group fared noticeably better than the Control Group (mean score of 5.00), with a mean score of 6.22. This suggests that, in comparison to the Control Group, the TBLT intervention significantly and favourably improved the Experimental Group's speaking fluency abilities.

ii) Grammar Component

TABLE 4
T-TEST: PAIRED TWO SAMPLE FOR MEANS IN POST-TEST GRAMMAR OF EXP GRP VS CTRL GRP

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means in Post Test Grammar of Exp Grp Vs Ctrl Grp		
	Exp Group	Ctrl Group
	Grammar	*Grammar*
Mean	6	4.92

The post-test grammar scores of the Experimental Group and the Control Group show a statistically significant difference, according to the t-test results. When it came to grammar, the Experimental Group (mean score of 6.00) scored noticeably better than the Control Group (mean score of 4.92). This suggests that in comparison to the Control Group, grammatical abilities of the Experimental Group were significantly and favourably impacted by the TBLT intervention.

iii) Pronunciation Component

TABLE 5
T-TEST: PAIRED TWO SAMPLE FOR MEANS IN POST-TEST PRONUNCIATION OF EXP GRP VS CTRL GRP

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means in Post Test Pronunciation of Exp Grp Vs Ctrl Grp		
	Exp Group	Ctrl Group
	Pronunciation	*Pronunciation*
Mean	5.96	4.96

The post-test pronunciation scores of the Experimental Group and the Control Group show a statistically significant difference, according to the t-test results. In terms of pronunciation, the Experimental Group fared noticeably better than the Control Group (mean score of 4.96 versus 5.96). This suggests that in comparison to the Control Group, the Experimental Group's pronunciation skills were significantly and favourably improved by the TBLT intervention.

iv) Content Component

TABLE 6
T-TEST: PAIRED TWO SAMPLE FOR MEANS IN POST-TEST CONTENT OF EXP GRP VS CTRL GRP

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means in Post Test Content of Exp Grp Vs Ctrl Grp		
	Exp Group	Ctrl Group
	Content	*Content*
Mean	5.82	5

The post-test content scores of the Experimental Group and the Control Group show a statistically significant difference, according to the t-test results. In terms of content, the Experimental Group did noticeably better than the Control Group

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(mean score of 5.00), with a mean score of 5.82. This suggests that in comparison to the Control Group, the Experimental Group's content-related speaking abilities were significantly and favourably impacted by the TBLT intervention.

VI. Conclusion

In this comprehensive analysis, the researchers investigated the effects of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on engineering students' speaking ability development. The study used a thorough evaluation system that started with a pre-test to determine baseline performance, then put TBLT into practice as the intervention, and ended with a post-test evaluation to gauge the effect. The effectiveness of TBLT was evaluated regarding important language skill components, such as content, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. The study offers vital insights into the efficacy of the TBLT technique in improving speaking abilities by examining pre-test and post-test data as well as t-test results. Additionally, students can connect with language in a meaningful, integrated way thanks to emphasis of TBLT on genuine, real-world interactions. Employing language in scenarios that closely resemble real-life ones, helps them strike a balance between correctness and fluency, promoting both communication competence and linguistic precision. Students can naturally grasp complicated grammatical concepts and improve their pronunciation with repeated practice and focused, constructive feedback. In the context of engineering education, where good and clear communication is essential for success in both academic and professional contexts, this approach promotes ongoing development in a way that is both entertaining and efficient. TBLT guarantees that language learning is not divorced from the particular requirements of the engineering industry, where technical expertise and communication abilities must cooperate. Through the use of scenarios that engineering students are likely to face in their professional lives—like presenting technical data, discussing project results, and working in groups—TBLT establishes a smooth link between language competency and the professional skills engineering students are learning. This method gives students the confidence to employ the language skills they need to communicate successfully in high-pressure, real-world situations, in addition to the language skills themselves.

Task-based language education is a versatile, dynamic, and highly applicable method for teaching engineering students. Through TBLT, which focuses on tasks that are directly tied to the student's academic and professional environment, language proficiency and the communication skills required in their field are connected. This method of language learning encourages a more thorough and integrated approach, making it an essential tool for developing technical and communicative skills. TBLT is an essential strategy for enhancing language development in technical disciplines since engineering education continues to stress the importance of effective communication in globalized and transdisciplinary contexts.

Appendix

The following items were used for assessment.

The test items were prepared based on the suggestions given by my guide and other senior professors.

1). Introduction
2). Students' real-life communication needs
3). Group Discussions,
4). Presentations
5). Interviews
6). Making the learning process more relevant and engaging.
7). Role-Plays
8). Discussing Similarities & Differences
9). Story Completion

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