

# EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING IN ENHANCING READING SKILLS: A STUDY OF SINGLE NATIONAL CURRICULUM ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF DISTRICT SAHIWAL

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## **Abstract**

*This research investigates the difficulties in teaching English reading skills in Pakistani elementary schools particularly of district Sahiwal. Students still have trouble with reading comprehension that enhances their challenges of learning English language. The Single National Curriculum (SNC) seeks to foster inclusivity and critical thinking whereas past setbacks underscore the necessity and importance of stakeholders' cooperation. The impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)'s principles on reading skills and their efficacy in SNC English textbooks are evaluated in this study. Twenty randomly selected elementary schools were surveyed, and the results show a discrepancy between the objectives of TBLT and the experiences of the students, many of whom have trouble with even basic reading skills and pronunciation. The findings suggest that teacher preparation, collaborative learning, and interesting content are all very crucial. By tackling these obstacles, teachers can establish a more efficient learning environment.*

## **Introduction:**

The curriculum is essential to education because it provides teachers with a roadmap for achieving the intended learning results. The process of developing the curriculum in Pakistan has been unrestrained with several attempts falling short of their goals (Sain, 2023). Although learning English is viewed as a way to improve one's social and economic standing, the nation's progress in acquiring English language proficiency has not been significantly impacted by English language teaching (ELT) initiatives (Jawad, 2024). Finding a balance between teaching and learning English in state, national, and international contexts is the primary challenge in Pakistan. Multilingualism is an alternative method of formulating language policy. The most recent effort to create an inclusive educational system that encourages critical, analytical, and creative thinking is the Single National Curriculum (SNC) (Jamil, Aslam & Ali, 2024). Nonetheless, prior failures and a lack of stakeholders' involvement indicate that collaboration and practical experience are essential for the success of curriculum development. Reading is a multifaceted and intricate process that includes motivation, recognition, comprehension, and fluency (Qasserras, 2023). Low English language reading proficiency among Pakistani students is a major issue, especially in the Punjab province. Learning a foreign language requires reading, and receiving insufficient English reading instruction can have long-term effects (Sari, 2023). The purpose of the study is to determine the reasons behind low reading proficiency and the part that elements like course materials and the lack of traditional exercises and approaches play.

The study is limited to the Sahiwal district and focuses on elementary public school teachers who work for the Punjab School Education Department. Policymakers, planners, and educators can more effectively address the issue and focus on specialized reading subfields if they have a better understanding of the factors that contribute to low reading proficiency. It is anticipated that the study's conclusions will lead to improved instructional strategies in English textbooks for elementary school students.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of reading since it develops vocabulary, expands imagination, and improves analytical and communication abilities (Ghafar, 2024). Without professional assistance, the majority of students learn to read on their own, which can result in poor fluency and comprehension. The study emphasizes the necessity of engaging activities and efficient instruction to enhance reading abilities, especially at the beginning stage of learning.

To sum up, the study intends to look into the reasons behind Pakistani students' poor reading proficiency in English. Teachers and legislators can create focused plans to raise reading proficiency and raise educational standards by knowing these elements. The study's conclusions have ramifications for instructional design, teacher preparation, and curriculum development, all of which will eventually improve learning outcomes for Pakistani students.

### **Research objectives**

- Assess how well the SNC English textbooks align with the principles of TBLT, particularly in terms of task design
- Implementation that promotes active engagement and interaction among students by using a designed task in the SNC English textbook.

### **Research questions**

- What are the views and attitudes of English language Instructors concerning the usefulness of TBLT principles in the SNC English textbooks for improving reading skills?
- How prevalent and consistent are the reading tasks in the SNC English textbooks and in what ways do they influence students' reading exercises

### **Hypothesis**

The task-based approach used in SNC English textbooks improves reading comprehension and encourages active participation. Students are encouraged to think critically, solve problems, and communicate effectively through TBLT-aligned tasks in SNC English textbooks.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Reading for learning**

Expanding our overall understanding of the world is one of the broader purposes of reading (Ohrvik, 2024), as reading is done on a daily basis for the sake of learning. Sometimes, our desire is to remind ourselves of half-truths or hazily stated beliefs rather than to acquire something really new. For example, as we read, we bolster, reaffirm, and elucidate our concepts. One would assume that reading for learning has just academic applications. In actuality, there are many different types of reading activities that are approved and encouraged by educational institutions that may or may not have anything to do with learning facts or opinions, even if it is evident that a significant portion of reading to promote learning occurs in academic settings. According to Takona (2024), some of these actions have a "ritualistic" purpose. One instance of this would be when students read aloud from a text to the class as a whole or to the teacher alone, and it becomes clear from probing questions that they have little comprehension of the text's substance. 'Reading around the class' is a common way for students learning English as a second or foreign language to engage in 'language practice'. Rather than

providing proof of learning or reflection, this type of reading could be seen to serve a 'display' role.

### **The role of the text in the second language classroom:**

Texts like the poems introduced at middle standard have the benefit of being brief, making them easy to memorize and utilize repeatedly when written upon a chalkboard. When it comes to restricted access to reading materials in second languages, this is a crucial factor. Certain educators and students will be situated in settings where an extensive range of English language resources are easily accessible in the form of books, periodicals, and newspapers (Abdala, 2024).

A slightly different strategy is to concentrate on the cohesive characteristics that enable us to identify long lengths of written language as texts rather than the sentence patterns found within them. Any text can be used to demonstrate cohesive elements in writing by emphasizing structural elements that occur within or between phrases, such as logical connectors and pronoun references (Anindita, 2024). Since coherence is a prerequisite for all documents, there is no need to write a text just for it. For pedagogical reasons, we could modify a book to expose students to these characteristics more frequently.

Another approach is that we choose texts because they encourage reading rather than for any particular linguistic qualities. This is consistent with the idea that reading itself helps to improve language (Yana, (2024). Elley (1984) observed that several studies of Fijian second language learners revealed extremely low reading proficiency and proposed two possible explanations: first, children's books were generally unavailable in any language, which may have resulted from Fijian teachers' disapproval of reading as a means of language acquisition; second, and somewhat related to the first, the English language instruction program utilized in Fiji's elementary schools was built on a highly structured audio-lingual approach that minimized reading as a means of language acquisition. Stanley and Wight (2024) came to the conclusion that since written language is mostly taught through reading, the learners were deprived of important exposure to English due to the delay in introducing written language.

The reader of a second language becomes more familiar with the main vocabulary and structures of the language the more fluently and broadly they read in it. Gupta (2025) discovered that when given meaningful written sentences to understand, children from Fiji and India could deduce the meaning of a significant amount of foreign English structures. This suggests that in order for a structure to be grasped when reading, it need not be part of the learner's active repertoire. Therefore, even for early second or foreign language readers, broad access to meaningful written language may be a useful strategy for acquiring new structures as well as for practicing or reinforcing existing ones. Written language is typically more permanent than spoken language, and it is also more fully ordered and consistent. This indicates that, in contrast to spoken language, important linguistic components are apparent and reviewable. It also means that the general content of the texts we choose will be more significant than specific grammatical aspects if we wish to encourage learners to read extensively in the second language.

### **While-reading activities**

The general goal of while-reading exercises is to help students become adaptable, engaged, and thoughtful readers. By encouraging the reader to read in ways that the materials writers believe are acceptable for the kind of text being provided, flexibility is fostered. Providing students with many interpretations of a text: It is feasible to create assignments that provide the reader with multiple perspectives on a text. According to Jones and Dowsett (2024), the writers specifically examine the potential differences in values between 2.19 post-reading activities

In TBLT, post-reading exercises extend beyond comprehension assessments and focus on utilizing the text's content for communicative objectives.

- ❖ **Information Gap Activities:** To finish a job, students in groups must communicate after receiving various bits of information from the text. This motivates them to employ the target language practically.
- ❖ **Producing Products:** Using the information acquired from the book, students utilize it as a basis to create new works of art, such as news reports, argument outlines, or brochures.
- ❖ **Discussion and Debate:** By fostering critical thinking and the formation of their own perspectives, students debate the concepts and points of contention made in the book.
- ❖ **Tasks involving Problem-Solving:** Students move beyond merely reciting information as they examine the text to find solutions to problems or provide answers to inquiries.
- ❖ **Quiz Creation:** To assess their knowledge and promote active learning, students create comprehension questions for their peers.
- ❖ **Games and Activities:** To make reviewing information interesting, create games or activities based on the text, such as bingo or trivia.

### Task-Based Language Teaching(TBLT)

Even while a great deal of research has been done all over the world on various approaches to improving reading comprehension, there is a noticeable lack of information in the literature about the particular use of short tales in the TBLT approach, particularly in Pakistani public schools. While TBLT has been acknowledged as an efficacious approach to language instruction, its utilization in conjunction with short tales for English language learners in Pakistan is still a neglected field. By reviewing the material already in existence and illuminating the possible advantages and difficulties of integrating short tales into a TBLT framework in the educational setting of Pakistan, this review seeks to close this gap.

Tavakoli (2018) distinguishes three primary TBLT methodologies. Task-oriented instruction. This method uses tasks to support and enhance current language-focused, structure-based approaches, giving students a chance to utilize language communicatively. Task-based instruction. According to Chen and Howard (2024), tasks are utilized in this method "as a way of defining the target abilities which students are intended to develop by the end of each unit or scheme of work." Although a specific teaching strategy or learning process is not mentioned in this approach, it is thought that the mention of tasks will motivate teachers and students to apply them since they understand that the tasks will ultimately determine how well students succeed. Task-oriented instruction. Because the curriculum is created using tasks in this method, learning and teaching are drawn from tasks rather than language components.

Task-based learning Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) places a strong emphasis on learner autonomy and language use in everyday situations. It entails creating activities like matching, sorting, listing, and problem-solving that demand that students use language in an authentic way. While students are expected to be team players, language practitioners, and assessors, teachers play a variety of roles, such as designer, task selector, and monitor. The method offers chances for understandable input, interaction, and language practice while encouraging learner autonomy, output, and meaning negotiation.

does not, however, preclude the employment of extracurricular activities designed to improve accuracy and fluency. It's also critical to highlight the widespread misperception that tasks exclusively emphasize oral communication. All four language abilities, however, can be included in activities; in fact, many tasks are integrative, including multiple skills.



Teachers can design effective and engaging language instruction that equips students for communication in the real world by emphasizing task-based learning. TBLT is a successful method of teaching languages because it places a strong emphasis on learner-centered instruction and real-world language use.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research design and procedure:**

The approach used in this research work is the creation of a quantitative instrument to gather information from teachers teaching English to elementary classes. English teachers' data regarding the effectiveness of TBLT in textbooks from classes 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> was collected with the help of a questionnaire containing 20 items asking opinions of honorable teachers regarding the effectiveness of TBLT in improving reading skills in students. Twenty elementary, high, and higher secondary public schools with availability of elementary classes were selected from the district of Sahiwal.

#### **Data collection**

IBM.SPSS.Statistics. (version 22), as a data analysis tool, was used to compare and analyze the results from both urban and rural schools. The collected data were contrasted and examined to evaluate the efficacy of TBLT in enhancing reading abilities.

#### **Validity & reliability**

By using verification techniques, qualitative researchers should be accountable for validity and reliability (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers). The researcher obtained the research instrument examined and rechecked by five senior most SSS of the relevant secondary schools in order to guarantee the validity and reliability of the instrument and findings. He sought the expert opinion of two English language trainers employed at Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development Punjab regarding the research methodology and instrument to verify his interpretation of the study's findings. With a combined twenty-two years of expertise in teaching and training English language and pedagogy, each trainer is highly qualified.

#### **Data analysis:**

Regarding how well SNC English textbooks apply the concepts of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), the survey analysis yields conflicting findings. 40% of respondents, a sizable portion, disagreed that students enjoy reading in class, indicating that more effort is required to make textbooks more interesting. Nonetheless, most respondents concurred that students are capable of scanning and skipping and are aware of the various reading stages. This suggests that TBLT techniques may be somewhat incorporated into SNC textbooks.

Additionally, the survey identifies areas for improvement in SNC textbooks and instructional strategies. For example, a sizable majority of respondents (57.5%) concurred that pronunciation is a critical component of language learning and that students struggle with it. However, a majority of respondents (66.6%) concurred that a crucial aspect of TBLT is that students feel more at ease working in small groups. Respondents also indicated a preference for employing signal words, a crucial part of TBLT, to aid students in improving their comprehension and level of interest.

The effectiveness of SNC textbooks in giving students practical assignments and promoting teamwork and communication was also examined in the survey. A sizable portion of respondents (45.8%) disagreed that textbooks clearly focus on real-world tasks that require reading skills, despite the majority of respondents (54.2%) agreeing that tasks in SNC

textbooks encourage students to collaborate and communicate. Additionally, 67.4% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that SNC textbooks do not offer enough guidance for teachers to successfully implement TBLT.

While SNC textbooks may be implementing some TBLT principles, the survey indicates that there is still opportunity for improvement in terms of making the textbooks more interesting, offering real-world tasks, and assisting teachers in successfully implementing TBLT. With 54.2% of respondents agreeing that tasks in SNC textbooks are adaptable, the survey also emphasizes the significance of tailoring assignments to various learning styles and student needs. SNC textbooks can enhance language instruction and learning in Pakistani classrooms by addressing these issues.

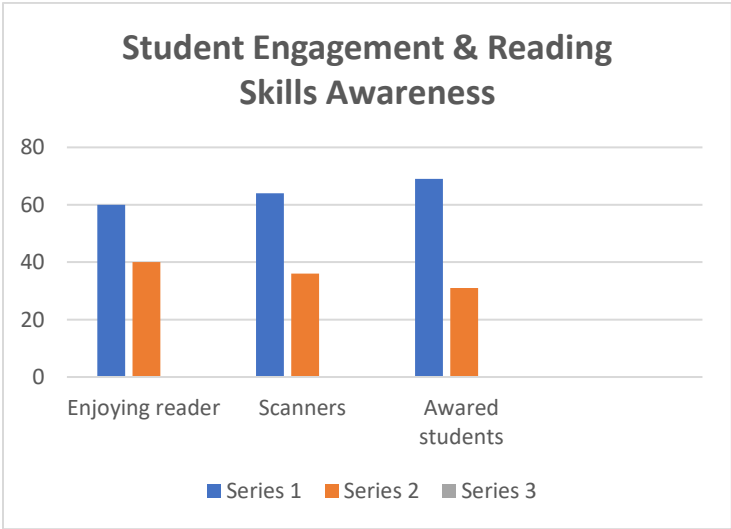
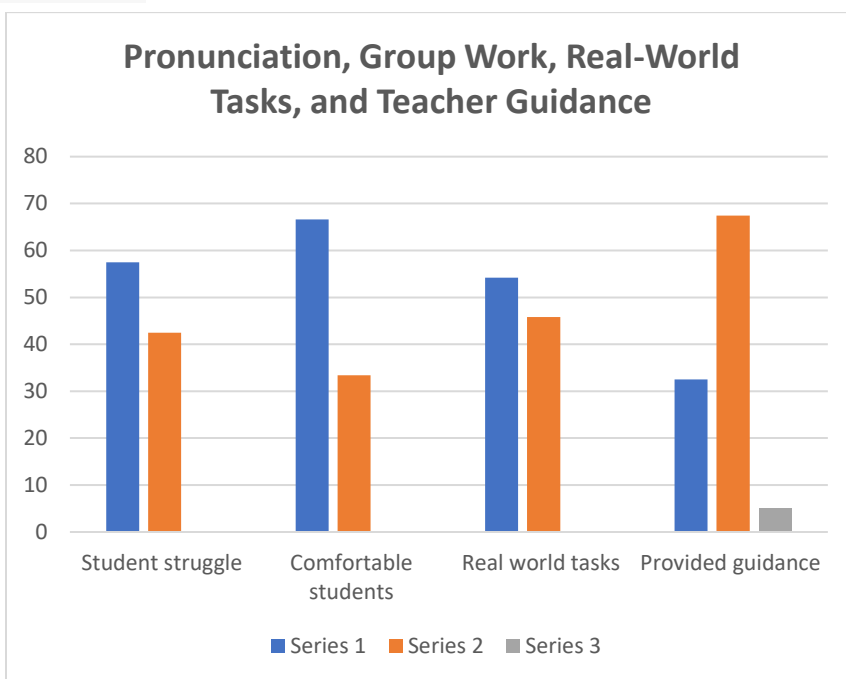


Table 1: Student Engagement & Reading Skills Awareness

Survey Item	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Notes
Students enjoy reading in class	60	40	40% disagree indicates need for interest improvement
Students are capable of scanning/skipping	Majority	Minority	Implies TBLT reading strategies somewhat incorporated
Students aware of various reading stages	Majority	Minority	Supports partial TBLT integration



**Table 2: Pronunciation, Group Work, Real-World Tasks, and Teacher Guidance**

Survey Item	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Notes
Pronunciation is critical, and students struggle	57.5	42.5	Indicates need for more pronunciation focus
Students feel more comfortable working in small groups	66.6	33.4	Supports TBLT emphasis on collaborative tasks
Textbooks focus on real-world reading tasks	54.2	45.8	Nearly half feel textbooks lack real-world tasks
Textbooks provide enough guidance for TBLT implementation	32.6	67.4	Majority disagree, showing need for better teacher support

### Conclusion:

The examination of survey data on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and its effects on reading comprehension reveals a complex picture with both potential advantages and challenges in the educational system. A notable discrepancy exists between the goals of TBLT and students' actual experiences in the classroom, with many students not enjoying reading activities. This suggests that current teaching strategies and resources, particularly SNC English textbooks, may not be meeting students' needs and interests.

TBLT has the potential to transform reading engagement through real-world, task-oriented methods, but successful tactics are needed to make reading a fun and meaningful experience for students. While many teachers claim that their students are familiar with different reading stages, there is a significant disparity in this regard, highlighting the need for improved teaching of fundamental reading techniques like scanning and skimming. Additionally, pronunciation issues

are a major problem due to linguistic differences between Urdu and English, and limited exposure to native speakers.

The survey highlights the importance of collaborative learning settings, with students feeling more comfortable working in small groups, which is consistent with TBLT's cooperative learning principles. However, there is a concerning trend of students being hesitant to engage with books outside of their assigned syllabus, even when they feel comfortable in group settings. The results also suggest that active interaction with texts, such as through comprehension questions, improves students' reading skills.

To fully realize the potential of TBLT, several issues need to be addressed, including providing engaging content, reinforcing fundamental reading techniques, addressing pronunciation problems, and encouraging group learning settings. Moreover, teachers need better training and resources to effectively implement TBLT approaches. By addressing these challenges, educators can create a more productive learning environment that not only improves students' reading abilities but also fosters a lifelong love of literature.

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