

Task-Based Language Teaching in Local ESL Context: Investigating English Teachers' Classroom Practices and Challenges among Asipulo Public High Schools

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Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) among English teachers in Asipulo Public High Schools, focusing on their instructional practices, challenges, and intervention needs. Anchored in TBLT theory and the Assessment–Analysis–Intervention–Dissemination (AAID) model, the study employed a qualitative descriptive developmental design to examine teachers' experiences. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 English teachers selected through purposive sampling and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Findings revealed that teachers employ communicative, experiential, and cognitive tasks that promote learner-centered and meaningful language use, including structured lesson planning, differentiated instruction, and contextualized activities. However, significant challenges were identified in instructional design, learner diversity, motivation, classroom management, limited resources, time constraints, and assessment practices. In response, the study proposes targeted interventions such as the Instructional Enhancement Program (IEP), Learner Support and Engagement Program (LSEP), continuous teacher training, and institutional support to improve TBLT implementation. The study concludes that effective TBLT requires alignment between pedagogical practices, learner needs, and systemic support mechanisms. The findings align with SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting effective language instruction and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by addressing gaps in rural educational contexts. The study contributes to educational and institutional sustainability by supporting improved teaching practices, equitable learning opportunities, and continuous professional development in language education.

Keywords: Assessment–Analysis–Intervention–Dissemination (AAID) model, communicative competence, differentiated instruction, English language teaching, qualitative research, task-based language teaching, thematic analysis

1. Introduction

Language teaching has evolved to meet global communication demands, emphasizing communicative competence through the integration of macro skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—in meaningful and real-life contexts. Contemporary approaches highlight learner-centered, task-based, and communicative strategies that foster linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural development. Among these, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as an effective framework for enhancing communicative competence through authentic and interactive tasks. Despite its proven effectiveness, challenges in implementation persist, particularly in resource-constrained and rural contexts. This study investigates English teachers' practices, and challenges in implementing TBLT in Asipulo Public High Schools, aiming to provide context-sensitive insights and interventions.

1.1 Background of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and English Teachers' Communicative Instruction in Asipulo Public High Schools

Language teaching has evolved in response to the growing demands of global communication, emphasizing the development of communicative competence and the effective use of language in real-life contexts. It is a systematic and pedagogically guided process that facilitates the acquisition of language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—while supporting learners' cognitive, social, and cultural development (Richards & Rodgers, 2022). Contemporary language instruction promotes holistic learning by integrating linguistic, cognitive, socio-emotional, and cultural dimensions, enabling learners to communicate meaningfully across diverse contexts (Richards, 2022; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2020). Effective language teaching requires alignment between instructional methods and learners' needs. Misalignment may hinder learning outcomes, while adaptability and flexibility in teaching approaches enhance instructional effectiveness (Richards, 2022). A strong theoretical foundation is essential for informed pedagogical decisions (Nation and Macalister, 2021), particularly in contexts where diverse learners require differentiated and contextualized instruction. Communicative competence, viewed as a multidimensional construct involving linguistic accuracy, pragmatic appropriateness, and discourse organization (Galaczi & Taylor, 2018), remains the central goal of language teaching. Task-

Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as a relevant approach that integrates meaningful communication and authentic tasks. It emphasizes real-life language use, learner engagement, and the development of macro skills through purposeful interaction (Ali & Fredrikson, 2023). By focusing on task completion and communication, TBLT supports the development of fluency, accuracy, and interactional competence, making it a suitable approach for contemporary language education.

1.2 Themes and Insights from Related Literature on TBLT Practices and Macro Skills Development

The literature consistently highlights the importance of integrating the four macro skills in language teaching. Speaking, listening, reading, and writing are interdependent and collectively contribute to communicative competence. Task-based approaches promote speaking through interactive activities such as role-plays and discussions that enhance fluency and negotiation of meaning (Liu, 2024; Bui & Tai, 2022; Ellis et al., 2020). Listening supports comprehension and participation in communicative tasks, enabling learners to interpret and respond effectively (Rost, 2011). Reading develops critical thinking and exposure to authentic language use, enhancing comprehension and vocabulary (Grabe and Stoller, 2011; Tatanova, 2025; Ambulong et al., 2023). Writing tasks, particularly collaborative and process-oriented activities, improve grammatical accuracy, coherence, and expressive ability (Khatib & Meihami, 2020; Zhang & Li, 2024; Wang & Chen, 2024; Huang et al., 2023). Empirical studies across different contexts demonstrate the effectiveness of TBLT in improving language proficiency. Research shows that task-based activities enhance speaking performance, fluency, and confidence (Abd Rahman, 2024; Nget, 2020), as well as listening comprehension and writing skills (Hoa, 2024; Prihastuti et al., 2024). Reading comprehension and motivation also improve through task-based activities such as problem-solving and information-gap tasks (Ismail, 2023). These findings confirm that TBLT fosters meaningful engagement, critical thinking, and communicative competence. Across Asian contexts, TBLT has shown positive outcomes in language learning. Studies in China, Indonesia, Thailand, and Myanmar report improvements in communicative competence, classroom interaction, and learner confidence (Xie and Lan, 2025; Astriani, 2023; Boonpho, Supakworaku & Khechornphak, 2025). Similarly, local studies in the Philippines demonstrate that task-based activities improve fluency, accuracy, and participation among learners (Longakit et al., 2025; Reyes 2024). These findings reinforce the effectiveness of TBLT as a learner-centered and communicative approach. However, the literature also identifies challenges in language learning and teaching. Learners face difficulties related to vocabulary, grammar, motivation, and proficiency (Rohmatillah, 2014; Susanto, 2021; Rosyada & Apoko, 2023; Afzal, 2019; Azmi, 2019; Ng et al., 2025). Teachers encounter challenges in task design, classroom management, and resource limitations (Cataraja, Beltran and Dela Cruz, 2025; Suardi and Sakti, 2019). These issues highlight the need for context-sensitive and adaptive instructional strategies.

1.3 Local, National, and Global Context of English Language Education and TBLT Implementation

Globally, English has become a dominant language for communication, education, and professional interaction, with over a billion learners worldwide (Furlow, 2019). Many countries in Asia have integrated English into their education systems to enhance global competitiveness (Nuraeni, Priadi and Lengkanawati, 2024; Pham, 2025). These developments emphasize the importance of effective language instruction in preparing learners for global participation. In the Philippines, the K-12 curriculum emphasizes communicative competence and literacy development. Recent policy shifts, including DepEd Order No. 020, series of 2025, aim to strengthen English proficiency in early education. However, national and international assessments reveal persistent challenges in language proficiency, as evidenced by low performance in reading comprehension and PISA rankings (Department of Education, 2020). Local studies further indicate gaps in vocabulary, comprehension, and communicative ability among students, highlighting the need for improved instructional strategies (Racca and Lasaten, 2016). These contexts underscore the urgency of adopting effective teaching approaches such as TBLT to address learning gaps and enhance language proficiency.

1.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Basis of TBLT in English Teachers' Classroom Practices

The study is grounded in the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching and communicative language teaching, which emphasize authentic communication, learner engagement, and contextualized language use (Willis & Willis, 2007; Ellis, 2017). These frameworks support the development of macro skills and communicative competence through meaningful tasks. The study also draws on theories of language learning that highlight the importance of strategy awareness and deliberate practice in improving language skills. Effective teaching practices, including task-based activities and exposure to authentic language use, facilitate the development of linguistic competence and communicative ability (Schmitt, 2020; Webb & Nation, 2023). Additionally, the study adopts the Assessment–Analysis–Intervention–Dissemination (AAID) Model as a guiding framework. This model provides a systematic approach to examining classroom practices, identifying challenges, developing interventions, and disseminating findings. It emphasizes continuous improvement in instructional practices and supports evidence-based decision-making in language education.

1.5 Research Gaps on TBLT Implementation in Rural ESL Contexts and Rationale for the Study in Asipulo

Despite extensive research on TBLT, significant gaps remain in its application within rural and remote ESL contexts. Most studies focus on urban or well-resourced settings, leaving limited understanding of how TBLT is implemented in geographically isolated areas such as Asipulo. Existing research often examines either teachers' practices or classroom

practices but rarely explores their alignment. Moreover, few studies adopt a comprehensive approach that simultaneously investigates practices and challenges. There is also a lack of localized studies in Ifugao Province examining TBLT implementation. These gaps highlight the need for a context-specific investigation that captures the realities of language teaching in rural public high schools. This study addresses these gaps by examining English teachers' practices and challenges in implementing TBLT in Asipulo, providing insights into localized instructional practices and potential interventions.

1.6 Alignment of the Study with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Language Education and Equity

This study aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education, as it seeks to improve language instruction and promote effective teaching strategies that enhance learners' communicative competence. By examining TBLT practices and challenges, the study contributes to the development of inclusive and equitable education that supports diverse learners. It also relates to SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, as improved language proficiency equips learners with communication skills necessary for employment and global participation. Additionally, the study supports SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals by encouraging collaboration among educators, policymakers, and institutions in improving language education practices.

1.7 Importance of the Study to Multidisciplinary Sustainability in Language Education and Rural Contexts

The study contributes to educational sustainability by promoting effective and adaptive teaching practices that address diverse learner needs and improve learning outcomes. It supports socio-economic sustainability by enhancing learners' communication skills, which are essential for academic success and workforce readiness. Furthermore, it contributes to institutional sustainability by informing policy development, teacher training programs, and curriculum improvement. By integrating evidence-based strategies and addressing contextual challenges, the study advances sustainable language education practices that are responsive to both local realities and global demands.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative research design to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' TBLT practices and challenges through their experiences and narratives. Qualitative data were gathered, analyzed, and thematized to produce comprehensive findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Specifically, the study adopted a descriptive developmental approach, which focuses on examining existing conditions and using findings to design instructional solutions (Paytaren, 2020). This design enabled the evaluation of current classroom practices and challenges in task-based instruction and the development of context-based interventions grounded in empirical data.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the Department of Education Schools Division of Ifugao, specifically in the Asipulo District. It included five public high schools: Asipulo National High School, Haliap National High School, Nangatengey National High School, Camandag National High School, and Natcak National High School. These schools were selected due to their diverse population of English teachers, openness to professional development, and the researcher's accessibility. The inclusion of multiple public school settings ensured variability and strengthened the validity of the findings.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The participants consisted of 12 English language teachers from public secondary schools in Asipulo District, including both Junior and Senior High School levels. Participants were selected because they could provide relevant insights into TBLT practices and challenges (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who met specific criteria: they were currently employed as English or language teachers and had at least one year of teaching experience. This sampling approach ensured that participants possessed sufficient experience and relevance to contribute meaningful data aligned with the study's objectives.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used a semi-structured interview questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. This tool focused on identifying TBLT strategies and challenges while allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences. Semi-structured interviews enabled flexibility in probing for deeper insights while maintaining consistency across participants (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Permission was secured from the Schools Division of Ifugao prior to data collection. The researcher conducted orientations with school heads and participants to explain the study's objectives, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Participation

was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained. Interviews were then conducted with all participants, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved familiarizing the data, generating themes, reviewing and defining themes, and producing a narrative interpretation. The analysis aimed to identify patterns in teachers' classroom practices and challenges in implementing TBLT and to support comprehensive conclusions.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards by ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Participants were fully informed about the study and their rights, and their anonymity was protected through coding systems. Data privacy and integrity were maintained throughout the research process. The study complied with ethical guidelines from the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020), the Department of Education's Research Ethics Guidelines (DepEd, 2022), and the Data Privacy Act.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Task-Based Language Teaching Practices and Implementation

3.1.1 Lesson Planning, Differentiation, and Contextualization

The results showed that teachers employ structured lesson planning aligned with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs), ensuring that instructional activities are curriculum-driven and goal-oriented. Teachers design learner-centered, task-based lessons that are responsive to students' needs, interests, and proficiency levels. Differentiated instruction is evident through varied tasks tailored to learners' abilities, such as assigning simpler activities for struggling students and more complex tasks for advanced learners. Teachers also integrate contextualization and localization by using local literature, cultural materials, and real-life situations. Authentic tasks such as dialogues, speeches, interviews, and discussions are commonly used to simulate real-world communication and enhance relevance and engagement. These practices indicate that teachers adopt a responsive and standards-aligned approach that supports meaningful language learning. Alignment with curriculum standards ensures organized instruction and measurable outcomes, as emphasized by Zhao et al. (2025) and Bajarias et al. (2024). Differentiated instruction reflects responsiveness to learner diversity, consistent with Darsih (2018), Tomlinson (2021), and Putri and Elizar (2025), while contextualization supports culturally responsive teaching as highlighted by Gay (2020). The integration of authentic tasks further strengthens communicative competence, aligning with Ellis (2020), demonstrating that meaningful, real-life applications enhance language acquisition.

3.1.2 Pre-Task Phase Strategies

The findings revealed that teachers prepare learners through explicit instruction, modeling, activation of prior knowledge, and strategic grouping. Teachers clearly explain task procedures, expectations, and rubrics to ensure students understand what is required. They provide concrete examples and demonstrations to guide learners in completing tasks accurately. Additionally, teachers activate prior knowledge through brainstorming and questioning to help learners connect new information with existing understanding. Strategic grouping is also practiced, where students are assigned roles to ensure accountability and participation, allowing more proficient learners to support others. These results highlight the importance of scaffolding in preparing learners for effective task engagement. Clear instructions and modeling enhance understanding and task accuracy, as supported by Ellis (2020). Activating prior knowledge improves comprehension and participation (Zhao, 2023), while structured grouping promotes collaboration and interaction, consistent with Li & Zhang (2022). These strategies collectively support learner readiness and establish a strong foundation for communicative task performance.

3.1.3 Main Task Phase Strategies

The results indicated that teachers implement collaborative, experiential, and cognitive tasks during the main phase. Collaborative and interactive activities such as group discussions, debates, reporting, dialogue creation, and presentations promote active participation and peer interaction. Experiential and performance-based tasks—including role-playing, storytelling, speech delivery, vlogging, and advertisement production—allow learners to apply language in realistic contexts. Cognitive tasks such as text analysis, research activities, and argumentative writing develop higher-order thinking skills. Teachers also facilitate learning through close monitoring, providing guidance, and encouraging peer support to sustain engagement and ensure task completion. These findings demonstrate that TBLT fosters meaningful language use through interaction, experience, and cognition. Collaborative tasks enhance communicative competence and social learning, aligning with Susilana and Priyatin (2025) and Li and Zhang (2022). Experiential tasks reflect "learning by doing," supporting Dewey's theory and findings by Ananda et. Al (2024) and U-senyang (2024). Cognitive tasks develop analytical and critical thinking skills, consistent with Yang and Gamble (2020) and Pinza-Tapia et al. (2021). Teacher facilitation further sustains engagement and supports language production, as noted by Shintani (2020).

3.1.4 Post-Task Assessment and Feedback Practices

The results showed that teachers employ comprehensive assessment strategies, including the use of rubrics, multiple evaluation methods, and varied feedback mechanisms. Teachers utilize clear criteria and rubrics to ensure objective and transparent assessment of student performance. Feedback is provided through constructive comments, peer evaluation, reflective activities, modeling, recasting, and both oral and written responses. Additionally, teachers assess learning using multiple indicators such as presentations, written outputs, quizzes, and participation to evaluate both performance and retention. These findings indicate that assessment practices are holistic and reflective, supporting both learning and improvement. The use of rubrics ensures fairness and clarity, as supported by Andrade and Brookhart (2020). Feedback strategies promote reflection and language development, consistent with Zhang and Hung (2020), Topping (2021), and Panadero, Andrade, & Brookhart (2022). The use of multiple assessment methods provides a comprehensive evaluation of learners' abilities, aligning with Nitko & Brookhart (2021) and Brown and Abeywickrama (2021), thereby strengthening communicative competence and learner autonomy.

3.2 Challenges Affecting TBLT Implementation

The results revealed that teachers encounter multiple challenges in implementing TBLT, including difficulties in designing appropriate tasks, addressing diverse learner needs, managing limited time and resources, handling low student motivation, and ensuring effective classroom management and feedback. Teachers reported that task design is time-consuming and complex, especially when aligning tasks with curriculum standards and varying proficiency levels. Learner-related issues such as low language proficiency, lack of motivation, poor study habits, and external distractions further hinder participation and performance. Contextual challenges, including limited instructional materials, unstable internet access, heavy curriculum demands, and large class sizes, also affect effective implementation. These findings suggest that while TBLT is pedagogically effective, its implementation is constrained by practical and contextual realities. Instructional challenges reflect the complexity of designing meaningful and aligned tasks, while differentiation issues highlight the need for inclusive teaching practices, consistent with Butler (2017). Learner-related challenges such as low proficiency and motivation reduce engagement and limit opportunities for meaningful language use. Contextual constraints such as limited resources and time pressure restrict task depth and interaction, while difficulties in feedback and classroom management indicate the need for structured support and professional development to enhance instructional effectiveness.

3.3 Evidence-Based Interventions and Dissemination Strategies

The results identified several interventions to address the challenges of TBLT implementation, including the Instructional Enhancement Program (IEP), Learner Support and Engagement Program (LSEP), continuous teacher training, differentiated instruction, and institutional support. The IEP introduces structured task design through strategies such as goal-oriented task planning, scaffolding, and continuous assessment. The LSEP promotes learner engagement through interest-based, game-based, and collaborative activities that enhance motivation and participation. Additionally, dissemination strategies include presenting findings in educational forums such as INSET and LAC sessions and publishing in academic journals to encourage broader adoption and collaboration. These interventions indicate that systematic and evidence-based approaches can enhance both instructional practices and learner engagement. The IEP strengthens teachers' ability to design aligned and meaningful tasks, while the LSEP addresses learner-related challenges by fostering motivation and participation. Continuous professional development improves teachers' pedagogical competence, and differentiated instruction ensures inclusivity. Institutional support further sustains implementation, while dissemination through forums and publications promotes knowledge sharing and innovation, contributing to continuous improvement in language education.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study provides a comprehensive examination of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) practices among English teachers, highlighting the use of communicative, experiential, and cognitive tasks that support meaningful, learner-centered language instruction. However, significant challenges were identified in instructional design, task differentiation, classroom management, learner proficiency, motivation, study habits, and institutional constraints such as limited resources, time pressures, and curriculum alignment, including difficulties in assessment and feedback. To address these concerns, the study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions such as the Instructional Enhancement Program (IEP), Learner Support and Engagement Program (LSEP), continuous teacher training, differentiated instruction, and sustained support from the Department of Education to ensure effective and sustainable TBLT implementation, ultimately improving language teaching and learning outcomes.

Based on the findings, teachers are encouraged to enhance task design by incorporating relevant, contextualized, and communicative activities that promote authentic language use and meaningful engagement. There is also a need to strengthen learner support through scaffolding strategies, differentiated tasks, and supportive classroom environments to address diverse proficiency levels and needs. Furthermore, teachers should establish consistent monitoring, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms, engage in reflective practices, and conduct action research to improve instructional effectiveness.

Strengthening TBLT implementation requires coordinated efforts involving teacher competence, learner-centered approaches, institutional support, and continuous assessment to achieve quality language instruction.

The study is limited to English teachers in selected public high schools within the Asipulo District, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. It also focuses primarily on teachers' practices, and challenges using qualitative data, which may not capture measurable outcomes of student performance. Additionally, the use of purposive sampling and a relatively small number of participants may limit the breadth of perspectives represented. Contextual factors such as time constraints, available resources, and institutional conditions may also influence the findings and their applicability to different educational settings.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study adhered to established ethical research standards, ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and data privacy throughout the research process. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, and their anonymity was protected through the use of coding systems. Data integrity and confidentiality were maintained in accordance with recognized ethical guidelines and relevant data privacy regulations.

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