INTERNATIONAL PREMIER JOURNAL OF LANGUAGES & LITERATURE (IPJLL)
VOLUME 4, ISSUE 3 (SI), 2026 p-ISSN: 3007-2336 e-ISSN: 3007-2344

TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AND ESL LEARNERS' MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT: A SURVEY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

Wahid Ud Din Sidiqui823@gmail.com	PhD Scholar, IELL, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan.
Naima Qamar Naima.qamar1234@gmail.com	*MPhil English Linguistics, NCBA&E, Lahore*, Pakistan.

Abstract

This research investigated how Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) influenced secondary school ESL students' motivation and engagement in the Pakistani secondary schools. Specifically during the secondary education stage because students during this time often experience fear and lose interest in learning and studying the English language. Motivation and classroom engagement are key elements of second language learning. Students' perceptions of task-based learning were investigated using a quantitative research approach. An organized questionnaire was used to gather data from 180 students from Grades 9 and 10 at some selected secondary schools in Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan. The questionnaire examined students' motivational levels as well as their behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement. Frequencies and percentages were among the descriptive statistical methods used in the analysis of the obtained data using SPSS. The results showed that students' motivation and classroom engagement were positively influenced by task-based language teaching. For participating in task-based activities, learners claimed high percentage of agreement on higher levels of interest, confidence, involvement and willingness to speak in English. Findings also showed that meaningful and collaborative activities promoted active student participation and minimized nervousness and anxiousness while speaking. According to the research's findings, TBLT is an effective teaching technique for raising secondary school ESL students' interest and engagement. To create engaging, student-centered and flexible environments in the classroom, it is urged that ESL teachers implement task-based activities into their teaching methods.

Keywords*:* *ESL Learners, Learner Engagement, Motivation, Secondary School, Task-Based Language Teaching.*

Corresponding Author: Wahid Ud Din (PhD Scholar, IELL, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan)
Email: Sidiqui823@gmail.com

1. Introduction

It is very important to learn and speak English in today's modern and connected world, gaining proficiency in English is necessary for career opportunities in the future and academic achievement, especially in countries where English is being taught as a second language. English is a compulsory subject in Pakistani secondary schools. The conventional teaching techniques that prioritize grammar, memorizing information and exam-focused schooling makes it challenging for students to develop communication skills. As a result, students often experience low motivation and low engagement in class. They feel nervousness and anxiousness while speaking, addressing or expressing their thoughts in English.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has become a widely used student-centered method. TBLT supports students to actively use language to complete tasks, solve problems and socialize with classmates instead of relying solely on grammatical accuracy. The goals of secondary school learners, who benefits from collaborative projects and interaction opportunities are fulfilled by this method. According to research, by making language acquisition more relevant and enjoyable, task-based teaching can improve students' motivation, confidence and engagement.

Successful language acquisition is greatly impacted by student's engagement and motivation. Motivated students are more likely to engage in classroom activities, putting forward effort to acquire knowledge and fight in a situation of setbacks. In an analogous way, active behavioral, emotional and cognitive participation in learning tasks is demonstrated by engaged learners. Teaching techniques that encourage independent learning and involvement can greatly increase motivation and engagement in ESL classes.

Only a few research works from Pakistan have investigated TBLT's impacts in Pakistani secondary schools. Numerous international studies highlighted its benefits. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate how Task-Based Language Teaching affects Pakistani secondary school ESL students' motivation and engagement. The study aims to add to the increasing body of research on successful ESL teaching methods and offer useful insights for secondary English language teachers by investigating students' perspectives on task-based instruction in general.

1.1. Research Objectives

- To examine whether TBLT increases learners' motivation compared to traditional methods.
- To determine the fruitful effects of task based learning on learners' participation and engagement.
- To analyze students point of view of task based learning as a teaching method.

1.2. Research Questions

- What is the role of task-based learning in enhancing motivation of ESL learners at

secondary level?

- What are the fruitful effects of task based learning in engagement of students in classroom activities and lessons?
- What is the perspective of ESL learning about task based learning in comparison to traditional learning?

2. Literature Review

According to Willis (1996), this approach helps learners pick up language by giving them chances to hear it, use it, and think about what they've learned during each task. In TBLT, language learning happens in a more natural way, as students interact and communicate to get things done. Skehan (1998) found out that this method of learning allows students to become more passionate towards their learning process. The active roles in which they get involved in due to this method allows them to think critically and logically. Richards & Rodgers (2014) also supports that this method allows fluency and motivation as a result of use of language used in real contexts by the learners.

Hymes (1972) claimed that language competence encompassed both grammatical accuracy and the ability to use language properly in the context of society. Nunan (2004) wrote in his work about how TBLT connects classroom learning with the communication in real life by classroom discussions, projects and group works and empowers use of language allowing them to practice and become fluent. Ellis (2003) suggestsed that this is a better time to focus on grammar, since students are more open to learning after seeing why they might need it. This final phase helps balance practicing real communication with polishing accuracy.

Iqbal (2021) discovered a fruitful effect. He found that TBLT was liked by both teachers and the students and they appreciated this method as they thought it made the lessons interactive and interesting. Robinson (2011) defined that tasks can be difficult or challenging but it allows critical thinking and allows the students to freely express themselves and boost their confidence, improve their speaking skills and kill anxiety. Rahman (2010) and Butler (2011) observed that this method makes the lessons interesting and students become more engaged and find it less boring. It showed active participation of students.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) views language learning as a socially mediated process that develops through interaction and collaboration. According to Harmer (2007), effective TBLT teachers supervise their students' Progress while preventing unnecessary interruptions so that discussions can flow. Students can concentrate on what they want to say and worry less about making mistakes in this fashion, which is helpful for secondary school teenagers.

According to Long (1985), tasks are more than just classroom exercises; they are activities that reflect how we use language in daily life. In order to achieve a real linguistic

goal, students who work on these tasks engage with English in useful manners, such as understanding, speaking, and expressing themselves, rather than only remembering the rules of grammar. Because this method strongly relates to real-life situations that we may encounter outside of the classroom and language learning feels more alive and applicable.

According to Borg (2003) even if teachers are willing to using creative methods, their opinions about teaching languages may have an impact. Khan (2011) notes that teachers recognize the advantages of hands-on activities for boosting students' speaking confidence and classroom participation. These results indicate that selected task-based activity incorporation is possible within the present-day curriculum, even if complete TBLT implementation may be difficult. Ali and Hamid (2018) believes that exam pressure and social expectations have an impact on secondary students' motivation and engagement in alongside methods of instruction. Exam-oriented instruction may decrease students' intrinsic motivation because success is mostly determined by written tests. By making language learning more relevant and interesting, task-based activities that prioritize teamwork and problem-solving may help offset this trend.

Some researches in Pakistan for example by Ahmad (2014) and Zaman (2019) it was discovered that TBLT has fruitful effects, it enhances motivation among students and allows them to participate and take interest more compare to traditional teaching. Tasks liken group discussions, projects and role play activities makes classroom more interactive and grabs students' attention. Multiple studies of English language teaching in Pakistan have brought attention to enduring difficulties in secondary classrooms. According to Mansoor (2005) textbook completion and exam preparation are often given priority over communication skills in teaching English in government-sector schools. As such students may show that they understand grammar rules however find it difficult to express themselves using the English language in everyday situations. Such situations can have an adverse effect on students' motivation and engagement, especially if they feel that the lessons are boring or pointless.

According to Breen (1987), students in these classes collaborate for understanding one another and use their previous understanding to complete the tasks. Students get more independence and responsible as a result of this active interaction. Another essential aspect of TBLT involves speaking with their peers. According to Pica (1994), when students communicate with one another, they have opportunities to ask questions, improve their language skills & gain confidence through realistic conversations. These exchanges help in learning a language and provide the students with more confidence while speaking in secondary school ESL classrooms.

According to Cope and Horwitz (1986), anxiety connected with studying a foreign language is a significant obstacle. In ESL lessons, anxiousness can frequently result in less engagement, an inability to share information, and a fear about making mistake. A number

of factors including the classroom atmosphere, communication skills may improve or worsen tension, according to MacIntyre and Gardner (1994). When used in an atmosphere of encouragement, task-based instruction reduces anxiety because it places a higher priority on meaning than performance.

According to Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia (2012) negative emotions may prevent participation, good emotions like interest and enjoyment increase learners' engagement. Emotional engagement is especially crucial in secondary ESL classes since students' attitudes and confidence in English can have a big impact on their readiness to speak and take chances while using the language. Which in fact is seen to be achieved by TBLT.

According to Greene (2015), cognitively engaged learners actively examine information, seek solutions to problems, and consider what they have learned. Cognitive engagement is the amount of effort students make as they understand the content and use learning methods. It calls for determination, discipline, and a willingness to take on challenging tasks. When children try to explain complex ideas, use strategies to improve accuracy, and fight in an environment of communication obstacles they are exhibiting cognitive engagement in language learning.

3. Methodology

This study used a quantitative research approach in order to investigate how Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) affects secondary school ESL students' motivation and engagement. The questionnaire method was implemented as it made it easy to quickly and thoroughly collect responses from a wide range of respondents.

For sampling, 180 secondary school students from Grades 9 and 10, ages 14 to 16, participated in the research. The students were selected from Sheikh Khalifa Public School, Army Public School Rahim Yar Khan City Campus, Army Public School Cantt and City School in Rahim Yar Khan, Pakistan. Students learning English as a compulsory subject, both male and female took part in the research.

A standardized questionnaire designed to assess students' motivation and engagement in the classroom with respect to task-based language learning was implemented to gather data. After examining relevant literature on TBLT, learner motivation and engagement, the questionnaire was created. It was divided into three sections: the first (Section A) collected basic demographic data, such as gender, age and class and the second (Section B) and third (Section C) contained close-ended questions that ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a five-point Likert scale. The section B contained question statements about motivation. The Section C consisted of statements concentrated on the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement of students in TBLT classes.

Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the instrument (Questionnaire) internal consistency in order to verify the questionnaire's reliability. Cronbach's Alpha helped

to assess whether a set of items consistently measure the same concept and how closely related they are within a range. It was used in this study to evaluate the validity of the questionnaire items related to student's engagement and motivation. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire items for data collection and analysis were demonstrated by a good Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.7

The questionnaire was given out during regular class hours with prior approval from the selected schools' administration. To maintain confidentiality, no names or other personally identifiable data was acquired and participation was completely voluntary. SPSS was used to analyze the gathered data. Findings were presented and analyzed using descriptive statistical methods such as frequencies and percentages in tables. Column charts were also developed which displayed and demonstrated the data visually.

4. Data analysis

Task-based English classes promoted active involvement, sustained focus, and determination in finishing classroom tasks. According to learner engagement information gathered. It appears that task-based learning successfully encouraged behavioral engagement since learners reported being more engaged in group conversations and activities. Students' efforts to understand their tasks, analyzing the mistakes they made and to improve their ability to communicate demonstrated cognitive involvement rather than just passively absorbing stuff, students were challenged to put forward language skills and think critically by having accomplished useful tasks. This support the idea that when students actively participate in the creation of knowledge, their sense of engagement improves.

The analysis of all the survey responses was utilized to look at students' motivation and engagement levels. Findings demonstrate that students appreciated task-based learning in English lessons. Task-based activities that included speaking, discussion, problem-solving, group projects, critical thinking and dialogue activities were likely to improve students' focus and engagement in the classroom.

Students agreed that task-based activities improved their understanding of English subjects by allowing them to utilize their spoken language skills in real-life situations. According to the findings students were focused, participated in class activities, and showed an interest and willingness to contribute. Task-based exercises seemed to boost students' curiosity and interest and involvement fostering an engaging and dynamic learning environment. Students responded positively to task-based English Teaching, according to the measurement of general motivation and engagement rates. Students demonstrated an immense amount of interest in class activities notably those that required speaking, discussion, and group projects. The findings suggest that task-based methods of teach motivated students to actively interact, pay attention, and participate.

Results further demonstrate that task-based activities enhanced knowledge of English topics. Students stated that completing assignments and collaborative tasks enabled them to make the connection between what they learned in the classroom and useful real-world applications. Because the question about lessons being interactive and collaborative students' confidence in their ability to use English during tasks also seemed to improve.

5. Findings

The findings about students' motivation suggest that task-based learning significantly increased their interest and confidence in learning English. Students agreed that speaking, teamwork, and hands-on activities made learning English easier and meaningful. This supports previous research showing that students' motivation rises when they believe that lessons have an objective. These findings further demonstrate that increasing students' motivation during task-based activities required guidance provided by teacher. Students felt more confident and experienced less nervousness when speaking English thanks to the teacher's advice and encouragement. This result agrees with sociocultural theories that highlight the teacher's role as a guide who helps students overcome challenges and barriers.

Task-based English classes promoted active involvement, sustained focus, and determination in finishing classroom tasks. According to learner engagement information gathered. It appears that task-based learning successfully encouraged behavioral engagement since learners reported being more engaged in group conversations and activities. Students' efforts to understand their tasks, analyzing the mistakes they made and to improve their ability to communicate demonstrated cognitive involvement. Rather than just passively absorbing stuff, students were challenged to put forward language skills and think critically by having accomplished useful tasks. This support the idea that when students actively participate in the creation of knowledge, their sense of engagement improves.

Students expressed feelings of fun and interest in the activities when they voted in favor of task-based learning. The projects' collaborative and participatory nature created a positive learning environment that raised student engagement. These findings demonstrate how effective task-based language instruction is at encouraging student participation in secondary ESL programs.

6. Conclusions

This research investigated at how Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) impacted Pakistani secondary-level ESL students' motivation and engagement. The findings suggest that students' commitment, confidence, participation and general enthusiasm for studying English as a compulsory subject are all positively impacted by task-based activities. When participating in meaningful activities like group discussions,

role plays and collaborative projects, students demonstrated increased eagerness and passion to communicate in English, allowing them to gain fluency and overcoming linguistic barriers. The findings also indicate that TBLT promotes a student-centered atmosphere that encourages engagement and meaningful language use. TBLT improves motivation and classroom engagement by shifting the priority from rote memorization to real-life conversation. In order to enhance students' verbal skills and generate more successful language learning experiences, the research recommends for the incorporation of task-based techniques into secondary-level ESL classes. Future research could examine TBLT's long-term impacts on different student demographics and academic settings.

References

Ali, M., & Hamid, M. O. (2018). Teaching English to Pakistani secondary school students: Exam pressure and classroom practices. *Journal of Education and Educational Development, 5*(1), 87–105.

Ahmad, N. (2014). Task-based language teaching in Pakistani ESL classrooms: Teachers' and learners' perceptions. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 1*(2), 45–58.

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching, 36*(2), 81–109.

Breen, M. P. (1987). Learner contributions to task design. In C. Candlin & D. Murphy (Eds.), *Language learning tasks* (pp. 23–46). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Butler, Y. G. (2011). The implementation of communicative and task-based language teaching in the Asia-Pacific region. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 31*, 36–57.

Cope, J., & Horwitz, E. K. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal, 70*(2), 125–132.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Greene, B. A. (2015). Measuring cognitive engagement with self-report scales. In S. L. Christenson et al. (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 247–266). New York, NY: Springer.

Harmer, J. (2007). *How to teach English*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269–293). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Iqbal, M. (2021). Teachers' and students' perceptions of task-based language teaching in ESL classrooms. *Pakistan Journal of Educational Research, 4*(1), 112–126.

Khan, S. (2011). Teaching English in Pakistan: The role of classroom activities. *Language in India, 11*(5), 234–246.

Long, M. H. (1985). A role for instruction in second language acquisition. In K. Hyltenstam & M. Pienemann (Eds.), *Modelling and assessing second language acquisition* (pp. 77–99). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1994). The subtle effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in the second language. *Language Learning, 44*(2), 283–305.

Mansoor, S. (2005). *Language planning in higher education: A case study of Pakistan*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.

Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pekrun, R., & Linnenbrink-Garcia, L. (2012). Academic emotions and student engagement. In S. L. Christenson et al. (Eds.), *Handbook of research on student engagement* (pp. 259–282). New York, NY: Springer.

Pica, T. (1994). Research on negotiation: What does it reveal about second-language learning conditions, processes, and outcomes? *Language Learning, 44*(3), 493–527.

Rahman, T. (2010). *Language ideology, identity and the commodification of language in the call centers of Pakistan*. Islamabad: Sustainable Development Policy Institute.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robinson, P. (2011). Task-based language learning: A review of issues. *Language Learning, 61*(1), 1–36.

Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Willis, J. (1996). *A framework for task-based learning*. Harlow: Longman.

Zaman, M. (2019). Effects of task-based instruction on ESL learners' motivation at secondary level. *Journal of Research in Social Sciences, 7*(2), 89–101.