

# Task-Based Language Teaching for Elementary Students' Reading Improvement: A Quasi-Experimental Study

Angeline B. Altarejos<sup>1</sup>, Danna Marie Q Bacus<sup>2</sup> and Lloyd Matthew C. Derasin<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1-3</sup>Cebu Normal University

**Abstract** - This study examined the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) for elementary students' reading comprehension. It was participated in by 29 public school students with varied reading abilities. Using a single-group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design, the researchers assessed the reading skills of students before and after implementing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) for one month in an English classroom. The data were gathered using the researchers-made questionnaires and analyzed using the Paired Samples T-test to determine the significance and the effectiveness of TBLT in their reading comprehension. Contrary to what was expected, the results indicated a decrease in the reading scores of the students in the post-test which shows that Task-Based Language Teaching was not effective for this group of students. The findings suggest that the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching may vary depending on factors like age and learning environment. The limitations of the study include its short duration and the small sample size in which future researchers should also look into and consider a longer period in implementing TBLT in the classroom.

**Keywords:** Task-Based Language Teaching, Elementary Students and Reading

## Introduction

Reading is an essential skill because it serves as a gateway to knowledge. Good reading skills not only help the students understand the language better but also equip them to handle various situations (Cantago et. al., 2024). Enhancing this skill remains a priority for teachers in teaching the language (Zulueta et. al., 2023; Montero et. al., 2022). It has always been both a challenge and a fulfilling experience. English teachers continue to find ways on how to effectively teach and improve the student's reading skills. Some of the teaching methods they used have evolved from conventional approaches to more innovative and student-centered approaches. There have been many novel methods that arose in the last century like technology integration (Abojon et. al., 2023, Derasin et. al., 2021, Canque et. al., 2021, Canque et. al., 2021), differentiated instructions, and communicative language teaching, including task-based language teaching (TBLT). It is a modern type of teaching in which students are engaged in tasks focusing on the target language.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an effective and dynamic approach that enhances the reading abilities of young students at the primary level. TBLT, renowned for its student-centric

methodology, offers a pragmatic structure that actively engages learners in purposeful activities, fostering both language acquisition and literacy enhancement. TBLT, also known as Task-Based Language Teaching, is a highly promising approach for enhancing reading proficiency in primary education, with a specific emphasis on cultivating essential language competencies. Multiple studies have confirmed that Task-Based Language Teaching is a successful approach in English Language Teaching and in enhancing the English proficiency of high school and adult learners. It is anticipated that, given their current level, individuals will further enhance their proficiency in the English language. Mufabar et al. (2020) conducted a study that revealed that the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) strategy has a positive impact on the reading comprehension of Junior High School pupils.

Moreover, Marlinton et.al (2023) also highlighted the effectiveness of TBL in improving reading comprehension among high school students who have a moderate level of English proficiency. They underlined the significance of taking motivation into account when designing instructional methods. The pupils' level of engagement is also considered a crucial aspect of language acquisition.

Zhu and Zhang (2023) found that implementing task-based teaching strategies can enhance the motivation of grade 8 students to learn English and enhance their English reading skills. This, in turn, can lead to improvements in their overall English proficiency. TBLT is also regarded as a means of enhancing one's proficiency in the English language.

Several studies highlighted that TBLT helps students with more than just one English skill which includes reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Pham et. al., (2021) pointed out in their study that TBLT significantly affected students' writing grammatical efficiency. In addition to English skills, other studies also demonstrated that TBLT enables students to develop valuable skills that are essential to them as they go out of the classroom. As cited in the study of Lai & Li (2011) Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has touched not only on language but also on building other essential skills such as collaboration skills, communication competency, digital literacy, and identity formation. It further suggests that TBLT could also be integrated with technology. It is understood that the skills on hand benefit students academically and personally. Another study by Soali et. al (2023) describes that task-based is suitable to be used by teachers at college students to improve the students' grammar mastery. In consideration of the claims presented above, there is a lack of research about the effectiveness of Task-based Language Teaching in improving the reading skills of elementary students. Thus, in this study, the researchers would like to find out if there will be reading improvement among elementary students when TBLT is being implemented in an English classroom. They would also want to further investigate if there is a significant difference in the reading performance of students before and after being exposed to Task-based Language Teaching. The study seeks to contribute valuable insights for educators, researchers, and curriculum designers about creative language teaching methods that would greatly help students enhance their reading skills.

#### **Methods and Materials**

This study utilizes a single-group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental research design to examine the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in improving elementary students' reading

skills. Singh (2006) stated that the single-group experiment is the most elementary and least rigorous design that compares the growth of a single group under two different sets of conditions. In this design, a single group of participants undergoes both the pretest and the posttest. The reading skills of the students will be evaluated twice. The first is during the pretest wherein the students' reading skills are assessed before the TBLT is implemented in the English classroom. The second is during the posttest wherein they will be assessed again after they've gone through the TBLT. Both tests will then be compared to see if there's a significant improvement in the reading scores after the TBLT intervention. This research study was carried out in one of the public schools in Cebu City. The intervention which is the TBLT activities was done during regular class hours to avoid interrupting the class schedule of the students and to ensure a smooth learning experience for the students. The said strategy was to be implemented in a month.

Moreover, a non-probability sampling method, convenience sampling in particular, was used by the researchers to select students who will participate in the study. The students are found to have a low performance in reading comprehension. The participants of this study were elementary students, specifically Grade 2 students with the age between 8 to 10 years old who are enrolled in a public school. These students were handled by one of the researchers. They selected these students with different reading abilities to make sure that this would help strengthen the overall conclusion of this study.

The researchers made sure to follow ethical rules. Permission to conduct the study was given to the school head and parents' consent was obtained for their children's participation in the study. Likewise, the instrument used in this study is a researchers-made reading assessment tool which is carefully crafted to produce meaningful research and achieve the aim of this study. This pre-designed reading assessment tool consists of 20 multiple-choice questions with 4 options for each item. These will be administered before and after the intervention period. The collected data will be analyzed through the statistical method, the *Paired Samples T-Test*, to examine the significant

difference in reading performance of students before and after being exposed to Task-based Language Teaching. T-tests will be used to find out the mean gain score. The mean scores obtained in the pretest will be compared to the mean scores of the post-test.

**Results and Discussion**

The objective of this study is to find out the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching in improving the reading comprehension of grade 2 students. The results and discussion are as follows.

**Table 1 the pretest and Post test Score**

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest Total Score	18.69	29	2.037	.378
Posttest Total Score	17.59	29	2.457	.456

Table 1 shows the description of the pretest and posttest. The pretest of the group has a mean of 18.69 with a standard deviation of 2.037 which is higher than the posttest with a mean of 17.59 and a standard deviation of 2.457. It reveals that the scores have decreased after the intervention.

**Table 2. Comparison of the pretest and Post-test Score**

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	P value	Decision	interpretation
Pretest and Post-test score	1.103	2.469	2.407	.023	Reject the null hypothesis	Not significant

The substantial fall in post-test reading scores, as indicated by a t-value of 2.407 and a p-value of .023, suggests that the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) intervention did not enhance reading skills; rather, it led to a decline in performance. This implies that the activities employed may not have been well devised to improve reading comprehension or that the execution of TBLT was ineffective. The factors of task complexity, compatibility with reading objectives, and execution consistency require reassessment. Future interventions should prioritize the implementation of specific reading tasks, offer comprehensive teacher training, and undertake rigorous program assessments to ensure the efficacy of TBLT approaches in promoting reading proficiency.

The findings of this study have important implications for language teaching. TBL has increasingly achieved popularity in recent years and has been recommended as a way forward in English Language Teaching. (Ruso, 2007) While it is often

known as an effective method of teaching language, the results suggest that its effectiveness may vary depending on different factors. According to Zare (2007) as cited in the study by Hadi. (2012) The educational environment to which people are accustomed can have some effects on their attitudes towards methods of language teaching, and these attitudes can sometimes prevent or delay the acceptance of new methods of language teaching. On the other hand, he argues that these attitudes are not innate and can be changed through exposure to a new method of teaching which is Task-Based Language Teaching.

Considering several restrictions is crucial for comprehending these unexpected results. At first, the study was conducted within a restricted time frame, which makes it difficult to determine if the decline in scores may be mainly ascribed to the TBLT intervention. In addition, the sample size was rather small, perhaps limiting the broader generalizability of the results. The Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), designed to improve students' ability to understand written text, had an unintentional negative effect on their academic achievement. The researchers suggest that future studies should utilize a longitudinal design with a larger sample size to comprehensively investigate the effectiveness of implementing Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in an English classroom. Hence, the participants will be allotted a substantial duration to actively participate in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

**Conclusion**

To summarize, although TBLT shows promise as a teaching approach, the present study emphasizes the importance of thoughtful task creation, teacher training, and consistent execution to effectively enhance reading skills. Subsequent investigations should prioritize these domains to optimize the advantages of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) for enhancing reading proficiency. To optimize the results of future TBLT interventions, it is crucial to reassess and improve the design of the activities, making sure that they are precisely customized to promote reading comprehension. It is essential to offer extensive training to instructors on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approaches and how to apply them to reading

instruction. Furthermore, carrying out comprehensive program assessments will assist in identifying and rectifying any deficiencies in the intervention process.

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