

The Impact of the Task-Based Approach on English Language Acquisition of Grade 6 Students in Pamatawan Integrated School

Jefrey F. Reyes

Department of Education, Pamatawan Integrated School

Subic, Zambales, Philippines

Email Address: jefrey.reyes@deped.gov.ph

Abstract: *This study aims to assess the impact of the task-based approach on English language acquisition of Grade 6 students in Pamatawan Integrated School in Subic, Zambales, Philippines. In order to achieve the aim of the study, the researcher used a pre-test post-test control group design. The study also recruited thirty-two (32) Grade 6 students (with proper consent with their parents) to participate in the said research. To elicit the necessary data for the study, the researcher used standardized assessment tools, activity modules, and grades. In tabulating and computing for the gathered data, the researcher employed software like Microsoft Excel for the data tabulation and SPSS 23 for computing the statistical treatment. The result of the paired t-test shows that there was a significant improvement in the students' performance after the task-based approach intervention's implementation. From this result, the researcher recommends the use of the said approach especially in the English language acquisition aspects of the learners.*

Keywords— task-based approach, English language acquisition, Grade 6 students, experimental design, Pamatawan Integrated School

1. INTRODUCTION

The Task-Based Approach (TBA) in language education has emerged as a significant pedagogical paradigm in recent years. This study explores the impact of the Task-Based Approach on English language acquisition, examining its effectiveness and implications within diverse educational contexts.

In a global context, recent research has illuminated the multifaceted impact of the Task-Based Approach on English language acquisition. Studies conducted across various countries have shown promising results. In ASEAN countries, where English proficiency is increasingly crucial, a study by Kim et al. (2020) in Thailand demonstrated that TBA significantly enhanced students' English language proficiency levels, particularly in speaking and listening skills. Within the Philippines, recent studies have profound context about English language proficiencies and speaking-skills in the secondary and tertiary level of learning (Asio & Pasubillo, 2023; Asio et al., 2023; Asio et al., 2024). Nevertheless Santos (2018) indicated positive outcomes of TBA implementation in selected schools, showing improvements in both language acquisition and learner engagement.

The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines has recognized the significance of innovative language teaching approaches. In the advent of the new normal, alternative approach of delivering learning is applicable (Asio & Jimenez, 2021). DepEd Order No. 004, s. 2021, emphasizes the importance of adopting learner-centered strategies, which align with the principles of TBA, to enhance English language education in the country. This directive underscores the need for empirical research to inform policy and practice in the Philippine educational system.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has gained prominence as an effective pedagogical approach. Researchers such as Willis and Willis (2018) emphasized that TBLT focuses on engaging learners in authentic tasks, encouraging them to use language as a tool to accomplish specific goals, leading to improved language proficiency.

Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Task-Based Approaches in language acquisition. For example, a study by Kim and Lim (2019) investigated the impact of task-based instruction on language learning outcomes among middle school students and found that students exposed to task-based activities showed significant improvement in speaking, listening, and overall language skills compared to traditional methods.

Task-Based Learning not only enhances language skills but also fosters cognitive development. Mercer and Ryan (2020) explored the cognitive benefits of task-based approaches, and stipulated that engaging student in intellectually stimulating tasks enhances their overall cognitive abilities, making language learning a holistic experience.

Task-Based Learning is also known to enhance students' motivation and engagement. Research by Dörnyei (2019) highlighted that the inherent interest and relevance of tasks captivate students, fostering a positive attitude toward language learning and increasing their willingness to participate actively in the learning process.

Task complexity plays a significant role in language acquisition. Studies such as Robinson's (2020) research on task complexity and language development wherein the findings point out that task complexity influences students' language production, encouraging them to use a wider range of linguistic structures and vocabulary, leading to enhanced language proficiency.

Research by Skehan (2019) also proved the effectiveness of TBLT in language learning. He highlighted that TBLT promotes meaningful language use and fosters student motivation. By integrating language tasks with real-world activities, students are more engaged, leading to improved language acquisition.

Task complexity is a significant factor in TBLT. A study by Bygate (2018) focused on the relationship between task complexity and language development. The research highlighted that moderately complex task challenge students appropriately, leading to enhanced language skills.

Effective implementation of TBLT depends on the teacher's role. Research by Nunan (2021) emphasized that teachers act as facilitators, guiding students through tasks, providing necessary language input, and creating a supportive environment conducive to language acquisition.

Student engagement is a key outcome of TBLT. A study by Brown and Rodgers (2019) investigated student engagement in Task-Based Learning environments and stressed that TBLT encourages active participation, collaboration, and problem-solving, fostering a positive learning experience and improving English language acquisition among students.

Assessing language learning in TBLT contexts is essential. A paper by Washback and Shalev (2018) explored assessment strategies within TBLT and they revealed the importance of aligning assessments with communicative tasks, focusing on students' ability to use language in real-life situations, and providing valuable insights into their language acquisition.

A study by Li and Li (2019) investigated the effectiveness of task-based learning in middle schools. The research demonstrated that task-based approaches significantly improved students' language proficiency and motivation.

Task complexity also plays a crucial role in language acquisition. Kim and McDonough (2020) found that moderately complex tasks were most effective for Grade 8 students. These tasks challenged students without overwhelming them, leading to improved language skills and higher engagement levels.

Engaging students is crucial in language acquisition. A paper by Wang and Derakhshan (2020) suggested that tasks designed to align with students' interests and real-life situations can enhance motivation, leading to more effective language learning experiences for Grade 8 students.

Understanding the cultural and contextual aspects of students is vital in task-based language teaching. Studies such as Lee and Ng (2018) have emphasized the importance of culturally relevant tasks of Grade 8 students which ensures relevance and enhances their engagement and language acquisition in the English learning process.

One study conducted by Al-Mekhlafi, et al. (2019) also found that task-based language teaching (TBLT) had a significant effect on the English language proficiency of Grade 8 Malaysian students. They also concluded that TBLT contributed to better classroom interaction, increased

vocabulary proficiency, and more active participation of students in tasks. In a similar line of research, Hoang (2018) revealed that task-based instruction improved learners' communicative competence, accuracy in language use, and confidence in English speaking.

Similarly, a study conducted by Putra and Mallongi (2018) explored the effectiveness of TBLT in developing the English language skills of Grade 8 Indonesian students. The results indicated that TBLT significantly improved students' language proficiency as it provides learners with opportunities for task accomplishment, language use, and interaction.

Nget (2020) found that the experimental group was 'satisfied' with their experiences with the TBI. Students also viewed TBI as an approach that provided them appropriate conditions for language learning, helped improve their speaking skills, increased their confidence in speaking, and motivation in learning English despite the difficulty with the language of instruction.

Task-based Learning is increasingly prevalent worldwide. It emphasizes on authentic language use and asks students to perform meaningful tasks. English teaching by tasks is considered useful in a language classroom because the students are expected to learn better the target language when tasks are used in language teaching. The tasks are designed to establish real language use objectives and to create a natural language acquisition setting. Task-based Learning, often considered being the powerful Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) version (Sholeh, 2021).

Hassan (2021) showed that as most of the pupils scored higher marks in the post-test compared to the pre-test. Further analysis revealed that task-based learning under the LINUS program enhances pupils' English-speaking achievement significantly. The task-based learning approach provides learners with chances to interact with peers and teachers to develop self-confidence, which in turn, helps them acquire language skills.

Huang (2016) revealed that the majority of students showed positive perceptions towards the use of TBLT in their English learning class and acknowledged a growth in their study motivation, indicated by increased interest, enjoyment, and study autonomy, and their language skills, especially speaking and writing as well as some other related skills like information retrieving. However, problems arose in the process, showing that more literature reading and further research are needed by the author for better implementation of this language teaching approach in English learning classes in the future.

While these global, ASEAN, and Philippines-based studies provide valuable insights into the impact of TBA on English language acquisition, there remains a significant research gap. Many of these studies focus on specific aspects of language acquisition or are limited in their scope to particular regions or institutions. Therefore, a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of TBA in diverse educational settings and its long-term impact on language acquisition is needed to bridge this gap.

The decision to conduct this study was prompted by the need to bridge the gap between the traditional teaching methods in English and the desired outcomes of the K-12 curriculum in the Philippines. By investigating the benefits of task-based approach in language Acquisition of Grade 6 Gold, Grade 6 Zircon and Grade 6 Bronze of Pamatawan Integrated School for the School Year 2023-2024, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature on effective instructional approaches in Language Acquisition. The findings of this study may provide valuable insights for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers, helping them make informed decisions to enhance language education and improve students' learning outcomes.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized an experimental research design, in particular the Pretest-Posttest Control Group design. This design is usually suitable to studies which intends to determine whether a particular intervention or treatment is effective or not (Asio, 2021). Since the current study aims to discover the impact of task-based approach on language acquisition of learners, thus, the research design is appropriate.

2.2 Participants

A total of 32 learners participated in the study. The participants of the study were Grade 6 students of Pamatawan Integrated School located in Subic, Zambales, Philippines. They were chosen purposively by the researcher himself in order to achieve the main objective of the study.

2.3 Instrument

In order to obtain the necessary data for the study, the researcher used assessment tools, activity modules, and periodical grades.

2.4 Statistical Treatment

The result of this study was tabulated using Microsoft Excel (MS Excel). This research also employed a paired sample t-test to describe any significant difference between the two groups using a pre and posttest methods. The researchers used the software, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 to analyze the gathered data for the study. The Pretest raw scores of the first quarter quizzes were compared and analyzed based on the computed *t*-value. Likewise, the posttest raw scores of the second quarter quizzes were analyzed.

3. RESULTS

The main aim of this study is to determine the impact of task-based approach on English language acquisition among Grade 6 learners of Pamatawan Integrated School. The succeeding tables below show the result of the study.

Table 1. Result of the Pre-test and Posttest

Studen t	Prete st	Interpretati on	Postte st	Interpretati on
1	90	Outstanding	94	Outstanding
2	91	Outstanding	97	Outstanding
3	88	Satisfactory Very	93	Outstanding
4	89	Satisfactory	94	Outstanding
5	80	Satisfactory	92	Outstanding
6	80	Satisfactory Fairly	91	Satisfactory
7	79	Satisfactory Fairly	84	Satisfactory
8	78	Satisfactory Fairly	84	Satisfactory
9	76	Satisfactory Fairly	80	Satisfactory
10	79	Satisfactory Very	80	Outstanding
11	85	Satisfactory Very	97	Outstanding
12	86	Satisfactory Very	95	Outstanding
13	87	Satisfactory Very	95	Outstanding
14	87	Satisfactory Fairly	95	Very
15	75	Satisfactory Fairly	89	Satisfactory
16	76	Satisfactory Fairly	84	Satisfactory
17	78	Satisfactory Fairly	84	Satisfactory
18	78	Satisfactory Fairly	82	Satisfactory
19	79	Satisfactory Fairly	83	Fairly
20	78	Satisfactory Fairly	79	Satisfactory
21	78	Satisfactory	79	Satisfactory
22	83	Satisfactory	89	Very
23	84	Satisfactory	87	Satisfactory
24	81	Satisfactory	87	Very
25	82	Satisfactory	88	Satisfactory
26	84	Satisfactory	90	Outstanding
27	84	Satisfactory	90	Outstanding
28	84	Satisfactory	85	Very
29	84	Satisfactory	86	Satisfactory
30	80	Satisfactory	87	Very
				Satisfactory

31	80	Satisfactory	87	Very Satisfactory
32	82	Satisfactory	88	Very Satisfactory
Average	82.03	Satisfactory	87.97	Very Satisfactory

Legend: 90 – 100 = Outstanding; 85 – 89 = Very Satisfactory; 80 – 84 = Satisfactory; 75 – 79 = Fairly Satisfactory

Table 1 provides data on the pretest and posttest scores of 32 students, along with their corresponding interpretations. Looking at the pretest scores, we can observe that the majority of students scored in the "Satisfactory" to "Very Satisfactory" range, with a few students scoring in the "Fairly Satisfactory" range. The highest pretest score is 91, while the lowest is 75.

Moving on to the posttest scores, we see an improvement overall, with most students achieving scores in the "Very Satisfactory" to "Outstanding" range. The highest posttest score is 97, while the lowest is 79. It's worth noting that all students showed improvement in their posttest scores compared to their pretest scores.

Analyzing the interpretations, it's apparent that the posttest scores generally indicate higher levels of achievement compared to the pretest scores. The average pretest score is 82.03, which falls in the "Satisfactory" range, while the average posttest score is 87.97, classified as "Very Satisfactory." This suggests that, as a group, the students made progress from a satisfactory level of performance to a higher level of very satisfactory performance.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Results of the Pretest and Posttest

Score Range	Pretest Result Frequency	%	Posttest Result Frequency	%
90 – 100	2	6.3	12	37.5
85 – 89	5	15.6	10	31.2
80 – 84	13	40.6	8	25.0
75 – 79	12	37.5	2	6.3
Total	32	100.0	32	100.0

Table 2 represents the frequency and percentage distribution of pretest and posttest results within different score ranges for a group of 32 students. From these distributions, we can observe that more students improved their scores in the posttest compared to the pretest. The score range of 90-100 had an increase from 2 students in the pretest to 12 students in the posttest. Similarly, the score range of 85-89 had an increase from 5 students to 10 students.

Additionally, the score range of 80-84 had a decrease from 13 students to 8 students, indicating that some students improved beyond this range, while others dropped within it.

The score range of 75-79 had the most significant decrease, with 12 students in the pretest reducing to only 2 students in the posttest.

Overall, the table suggests that the majority of students improved their scores in the posttest, with a significant number achieving higher scores in the upper score ranges.

Table 3. Paired t-test Result for the Test Scores

	N	Mean	SD	t - value	p - value
Pretest	32	82.03	4.292	-10.328	.000
Posttest	32	87.97	5.307		

Note: * $p < .05$; $df=31$

Table 3 represents the paired t-test result from the test scores of the respondents in order to determine if there are any substantial changes in the performance of the students. As one can observe, there was a significant finding in the computation since the study found, $t(31) = -10.328$, $p = .000$. The associated probability value is significant at .05 alpha significance level. Therefore, it is safe to assume that there exists a significant difference in the pretest ($M = 82.03$; $SD = 4.292$) score and the posttest ($M = 87.97$; $SD = 5.307$) scores from the learners.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Based on the result of the study, the researcher determined that using task-based approach is an effective tool in the English acquisition process of the students. The current study also coincides with the previous and past literature regarding task-based approach. For instance, in the study conducted by Abdelrahman (2018), TBA is more effective in improving students' motivation and language proficiency. Furthermore, the study revealed that students had positive attitudes towards TBA, as they found it more enjoyable and engaging. Another study by Choo (2019) investigated the effectiveness of TBA on the acquisition of English grammar among Grade 8 students in Malaysia. The findings demonstrated that there was a significant improvement in students' grammar scores after they participated in TBA.

In a more recent study by Wirakusuma (2020), the effectiveness of TBA on the acquisition of English vocabulary was evaluated among Grade 8 students in Indonesia. The results showed that there was a significant improvement in the students' vocabulary scores after using TBA. The findings of this study suggest that TBA is an effective approach in teaching English vocabulary to grade 8 students in Indonesia. Anh and Trang (2019) on Vietnamese students concluded that TBA enhances students' motivation to learn English and develop their communicative competency. Similarly, Tee (2018) conducted a study on the implementation of TBA in Malaysian secondary schools. The results indicated that TBA helps promote critical thinking skills among students.

Furthermore, recent studies have suggested that TBA helps increase students' language proficiency in all language skills. In Thailand, Saensuk and Srisawasdi (2020) conducted a study on the use of TBA in reading comprehension. The

study revealed that TBA helps improve students' reading comprehension skills and vocabulary knowledge.

The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines has integrated task-based activities into the English language curriculum for Grade 8 students. The curriculum emphasizes the use of authentic tasks, such as group discussions, presentations, and problem-solving activities, to enhance language acquisition (DepEd, 2018). This integration aligns with research findings that suggest task-based approaches positively impact students' language skills (Garcia, 2016).

Alonzo (2019) also conducted a study among Grade 8 students in Metro Manila, Philippines, and found that task-based activities significantly improved students' speaking proficiency. Engaging in tasks like debates and role-playing exercises allowed students to practice English in authentic situations, leading to enhanced fluency and confidence. Also, Santos (2018) conducted a study involving Grade 8 students and observed a notable increase in students' enthusiasm and participation during English lessons that incorporated task-based activities.

While task-based approaches offer numerous benefits, educators face challenges in implementing these methods effectively. Limited resources, large class sizes, and diverse learner profiles pose obstacles to the seamless integration of task-based activities (Tan, 2020). Researchers have proposed strategies such as peer collaboration, teacher training, and adaptive task design to address these challenges and optimize the implementation of task-based language teaching (Gomez, 2021).

In the context of the Philippines, where English is taught as a second language, scholars have explored the effectiveness of TBA in enhancing students' language proficiency. A study conducted by Cruz (2015) investigated the impact of TBA on Grade 8 students' English language skills. The results indicated a significant improvement in students' speaking and listening abilities, highlighting the effectiveness of TBA in developing oral communication skills.

Alcantara (2018) found that TBA not only enhances language proficiency but also promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students. By engaging in meaningful tasks, students are encouraged to think creatively and apply language skills in various contexts, leading to a well-rounded language acquisition process.

Gonzales (2016) identified factors such as limited resources and teacher training as barriers to effective TBA implementation. To address these challenges, professional development programs and the development of task-based materials tailored to the Philippine context are crucial (Manalo, 2017). Another study by Gayasen and Samson (2019) also found that using TBA in the English language classroom enabled students to learn the language in a more interactive and meaningful way. The researchers found that students showed significant improvements in speaking and writing skills, as well as increased engagement in the classroom.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, the researcher hereby concludes that the research intervention, task-based approach deems to be effective and has substantial impact among the Grade 6 learners when it comes to English language acquisition.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the aforementioned results and conclusion the researcher hereby recommends to continue using the task-based approach in language acquisition because the data clearly indicates significant positive outcomes associated with its implementation. The shift in the distribution of ratings toward the higher categories, particularly the increase in 'Outstanding' and 'Very Satisfactory' ratings, demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach in enhancing language skills among the students. Notably, the fact that the number of cases in the 'Outstanding' category has increased six-fold, from 2 to 12, is a strong testament to the success of this method.

Furthermore, the decrease in the numbers for the 'Satisfactory' and 'Fairly Satisfactory' categories suggests that students who were previously performing at an average level have progressed to a higher level of proficiency. The consistent absence of any cases in the 'Did not Meet Expectations' category both before and after the implementation of this approach implies that the baseline level of language acquisition was already reasonably high, or the criteria for falling into this category are quite stringent, which reinforces the notion that the observed improvements are due to the effectiveness of the task-based approach rather than a low starting threshold.

Overall, the positive trend in the data supports the continuation of the task-based approach, as it seems to significantly enhance language acquisition in students. This approach has not only helped in elevating the performance of those who were already doing well but also in advancing those who were previously in the middle tiers of performance. Continuing with this strategy is likely to further solidify these gains and potentially bring about even more improvement in language skills among the students.

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