

## **The impact of Task-Based Language Teaching in improving English speaking skills in the ESL classroom**

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There has been a major shift towards the communicative approach and student-centered learning in education in the last few decades, reducing the amount of teacher talking time (TTT). That is one of the reasons to use task-based language teaching (TBLT) in the ESL classroom. From the preliminary investigations, it was identified that there are a surprising number of students who report that they have anxiety in language learning and that they do not possess enough confidence with their level of spoken English to initiate conversation in the class. Hence, by focusing on the value of research in Humanities, this study aims at investigating the impact of TBLT in the ESL classroom. Therefore, a structured approach was used where the objective, design, sample and the questions were predetermined. The community selected for the study was hundred first year undergraduates of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages, Sabaragamuwa university of Sri Lanka. They were observed during their usual lecture sessions in Compulsory English Language (CEL) using Test Teach Test (T-T-T) method where the learners first complete a task or activity without the help from the lecturer. Then, based on the problems seen, the target language was presented to practice the new language. A variety of task-based activities such as role plays, discussions, debates, interviews, dramas and information gaps were used. In addition, two female ESL lecturers participated in the study. They were interviewed regarding the use of TBLT in their classes. Research results denoted the fact that putting ESL learners in a variety of tasks gets them to speak up and to practice the target language effectively. The students' active participation in the lesson could be observed to a greater extent. It also enables students to learn from each other where the weaker students feed off the stronger students and vice versa. Moreover, the two participating lecturers expressed their opinions of TBLT in the interviews. They were of the view that TBLT helps in brainstorming more ideas and practicing more language where they can personalize the lesson and adapt its content to the learner needs. Therefore, integrating the value of Humanities in Language Teaching, the study proves that the use of TBLT in the ESL class room has a positive impact on communication and interaction, having students use authentic target language in completing meaningful tasks.

**Keywords:** Communicative Approach, Student Centered Learning, Task-based Language Teaching