
INTERVENTION OF TASK BASED LEARNING IN ENHANCING ENGLISH GRAMMAR PROFICIENCY OF CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITY

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Abstract

An Action Research study was conducted to investigate the effect of task based learning on the English grammar proficiency of children with learning disability of Bandra Hindu Association School. The researcher observed the problem among the children with learning disability that they were not easily able to understand the use of grammar with proper words and applications of rules. This study was conducted to enhance their understanding in the application of grammar rules. The researcher used experimental method for the conduction of the research. The experiment was done on 103 children with learning disability from middle classes of the school. A pretest was distributed among the students to examine their level which showed very weak results. Then the researcher conducted the activities in 12 days using task based learning. The interventions were conducted providing the children with learning disability with worksheets and meanwhile explaining to them the proper usage of grammar and pronunciation of certain words through various task based learning like slide presentation, role-playing, gaming, group discussion, storytelling, interviewing, oral and written activity. The post test after the treatment was successfully given to the students to evaluate the progress in students' learning. The findings of the research showed that the children with learning disability benefited from the learning. The results of the post test showed positive effect on the children with learning disability and the task based learning has proved to be useful to improve the English grammar proficiency.

Keywords: *Task Based Learning, English Grammar proficiency, Task based approaches, Action Research, Children with learning disability.*

Introduction

Children with learning disabilities represent prominent segment of student population. Learning disabled students have unique learning needs that affect teaching because of the interaction of their disability and language learning processes. English

has got the status of most spoken language in the world that supersedes all other languages. Learning disabled Students could be slow learners and are not proficient in English language hence they are eligible for English language support services. The goal of such programs should be to increase students' English proficiency so that they could achieve in English content classrooms.

According to Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), Learning Disability which is a developmental disorder is also considered as a language based disorder since English is determined a foreign language that aggravates the academic difficulties of the children. . Total number of 2,225 children visited the hospital for certification of LD from the lower, middle and upper middle socioeconomic strata of society due to their poor school performance (LTMG, 2006). Studies revealed that nearly more than 10% of the school population for Classes I to VII have learning disability of one form or the other (Sree Chithira Thirunal Institute of Medical Sciences and Technology, 1997). Interventions are crucial for individuals with LD aimed at developing phonemic awareness, phonics and fluency. It is suggested that instructions in vocabulary, background knowledge, comprehension strategies, and reading programs through library activities, storytelling and individualized remedial reading sessions are helpful for language development and enhancement of grammar proficiency.

During the middle school, learning must emerge more easily and efficiently since this phase lays down the foundation of all school subjects. Failure to learn Academic skills such as reading, writing, speaking of English language brings forth failure in all other subjects. It must be done through active participation by the learners and interaction among them avoiding the passive teaching learning process. A number of approaches are being used like curriculum-based assessment, task analysis, dynamic assessment, outcome based assessment, cultural-linguistic assessment, multi-sensory teaching, experiential learning and learning style assessment.

Task Based Learning and its phases

TBL focuses on the use of basic language and design meaningful tasks for students such as conducting an interview, group discussion, debate. It has the capacity to replace the traditional classrooms with real-life situations to solve problems. TBL is known for developing language fluency and student confidence. Task is a cognitive work plan comprising of real-world skillful activities of communication through language development. TBL is an effective methodology consisting of three learning conditions; exposure, use and motivation inside the classroom. It is a powerful pedagogical tool to

develop learners' proficiency in English so that they practice the essential skill to succeed, both academically, professionally and personally. Different types of specific learning disabilities (SLD) were determined as dyslexia (difficulty in reading), dysgraphia (difficulty in writing), dyscalculia (difficulty in numbers and mathematical concepts), dysnomia (difficulty in naming), dysphasia (expressive language difficulty) and receptive language difficulties. SLD is evident as inability to listen, speak, read, and spell or to do mathematical calculations.

The task based activities when given to the LD students; they get a chance to apply their perception of grammar in written or spoken form because it is emphasized on learning to communicate in the target language. It provides the student with various meaningful activities or task to accomplish by being proactive and aware of their limitations in their knowledge about grammar that are necessary to convey their message appropriately and accurately. TBL helps the teacher to use language lessons of academic and non academic nature making students enthusiastic and motivated to learn grammar. It implies that the teacher provides students with an enjoyable and interesting learning process by selecting appropriate activities. TBL consists of three stages, pre-task, task cycle and post task:

1. **Pre-Task stage-** Teacher introduces the topic and task, gives old or new vocabulary, words and phrases to acquire, remember the old knowledge that may be relevant and help them perform the task by generating interactions.
2. **Task Performance Stage -** Students perform the task given to them in an interactional context to improve their communication skills. A wide variety of different exercises are given to strengthen the understanding of the language. Teacher helps them by telling grammatical rules and students in the end prepare their own report present to the whole classroom.
3. **Post-task Stage-** Students' report are analyzed with language focus and language practice. Students understand the usage of the language, rules of the target language and the exact use of language functions.

Review of Related Literature

Bahadur (2014) studied the effectiveness of Task Based Language Teaching in developing Writing Skills at the Secondary Level in Nepal to find out the reasons of students' inability to write with good organisation of ideas, adequate vocabulary with syntactic structure correctly. It was found that performance of experimental group has significantly changed in the post-test because of TBLT, no significant change has been

found in the performance of post-test in control group and learners in the experimental group outperformed the control group in the post-test.

Nurul (2018) conducted a research entitled “Using Task- based Instruction to Increase Students' Speaking Skill” to find out students' responses in implementing Task-based Instruction. The study was conducted in the first grade at MAS Al-Manar Aceh Besar, involving 48 students as the sample divided into two classes, X-A and X-C. The respondents were students in X-A which consists of 31 as control class, and class X-C which consists of 17 as experimental class. Based on the students' responses in questionnaire, they considered that Task- based Instruction was a suitable learning applied to increase students' speaking skill.

Stroud (2018) studied Task-based language teaching learning to group discussions in Japanese university classrooms: an empirical study of Goal setting and feedback (GSF). Thesis draws on a classroom-based empirical study to explore the actual effects that TBLT has on students' performance, when applied to group discussions, and the impacts that different forms of GSF have on their learning. Findings showed improvements in fluency and accuracy, positive feelings towards learning, and larger improvements for lower performers.

Rationale

Above research studies indicates that TBL approach plays a crucial role and in learning English language while teachers faced various difficulties in the adoption of TBL in their classroom teaching to deal with LD children. The ideas of TBL are different from the educational system and traditional settings. The examination pattern, large class size, and students' low proficiency have a great influence on TBL practices. This review of literature has confirmed a gap between national education policies and practices. It is necessary to constantly keep correcting the student's grammatical mistakes and also revise the rules on and off so as to help them improve. Therefore, more research is needed on the TBL implementation in the education field.

Need of the study

LD children need to be included in the mainstream class by modifying the education system as per their demand and interest. There is a continuous need to create awareness about LD in schools to shift a social attitude about this disability by teachers, educational psychologists and the stakeholders in the field. Using variety of teaching methods, multi-sensory tools and resource rooms make a whole lot of difference to the learning of

children with LD. Task-Based Learning (TBL) is one such approach that provides ample opportunities to the learners for learning the language focusing on concepts, critical thinking and problem solving. Hence, an attempt has been made in this paper to explore how effective tasks can be designed and TBL can be implemented for effective teaching of English grammar.

Scope of the Study

TBL provides opportunities to learners to use the target language in the classroom in order to develop their confidence and fluency in using English. Tasks also improved learners' motivation and therefore promoted learning. Teachers can use it as a pedagogical tool to develop learners' proficiency in English so that they are equipped with the essential skill to succeed, both academically, professionally and personally.

Limitations of the study

- This study was limited to the children with learning disability who were from middle class in academic year 2019-2020.
- This study may/may not be beneficial to all the adolescence.

Explanation of key terms

Task based learning (TBL) is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes task based activities focussing on communication and interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study.

Objective of the study

To Study effect of task based learning in improving English grammar proficiency of middle class children with learning disability of Bandra Hindu association school.

Hypothesis of the study

The null hypothesis was formulated keeping in view the objectives of the study.

- There is no significant difference in the English proficiency pretest and posttest scores of middle class children with learning disability taught through Task based learning.

Methodology of the Study

The Action Research conducted is experimental in nature that continued for 7 days at the rate of 45 minutes per day. This research was designed to examine whether an

intervention of TBL application in grammar teaching would be effective for Children with learning disability of Bandra Hindu Association. The design of the study is displayed in Figure 1.

Independent Variable – Task based Language Teaching

Dependent Variable – English proficiency



Fig 1. One-group Pretest-post Test Design

Sample and Sampling Technique

In this study researcher considered children with learning disability from the classes belonging to age group 11-13 years from Bandra Hindu Association and the task based Learning was given. Researcher selected 103 children with learning disability as a purposive Sampling technique. The researcher chose a particular school and particular college for research and the samples too were chosen with a definite purpose this technique was used by the researcher so that accurate results are arrived at and a detail channelized study is possible. Also the purposely chosen samples behavior was easy to monitor and observe. The composition of the sample is as follows:

Sample Size	Institute	Age Group
103	Bandra Hindu Association	11-13

Description of Tool used for Data Collection

Grammatical Knowledge Test was prepared by the investigator. The tool carried 25 marks which the children with learning disability were expected to complete in one lecture of 45 minutes. Scoring - each correct answer of section was marked 1 point. The tool used for collecting the data was prepared by the teacher keeping in mind the academic level of the children with learning disability. The tool was prepared systematically with the help of objective questions with clear instructions given in the question itself. Each question was for 1 mark. The same tool would be administered after giving treatment on each of these topics of grammar so as to ascertain the effect of the same on the children with learning disability.

Procedure of Data Collection

The action research was conducted by the teacher teaching English grammar to middle class children with learning disability. The teacher while teaching observed that the children with learning disability were unable to respond with grammatically correct sentences in class. The teacher developed a tool with 28 questions based on a few grammar topics namely conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, verbs and adjectives. The tool had objective type questions of one mark each which was used for pre-test. First, a pre-test for grammar items was administered to the students at the beginning of the study in order to see their level. From next day onwards the teacher used various teaching activities on each topic and helped the children with learning disability to understand the rules better. Then, a post-test same as the pre-test questionnaire was administered to the subjects after the treatment of TBL for teaching grammar to see the efficiency of the instructions and to evaluate the proficiency level of the students.

Action Research Plan

During the classroom teaching, teacher observed that the children lacked basic grammatical knowledge and after few classes she realized that the children were unaware about the basic rules of grammar and hence made silly mistakes. The teacher also discovered that the children with learning disability faced difficulties in various topics and therefore decided to do the research for the same. Keeping in mind the academic level of the children with learning disability in English, teacher prepared teaching activities for the topics of grammar.

The teacher also prepared worksheets to help the children with learning disability get a better understanding of each of the topics. The teaching was planned accordingly covering most of the rules for each topic with appropriate examples. This helped the children with learning disability to get a better idea and clarity to use these rules and improve their language skills. The treatment was given over a period of 2 weeks and the student solved the worksheet simultaneously. The teacher also encouraged children with learning disability to converse by planning certain activities that gives opportunities to express themselves and helped them not only to overcome their stage fear but also speak with confidence in English. After deciding the topics the teacher thought of preparing various audio and visual aids to explain the topics. The teacher planned various activities and also worksheets to enhance the concept of learning by doing. The teacher started working on each topic where she covered each topic with examples and rules of it.

Day 1	Pretest Proficiency test	Teachers give pre-test in order to measure their proficiency in speaking skill and explained the material from the pre-test.	Students perform the pre-test.
Day 2 to Day 13	Intervention Strategies	Teacher's Task	Student's Task
Day 2	Learning Pronouns through Interactive Session	The teacher explained the concept of Pronouns through PPT, giving relevant examples and asked them to write about themselves using as many pronouns as they can, then they were asked to read the same.	Children were asked few questions and were given some time to write about themselves and were asked to discuss the same with the teacher.
Day 3	Understanding Adjectives through concept attainment	Teacher gave sentences for practice for better understanding. She gave them a simple meaning of adjectives and also a list of common adjectives and non-adjectives that they come across while reading on flash cards.	After this practice, sentences were given to students to solve where they had to identify the adjectives in the given sentences to help them understand the concept better. Children connect nouns with suitable adjectives in the book and create short sentences.
Day 4	Writing Session for teaching Prepositions	Preposition of time and place were explained with the help of examples. After this, students solved the practice worksheets which were in the form of match the column was given to get a better understanding of the same.	Students read two short texts and fill in the blank spaces with appropriate prepositions. Students write answers on worksheets. Students get hand-written practice in producing grammatically and syntactically correct sentences.
Day 5	Teaching Verbs through worksheets	Teacher asked students to identify the verbs. They made mistakes hence they were given various examples and were also asked to identify the verbs in sentences. Also worksheet in the form of word search was given to students.	They were also given few places like home, school, and park. They were arranged in groups and were asked to write as many activities they would do or see in these places using action verbs.
Day 6	Articles through oral activity	Teacher Write on the board and read a list of examples which are used with an article.	Oral practice was given to students for speaking skills. Then they were asked to speak in groups.
Day 7	Learning Conjunctions through Game Session	The teacher explained the topic of conjunctions with examples. For better understanding the game of Dice was played whereby the teacher wrote all the commonly used conjunctions on the dice and numbered them from 1 to 6 e.g. 1) and 2) because 3) so 4) but 5) or 6) yet.	The teacher then divided the class into three groups and children from each group were asked to throw Dice and make sentence according to the words associated to the numbers of the dice. Students were practiced to earn a point for correct and meaningful sentence.

Day 8	Picture description through story telling	Teacher ask students to listen to audio recording and decide which of the three pictures is being described. Then she gives them few adjectives and the task of completing the story.	Students work in pairs and match appropriate adjectives with three pictures. They write down useful phrases connected with picture description. Then they were given practice in telling their own story.
Day 9	Writing an essay through discussion	Teacher asks students to look and read the text in the PPT and get the main idea of the text. Teacher gives an exercise in the book and discuss about holiday activities.	Students read the text quickly to understand the whole content. Then they discuss in groups and write it in their own words.
Day 10	Role Playing in a particular setting	The teacher sets the scene to begin conversation in a specific setting like cafeteria/ park/shopping mall. The teacher directs the conversation like the speaker is asking for directions or ordering coffee or talking about a movie etc.). Teacher regulates conversations between the students.	The students converse in pairs and are more comfortable speaking in pairs rather than in front of the entire class. Students practice using the same words repeatedly in the beginning when doing this activity.
Day 11	Group Discussion and debate	Teacher divide students into two groups, provide pros and cons. Teacher writes the topic on the blackboard, and then discuss into group. Teacher calls the group randomly for presentation.	Students discuss about the topic giving their opinion of the topic and each group has 15 minute to presentation.
Day 12	Presentation on favorite topic in pair	Teacher asks students to discuss about their favorite topic and act in pair before performance.	Then the students perform in front of the class.
Day 13	Interviewing session	The teacher gives each student the same set of questions to ask their partner. Students take turns asking and answering the questions in pairs.	Student starts to have unpredictable conversations where neither the questions nor the answers are scripted or expected.
Day 14	Post test	Distribution of Proficiency Test	

Data Analysis

The data were analysed with the help of Mean, Correlated t-test and SD. In this case, paired t-test can be used as the two sets of values being compared are related, one before and the other after treatment.

Hypothesis Testing

The objective of Action Research was to compare mean scores of task based learning in enhancing English grammar proficiency of children with learning disability before and after giving treatment.

Null hypothesis - There is no significant difference in the English proficiency pretest and posttest scores of children with learning disability taught through Task based learning.

Table 2: Testing-wise M, SD, N and correlated t-values of Achievement in English proficiency of children with learning disability

Testing	M	SD	N	Correlated t-test value	Remark
Pretest	17.9048	4.16	103	9.1905	Significant at <0.01 level
Post test	27.0952	1.92	103		

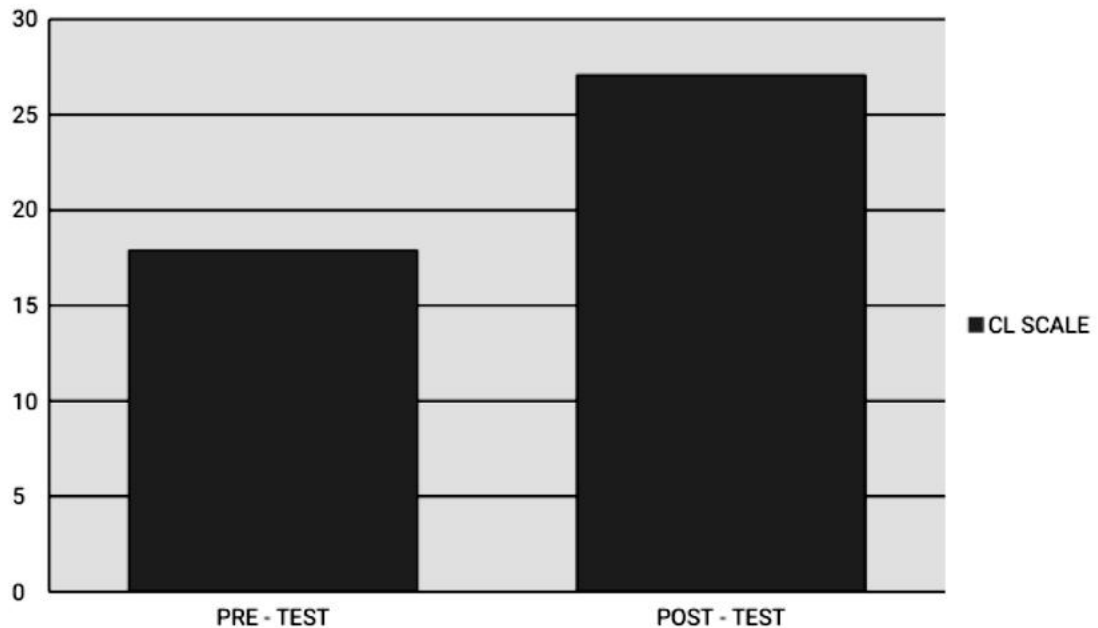
Result and Discussion

Above Table clearly indicates the English grammar scores of the children with learning disability during the pre and the post test. The table shows the difference between the English grammar scores before and after the intervention. From the table, it is clear that the correlated t-value is 9.1905 is more than the table value 2.845 at 0.01 level with $df=102$ which is found to be significant. This means that there is a significant difference in mean scores of enhancing English proficiency before and after giving treatment. Thus the Null Hypothesis that there is no significant difference in mean scores of enhancing English proficiency before and after giving treatment is rejected.

Further the mean score of improving English grammar proficiency before giving treatment is 17.904 which are significantly lower than mean score after treatment which is 27.0952. It may, therefore, be said that English grammar proficiency improved after giving treatment. This indicates that task based language learning has a positive effect on the student.

Findings: In the context of the present Action Research, the finding is as given below:

It was observed that the children with learning disability performed better after doing each of these tasks or activities and the teacher determined that the children with learning disability needed constant revision and practice so as to help them perform better. Task based learning was found significantly helpful in improving English grammar proficiency of children with learning disability.



Graph 1: Pretest and posttest English grammar proficiency scores

Above Graph indicates the significant differences between the tasks based learning of the children with learning disability in pre test and post test mean scores. The pre-test mean is **17.90** and post-test mean is **27.09**, which clearly indicates task based learning has a positive effect in developing the English proficiency of the children with learning disability. The obtained t-value is 9.1905 which is significant on <0.0001 level of significance. Since the diagrams clearly shows the difference, hence the hypothesis that “There is no significant effect of the English proficiency pretest and posttest scores of children with learning disability is rejected.

Major Findings

As per the data gathered we can see that task based learning has significantly affected the English proficiency of the middle class children with learning disability. During the

pre-test, it was observed that the performance of children with learning disability was very low. When the posttest was conducted it was observed that there was tremendously positive effect on the children with learning disability. They performed well in the posttest because of the task based learning that was given to the sample as a treatment. Major findings of study were as follows:

- 1) **The use of task based learning improves grammar mastery-** TBL is a method that emphasizes children with learning disability to do meaningful task. By using this method in the class the children with learning disability are led to apply the rules of language directly with accomplishing the task using various activities. The improvement of their mastery can be seen from the result of post test. The pre test shows the average score of their grammar mastery is 17.9. Most children with learning disability had problems in pronouns, prepositions, verbs, adjectives and conjunctions. After treatment the post test results reached the average of 27. These findings describes that task based is suitable to use to improve the student's grammar mastery.
- 2) **Task based learning improves classroom condition-** The data obtained from observation results done by observer shows that the children with learning disability are motivated and enthusiastic to learn grammar because it provides various meaningful activities. The learning of grammar is not only theoretical but also practical. They could apply their grammar in spoken or written form. Using various tasks in learning grammar makes the children with learning disability feel new atmosphere. The teaching process is not teacher centered because children with learning disability are encouraged to learn actively. The teacher facilitates the children by helping them realize their grammar knowledge by guessing and inferring meaning from their background knowledge and also motivates them to accomplish the task and their own progress.
- 3) **Task based learning affect their ability to frame grammatically correct sentences and understand the rules of grammar-** It was observed that during the treatment when the children were given the task to express themselves, they were able to frame sentences successfully, to speak properly, and write grammatically correct sentences using the rules of grammar.

Conclusion

The task based gives LD children a chance to apply their grammar mastery

communicatively in written or in spoken form because it is emphasized on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language. It provides the student with various meaningful activities or task to accomplish. When they have to accomplish the tasks, they are led to be more aware of their limitations in their knowledge about grammar that are necessary to convey their message appropriately and accurately.

By using various tasks, it helps the teacher use language lesson in academic and non academic in nature. It means it allows the LD children to explore the insights or knowledge about many topics. The children were enthusiastic and motivated to learn grammar using task based. It implies that the teacher should provide children an enjoyable and interesting learning process by selecting appropriate activities.

The study proved to be successful in seeking evidence for the effects of task based grammar teaching on children with learning disability' improvement on grammatical knowledge. The current finding shows that task based grammar teaching did benefit the children with learning disability both in grammatical knowledge and proficiency; it did appeal the children with learning disability' interest in grammar lessons, also. It hence richly deserves application in teaching grammar within the context of the school.

Lesson Plan

School : Bandra Hindu Association

Subject : English

Time allotment : 5 x 45 minute (5 meeting)

Aim - At the end of teaching learning process, the students are expected to be able to develop their speaking skills, listening skills, reading skills, writing skills, Practicing new vocabulary, and pronunciation by using task-based instruction method.

Materials and classroom equipment used - Pre-Intermediate Student's Book (p. 28-29), whiteboard, CD-player with recording.

Objectives:

1. The students are able to enhance their grammatical skills.
2. The students respond to the activity from the tasks.
3. The students are able to speak clearly in front of the other student by using task-based instruction method.
4. To develop students' communicative abilities

Method / Technique

1. Method : Task-based Instruction
2. Technique : Group Discussion, and Debate

Day wise Class activities

Stage 1 - Pre activities

- Greeting, Introducing self and starting the goal of the class
- Checking the students' attendance.

Stage 2 - Task Performance

Teacher gives task based activities for students to perform.

Stage 3 - Post activities

- Complimenting students' performance
- Give comment and critic to the students

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