Student Attitudes Towards TBLT for English Language Learning

Namrata Gogoi & Yeasmin Sultana

Abstract

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has been widely explored in both experimental and classroom settings; however, research on learners' attitudes towards this approach remains limited. This study addresses this gap by examining the attitudes of ninety Grade 8 students in vernacular medium co-educational schools in Assam, following a three-month TBLT instructional period. By assessing six key dimensions of attitude—including 'Collaborative Learning', 'Teacher's Role', 'Motivation', 'Practical Relevance', 'Satisfaction', and 'Relevance to Assessment Method'—this research highlights students' attitudes towards TBLT as a method for language learning. Data were collected using a self-constructed attitude scale. The findings show that most students have a positive attitude towards TBLT, suggesting that it can help improve engagement and learning outcomes in similar educational settings.

Keywords

Attitude, Task-Based Language Teaching, ELT, experimental study, language pedagogy

Introduction

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which emerged in the 1980s as a learner-centred approach, focuses on fostering real language use by engaging students in meaningful tasks. Recognised by NCERT (2005) as an 'input-rich' theoretical method for teaching English, TBLT emphasises experiential learning by providing students with context-rich exposure

to the language. This approach aims to equip learners with practical language skills beyond rote memorisation.

Despite its benefits, TBLT has yet to see widespread implementation in schools in Assam, especially in provincialised schools in Assam. English instruction in these schools often prioritises syllabus completion and exam preparation, primarily relying on the Grammar Translation Method (Changkakoti, 2023; Awal & Karim, 2021; Deka, 2020). This traditional focus limits opportunities for students—particularly among those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who have minimal exposure to English outside school—to develop practical language skills. As a result, many students often struggle to view English as a valuable life skill despite its global significance.

Existing studies consistently show that TBLT has a positive impact on learners' motivation, engagement and confidence. It also helps reduce language anxiety and encourages collaborative learning (El Arbaoui, 2023; Nguyen, 2022; Badrus Sholeh et al., 2021). At the same time, some challenges remain which include large class sizes, exam-oriented teaching, and resistance to moving away from teacher-centred practices (Tan, 2016; Nhem, 2020).

Only a limited number of studies have focused specifically on students' attitudes towards TBLT. Research from different contexts shows that learners generally respond positively to task-based activities. They appreciate the relevance of tasks, opportunities for teamwork, and active participation in learning (Hattani, 2020; Viriya, 2018; Akil et al., 2018). Ölmez (2015), in a different context, found that learners were strongly motivated by tasks that supported their interest and sense of self-confidence. However, practical concerns such as classroom management and adjustment to learner-centred methods have also been reported (Tan, 2016).

In the Indian context, studies have reported improved engagement and positive responses to task-based learning. For example, Hasnain (2023) found increased student involvement and interest, while Macwan (2013) showed that task-based activities helped improve communicative competence among Grade 8 students. In Assam, Changkakoti (2023) also observed a positive shift in students' attitude towards learning English when tasks involved group and pair work.

Despite these findings, limited attention has been given to understanding

students' attitudes towards TBLT in the local context. Choudhury and Dutta (2015) point out that students' views on innovations in English language teaching in Assam are still underexplored. This highlights the need to study how learners respond to TBLT in vernacular medium classrooms.

Understanding students' attitudes is crucial for adapting TBLT to local contexts and maximising its impact on language skill development. This study, therefore, aims to assess the attitudes of Grade 8 students in Assamese medium schools towards TBLT after a three-month instructional period, focusing on six dimensions of attitude. By doing so, it seeks to provide insights into how TBLT can enhance engagement and skill development. The findings aim to contribute to the broader discourse on language pedagogy, supporting the NEP (2020) vision of moving beyond rote learning and fostering meaningful, practical language use.

Methodology

The researchers conducted a quasi-experimental study in two randomly selected provincialised Assamese medium schools—Dakshin Beltola M.E. School, Bongaon, and Ganesh Mandir H.S. School, Khanapara—in the Kamrup (Metro) district in Assam. A sample of 179 was included through an intact group sampling technique, as shown in Table 1 (as the end of this paper). Post a three-month TBLT intervention, data from the experimental group (90 students) was collected using the final *Student TBLT Attitude Scale* (Table 2) to gain insights for improving educational practices**.**

The scale consisted of 30 items on a 5-point Likert scale with an Assamese translation for clarity. Six dimensions were identified based on a literature review: Collaborative Learning, Teacher's Role, Motivation, Practical Relevance, Satisfaction, and Relevance to Assessment Method. The standardisation process included:

1. **Individual Try-out**: Conducted with 12 students of Beltola High School, Guwahati, to confirm the scale's clarity and time suitability (30 minutes).
2. **Group Try-out**: Administered to 45 students (excluding the earlier 12) from the same school. Item analysis using Independent Sample t-tests eliminated five non-discriminative items, finalising the scale with 30 statements (19 positive and 11 negative).

3. **Final Try-out**: Validity and reliability were assessed with 70 students at Dispur HS School, Guwahati. The scale showed strong reliability (Pearson's r = 0.792; Cronbach's α = 0.768) and content validity (CVI = 0.81). Z-score norms were established for individual dimensions.

Key Findings and Discussion

The percentage distribution of scores across the six dimensions is presented in Table 3. The findings for each dimension are discussed below:

(i) Dimension 1: Collaborative Learning

A significant majority of students exhibited 'Highly Favourable' (48.90%) and 'Extremely Favourable' (47.80%) attitudes, with only 3.30% reporting a 'Moderate' attitude. Group tasks were seen as beneficial for fostering spontaneous English interaction, idea-sharing, and confidence-building. Collaborative learning not only improved communication skills but also encouraged creativity and a sense of community.

These findings align with previous studies emphasizing the advantages of peer collaboration and shared responsibility in language learning (Hasnain, 2023; Prianty et al., 2022). TBLT's relaxed, low-pressure environment promoted engagement and fluency (Ahmed, 2020; Rashid, 2017). Research further highlights that learners in collaborative setups produce more accurate texts compared to those working alone (Dabo, 2012; Sarıçoban & Karakurt, 2016).

(ii) Dimension 2: Teacher's Role

Students positively viewed the teacher's role, with 36.60% rating it as 'Highly Favourable' and 42.20% as 'Moderate'. These results provide undeniable evidence that students have a positive attitude towards the teacher's role as a facilitator, who assists during the task phase only when needed, rather than dominating the class and making it teacher-centric.

Students appreciated the teacher as a facilitator who supported the learning process without dominating the class. Effective teacher support in TBLT involves motivating students, organising tasks, setting timeframes, managing group dynamics, and providing targeted guidance when necessary. Students favoured teachers who acted as partners in the learning process, offering well-timed corrective feedback

that promotes autonomy and motivation. Overall, students viewed the teacher as a scaffolder, adapting support to meet their learning needs, which aligns with previous research emphasising the importance of a supportive teacher role (Hasnain, 2023; Changkakoti, 2023; Pham & So, 2021; Hadi, 2013; Rassaei, 2013; Meng & Cheng, 2010; Van den Branden, 2009).

(iii) Dimension 3: Motivation

An overwhelming 92.22% of students reported an 'Extremely Favourable' attitude towards TBLT in terms of motivation, while 7.78% classified their attitude as 'Above Moderate'. Participants expressed enthusiasm for engaging in interesting, authentic tasks, which contributed to a low-anxiety environment. While student engagement may not solely drive motivation, it plays a significant role. This finding is consistent with earlier research demonstrating that task-based activities often lead to increased motivation (Changkakoti, 2023; Nhem, 2020). Tasks were designed to progress from simple to complex, aligning with learners' proficiency levels to maintain interest and confidence. This approach echoes Namaziandost et al. (2017), emphasising that task selection tailored to learners' levels is vital for motivation.

(iv) Dimension 4: Practical Relevance

A large percentage of students (48.88%) rated the practical relevance of TBLT as 'Extremely Favourable,' and 37.78% rated it as 'Highly Favourable.' Additionally, 10.00% expressed an 'Above Moderate' attitude, while 3.34% were 'Moderate.' These results highlight a strong perception of TBLT's applicability to real-life contexts.

Students valued tasks that promoted real-world communication, such as reporting and presenting, boosting their confidence in using English. They appreciated writing tasks, especially those involving planning and public speaking, which were often neglected in traditional methods. The integration of local context made learning more relevant, enabling them to establish connections between their classroom learning experiences and language use in real-life contexts. The findings corroborate Badrus Sholeh et al. (2021); Cheng and Wang (2019); Córdoba Zúñiga (2016) and Sarıçoban and Karakurt (2016).

(v) Dimension 5: Satisfaction

Satisfaction with TBLT was largely positive, with 41.11% of students

rating it as 'Extremely Favourable' and 45.56% as 'Highly Favourable'. Students valued the communicative tasks for reducing anxiety, promoting autonomy, and encouraging active participation. They appreciated using English without fear of grammatical errors, which boosted confidence and proficiency. These findings align with Shaby and Joy (2020), Carrero Pérez (2016) and Sae-ong (2010). Additionally, students found the option to use L1 during tasks beneficial, as it reduced cognitive load and created a relaxed environment, supporting language learning (East, 2021; Prabhu, 1987).

(vi) Dimension 6: Relevance to Assessment Method

Regarding the relevance of TBLT to assessment methods, 34.44% indicated an 'Extremely Favourable' attitude and 45.46% as 'Highly Favourable'. This highlights a positive perception of how TBLT aligns with assessment practices. Students exhibited a positive attitude towards TBLT for assessment, recognising its alignment with authentic language use. They perceived TBLT as relevant for applying language skills in real-world contexts. However, a small percentage of students still had doubts about TBLT's effectiveness in formal exams, likely due to the conventional emphasis on memorisation and rigid exam structures. The findings align with Badrus Sholeh et al. (2021); Littlewood (2007) and Ellis (2003).

While most students showed a very positive attitude towards task-based learning and enjoyed participating in the activities, a small section still seemed unsure about its usefulness for written examinations. This points to a gap between active classroom engagement and exam-related expectations. Even though students liked the tasks and felt more confident using English, they were still influenced by the traditional focus on marks and written tests. This suggests the need to better connect task-based classroom practices with assessment patterns so that students feel more secure about their exam preparation.

Conclusions

(i) Summary of Findings

The study explored the attitudes of students towards the TBLT approach in English language learning. Overall, students displayed a positive attitude across six dimensions, although a few of them expressed concerns about its impact on exam preparedness and

perceived workload. Initial hesitation, due to their earlier experience with traditional teaching methods, gradually turned into confidence and enjoyment, especially during collaborative tasks. This transition was highlighted by improvements in their ability to present reports and provide feedback in English.

The findings also support well-known theories of language acquisition, notably Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1983), and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982). These theories collectively illustrate how interaction, collaboration, and a supportive learning environment foster language acquisition. The observed reduction in students' affective filters, alongside increased motivation and engagement, underscores the potential of TBLT to create conducive learning conditions.

(ii) Educational Implications

The results indicate that integrating TBLT within the Assam ELT context can enhance student engagement and confidence in language use. Educators are encouraged to adopt task-based methods that promote interaction and collaboration. These can help students see the relevance of language in real life, including its role in academic assessments. Additionally, recognising the emotional dimensions of language learning —such as students' fears and apprehensions—can lead to more effective teaching strategies that foster a supportive classroom atmosphere.

(iii) Suggestions for Future Research

Although the findings are promising, they should be viewed in the light of certain limitations. The intervention was conducted over a period of only three months, and the responses reflect students' attitudes at that particular time. Therefore, they may not fully capture deeper or long-term changes. Future studies should investigate the specific challenges faced by students when adapting to TBLT, especially concerning exam performance and workload perceptions. Exploring the integration of students' first languages alongside English could yield insights into enhancing cognitive engagement and learning outcomes. Longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of TBLT on language acquisition and academic performance are also recommended. Furthermore, research could assess the effectiveness of TBLT across diverse educational contexts and student demographics to better understand its applicability and adaptability.

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Appendices

Table 1: *Description of Sample*

SI. No.	*Randomly Selected Target Schools*	*Grades*	*Sections*	*Formations of Group*	*No. of Students*	*Total*
1	Ganesh Mandir HS School, Jayanagar Khanapara	Class VIII	Sec-A	EG	43	179
			Sec-B	CG	40	
2	Dakshin Beltola ME School, Bongaon	Class VIII	Sec-C	EG	47	
			Sec-B	CG	49	

*Note: The attitude scale was administered only to the Experimental Group (EG), comprising 90 students***.**

Table 2: *Student Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) Attitude Scale*

SI. No.	*Statements*	*SA*	*A*	*UD*	*D*	*SD*
1	I enjoy the opportunities to brain storm and discuss ideas with my partner and group members while doing the tasks.					
2	The support of my partner/group members made me confident during tasks.					
3	Doing tasks promotes team spirit and collaborative learning.					
4	I prefer working individually than in groups or pairs to complete the tasks.					
5	During teamwork, if something is difficult, I trust my classmates to help complete it instead of me contributing my ideas.					
6	The teacher encourages us to analyse important language/grammatical forms after completing the tasks.					
7	Feedback from the teacher throughout the task stages helps me learn better.					

8	I think the teacher should help us more during task stages to complete them effectively.					
9	I prefer direct corrections from the teacher rather than self-correction during tasks.					
10	Engaging in tasks motivates me to develop my problem-solving skills and express my opinions.					
11	I am motivated to learn beyond the textbook content through tasks.					
12	Doing tasks provides enjoyable opportunities to practise listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.					
13	I dislike presenting in front of the class owing to my fear of making mistakes.					
14	Doing more tasks in English can help me perform better in exams.					
15	Learning lessons through tasks made the course book content easy for me to comprehend.					
16	I get many opportunities to perform tasks related to daily lives.					
17	Reporting after tasks helps practice public speaking.					
18	I often feel disconnected during the tasks because I do not see how they are useful outside the classroom.					
19	I prefer doing grammar exercises over tasks, especially because they seem more beneficial for my exams.					
20	I prefer taking notes provided by the teacher during regular English class over completing tasks because they help me study for exams.					
21	I get ample chances to interact in English with classmates during tasks.					
22	Doing tasks boosts my confidence in using the English language.					
23	The writing tasks enhance my creative and critical thinking skills.					
24	Grammatical mistakes during tasks do not hinder my English communication in class.					

25	TBLT fosters a comfortable environment for English language use.					
26	I find the task stages boring because they are very long.					
27	Using the mother tongue during tasks does not aid in developing my English language skills.					
28	English examinations should be task-based, rather than producing only written answers.					
29	TBLT is not useful since English subject exams are not task-based.					
30	Doing tasks adds to our workload as we have to prepare for written exams.					

Table 3: *Dimensions of the Student TBLT Attitude Scale versus Percentage of Scores Against Each Norm*

Dimensions	*Norms*						
	Extremely Favourable	*Highly Favourable*	*Above Moderate Favourable*	*Moderate*	*Below Moderate*	*Highly Unfavourable*	*Extremely Unfavourable*
Collaborative learning	47.80%	48.90%	0.00%	3.30%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Teacher's role	8.90%	36.60%	12.30%	42.20%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Motivation	92.22%	0.00%	7.78%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Practical relevance	48.88%	37.78%	10.00%	3.34%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Satisfaction	41.11%	45.56%	13.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Relevance to assessment method	34.44%	45.46%	13.34%	4.55%	2.21%	0.00%	0.00%

Namrata Gogoi *is an Independent Researcher based in Assam. Her areas of interest include ELT, language pedagogy, teacher education, soft skills, and emotional intelligence.*
namugogoi@gmail.com

Yeasmin Sultana *is an Assistant Professor at Tezpur University, Assam. Her areas of interest include ELT, language pedagogy and technology-integrated language learning.*
yeasmin85@gmail.com