

# Enhancing Oral Communication through Task Based Language Teaching among Polytechnic Students- An Experimental Study

P. Santhosh\* and K. Meenakshi

School of Social Sciences and Languages, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), Near Katpadi Road, Vellore – 632014, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India; santhosh.perinbam@vit.ac.in, k.meenakshi@vit.ac.in

## Abstract

**Objectives:** An experimental study has been conducted to find out the effectiveness of Task Based Approach in teaching oral communication skills to polytechnic college students. Based on the prescribed text book task based platform was constructed to teach for the first year students. **Methods:** An oral performance test attended by an assessment heading was administered. Fifty students were taken for the study and they were divided into two groups. Twenty five students representing the experimental group planned two units exploiting the task based program while twenty five students signifying the control group studied the same units following the Teacher's instruction. **Findings:** Data were analyzed and Results exposed that there were statistically substantial differences found between the control and the experimental group. These results supports to utilizes task based learning in teaching English as a second language **Improvements:** This study is focused only in the field of polytechnic institutions further study should concentrate on the other fields

**Keywords:** Oral English Performance, Teaching English, Task Based Language Teaching

## 1. Introduction

The Task-based approach emerged in teaching foreign and second language. It emphasizes that teaching must be accompanied with real life tasks and goals<sup>1</sup>. The main objectives of Task-based approach are learners should actively participate, cooperate and communicate when performing the task. In<sup>2</sup> examined that second language learners do not like their teacher's method of teaching in the language class. Lecturing time is not motivating students since they do not like to be in passive in class. Many EFL learners cannot excellently use English in conversation or correspondence with others. It<sup>3</sup> introduced a new eclectic model for teaching English for the second language which is different from traditional teaching method and it helps teacher to introduce new vocabularies and sentence formation. In<sup>4</sup> his study when students are involved in enthusiastic environment their interest

on learning is so effective. So they suggest that teachers should allot those environments for the operative classroom atmosphere. In<sup>5</sup> proposes that Task based approach is the substitute approach to solve the barriers in teaching English for second language learners which help learners to learn the language by tasks and activities. In<sup>6</sup> stated that teachers should have the confident that task based language teaching provides the atmosphere for healthy learning process with minimum effort. In<sup>7</sup> has advocated that these activities and task playing a dominating role to get the significant outcome for second language learners which comprise learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Learning to speak English language is not an easy process. Second language teachers and learners find speaking

\*Author for correspondence

the most challenging language skill; therefore this skill is frequently abandoned or poorly trained in the English classroom. English teachers tend to use drilling patterns, reading texts and writing tasks but rarely have their students involved in speaking activities. Students who pursue diploma courses face difficulties in learning English because they are used to rote learning. Majority of students are from regional medium and they have less exposure to the language. The curriculum has given more importance for writing than speaking. Though they have practical knowledge in their field of specialization, they lack in language proficiency. So they struggle a lot to express their ideas when they go for industrial visits and interviews. As researchers and industrialists have stated there is an urgent need to bridge the gap between what they learn and what they need.

### 3. Research Questions

In<sup>8</sup> examined that task-based research has been primarily motivated with the productive tasks, particularly speaking tasks. Tasks can include any of the four language skills. The following two research questions are framed to bring out the effectiveness of using TBLT in improving the oral communication of the first year polytechnic college students.

1. Does TBLT help learners develop their oral fluency?
2. Do the tasks and activities improve students' interest in the language classroom?

### 4. Methodology

The Government polytechnic college in Vellore district was chosen for the experimental study. This study involved 50 students from Thanthai Periyar Polytechnic College in Vellore, who had just completed their first semester. A pretest was conducted to check the language proficiency of the students. The questionnaire encompassed two sections: Section A includes choose the correct option relating to articles, prepositions and conjunctions), section B contains match the followings, fill in the blanks and spot the error. After evaluating the pretest, the total number of respondents was divided into two groups. 25 students were taken up for the experimental study and other 25 students were for control group. Activities and tasks were given for experimental group. Students were

briefed on the purpose of the study and instructions relating to the activities were given.

### 5. Activities Used in this Study

The activities given below are conducted for the experimental group in order to attain the language proficiency.

- a. Just a minute – L2 learners have to speak for a minute on their own for the given topics.
- b. Introducing Each other- Learners have to introduce their friends
- c. Train Story- L2 learners should tag a story one by one
- d. Things in Common- Learners should pick the related card which has same meaning
- e. Describe a picture- L2 learners should describe a picture which is shown to them.

Based on the activities used in the classroom, a post-test was conducted for the both control and experimental groups. Similar pattern of pretest questionnaire has been used in the post test with various new examples. The marks scored by the experimental and control group was analyzed by using SPSS (statistical package for the social science) software and the results interpreted are as follows.

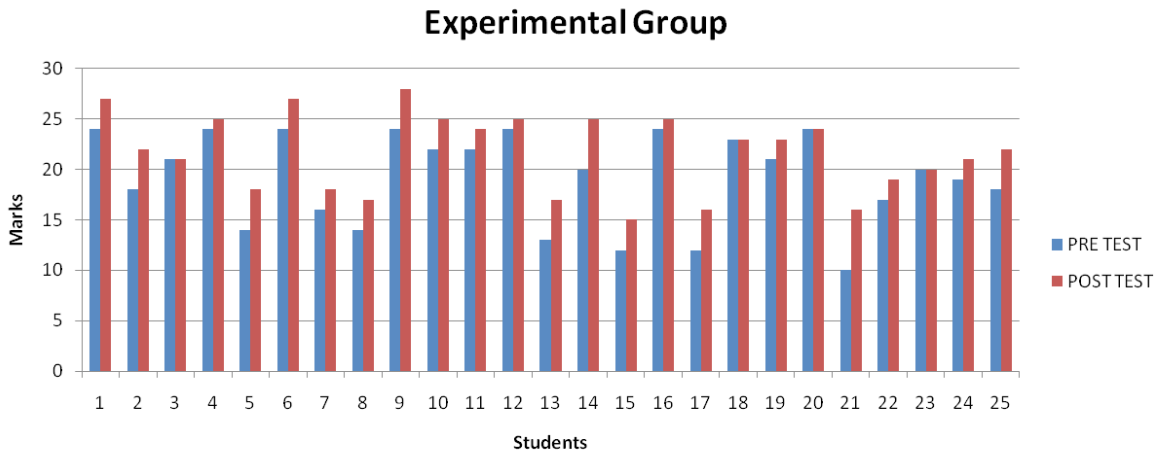
### 6. Results and Discussions

#### 6.1 Findings

- After trying different activities in the classroom, students showed improvement in their listening skills, which was obvious in their active participation in the classroom.
- The students were able to express their ideas very confidently.
- A Statistical technique (paired sample T- test) was used to analyze and interpret the data.

Results in the Table showed that there is significant difference found between groups.

The outcomes stated in the Table 1 showed the operative impact of task based instruction on teaching the speaking skill. As shown in Figure 1, the X axis represents the total marks and Y axis represents the number of students participated in the experimental study. Similarly



$P < 0.05$

**Figure 1.** Difference between pre-test and post-test marks of experimental group.

there is a growth in posttest when compare to pretest scores. Task-based instruction provided learner with opportunities to implement English language contextually, to explore it with situational activities. As task based learning is student centered, students were stimulated to use language inventively through the tasks they were asked to complete. Errors and mistakes while practicing the language were measured natural as the emphasis was on fluency and message assigning. Hence, students were allowed to prompt their ideas without anxiety of being reproached for making faults. Similarly, task-based learning exploited with the experimental group learners offered them chances to learn while doing. Language learning should create a happy environment; “Learning by doing” is not a new idea though it considered as traditional method it enhances the cognitive appointment of learners. Studies have proved that teaching through tasks, games and activities always plays a significant role in language teaching.

**Table 1.** The values of paired sample T-test

	Mean	SD	Sig
Experimental -Pre test Post test	19.20	4.55	0.000
	21.72	3.85	
Posttest Control Group Experimental Group	18.84	2.30	0.006
	21.72	3.85	

## 7. Conclusion

Task based teaching method is very effective than the traditional teaching method, because students were so

interested to participate in group work like developing a conversation and playing language games. They spontaneously come forward to achieve the language outcomes. This method is applicable and even effective for the moderate and slow learners because it taps their curiosity in learning something new. When students are involved in group activities they feel more comfortable to express their thoughts and ideas when compared to other teaching methods and that too with minimum effort.

The following recommendations are presented:

1. The content of the English textbook of the first year polytechnic should be reassessed and task based learning activities must be included in teaching English as a Second Language at polytechnic level
2. Oral skills must be given utmost importance because it provides a strong framework for their future career.
3. English teachers should use real life situations in the classroom for developing the students’ oral proficiency.

## 8. References

1. Lin Z. Task based approach in foreign language teaching in China [Master thesis]. USA, University of Wisconsin; 2009 Apr. p. 1–7.
2. Nazenin R. The influence of task based learning on EFL classrooms. *Asian EFL Journal*. 2007 Feb. p.1–23.
3. Xiao LX. A new paradigm of teaching English in China: an edectic model. *The Asian EFL Journal*. 2009; 11(1):271.
4. Hahim F. Language immersion for low proficiency ESL learner: the ALEMAC project. *The Reading Matrix*. 2006 Sep; 6(1):170–85.

5. Lochana M, Deb G. Task based teaching: learning English without tears retrieved. *The Asian EFL Journal*. 2006 Sep; 8(3):140–64.
6. Muller T. Researching the influence of target language on learner task performance. *The Asian EFL Journal*. 2006 Sep; 8(3):165–73.
7. Nunan, David. Task based teaching in the Asia context: defining task. *Asian EFL Journal*. 2006 Sep; 8(3):12–8.
8. Ellis. *Task-based language learning and teaching*. 1st edition, Oxford University Press, New York; 2003.