Human Nature Research Publisher

Original Article **http://hnpublisher.com**

Exploring the Landscape of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT): Unveiling ESL Teachers' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: The current study is centered on exploring the perceptions of the ESL teachers regarding the implementation of Task-Based language teaching in ESL classrooms.

Methodology: This study holds a quantitative research design. The participants of the study consisted of 50 ESL Teachers. Researchers used a close-ended questionnaire to explore the perceptions of teachers about TBLT in ESL classes as well as the difficulties and obstacles teachers encountered while teaching by using the said approach.

Findings and Conclusion: Findings show that TBLT promotes natural learning, generates students' intrinsic motivation, and develops language skill development that can lead the students to accelerate their communicative competence.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Communicative Competence, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Second Language Learning, ESL Teachers' Perceptions.

Introduction

English is the most widely used language in the world today, its significance cannot be downplayed or overlooked (Nguyen, Newton & Crabbe, 2015; Yen, Van den Branden, Van Steendam, & Sercu, 2015). English is now the most widely used language on the globe (Zaidi et al, 2020). English language proficiency is valued at the national level as human capital that can increase a nation's economic competitiveness on the world stage (Le & Do, 2012). In the 21st century, a paradigm shift is witnessed from teacher-centered approaches to more learner-centered teaching (Shamim & Rashid, 2019). Numerous studies have been done, and a variety of teaching methods have been devised in an effort to raise the level of English language instruction and learning across the educational system in the Pakistani context. At the university level, students should be able to communicate effectively in English. According to the national policy, the use of English as both an official language of instruction and a required language is on the rise (Vu & Burns, 2014). English is taught as a required subject in our educational system due to its universal appeal. A way of communication is offered by the English language. For over 14 years, in professional or higher education careers, most students lack proficiency and communication

skills in the English language. They face many difficulties in many areas of learning including reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Lack of communication skills and learners' poor command of vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and punctuation are major learning issues. However, ESL teachers pay extra attention to develop communicative and grammatical competence in learners. To make students proficient and fluent it is essential to communicate or collaborate with each other, in order to improve their communicative competence in their learning.

In light of these issues, second language learners should have enough opportunity to practice their English (Irmawati, Basri, Rosniati, & Ashar, 2016) so they are prepared to operate professionally across borders without encountering language barriers. As a result, ESL instructors must create learning activities that encourage students to engage in their learning in order to enjoy using English for communicative language learning activities (Arifani & Suryanti, 2019).

In this regard, second language learning should include communicative language teaching (CLT) to encourage students to utilize their newly acquired language (Shariq, 2020). Task-based language instruction is one of the most often used teaching strategies in CLT. This TBLT has supported learner-centered language teaching to increase the communicative skills of second language learners and to increase their desire for language (Harper& Widodo, 2020). The use of this TBLT has been recognized as a successful strategy to support ESL learners by emphasizing on meaningful activities and enabling them to execute tasks to improve their communication abilities in a variety of contextual settings (Wu et al., 2016). Furthermore, as students are engaging in realistic and real-world communication activities, TBLT has improved their learning motivation and engagement (Page & Mede, 2018; Ji & Pham, 2020).

But unlike CLT, TBLT only uses one paradigm for instruction: the task. In essence, this is a goal-oriented activity where students communicate in the target language and work to attain a goal. According to Ellis (2003: 8), TBLT's fundamental principles—the use of meaningful and purposeful communicative actions to promote teaching and learning as different ways to implement it as its use increased. The adoption of a TBLT strategy that emphasises meaning and form may fully help learners in EFL environments since they must master linguistic forms, notably for school exams (Zheng & Borg, 2014). The use of "recasts" and "prompts" may encourage learners in conveying meanings and aid in refining linguistic forms (Guchte, Braaksma, Rijlaarsdam, & Bimmel, 2015). Therefore, in fulfilling the learning needs of the student in learning a language, task-based methods can be used in the Pakistani context as an effective language teaching strategy.

Objectives of the Study

To find out the gap between teachers' perceptions and practice regarding TBLT, the following objectives were formulated:

- To investigate the perceptions of ESL teachers about Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

- To explore factors that influence the implementation of TBLT in ESL classrooms

- Examine the elements that affect instructors' ability to adjust activities and materials, and find out to what extent teachers feel empowered to adapt TBLT to their particular teaching setting.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of teachers regarding Task-Based Language Teaching in ESL classes at the undergraduate level?

2. How often do ESL teachers make use of Task-based Language Teaching?

3. What are the challenges and difficulties ESL teachers face while implementing TBLT?

Significance of the Study

The current study has important ramifications for language education. By comprehending teachers' opinions of TBLT, the study can help to advance methods for teaching English as a second language. Moreover, the study's significance lies in its potential to promote student learning outcomes through enhancing language instruction techniques, professional development programs, curriculum design, and educational policies. The study can help enhance task-based language teaching methodologies and be beneficial to language educators, students, and other educational stakeholders involved in language education by concentrating on teachers' perspectives of TBLT and its implementation.

Literature Review

In order to communicate internationally, people generally use English as a medium of communication when they have different first languages (L1). English should not just be seen as a language per se in a vacuum in modern society due to its dominance and strength, but also as being placed in numerous sociocultural and sociopolitical settings and imbued with multiple ideologies (Fang, 2018a; Nieto, 2017)

The need of English language in various fields of human existence, or at least, schooling, innovation, governmental issues, amusement, financial matters, and professional, has encouraged vast attention for English linguistic instructing all over planet (Pandey and Pandey, 2014). English learning classrooms remained instructor focused, where teachers occupied in as a source of information and students remained unsophisticated (Haider, 2018). That conventional exercise is inescapable to such a level that its follow is found in numerous front-line study rooms. White (1988) stated that linguistic abilities and educational skill are not emphases of conventional language educating. While showing composition skills, the solemn matters experienced by the instructors incorporate substitutes' absence of control over language examples and vocabulary, indifferences, motivation and less an ideal opportunity for composition practice (Almubark, 2016).

In Pakistan, English is highly valued as the language of instruction, law, administration, science, and technology. English is still used as a common language throughout the provinces and for worldwide communication, according to supporters of the language. Muhammed in (2011) stated that in Pakistan there is a most disregarded aptitude in English while learning the language. Jarvis and Szmczyk (2010) also acknowledge about sentence structure, game plan, talking and listening capacities are the standard fixation and getting activities and tests are considered as monotonous and debilitating. Elucidating this point of view. Furthermore, Wyatt (2012) stated as that a teacher's lack of requests for getting capacities and the absence of planning are viewed as obstacles to demonstrating getting capacities. Teachers have a number of significant problems in demonstrating examination abilities, including learners' lack of language skills, enthusiasm in practicing, and a lengthy review period (Bhatti, 2013; Rasheed, Saleem, Buksh and Rasul, 2011).

In addition, there are three issues with ELT in Pakistan. The first issue is a lack of adequate comprehension of the significant differences between literature and second-language language. The second is that Pakistan's lenient semantic progression discourages people from learning modern English, both in writing and in speech. Yasmin (2006) provides a more in-depth explanation of the third issue, which is that the administration does not participate in the development of English writing skills because it does not want to prioritize the issue. According to Mariam (1999:215), learning English as a second language has not been successful, and there ought to be solutions to this problem. According to Ara (2005), it is the responsibility of teachers to select the appropriate instructional materials that students require to learn about such subjects in the classroom. In addition, it is the instructor's responsibility to increase their likelihood of becoming more than just a teacher. However, because they are unsure of how to handle the situation, instructors in Pakistan rarely are able to provide their students with options for further English training.

The majority of the time, teachers have taught their students through lectures. In order to pass the class, students typically memorize the test answers. In addition, instructors rarely include their students in

classroom activities. In addition, instructors now face the challenge of maintaining order in their classes, particularly those with a large number of students. Additionally, it is challenging for them to keep students quiet during classes. However, it should also be noted that students may only be able to learn in an environment where the instructor has prior experience teaching the subject at hand. Additionally, Research suggests that these strategies frequently serve as general guidance for teachers (Mifsud & Vella, 2018; Xu & Fan, 2017), even though TBLT has been strongly endorsed in curriculum documents for teaching an L2 in a variety of circumstances (Peng & Pyper, 2019). Teachers thus actively participate in transforming the intended curriculum into the fact curriculum. The complexity of educational circumstances has impeded the implementation of TBLT (Butler, 2017; Littlewood, 2007). Teachers expressed some misconceptions regarding TBLT at the conceptual level, including its lack of knowledge of grammar instruction (East, 2017), its unsuitability for beginning students (Chen & Wright, 2017), and its equality with pair or group work (Zheng & Borg, 2014). Lack of institutional support at the curricular level also hindered TBLT's performance (Ruan et al., 2015).

According to Chen and Wright (2017), TBLT could be used with some degree of individual freedom under conditions such as institutional support for focused teacher training, the use of authentic materials, and encouragement of learning beyond the classroom. Teachers' efforts to make decisions on student learning, teaching innovation, professional development, and collaborative teacher learning can be seen as evidence of their agency.

Task-based Language Teaching

The idea of a task is an important basis in TBLT."A task is a piece of work conducted for oneself or others, willingly or for a reward," Long suggests as a definition." visiting a surgeon, making a short picture, planning a road trip, writing a message and dressing a kid are some examples of tasks. A task is something that individuals do on a daily basis. because "real world" learning environments have been changed to artificial classrooms. In addition, Nunan (2004) defines tasks in educational perspective. He emphasizes on L2 classrooms, educational application and meaningful communication. Both Long (1985) and Skehan (1998) uphold that a task represents a meaningful activity and should be related to real-life. However, a real-world is too difficult due to deficiency in proficiency level.

Ellis (2009) said that the interaction hypothesis and interest in communicative language teaching (CLT) served as the foundation for the creation of task-based language teaching (TBLT). The main notions of task-based language teaching are meaning-based communicative and students centered task (Ellis, 2003). Ellis and He (1999) also suggest that to create an advance atmosphere for acquiring vocabulary leaners should use new words and reconcile new word in their discussion. Meanings of words formed during collaborative tasks enrich L2 progress. Long's (1998) communication theory recommends, communication can aid learners in the growth of L2 as it inspires conciliation of meaning. Mackey in (1999) stated as during collaborative tasks, the linguistic units are repeated, rephrased, and modernized knowledge during collaborative tasks (p. 558).
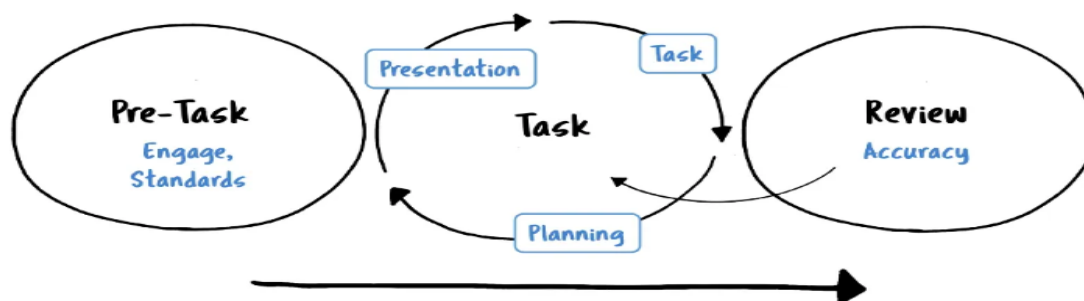

Fig 1. The process of task-based Language learning proposed by Weller (2020)

https://studycat.com/webinar/task-based-language-teaching-tblt/

Features of TBLT

The criterial elements of TBLT in this study, which are based on the findings of other studies (such as Ellis 2003; Long 1985; Skehan 1998), can be concise as follows:

- Tasks are activities with a specific aim in mind.
- They exclude language-free activities.
- They employ the target language for communication in order to attain that goal.
- They ought to be real and interesting.
- Their primary focus should be on meaning.

Relation between Task-based Teaching Method and Second Language Learning

Students are engaged and motivated by the task-based approach (Yen, 2016). Task-Based Language Learning (TBLT) is an innovative approach to language learning and collocation that can help students become better communicators. Van den Branden (2006) states that TBLT is a method of teaching languages in which students are given practical tasks that encourage them to concentrate on conversations with meaning and use language for non-linguistic, real-world objectives. As a natural development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Focused Language Teaching (TBLT) refers to an approach/method focused on the use of tasks as the fundamental unit of planning and instruction in language teaching, according to Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 223). With the aid of the TBLT approach, students can work more productively in pairs or groups. Real-world activities like solving a puzzle, playing a game, filling in the gaps, making decisions, and exchanging knowledge or experiences can all be regarded as real work. The goal is the primary focus of classroom activities, and language is a tool that students utilize for communication. The concept of the task has grown in importance in the learning process.

Benefits of Task-based Language Instruction for Language Teachers

Task-based instruction should be discussed by language teachers because, as stated earlier, it is a logical progression from CLT. The significance of incorporating CLT into language instruction as a means of preparing students for real-world interaction. In addition, the communicative activities that are supported by TBLT will enable students to not only enhance their impulsive spoken discourse but also prepare them for interaction in real-world settings like lectures and broadcasts. The student must confront the characteristics of incidental speech at some point. According to Córdoba (2016), TBLT implementation increased the integration of the four key skills in an EFL setting, as well as motivation and self-awareness during task development. Furthermore, the concepts promoted by TBLT are the primary motivation for its implementation. TBLT is the product of a series of procedures that have been used in the past. Through the utilization of online contexts like conferencing tools and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), TBLT has also demonstrated adaptability to recent advancements in education.

Focus-on-Form TBLT

Focus-on-form, along with interaction, can help with lexical acquisition, according to Doughty and Williams (1998). The three basic stages in the acquisition of forms, meanings, and right usage of words in certain contexts is referred as vocabulary learning (Kit, 2003). During vocabulary exercises focus on forms strengthens the link between form and meaning of words.

Ellis (2001) examined 159 vocabulary items are involved in focus-on-form communications. In another study, it is found that tutor focus-on-form communications addressed vocabulary. The studies showed that vocabulary was the main focus of concentrate-on-form task-based language teaching. According to Alcón (2007), teachers' focus-on-form TBLT is good to students' vocabulary acquisition since it improves learners' vocabulary knowledge and usage, which is consistent with Ellis' findings.

Many researchers favor the task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach; however, it hasn't had enough research to be empirically verified in use in EFL classrooms. Few researchers have looked into how English language teachers react to TBLT. By examining EFL teachers' perspectives of TBLT and evaluating the method's current application, this study can help improve this situation. TBLT is a "learner-centered approach to language training," according to Van den Branden (2016, P:164). Its objective is to "increase learners' communicative competence by engaging them in meaning-focused communication through the execution of tasks. "Additionally, it enhances learners' verbal and social skills (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). A core element of TBLT is, in essence, that learners must pay attention to form in addition to comprehension and message construction in order for learning to take place (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). This indicates that task-based approaches are used across the curriculum at all levels (Adams & Newton, 2009). As a result, TBLT has been supported by both educational curriculum efforts and policy officials. Le (2011), conducted a research with ESL teachers and workshops and conferences were organized on TBLT therefore, English teachers started using TBLT in their classes as a result, and the results were positive.

To conclude, language education has been substantially and significantly influenced by TBLT. According to various researchers (Khoram & Zhang, 2019; Richa; Ji & Pham, 2020), TBLT is an effective language pedagogy that stresses the importance of meaningful language learning activities with a variety of real-life tasks to accomplish communicative outputs. The utilization of TBLT may support learners in enhancing their target language input with real-world activities that can increase their willingness to study the language (Aliasin et al., 2019; Page & Mede, 2018). The purpose of TBLT should be primarily focused on improving learners' target language performances via meaningful activities, notwithstanding their variances in TBLT pedagogical sequences. In spite of so many benefits, TBLT has not gained due importance by language teachers. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to fill the gap by exploring the perceptions of ESL teachers regarding the implementation Task-Based Language teaching approach in their classrooms.

Research Methodology

This research entails gathering quantitative data in order to determine the teacher's perception of Task-Based Language Teaching and its implementations in ESL learners at the graduate Level.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative research methodology. researchers used a quantitative tool i.e. closed-ended questionnaire to obtain unbiased, objective, and generalizable results. It is a useful research tool since it takes up less time, is less exclusive, and allows for the collection of data from a considerably larger sample size (Best and Khan, 1992).

Population for the Study

All ESL teachers make up the research population. However, the sample consisted of 51 ESL teachers from all the campuses of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur.

Research Tool

The research tool is the backbone of any research. Therefore, a reliable and valid tool must be devised or used by the researchers. In order to collect the necessary data, a questionnaire with closed-ended questions was utilized in the present study. The questionnaire consisted of 35 items.

Questionnaire Contents

This questionnaire was developed using a range of questionnaires.

- It deals with the teacher's perspective on the use of the Task-Based method in teaching.

- It contains questions about the overall impact of task-based language teaching.

- It contains questions regarding challenges that learners and teachers experience, as well as how to apply the TBLT approach.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

In the current research, data was collected from ESL teachers using a random sampling technique. Collected data was then analyzed carefully, and frequency and percentage were calculated against each item in the questionnaire.

Table 1: *TBLT promotes the learner's academic progress.*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	SA	12	23.5	23.5	23.5
	A	29	56.9	56.9	80.4
Valid	U	8	15.7	15.7	96.1
	D	2	3.9	3.9	100
	SD	0	0.0	0.0	100
	Total	51	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of responses from the participants, it shows that 23.5% of participants strongly agreed, 56.9% agreed, 15.7% were neutral and 3.9 % disagreed with the above statement.

Table 2: *I enjoy teaching the whole learning process using TBLT approach.*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	SA	12	23.5	23.5	23.5
	A	29	56.9	56.9	80.4
Valid	U	6	11.8	11.8	92.2
	D	3	5.9	5.9	98
	SD	1	2.0	2.0	100
	Total	51	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 gives a clear description that 23.5% of participants strongly agreed with the statement, while 56.9 % agreed 11.8% were neutral, 5.9% disagreed, and 2.0% strongly disagreed.

Table 3: *It is helpful to understand the use and meaning of the words.*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	SA	17	33.3	33.3	33.3
	A	24	47.1	47.1	80.4
Valid	U	6	11.8	11.8	92.2
	D	2	3.9	3.9	96.4
	SD	2	3.9	3.9	100
	Total	51	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 depicts that 33.3 % of participants strongly agreed with the statement, 47 % agreed 11 % were neutral, 3 % disagreed, and 3 % strongly disagreed.

Table 4: *By TBLT learning is more interesting.*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	SA	11	21.6	21.6	21.6
	A	27	52.9	52.9	74.5
Valid	U	9	17.6	17.6	92.1
	D	1	2.0	2.0	94.1
	SD	3	5.9	5.9	100
	Total	51	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 gives clear description that 21.6% participants are strongly agreed with the statement, 52.9% agreed17.6 % were neutral, 2% disagreed, and5 % strongly disagreed.

Table 5: *It is a cooperative activity*.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA	16	31.4	31.4	31.4
	A	27	52.9	52.9	84.3
	U	4	7.8	7.8	92.1
	D	3	5.9	5.9	98
	SD	1	2.0	2.0	100
	Total	51	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 gives clear description that 31.4% participants are strongly agreed with the statement, 52.9% agreed 7% were neutral,5 % disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed.

Table 6: *TBLT is less stressful*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA	5	9.8	9.8	9.8
	A	20	39.2	39.2	49
	U	15	29.4	29.4	78.4
	D	9	17.6	17.6	96
	SD	2	3.9	3.9	100
	Total	51	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 gives clear description that9.8 % participants are strongly agreed with the statement, 39.2% agreed 2.9% were neutral, 17.6% disagreed, and 3.9% strongly disagreed.

Table 7: *TBLT encourages learner's intrinsic motivation.*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA	14	27.5	27.5	27.5
	A	26	51	51	78.5
	U	7	13.7	13.7	92.2
	D	3	5.9	5.9	98.1
	SD	1	2	2	100
	Total	51	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 gives clear description that27.5 % participants are strongly agreed with the statement, 51% agreed 13% were neutral, 5% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed.

Table 8: *As a facilitator, TBLT places a significant psychological responsibility on the instructor*.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA	9	17.6	17.6	17.6
	A	15	29.4	29.4	47
	U	16	31.4	31.4	78.4
	D	7	13.7	13.7	92.1
	SD	4	7.8	7.8	100
	Total	70	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 gives clear description that17 % participants are strongly agreed with the statement, 29% agreed 31% were neutral, 13 % disagreed, and 7 % strongly disagreed.

Results

This study investigated how instructors perceived task-based language teaching (TBLT) and the variables affecting its adoption in ESL classes. Important insights that can help to enhance language instruction methods have been discovered from an assessment of teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and understandings of TBLT, as well as the difficulties and enablers they face. The results show a variety of perspectives among teachers, with some having favorable opinions of TBLT as a communicative and student-centered approach and others having misgivings or having trouble implementing it. Institutional restrictions, time restrictions, curricular requirements, and student characteristics were among the factors that affected the implementation of TBLT. Successful implementation also requires facilitators such as focused professional development, teacher preparation, and institutional support. Several suggestions for improving TBLT implementation can be made in light of these discoveries. Education professionals can be empowered to successfully adopt TBLT by offering specialized professional development programs that address the unique requirements and challenges of instructors. Additionally, the curriculum **designers** should take into account the many settings and limitations that instructors must work within, giving them the tools and flexibility they need to modify TBLT projects for their classrooms. Policymakers should be aware of the significance of encouraging teacher autonomy, allocating funds for training and materials, and coordinating assessment procedures with TBLT tenets in order to support the adoption of TBLT. Task-based language teaching can be very helpful in a language classroom. By engaging in tasks, learners are able to develop their language skills in a more natural and meaningful way. This approach also encourages learners to use language to communicate meaning rather than just memorizing grammatical rules and vocabulary. Additionally, task-based language teaching can help learners develop other skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. Overall, this approach can make language learning more engaging and effective for learners. Task-based language teaching is useful for language learning because it emphasizes the use of language in real-world situations. This approach encourages learners to use language to communicate meaning rather than just memorizing grammatical rules and vocabulary. By engaging in tasks, learners are able to develop their language skills in a more natural and meaningful way. Additionally, task-based language teaching can help learners develop other skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the continued development of language instruction techniques by taking into consideration instructors' perspectives and the variables impacting TBLT implementation. The results underline the importance of teacher views in creating effective pedagogical approaches and the demand for continued assistance, resources, and training to promote the successful application of TBLT. In the end, these initiatives may result in improved language learning results, raised student involvement, and the emergence of useful communication abilities in language learners.

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