



Mastering Engineering English: Investigating The Efficacy Of Task-Based Language Teaching In English Grammar Acquisition For Engineering Students

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to present the efficacy of TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) in English Grammar Acquisition and communication skill for Engineering Students. The present research work examines engineering students' ability to endeavour English grammar through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). It is observed that students' participation increased during the task and the post-task and there is a considerable improvement in English grammar acquisition as a result of the application of TBLT. The students' qualitative feedback indicates that students feel more confidence in employing English within the class and among the TBLT group. The application of TBLT is so practical and useful in the context of a Government Engineering College undergraduate students, replete with diverse linguistic, academic and socio-economic backgrounds necessities as a result of its course of action specifically benefitting learner-centered, native-like language tasks. The research highlights that TBLT pedagogy is a potential and an innovative English language teaching strategy.

Keywords: Task, Task-Based Language Teaching, English Grammar Acquisition, Innovative English language teaching strategy

Introduction

English grammar teaching and learning play a crucial role in language learning and proficiency development for the learners. However, Traditional Grammar (TG) teaching methods give more importance to learn rules and rote memorization. This TG teaching method may fail to engage learners and promote meaningful language use. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) offers the alternative approach that emphasizes on the completion of tasks to facilitate language learning (Ellis, 2003). TBLT encourages learners to use language in real-world contexts, promoting authentic communication and language acquisition (Skehan, 1996). Despite its potential benefits, the effectiveness of TBLT in English grammar instruction remains underexplored, particularly in longitudinal studies spanning over an extended period.

This research addresses the gap in the literature by conducting a study to investigate the effectiveness of TBLT in English grammar education. By examining the impact of TBLT on grammar proficiency, student engagement, and motivation, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the long-term effectiveness of TBLT in promoting English grammar teaching and learning. The findings of this study have implications for language teachers, curriculum designers and policymakers to recommend and implement this TBLT methodology to enhance English language teaching practices. TBLT teachers should be provided with training and support to help them design and implement effective TBLT tasks (Almefleh, Hissah, et al, 2023).

Task-Based Language Teaching Method

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a pedagogical approach that focuses on the completion of meaningful tasks to facilitate language learning (Willis, 1996). In TBLT, learners are presented with authentic tasks that require the use of language to achieve communicative goals (Ellis, 2003). These tasks are designed to simulate real-world situations and promote authentic communication, allowing learners to practice language skills in context (Skehan, 1996). TBLT is characterized by the following key principles:

1. **Meaningful Tasks:** Tasks in TBLT are meaningful and relevant to learners' interests, needs, and experiences (Nunan, 2004). In TBLT, learners engage in role-play activities, problem-solving tasks, or collaborative projects that require the use of English grammar in authentic contexts.
2. **Focus on Communication:** TBLT gives importance to the development of communicative skills by providing opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful communication (Ellis, 2003). Learners are encouraged to use English language to convey messages and attain communicative goals during the task without any hesitation.
3. **Learner - Centered Approach:** TBLT adopts a learner-centered approach that emphasizes the learner's active participation and autonomy (Nunan, 2004). Learners take ownership of their learning process and are actively involved in task planning, execution, and reflection.
4. **Language Awareness:** TBLT promotes language awareness by encouraging learners to notice and reflect on language forms and structures in context (Willis, 1996). Learners develop metalinguistic awareness and an understanding of how grammar functions in communicative situations.

To illustrate the application of TBLT in English grammar acquisition, one may consider the following examples of tasks designed to promote grammar learning:

1. **Problem-Solving Task:** The students are given a problem-solving task in which they need to plan for an Industrial visit. They are tasked with creating an itinerary, booking accommodations, and navigating transportation options using English grammar structures related to future tense, prepositions of place, and modal verbs.
2. **Role-Play Activity:** Students are assigned roles as characters in a restaurant situation. They engage in a role-play conversation where they take orders, ask for recommendations, and make polite requests using English grammar structures such as present continuous tense, polite forms, and imperatives.
3. **Collaborative Project:** Students work in groups to research and present information about a topic of interest, such as environmental issues or cultural traditions. They use English grammar structures related to present perfect tense, passive voice, and relative clauses to convey information and express opinions.

Research Questions

In this study, the following research questions are employed to investigate the efficacy of TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) in English Grammar Acquisition and communication skill for Engineering Students.

1. What will be the long-term gains in English grammar proficiency look like for engineering students, and how will they compare to the short-term gains observed upon the completion of a TBLT program?
2. What specific gains will be engineering students make in their English grammar proficiency following Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in comparison to students exposed to traditional grammar instruction methods?
3. Where and to what extent will engineering students be able to demonstrate active, problem-solving involvement in English grammar acquisition as a result of a TBLT programming context?
4. In what ways will the implementation of TBLT affect engineering students' confidence levels in their ability to use English grammar within the contexts of technical and academic English?

Review of Related Literature

Academic and technical tasks require engineering and non-engineering students to communicate in English. Thus, English grammar is central to the successful completion of such tasks. Conventional ways of teaching grammatical principles and rules involve structure-based and teacher - centered format tasks. They involve using explanation and examples to teach students with minimal manipulation of knowledge, little communication and limited practice. However, an alternative to the conventional approach of teaching grammar through direct instruction is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). TBLT originates from second language teaching methods and focuses on developing communicative competency (N.S.Prabhu, 1987). This paper reviews the related literature on Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in English grammar teaching for engineering students. It primarily addresses the academic backgrounds, the experiential evidence, and the practical implications of Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in the light of Indian engineering students.

Theoretical Foundations: TBLT appears to emerge from a variety of theoretical lineages in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) research, approaches to communicative language teaching (CLT) and, the study of the psycholinguistic processing of language input and output. Long (1985) and Skehan (1996) are among the main proponents of the use of tasks as a means to learn, and in the importance of meaningful communication and negotiation over language forms. A sociocultural theory perspective also recommends TBLT (Vygotsky, 1978). From this perspective, TBLT has the potential to greatly benefit engineering students' English grammar proficiency (Nunan, 2004).

Empirical Evidence: There has been some empirical evidence to suggest that tasks in TBLT have affected grammar in various ways (Paul Garcia, 1999). Investigations of task-based grammar acquisition have shown that TBLT has significantly fostered learner understanding of and production of grammar structures. (Ellis, 2003). Moreover, Ellis has claimed that TBLT lead to increased recognition and recall of grammatical items relative to conventional form-focused instruction.

Implications: As it stands, though, there are certainly practical implications for English grammar teaching, in the context of Engineering education. From a language teaching perspective, TBLT is valuable for English for Engineering students in a number of important ways: as material, Task in TBLT teaching is typically more reflective of the type of English engineering needs of engineering students, who are those who need to use language in its linguistic functions textual and intertextual genres in authentic academic and professional settings that belongs to academe and the world of technical-and-technologists, than material in the form of isolated English grammar practice exercises used in a content-based humanistic language syllabus (Krahnke, 1987).

It generates active learning, which is also stimulating for the types and quantity of problems that students will have Engineering courses (Nunan, 2004) Combining grammar teaching with the tasks that students are doing anyway gives a real purpose and relevance for their language learning, and their learning of the ways and means of their professional language (the English language), with variation and diversity, is their entry in to their profession as Engineers.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Both the quantitative data and qualitative data are collected and analysed. This study collects quantitative data on grammar ability via pre-and post-tests taken by the TBLT and control groups. These tests consist of multiple-choice quiz, fill in the blanks, and sentence correction tasks attending to multiple grammatical concepts. The tests were taken during the language awareness before and after intervention. English grammar is measured using the commonly practiced standardized tests of English grammar. Qualitative data were collected both by open and close ended questions and student survey from the TBLT group and the control group. These surveys assess the students' perception and motivation towards learning L2 and improvement of students' participation in the class, communication skills and English grammatical competency. This methodology enables the comparison of outcomes obtained from the TBLT and the control Group.

Sample

The sample size of this study is 106 first semester engineering students from a Government College Engineering. 54 students are grouped into TBLT and another 52 students are grouped into Traditional grammar, as per academic schedules. It is clearly shown that 101 students are from Tamil Nadu and they speak Tamil as L1 at home and 5 students are from Mizoram and their L1 is Mizo, all the students have differences in socio-economic, cultural backgrounds.

The control group received traditional grammar instructions (TG) whereas the TBLT group received a series of English grammar classes based on Task-Based Language Teaching. The TBLT involves various authentic tasks that are mainly intended to facilitate a meaningful use of language and encourage communicative competence. The tasks include, but not limited to, problem-solving activities, role plays, GD and project jobs on collaboration in areas related to English grammar.

Data Analysis

Data from the pre- and post-tests was quantitatively analyzed through statistical methods to measure and compare means and differences in grammar learning ability between the TBLT and the control groups. Survey and classroom observations' data were qualitatively analyzed to assess frequently found patterns in the TBLT activity.

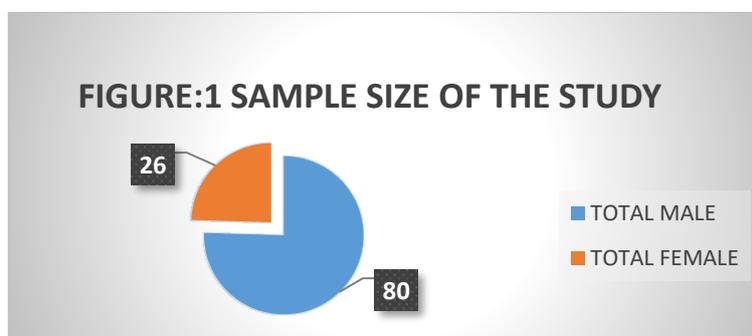


Figure:1 shows the size of the sample. The total number of students involved in the study are 106 out of which 80 students are Male and 26 students are Female.

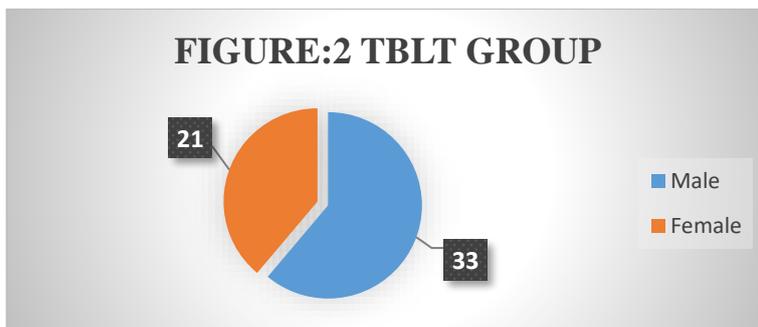


Figure:2 shows that size of the TBLT group. In this experimental group, there are 33 Male students and 21 Female students. The total number of TBLT group is 54.

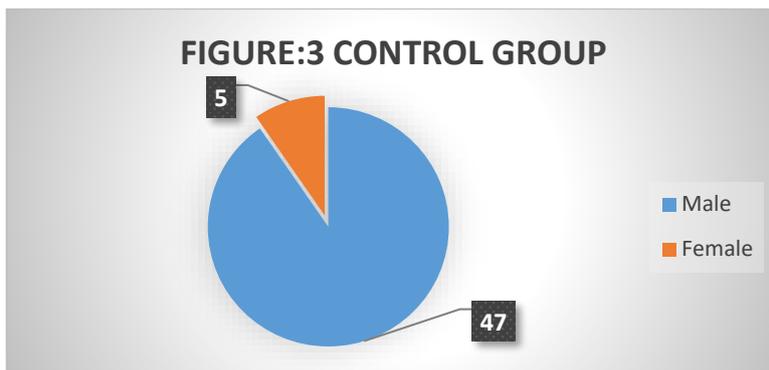


Figure:3 shows that size of the control group. In this group, there are 47 Male students and 5 Female students. The total number of control group group is 52.

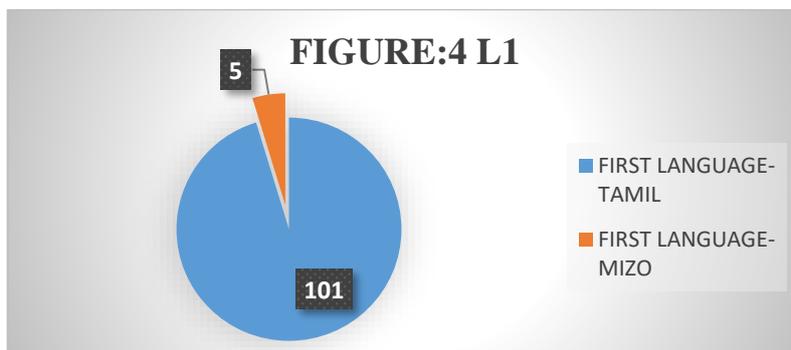


Figure: 4 shows that 101 students L1 is Tamil and 5 students L1 is Mizo.

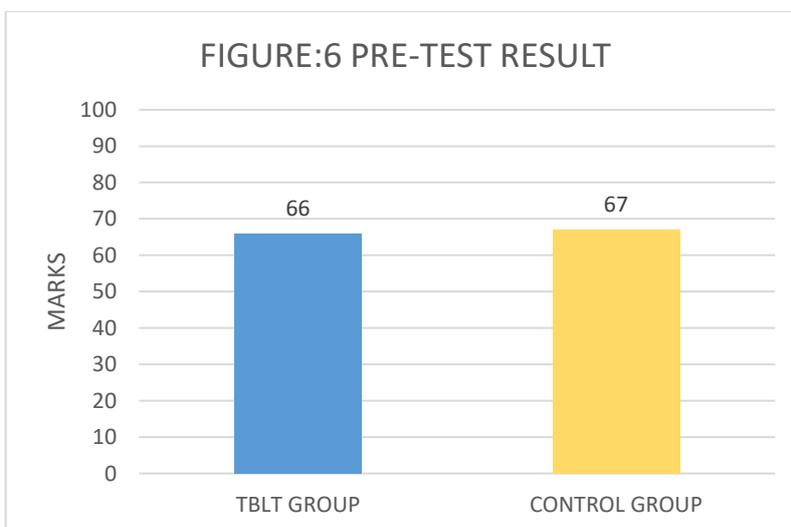


Figure: 6 shows that the average results of the TBLT and Control groups in the pre-test. From the quantitative data, the researchers found that in the pre-test a significant number of students had intermediate level of proficiency in English grammar.

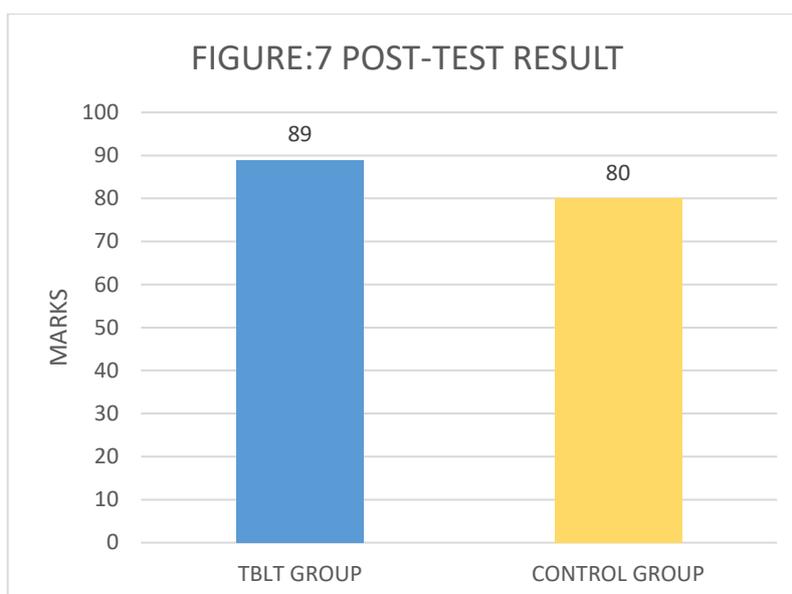


Figure: 7 shows that the average results of the TBLT and Control groups in the post-test. From the quantitative data, it is found that the average score of the TBLT group's post-test is higher than the control group. From the qualitative data also, it is evident that there is a significant improvement among the TBLT group students than the control group student's participation in the class, communication skills and English grammatical.

Hence, this study emphasizes the fact that TBLT methodology would help the learners to improve their confidence level and analytical skill, problem solving skill and creativity in participating in various tasks.

Conclusion

However, there may be some design, assessment, and training, or other obstacles to TBLT that will need to be addressed. The TBLT pedagogical approach requires careful consideration and a fair amount of adaptation in settings that are already very demanding because of the nature and organizational requirement of engineering education, especially in a country like India. Since the TBLT is an unexplored area of research, there are plenty of possibilities available for the teachers to implement TBLT in the classes. Much more experimental work is called for in the future, and much skilled and intelligent work, but it would be good to spend more time investigating how it might be possible to make tasks more efficient in English grammar acquisition.

There is real potential in TBLT in particular for technology, multimedia, and mixed media, and associated procedural learning, and such projects are just beginning to be investigated in TBLT, and should be approved. TBLT-based digital storybooks are expected to be able to implement the TBLT method well in their learning activities (Fridayanti, Kadek Shinta, et al, 2023). Though three decades old, the TBLT pedagogical approach would be more interesting and innovative, when it is implemented in the curriculum. The integration of TBLT and technology would definitely help not only engineering students but also all the L2 learners to acquire grammatical acquisition efficiently.

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