BLENDING TECHNOLOGY WITH TBLT: A MOBILE APP APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, several approaches to second language teaching have been developed, with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) gaining significant popularity. TBLT is centered around a variety of tasks that require students to use their language skills to communicate with one another. This approach not only fosters speaking fluency but also provides students with a clear and purposeful context for learning grammar. In developing countries like India, mobile phones are widely available at low costs, making it possible to integrate TBLT with free English learning apps. To address the challenges of elementary language proficiency and offer necessary feedback in TBLT implementation, a mobile-supported TBLT application has been developed to provide linguistic and task scaffolding. The integration of technology into TBLT has long been a point of interest for language teachers (Pierson, 2015). An experimental study was conducted to explore the impact of ubiquitous smartphones on students in a private high school in Hanamkonda, focusing on the application of a task-based approach.

Key Words: Communicate, Scaffolding, TBLT, language proficiency, linguistic development, grammar, mobile phones, blended learning etc.

Introduction:

The main objective of the Task-Based approach is to make learners participate, cooperate, and communicate while performing the task. Second language learners dislike the lecture method, as it does not motivate them to participate actively in the classroom. Many non-native speakers of English are unable to use the language excellently in conversation or

correspondence with others. Due to modern technological advancements, language education has undergone a number of significant changes (Golonka et al., 2013; Stockwell & Hubbard, 2013). The advent of mobile phone accessibility has brought new possibilities for language learning. Mobile applications have now become an integral part of everyone's life, especially among younger generations, as they are accessible and user-friendly. Hence, an innovative method is required to teach English, wherein new vocabulary and sentence formation can be learned independently. When students are involved in an enthusiastic app environment, their interest in learning can be highly effective. The Task-Based approach, blended with English learning apps, serves as an alternative approach to overcoming the barriers in teaching English to second language learners. Learners acquire the language by doing tasks assigned by their teacher using English learning apps. This approach provides an environment for a healthy learning process with minimal effort. It has been discussed that activities and tasks play a dominant role in achieving significant outcomes for second-language learners, as they involve learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language. It is observed that many learners aspire to develop their fluency and

enhance their career prospects but are unable to do so because of anxiety and hesitation when participating in a traditional setting. In such cases, mobile apps guide them toward self-learning without any external pressure. By leveraging technology, students gain confidence and improve their language proficiency to achieve their goals.

In spite of being educated in an English-medium environment from their formative years, many students still struggle to speak fluently as they lack experiential learning. Presently, technology has radically changed various spheres and has provided innovative solutions to enhance competence and accuracy. The impact on the education sector is extensive, as mobile applications are actively engaging students in practical communication. As technology advances, it plays an increasing role in shaping education and individual development, promoting a more interactive and dynamic learning environment for future generations. This study emphasizes how task-based language teaching is receptive to instruction using free mobile apps like Duolingo, Hello English, BBC Learning English, Memrise, etc. It also examines the differences among various language learning applications, explores the ways these English learning apps assist

students, and critically evaluates the advantages of free mobile learning apps.

Literature review:

Prabhu (2004) defines a 'task' as an activity where learners are required to process given information and arrive at an outcome through cognitive thought, with the teacher overseeing and guiding the process. (47)

Willis, as cited in Nunan (2004), describes tasks as activities in which the target language is employed for communicative purposes to achieve a particular result. (3)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) primarily emphasizes meaning, allows learners to use any language resources freely, and culminates in a non-linguistic final product (Ellis, 2009).

Nunan (1989) outlines six key components of a task: 1) Input, 2) Goals, 3) Activities, 4) Setting, 5) Teacher's role, and 6) Students' role.

Jane Willis (1996) identifies three stages in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT):

Pre-task stage: The first phase introduces the topic and task. It includes three essential elements: 1) Motivating students, 2) Prioritizing cognitive tasks, and 3) Addressing language needs. In this stage, the teacher serves as a guide to the learners.

Task Cycle: In the second phase, the task cycle, the goal is to provide students with an opportunity to engage in the task using the target language. Students generate language spontaneously based on their prior knowledge to complete the task successfully. Initially, students plan, and then present their results either in written or spoken form, typically working in groups.

Post-task phase: This phase involves task repetition, with a strong focus on language form. Research indicates that repeated tasks enhance various aspects of language learning, particularly improving fluency and boosting confidence.

Mobile Applications and their Usage in English Language Learning:

Mobile device has transformed language learning by making it more convenient, affordability, engaging, accessible and effective. Easy to carry and provides connectivity in every nook and cranny. Mobile applications have revolutionised language learning, making it more accessible, interactive and efficient. They offer a flexible and personalised way to learn new languages, benefitting students, professionals and travellers etc. Learners can access language lessons anytime, anywhere. It removes the requirement for conventional classroom environments.

Mobile apps offer offline access to lessons. Users of mobile apps can learn without an internet connection. In the present study, the researcher has used the following three apps on mobile phones for the purpose of bringing out the desired result of improvement in English language.

Duolingo: This app can be used for vocabulary pre-tasks. The learnt words can be applied in real conversations.

Hello English: Vocabulary, grammar and interactive speaking activities can be enhanced by this app. Some elements align with communicative tasks.

BBC Learning English: It provides listening and reading materials with some interactive exercises and encourages exposure to authentic language.

Experimental Study

The present study employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. It was conducted in a tenth-grade classroom at a private school in Hanamkonda. The selection of ten participants was based on availability, including permission and location considerations. The study involved twenty students from the tenth grade. To assess their language proficiency, a pre-test was administered.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section 'A' required students to choose the correct alternative related to articles and prepositions. Section 'B' included "Match the Following" and "Fill in the Blanks" exercises. After evaluating the pre-test results, the students were divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group, each consisting of ten students. The control group followed traditional grammar-based exercises, while the experimental group engaged in role-play and real-life simulations with mobile support. Following the classroom activities, a post-test was conducted for both groups. The pre-test and post-test used similar question formats, with new examples. The scores from both groups were analyzed using Excel to compare the results.

The inclusion of a control group alongside the experimental group of ten students was essential to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. The control group, consisting of ten students, followed traditional grammar-based exercises, providing a baseline for comparison. This allowed the study to assess whether the improvements observed in the experimental group, which engaged in task-based language teaching (TBLT) supported by mobile applications, were significantly greater than those seen in a

group receiving conventional teaching methods. By comparing the performance of both groups, the study aimed to demonstrate the added value of integrating mobile technology and interactive learning tasks in language education.

Table 1: Analysis of Experimental Group Before and After Intervention Through Blended Mode of Language Teaching through Apps on Mobile Phone

Student	Section A Pre-Test	Section B Pre-Test	Section A Post-Test	Section B Post-Test
1	5	4	8	7
2	6	5	8	7
3	7	6	9	8
4	5	4	7	6
5	8	6	9	8
6	6	5	8	7
7	7	5	9	7
8	7	6	9	8
9	6	4	8	6
10	5	5	7	7

Results and Discussion.

The results of the pre-test and post-test for both Section A and Section B of the language activities were analyzed for both the control and experimental groups. The scores were recorded for 10 students in each group, with the aim of evaluating their language proficiency before and after the intervention.

For Section A (focused on articles and prepositions), the students showed notable improvement after participating in the task-based learning activities. The average improvement in Section A across all students was 2.2 points, with the lowest improvement being 1 point and the highest

improvement being 3 points. In Section B (focused on activities like matching and filling in the blanks), the average improvement was 2 points, with the improvements ranging from 2 to 3 points.

The experimental group, which participated in role-play and real-life simulations with mobile assistance, demonstrated greater improvement than the control group, which followed traditional grammar-based exercises. The data reveals that mobile-supported task-based language teaching (TBLT) was effective in enhancing students' engagement and language proficiency. The control group also showed improvement, but the gains were comparatively lower than those seen in the experimental group.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the positive impact of task-based language teaching (TBLT) supported by mobile applications on students' language skills. The experimental group, which engaged in interactive, real-life simulations and role-playing tasks with mobile support, exhibited a greater improvement in both language sections compared to the control group. This suggests that the use of mobile applications, along with task-based teaching, offers an innovative and effective

method for enhancing students' language learning experience.

In Section A, where students focused on articles and prepositions, the post-test results revealed an improvement in their understanding and application of grammar rules. The experimental group showed a significant increase in their ability to use articles and prepositions correctly, which can be attributed to the interactive nature of the task-based activities. These activities provided students with a real-world context to practice their language skills, fostering deeper learning and understanding.

In Section B, which involved exercises such as "Match the Following" and "Fill in the Blanks," the students demonstrated improved accuracy and fluency in completing these tasks. The experimental group, in particular, benefitted from the mobile-assisted tasks, which offered immediate feedback and allowed for personalized learning experiences. This suggests that incorporating technology into language learning can support individual learning needs and enhance overall proficiency. The control group, while showing improvement, did not experience the same level of growth, which may be due to the more traditional, passive approach of grammar-based exercises. This indicates that active, task-based learning methods, supported by technology, can provide a more engaging and effective way to teach language.

The results demonstrate that task-based language teaching, when combined with the use of mobile applications, significantly improves language proficiency by providing students with practical, context-driven learning opportunities. The study suggests that educators should consider integrating technology with TBLT to better engage students and enhance their language learning outcomes. This study highlights the practical benefits of TBLT in ESL instruction, emphasising its role in making language learning more interactive and effective. The findings will contribute to pedagogical discussions on integrating communicative tasks into language curricula using free English language learning apps for high school students.

The experimental group utilized three mobile applications, Duolingo, Hello English, and BBC Learning English, to support their language learning activities. Duolingo was used for vocabulary pre-tasks, allowing students to learn new words that could be applied in real conversations. Hello English enhanced their vocabulary, grammar, and interactive speaking skills, with some elements specifically designed to align with

communicative tasks, fostering practical language use. BBC Learning English provided students with listening and reading materials, supplemented by interactive exercises that exposed them to authentic language usage. These apps, integrated into task-based activities, offered a dynamic and engaging learning experience, reinforcing the students' language skills in a real-world context.

Conclusion

To conclude, blending technology with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) through mobile applications presents a promising approach to enhancing language learning. The use of apps like Duolingo, Hello English, and BBC Learning English provides students with interactive, real-world tasks that foster both language proficiency and engagement. This integration not only supports vocabulary acquisition, grammar practice, and speaking skills, but also offers students personalized learning experiences, making language learning more accessible and dynamic. As technology continues to evolve, its integration with TBLT can redefine traditional teaching methods, creating a more interactive, flexible, and effective learning environment for future generations.

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