Effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching Approach on Students' Academic Performance in Productive Skills of English Language

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Abstract

The study examined the effectiveness of Task-based Language Teaching Approach on Students' academic Performance in Productive Skills of English language. The quasi-experimental design was adopted for the study with three formulated objectives and three tested hypotheses. The study's population comprised three hundred and sixty-five (365) senior secondary school students from Jibwis Multilingual Academy in Maiduguri, Borno State. A convenience sampling technique was employed to select two intact senior secondary (SSII) classes in the school, resulting in a sample size of one hundred and five (105) students. The experimental group (Class A) consisted of fifty-five students (55), while the control group (Class B) consisted of fifty (50) students. The instrument used for the study was a researcher's self-developed tool named the English Language Productive Skills Performance Test (ELPSPT). In order to ensure that the instrument was valid both in face and content, the instrument was scrutinized by two experts from test and measurement. Moreover, a pilot test of the instrument was done to ascertain the suitability of the questions and the comprehensiveness which resulted to 0.88 reliability index using Cronbach Alpha. An Independent samples t-test was used as statistical tool to test all the hypotheses at 0.05 significant level. The findings revealed that the task-based language teaching approach had positively impacted on improving students' academic performance in speaking and writing skills of the English language. It was recommended that school administrations should encourage teachers to implement teaching methods centered around activities fostering active student engagement and communication in the classroom. Additionally, education bodies at the state level, such as the teaching service board and the state ministry of education, should conduct regular seminars and workshops to enhance teachers' skills and development.

Introduction

In recent decades, the field of language teaching has witnessed the emergence and decline of different pedagogical methods and approaches, transitioning from grammar-translation methods to more activity and communication-oriented approaches is an important aspect in the field of language teaching. Yang (2014) The effectiveness of any teaching method dependent on how instructors employ it at a given time, for what purpose they employ it, what be of the outcome is expected and who is the trainers; not to mention other factors, such as learners' personality and their learning styles, the purpose for which they are learning the language. Relatively, the first step towards making the language teachings more advanced was in the twentieth century. In the first half of the twentieth century, the concept of methods brought a new perspective to the field of language teaching. (Richards, 2001) reported that there were primarily three important points that need to be considered about methods: these are the function of language, instructional factors, and implemental factors in methods.

According to Rozimela (2019), methods could be categorized under one of the two headings: teachers-centered methods and learners-centered methods. The former is composed of those methods which are based on a theory of language where the teachers believe the instructor and the students are just passive listeners. The latter, however, includes methods based on a theory of the learning process and the role of the teacher in this regard as the facilitator which guides the process of learning. The English language teaching methods have been subjected to tremendous changes especially throughout the twentieth century to the present day twenty-first century (Muhammad 2018).

An effective method in language teaching is characterized by engaging instructional strategies that cater for diverse learning styles, fostering supportive and interactive participation in learning. The instructional activities are sequenced according to a logic that students can perceive and better understand the lesson. Teachers also assign activities to attain particular learning objectives. These are called tasks or activity structures. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is known as task-based approach (TBA) or task-based Instruction (TBI). According to Shehadeh (2005), (TBLT) is not a new approach to language teaching; it has been in place for more than

three decades. It was first raised by Prabhu in 1987 from the aspect of teaching, stressing that students study languages by fulfilling the tasks in the process of language task fulfilment, the interaction and communication follow. According to Willis (2016), tasks are the activities used in the target language for communication in the class.

Additionally, Task Based Language Teaching is closely related to experiential learning by doing supported by the famous scholar John Dewey. In his point of view, learning is posited as an activity conducted by students to acquire certain knowledge or skills instead of a teacher's activity of transferring knowledge directly to the learners. It commonly distinguishes students from being active or passive in the classroom. When students see and hear the teacher's explanation or only respond mechanically to the teacher, they are considered passive. On the other hand, when students are doing the activities physically and or mentally which can be considered as their effort to process knowledge and skills, they are active. TBLT provides opportunities for learners to be involved in doing certain activities in the target language through these tasks, the they explore use of language. In the task-based approach, the tasks provide the main context and focus for the learning experience, and they encourage language use similar to the way language is used outside of the classroom as well. (Ellis, 2003).

Nunan (2007) outlined seven key principles to guide it's the implementation of task-based language teaching. First, scaffolding involves providing support and assistance to learners as they engage in tasks, gradually withdrawing this support as proficiency improves. Task dependency emphasizes the notion that language tasks should be designed based on the learners' communicative needs, ensuring relevance and authenticity. Recycling suggests revisiting and reinforcing previously learned language elements within new tasks to enhance retention. Active learning underscores the importance of learners actively participating and engaging in meaningful language use during tasks. Integration advocates for the inclusion of various language skills and components in tasks to reflect real-life communication scenarios. The progression from reproduction to creation encourages learners to move from replicating language patterns to generating original expressions. Lastly, reflection prompts learners to analyze and evaluate their language learning experiences, fostering metacognitive skills essential for ongoing improvement. These principles collectively contribute to a dynamic and learner-centred approach in TBLT.

The task-based language teaching activities are designed in such a way to engage students' interests and needs with active participation in promoting language learning. The following are stages of task-based language teaching. The Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) process unfolds through distinct stages. First, the Preparing stage initiates by activating students' prior knowledge, involving discussions, idea brainstorming, or pre-task activities. Following this, the Main Task stage assigns students a specific communicative task, encouraging language use for problem-solving or goal achievement in individual, pair, or group settings. Subsequently, the Language Focus stage addresses language needs arising from the task, offering grammar explanations, vocabulary expansion, or pronunciation practice to enhance language tools for improved task performance. Lastly, the Report stage culminates the process, with students sharing task outcomes, fostering communication, and reflection, and providing opportunities for feedback and error correction within the class.

Furthermore, Speaking and writing skills are called productive skills. They are crucial as they allow students to practice real-life activities in the classroom. These two skills can be used as a guide to check how much the learners have learned the language well. Good command of speaking skills develops a real sense of progress among learners and boosts their confidence. Teaching writing is important because written communication is a basic life skill. Students may need to take notes, fill in forms, and write letters, reports, stories etc. The learners need the writing skills to express themselves and compose short stories or essays. The ability of writing skills gives one confidence and marks his expertise in a particular language. Another reason learner need to write is for assimilation. Writing is an effective way of reinforcing what they have already been studying, and they benefit greatly from seeing new or unfamiliar language in written form. Writing is a good way to practice grammar structures; it helps learners to recycle and look up new vocabulary and to learn English punctuation rules. It encourages learner's objectivity when they are asked to keep in regular writing assignments that they carry out at home.

Speaking and writing are productive skills of language. Its utilization accurately is essential in ensuring efficiency and simultaneous effectiveness for conveying meaning and clarity of communication. The implementation of task-based language teaching in an English language classroom aims to enhance communicative skills. This approach involves learners utilizing assigned tasks as a means to acquire and develop language skills. Research shows that the task-

based language learning approach could be effective in developing students' communicative skills. For instance, the studies conducted by Sariannur (2017), (Musazay & Khalid, 2017), (Nita, & Rozimela, 2019) and Omar et al., 2021) their findings revealed that there was a significant improvement in student's academic performance through task-based language teaching activities used in teaching. Similarly, Ayu, (2017). Conducted a quasi-experiment study on using the ask-based-language-teaching to improve the speaking ability of eleventh-grade Students. The study revealed that TBLT improved the speaking ability of experiment group eleventh grade students after the treatment.

Additionally, research shows that task-based teaching enhances students' oral skills. Sabil, (2020). employed quasi-experimental research design to check the degree of enhancement in the students' speaking skills ability. Self-developed instrument speaking performance test was used as an instrument of data collection. Convenience sampling was used to select the sample size of 20 first-year college students at Socotra Faculty of Education, Hadhramout University, Yemen, in the academic year of 2018-2019. The findings of the study among others revealed that TBLT improved oral ability. The finding of the study was also contented with the findings of (Morita, 2021) on the effectiveness of task-based to improve speaking performance.

Furthermore. Activities of task-based language teaching improve not only speaking skills but also writing and any other skills of language this was evident based on the literature reviewed. (Ahmed & Bidin 2016) studied on The study investigated the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on enhancing the writing skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners enrolled in undergraduate programs at public Malaysian Universities. The research involved dividing participants into an experimental group and a control group. Data were collected using a Mixed Method Research paradigm, incorporating pretest and posttest. The statistical analysis employed was a Paired Samples T-test to assess the significance of learners' scores before and after the intervention. The results indicated that students overwhelmingly favoured TBLT, with their feedback supporting the perception that TBLT is a learner-centred approach to language teaching. A similar study was conducted in Nigeria the Study on activity-based strategies to develop students' writing and vocabulary skills. (Mustapha, et al., 2020), (Chinelo, 2020). The studies observed that teaching writing, speaking and all their components in the Nigerian context requires methodologies that encourage interactive use of the target language. Among the approaches to

language learning, Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) is one of the approaches that offers a lot of opportunities for students to practice and improve their skills with activity-based learning.

In addition, the task-based language teaching approach proved to be an effective approach not only in teaching the English language but other languages. Uju (2014) investigated on effect of task-based language teaching methods on students' achievement in Igbo essay writing. Experimental research focused on the impact of the task-based language teaching (TBLT) method on the academic performance of students in Igbo essay writing within the Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The study employed a simple random sampling technique to select four schools, involving a total of 303 Senior Secondary (SSII) students. The findings of the study indicated that students who were instructed in Igbo essay writing using the Task-Based Language Teaching method exhibited significantly higher levels of achievement compared to those who were taught using the lecture method. In light of these results, the study recommends that Igbo language educators consider incorporating the Task-Based Language Teaching method into their essay instruction to enhance the active involvement of learners, consequently leading to improved performance.

The theoretical framework of this study was based on constructivist theory developed by Bruner (1956) and the communicative competence model developed by Widdowson (1972). Bruner (1956) is one of the proponents of constructivism who supports the constructivist theory of cognitive constructivism by prominent scholar Piaget. This implies that Bruner shares Piaget's perspective on an individual's capacity to construct and connect new knowledge with existing information. Bruner's theory is based on the learners' active construction of new knowledge or ideas based on their current or past knowledge. Moreover, the focus of Bruner's constructivism is on instruction. So, in this case, the role of the instructor should try and encourage students to discover new knowledge by themselves. The instructor should guide the students to engage in the activities. According to the (Meyer, 1998) there are three main principles of instruction from Bruner's theory of constructivism. Instruction must be concerned with the experience and the contexts that make the students willing and able to learn (readiness) Instruction must be structured so that it can be easily grasped by the students (organization) and the Instruction should be designed to facilitate learning beyond the information given (tasks.).

In addition, the communicative competence model seeks to understand an individual's ability to convey meaning within given contexts. Widdowson views language learning as not merely acquiring the knowledge of the rules of grammar, but the ability to use the language to communicate. He asserts that language proficiency extends beyond the mere understanding, speaking, reading, and writing of sentences. It involves grasping how sentences function in communication. The focus is not solely on constructing and understanding isolated sentences as linguistic entities with no specific context, but also on using sentences effectively to fulfill communicative goals. Widdowson emphasizes that developing communicative ability should occur concurrently with acquiring linguistic skills. Otherwise, solely gaining linguistic skills might impede the growth of communicative proficiency. Both the theory and the model are relevant to this study in the sense that it allows the active participation of the learners in the learning process by interaction in the target language in the classroom this interaction process requires the learners to communicate and construct new knowledge with the given tasks.

Many students perceived the English language as the most difficult subject. Communicating with an English language is considered the most challenging language task, leading to its neglect or inadequate practice. In English language teaching in Nigeria particularly in Maiduguri in Borno state teachers tend to focus on stress-drilling patterns, reading texts, and writing tasks, which rarely involve the learners in real communicative activities. In most cases, the language teachers after introducing language forms early on, students engage in group work or discussions, hindering their development of effective communication skills. This teaching approach emphasizes only grammatical rules, vocabulary memorization, and text translation, sidelining learners from active participation. This as a result of so many challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of qualified teachers, dominance of indigenous languages above all lack of integration of practical language skills and student's active participation is the major impede for the effective teaching and learning of the English language.

However, despite the importance of communication skills at the secondary level, students suffered weaknesses in both speaking and writing which are fundamental for communication. This can be attributed to the researcher's observation as English language teachers for decades of the prevailing conventional methods of teaching the English language. In this method, the students most of the time are very rarely to say more than a few words in response to some questions raised

by the teachers because students are just passive listeners. hence, there is a need to adopt an activity-based teaching approaches that engage the learners with a certain task, in the process of performing the task, they will not only actively be involved in doing the task but use the ask for real communication activities. Generally, poor performance in speaking and writing skills is a major concern. The underlying problem is the use of improper teaching methods that focus on rote memorization rather than activity which hinders the development of expressive and communicative abilities. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive educational reforms and the implementation of innovative teaching approaches to enhance both spoken and written communication skills. This study tends to investigate the effectiveness of a task-based language teaching approach on students' academic 'performance in productive skills of the English language

Purpose of the Study

The objectives of this study determined:

  i. Effect of task-based language teaching approach on students' academic performance of English language speaking skills

 ii. Effect of task-based language teaching approach on students' academic performance in teaching English language writing skills

iii. Whether there is significant difference between the academic performance of students taught the English language through a task-based language teaching approach and those taught with the conventional method

Research Hypotheses

The study tested the following null hypotheses

H_{01}: Task-based language teaching approach has no significant effect on students' academic performance of English language speaking skills

H_{02}: Task-based language teaching approach has no significant effect on students' academic performance of English language writing skills

H_{03}: There is no significant gender difference between the academic performance of students taught the English language through a task-based language teaching approach and those taught with the conventional method

Methodology

The study adopted quasi-experimental design. Quasi-experimental design involves selecting groups, upon which a variable is tested that is pretest and posttest. According to (Cohen, et al.,2013) quasi-experimental design is concerned with a situation when some investigator deliberately controls and manipulates the condition which determines the events in which they are interested. The population for the study is comprised of three hundred and sixty-five (365) Jibwis Multilingual Academy of Maiduguri Borno State. A convenience sampling technique was employed to select only two intact senior secondary (SSII) class in the school with a sample size of one hundred and five (105) students. The class A experimental group consists of fifty-five students (55) while class control group B consists of fifty (50) students. The choice of convenience sampling because the participants were readily available and easily accessible, which can save time and resources.

The instrument used for the study was a researcher's self-developed instrument and named as English Language Productive Skills Performance Test (ELPSPT) the instrument was divided into two sections. Section A and B. Section A consist of respondents' data and names as demographic data while section B consists of twenty-five (25) multiple choice questions on productive skills that is to say speaking and writing skills. In order to ensure that the research instrument was valid both in face and content, the questions as contained in the instrument were given to experts in the test and measurement and English Language to ascertain that the items measured what they supposed to measure. Moreover, trial testing of the questionnaire was done to ascertain the that the instrument is consistent in measuring what it is supposed to measure which resulted to 0.88 reliability index using Cronbach Alpha.

Results

H_{01}: Task-based language teaching approach has no significant effect on students' academic performance of English language speaking skills

Table 1: Independent samples t-test for equality of means on speaking skills between students taught with task-based language teaching approach and conventional approach

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Experimental	55	11.1455	3.46634					
				4.233	103	.000	1.50175	4.14916
Control	50	8.3200	3.35906					

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the effect of a task-based language teaching approach on student's academic performance in English language speaking skills. The experimental group which consists of 55 students were taught English language speaking using the task-based language teaching approach while the control group of 50 students were taught English language speaking using the conventional approach. The results indicate a significant difference between experimental group (M= 11.1455, SD= 3.46634) and the control group (M= 8.3200, SD= 3.35906), $[t(103) = 4.233, p = .000 < .05]$. The 95% confidence interval of the difference between means ranged from [1.50175 to 4.14916] and indicated a difference between the means of the sample. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was upheld. This implies that there is a significant effect of the task-based language teaching approach on students' speaking skills

H_{02}: Task-based language teaching approach has no significant effect on students' academic performance of English language writing skills

Table 2: Independent samples t-test for equality of means on writing skills between students taught with task-based language teaching approach and conventional approach

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Experimental	55	3.6182	1.19398					
				9.053	103	.000	1.52922	2.38715
Control	50	1.6600	1.00224					

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the effect of a task-based language teaching approach on student's academic performance in English language writing skills. The experimental group which consists of 55 students were taught English language writing using the task-based language teaching approach while the control group of 50 students were taught English language writing using the conventional approach. The results indicate a significant difference between experimental group (M= 3.6182, SD= 1.19398) and the control group (M= 1.6600, SD= 1.00224), $[t(103) = 9.053, p = .000 < .05]$. The 95% confidence interval of the difference between means ranged from [1.52922 to 2.38715] and indicates a difference between the means of the sample. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was upheld.

This implies that there is a significant effect of the task-based language teaching approach on students' language writing skills

H$_{03}$: There is no significant difference between the academic performance of students taught the English language through a task-based language teaching approach and those taught with the conventional method

Table 3: Independent samples t-test for equality of means on academic performance between students taught with task-based language teaching approach and conventional approach

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Experimental	55	14.7636	3.60536					
				6.873	103	.000	3.40321	6.16406
Control	50	9.9800	3.51376					

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the difference between the academic performance of students taught the English language through a task-based language teaching approach and those taught with conventional methods. The experimental group which involved 55 students were taught the English language using the task-based language teaching approach while the control group of 50 students were taught the English language using the conventional approach. The results indicate a significant difference between the experimental group (M= 14.7636, SD= 3.60536) and the control group (M= 9.9800, SD= 3.51376), [t(103) = 6.873, p = .000 < .05]. The 95% confidence interval of the difference between means ranged from [3.40321 to 6.16406] and indicated a difference between the means of the sample. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was upheld. This implies that there is a significant difference between the academic performance of students taught the English language through a task-based language teaching approach and those taught with conventional methods.

Discussion of Findings

The study examined the effectiveness of a task-based language teaching approach on students' academic performance in productive skills of the English language. The findings of the study revealed that task-based language teaching significantly improved students' speaking and writing skills. The experimental group, consisting of 55 students, was taught English using the

task-based approach, while the control group, consisting of 50 students, was taught using a conventional method. The results showed a significant difference in academic performance between the two groups, thus rejecting the null hypothesis.

For the writing skills, the study found that task-based language teaching is effective in teaching English writing skills. This is aligned with previous research that found a positive effect of task-based language teaching. For example, Chinelo (2020) and Uju (2014) found that students who were taught using task-based teaching showed higher academic achievement compared to those taught using lecture methods. Sariannur (2017), Musazay & Khalid (2017), Nita & Rozimela (2019), and Omar et al. (2021) reported a significant improvement in student's academic performance through task-based language teaching activities used in teaching.

Comparing the students speaking proficiency in the two groups, this study found that task-based language teaching significantly improved students speaking skills. The experimental group outperformed the control group in the speaking skills test, affirming the effectiveness of the task-based approach. The finding is in support of previous research conducted by many scholars. For instance, Sabil (2020) found task-based language teaching improved twelfth-grade students' speaking proficiency. The experimental group showed a mean score of 79.69, with a post-test in discussion technique of 73.85. This improvement was 5.84 points higher than the control group. Another quasi-experimental study showed a similar result, with a mean score of 66.38 in the experimental group compared to 60.3 in the direct method. Similarly, Ayu (2017) reported that TBLT improved the speaking ability of the experiment group of eleventh grade students after the treatment. He found that task-based teaching enhances students' oral skills. The results support the effectiveness of task-based language teaching in teaching speaking skills.

Conclusion

The research findings suggest that task-based language teaching proves to be a more effective approach than traditional teaching methods. This is attributed to the active engagement of students in real-life tasks, enabling them to express their thoughts and ideas comfortably. Consequently, this active participation contributes passively to enhancing their communicative skills in both speaking and writing. Additionally, the findings of the study show that task-based language teaching improved the student's performance in both writing skills. the experimental

class under the task-based approach had better improvement compared to the control class taught under conventional teaching methods,

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The school administrators should encourage the teachers to implement the use of task-based teaching approach that centered around activities, fostering active student engagement and communication within the classroom.

2. Education bodies at the state level, such as the teaching service board and the state ministry of education, should conduct regular seminars and workshops to enhance teachers' skills and development.

3. it is suggested that interactive teaching aids should be supplied to encourage learners to undertake various tasks, thereby enhancing their English language speaking and writing skills.

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