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Task-Based Language Teaching for Technical Education: Strengthening Oral Proficiency of Rural Engineering Students

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***Abstract*—Language, as a medium of communication, holds critical importance in today's globalized and technologically driven world. English has established itself as the lingua franca of academia, industry, and professional exchange, making oral proficiency indispensable for engineering graduates. Despite possessing strong technical expertise, many students from rural backgrounds encounter difficulties in expressing ideas effectively in English, which hinders their academic and professional growth. To address this challenge, the present study introduces Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) for Technical Education: Strengthening Oral Proficiency of Rural Engineering Students, a structured pedagogical framework designed to enhance communication skills. The model integrates TBLT principles with customized tasks, interactive workshops, and progressive activities aimed at improving fluency, confidence, and collaborative abilities. Drawing theoretical support from communicative competence models and sociolect-cognitive perspectives, the framework focuses on equipping rural engineering students with the necessary oral skills to participate effectively in professional and academic contexts. The study examines how TBLT fosters oral proficiency, enabling students to bridge the gap between technical competence and communicative performance. By emphasizing the synergy of technical knowledge and effective communication, this research highlights the role of innovative language teaching in preparing rural engineering graduates for global opportunities.**

***Index Terms*—Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), oral proficiency, rural engineering education, communicative competence, technical students**

I. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of engineering education, effective communication skills have become a critical determinant of academic achievement and professional success. Engineering graduates are expected not only to demonstrate technical expertise but also to articulate their ideas clearly, collaborate effectively in diverse teams, and present projects with confidence to a variety of stakeholders. Among these competencies, oral proficiency stands out as an essential skill for bridging the gap between technical knowledge and practical application in professional environments.

Despite this growing demand, students from rural backgrounds often face significant challenges in developing oral communication skills. Rural educational institutions generally have limited access to resources such as language laboratories, professional training modules, and exposure to diverse communicative environments. Opportunities for participation in activities that enhance speaking abilities—such as public speaking clubs, debates, and professional networking platforms—are scarce. This lack of exposure and infrastructure restricts students' ability to gain confidence and fluency in spoken English, which is increasingly, required in both academic and industry contexts.

The disparity between technical competence and communicative proficiency creates a substantial obstacle for rural engineering students, limiting their confidence, employ-ability, and opportunities for professional growth. Addressing this gap requires innovative and structured approaches tailored to their unique challenges. In response, this study proposes **Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) for Technical Education: Strengthening Oral Proficiency of Rural Engineering Students** as a pedagogical model to enhance communication skills. By adopting interactive, task-based strategies grounded in communicative competence theories, the model seeks to equip rural engineering students with the oral proficiency needed to thrive in the globalized job market.

Language, as defined in the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995), is a structured system of communication governed by rules that allow the creation of meaningful messages. Sapir (1921) further emphasized it as a uniquely human, non-instinctive method of conveying thoughts and emotions through a system of deliberately produced symbols. Similarly, Tallerman and Gibson (2012), in *The Oxford Handbook of Language Evolution*, highlighted that language is not a single unified phenomenon but a complex set of traits rooted in cognitive abilities such as memory and problem-solving. These perspectives underline the multifaceted nature of language and the challenges learners encounter when acquiring oral proficiency in English, particularly within technical education contexts.

For rural engineering students in India, speaking English poses significant challenges. Many come from Telugu-medium or other regional-language educational backgrounds where English is introduced late and practiced minimally. The transition to engineering education, which demands presentations, teamwork, and professional communication, often heightens their difficulties. Speaking requires learners to convert thoughts into words in real-time, an act that induces stress and performance anxiety. Common psychological barriers include fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, shyness, and concern about peer evaluation. These issues discourage active participation and reinforce hesitation in classroom and professional interactions.

Pedagogical practices further compound the problem. In many institutions, English classes focus primarily on instruction and theoretical knowledge rather than on interactive speaking activities. Students rarely receive structured opportunities to engage in debates, role-plays, or collaborative tasks that foster oral proficiency. The limited class hours allotted for language instruction, combined with the lack of exposure to English-speaking environments outside the classroom, restrict meaningful practice. As a result, rural engineering students struggle with sentence construction, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and fluency.

To address these challenges, French's (1960) perspective in *The Teaching of English Abroad* provides valuable insights: English must be taught not merely as an academic subject but as a gateway to trade, science, and innovation. For technical students, this means integrating language instruction with their disciplinary knowledge while promoting both communicative competence and professional skills. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) offers a pedagogical pathway to achieve this integration by emphasizing interactive tasks, problem-solving, and collaboration. Such an approach can help bridge the gap between technical expertise and oral proficiency, empowering rural engineering students to meet the linguistic and professional demands of a globalized workforce.

II. Literature Review

The proposed framework of **Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) for Technical Education** is grounded in well-established theories of language acquisition, communicative competence, and applied linguistics. A review of the literature reveals that integrating interactive, task-based methods is particularly effective in enhancing oral proficiency among technical learners, especially those from rural contexts.

Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory emphasizes that language development occurs most effectively through social interaction in meaningful contexts. TBLT aligns with this principle by engaging engineering students in

collaborative tasks that simulate real-world communication, enabling them to practice technical vocabulary and discourse within authentic social learning environments.

Swain's (2005) Output Hypothesis highlights the importance of producing language as an essential step in language acquisition. TBLT provides structured opportunities for technical students to engage in speaking tasks, presentations, and problem-solving discussions, thereby refining their communicative abilities and internalizing linguistic structures relevant to professional contexts.

Richards and Rodgers (2014) argue that task-based learning emphasizes meaningful language use in real-world situations. TBLT directly supports engineering students by encouraging them to apply English in academic and technical contexts such as explaining complex ideas, delivering project reports, and participating in technical debates.

Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory stresses the role of self-regulation and observational learning in skill development. TBLT incorporates regular feedback, peer interaction, and reflective practices, enabling students to monitor their progress, enhance self-confidence, and build resilience in oral communication.

Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis posits that language is best acquired through comprehensible input combined with opportunities for output. TBLT balances both by exposing technical students to subject-related English materials and providing task-based activities that require them to articulate responses in English.

Hymes' (1972) Communicative Competence expands beyond Chomsky's (1965) linguistic competence to include the ability to use language appropriately across contexts. TBLT strengthens communicative competence by designing tasks that mirror real-world scenarios—such as technical presentations, team discussions, and workplace interactions—thus preparing students for professional communication.

Chomsky's (1965) notion of linguistic competence reflects the theoretical knowledge of syntax and grammar, but it falls short in addressing practical communication. TBLT addresses this limitation by emphasizing negotiation of meaning, problem-solving, and adaptability in dynamic speaking contexts relevant to engineering education.

Cummins' (2007) BICS and CALP framework distinguishes between conversational fluency and academic language proficiency. TBLT fosters Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) through interactive activities while simultaneously building Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) through structured tasks such as technical presentations and seminars.

Socio-economic and cognitive factors also play a crucial role in language learning (Chopra, 1994; Kaile, 1987). TBLT accommodates these variables by adopting differentiated tasks that respond to learners' diverse backgrounds, cognitive capacities, and learning environments, ensuring inclusivity in language acquisition.

Best (1950) and Dörnyei (2001) emphasize the importance of accumulated knowledge and literature reviews in advancing pedagogy. Informed by existing research on communicative and task-based teaching, TBLT integrates proven methodologies into a framework tailored for engineering education.

Somasundaram (2009) found communicative tasks highly effective in fostering active student participation and improving language proficiency. TBLT builds on this by embedding communicative tasks into speaking instruction, thereby making English use authentic and purposeful.

Ubon (1985) highlighted essential teaching competencies such as contextual adaptation and student engagement. TBLT transfers these competencies to learners themselves, requiring engineering students to adapt their spoken English to varied contexts including peer discussions, technical explanations, and project presentations.

Bawa (2001) underscored the importance of context-specific language instruction in technical education. TBLT incorporates this by designing tasks aligned with engineering contexts, such as case study discussions, workplace simulations, and technical report presentations, ensuring that students develop not only general fluency but also discipline-specific proficiency.

Basireddi et al. (2025) emphasized the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in enhancing speaking skills among engineering students. By engaging learners in real-life communicative tasks such as group discussions, role plays, and technical presentations, the study demonstrated improved fluency, accuracy, and confidence, aligning language instruction with professional needs.

Similarly, Movva et al. (2024) highlighted the role of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) in developing employability-oriented communication, particularly interview skills, at the graduation level. Through activities like mock interviews and peer evaluation, the study revealed significant gains in verbal and non-verbal communication, self-confidence, and overall performance, underscoring the pedagogical value of experiential learning in language education.

In sum, the literature demonstrates strong theoretical and empirical support for TBLT as an effective pedagogical model for enhancing oral proficiency. By integrating principles from sociocultural learning, communicative competence, and task-based methodologies, the proposed framework offers a practical pathway to address the communication challenges faced by rural engineering students.

III. Methodology

The study adopted a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework to strengthen oral proficiency among rural engineering students, focusing on fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and technical vocabulary. A total of 120 final-year students from rural backgrounds participated in the program, which was conducted over one and a half months with 30 instructional hours. Instead of modules, the methodology was structured around six communicative tasks designed to

address academic and professional needs. The listing task encouraged students to generate vocabulary related to engineering concepts and project steps, while the ordering task focused on sequencing construction processes and project stages to enhance logical flow and coherence. The comparing task required students to evaluate materials, designs, or methods, promoting critical thinking and precise articulation. Through problem-solving tasks, learners collaborated on hypothetical engineering issues, improving technical vocabulary usage and fluency in real-world contexts. The sharing personal experiences task allowed students to discuss academic challenges or rural educational experiences, building confidence and reducing hesitation. Finally, creative tasks such as role plays, project presentations, and mock client interactions fostered spontaneity and professional communication skills. Each task followed the three-phase TBLT cycle—pre-task preparation, task execution, and post-task language focus with corrective feedback—ensuring systematic skill development. This methodology provided rural students with structured, context-based opportunities for oral practice, bridging the gap between technical knowledge and verbal articulation, and equipping them with essential communicative competence for both academic and industry success.

A. Data Analysis

The data obtained through observations, interviews, and questionnaires were analysed using **statistical methods** to identify patterns in oral proficiency development. Qualitative feedback from interviews was thematically analysed to uncover recurring challenges and effective strategies. This combination of approaches ensured a holistic understanding of both the measurable improvements in speaking skills and the subjective experiences of the learners.

Through this methodology, the study systematically examined how TBLT modules supported the enhancement of oral proficiency, particularly in overcoming barriers such as limited exposure, low confidence, and lack of practice opportunities among rural engineering students.

B. Hypothesis

1. What types of mistakes do students frequently make when speaking English?
2. Can improving fluency in English compensate for a lack of understanding of its importance?
3. Does proficiency in speaking English contribute to the long-term success and resilience of students?
4. What are the common errors students make during spoken communication?
5. What measures are in place to create a supportive and welcoming environment?
6. How can the fear, anxiety, and shyness experienced by students be effectively alleviated?

In addressing the primary challenge faced by marginalized students from PVPSIT and SRGEC Colleges in speaking English, the researcher analyzed the means, standard deviations, and relative weights of the scores obtained by the study sample across various domains. This analysis also included evaluating overall proficiency in English speaking skills during interviews.

TABLE 1

Methods	No of students Participated in PVPSIT	No of students Participated in SRGEC	scores
Observation	20	20	35%
interviews	20	20	35%
questionnaires	20	20	30%
Total	60	60	100%

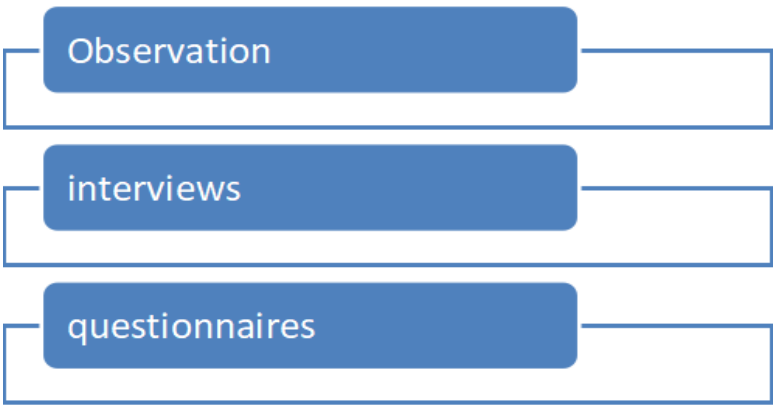

Figure 1. Three Methods

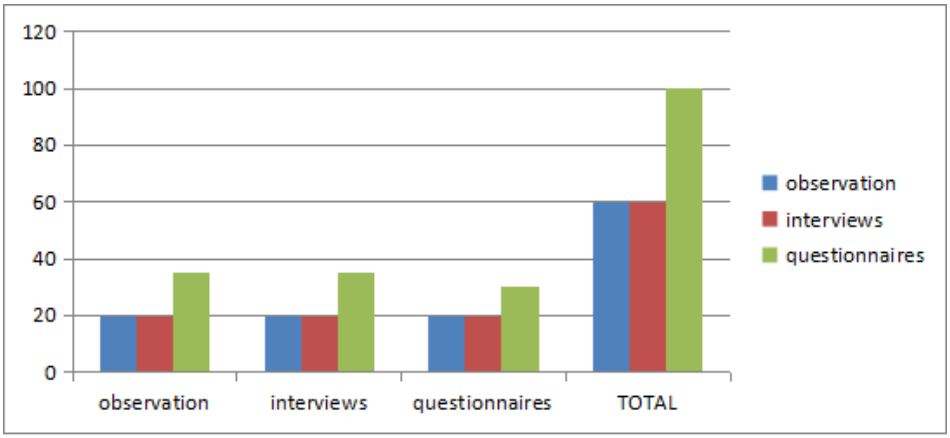

Figure 2.

The primary aim of this study on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) for Rural Engineers: Enhancing Oral Proficiency in Engineering Education was to improve and refine students' oral communication skills by supporting and enhancing their speaking proficiency, implementing effective strategies for skill development, and equipping them with a comprehensive range of communicative abilities focused on accuracy, fluency, and confidence. The broader objective was to elevate rural engineering students to a practical level of proficiency, fostering linguistic competence necessary for both academic and professional success. To systematically evaluate the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing oral proficiency among rural engineering students from PVPSIT and SRGEC, the researcher employed three complementary data collection methods: Observation, Interviews, and Questionnaires. Each method provided unique insights into students' speaking challenges, progress, and perceptions.

a) Observation

Observation was conducted during classroom sessions where TBLT activities such as role plays, group discussions, problem-solving dialogues, and technical presentations were implemented. Twenty students from PVPSIT and twenty students from SRGEC were observed. Key areas assessed included participation levels, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, fluency, and confidence indicators (e.g., hesitation, mother tongue reliance, or avoidance of speaking tasks). This method offered first-hand evidence of oral proficiency gaps and enabled the researcher to monitor students' immediate responses to task-based interventions.

b) Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 20 students from each institution to explore their challenges and learning experiences in depth. The interviews focused on barriers to speaking English (e.g., fear of mistakes, lack of vocabulary, mother tongue influence), students' self-perceptions of their communication abilities, feedback on TBLT activities, and suggestions for further improvement. This qualitative data revealed the emotional, psychological, and motivational dimensions of students' learning journeys, which quantitative tools could not capture fully.

c) Questionnaires

Structured questionnaires were distributed to 20 students from PVPSIT and 20 students from SRGEC to generate quantitative evidence of proficiency levels and learner attitudes. The questionnaires measured vocabulary range, sentence formation, fluency, and grammatical accuracy, and they tracked progress by comparing responses before and after the TBLT intervention. Additionally, they assessed confidence, motivation, and willingness to engage in English-speaking activities. Statistical analysis of the data—including means, standard deviations, and relative weights—highlighted trends and provided measurable evidence of improvement, thereby complementing the findings from observations and interviews.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Pre-Test – T-Test

A speaking proficiency test was administered to 120 final-year engineering students (60 from PVPSIT and 60 from SRGEC) to determine their baseline oral proficiency levels. The test results were used to classify students into four performance groups:

Group A: Students scoring 70% and above, demonstrating strong oral proficiency.

Group B: Students scoring 55–69%, reflecting moderate proficiency.

Group C: Students scoring 40–54%, representing lower-intermediate proficiency.

Group D: Students scoring below 40%, identified as beginners with significant challenges.

The evaluation showed that only 23 students (19.2%) were placed in Group A, demonstrating strong speaking competence. 36 students (30%) fell into Group B, showing moderate skills. 30 students (25%) were placed in Group C, and another 31 students (25.8%) in Group D, reflecting weak oral proficiency.

TABLE 2
PRE-TEST EVALUATION

NO OF STUDENTS	GROUP	Marks	percentage
23	A	70above	19.2%
36	B	55 to 69	30%
30	C	40 to 54	25%
31	D	less than 40	25.8%

The results clearly indicated that the majority of students fell into lower and intermediate proficiency groups (b, c, and d), highlighting the urgent need for targeted interventions to strengthen their oral communication skills.

B. Post-Test – T-Test

These findings highlight the effectiveness of TBLT in bridging language barriers for rural engineering students. The notable increase in Group A and B students demonstrates that task-based interventions successfully enhanced fluency, accuracy, and confidence, while the sharp reduction in Group D confirms the value of this approach in technical education.

After six weeks of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) intervention, all 120 engineering students (60 from PVPSIT and 60 from SRGEC) were reassessed using a post-test evaluation and a 12-item questionnaire. The test measured pronunciation, fluency, grammar accuracy, vocabulary, comprehension, and confidence in oral communication.

The results showed a significant improvement compared to the pre-test. A large number of students moved up to higher proficiency levels, reflecting the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing speaking skills. 97% of the participants reported satisfaction with TBLT, highlighting its usefulness for real-life communication practice.

TABLE 3
POST-TEST EVALUATION

NO OF STUDENTS	GROUP	Marks	percentage
55	A	70above	46
35	B	55 to 69	29
25	C	40 to 54	21
5	D	less than 40	4

The findings indicate that:

Group A students (55, i.e., 46%) demonstrated strong proficiency with high fluency, accuracy, and confidence.

Group B students (35, i.e., 29%) showed clear progress, reaching above-average oral competence.

Group C students (25, i.e., 21%) improved compared to the pretest but still require additional support.

Group D students (5, i.e., 4%) remained at a low proficiency level, showing that while TBLT was effective for the majority, a small fraction of students need more remedial practice.

This outcome clearly shows that TBLT significantly improved oral proficiency among rural engineering students, with most learners moving from lower bands to Group A and B, while only a negligible percentage remained in Group D.

TABLE 4
PRE-TEST & POST–TEST ANALYSIS

GROUP	Pre-test	Percentage	Post-test	percentage
A	23	19.2%	55	46
B	36	30%	35	29
C	30	25%	25	21
D	31	25.8%	5	4

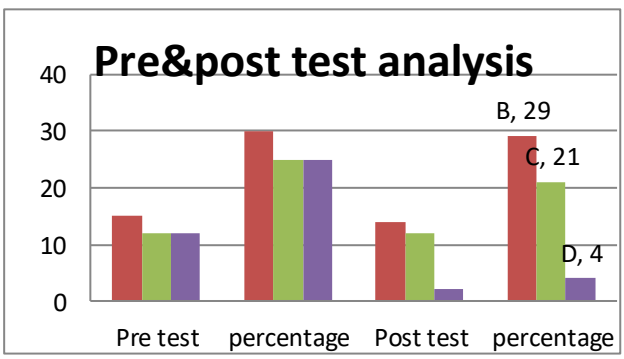

Figure 3.

The study implemented Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) to strengthen the oral proficiency of rural engineering students, drawing upon six task types—listing, ordering, comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experiences, and creative tasks—as the foundation for classroom activities. These task types were selected because they align with communicative language teaching principles and provide meaningful, real-life contexts for learners to engage in English use. During a six-week intervention, the six task types were introduced as follows:

Listing

Listing tasks require learners to brainstorm and generate a collection of items, ideas, or points related to a specific topic. This may involve group discussions, mind-mapping, or note-taking activities. For example, civil engineering students might be asked to list common construction materials, safety measures at work sites, or steps in a surveying process. Such activities encourage participation, vocabulary building, and collaborative thinking, while also improving students' ability to organize ideas clearly in English.

Ordering and Sorting

Ordering tasks involve arranging items into a correct sequence, while sorting tasks involve classifying items into categories. These tasks foster logical reasoning and the ability to present information coherently. For instance, students may be asked to order the steps involved in designing a bridge, sequence the process of concrete mixing, or categorize different types of soil based on engineering properties. These activities help students develop accuracy in both technical vocabulary and procedural communication.

Comparing

Comparison tasks engage students in identifying similarities, differences, and relationships between concepts. This encourages critical thinking and descriptive language use. Engineering students might compare traditional construction methods with modern ones, or evaluate the pros and cons of different materials like steel and reinforced concrete. By practicing comparisons, students strengthen analytical skills and learn to express nuanced ideas with clarity in English.

Problem-Solving

Problem-solving tasks are central to TBLT, requiring learners to use English as a tool for reasoning and negotiation. These tasks are especially relevant to engineering students, as they mimic real-life professional challenges. For example, students could be given a scenario where a bridge design faces structural issues and asked to propose solutions in English, or they could work in groups to discuss how to address water drainage problems in rural areas. Such activities enhance both fluency and critical thinking, bridging technical knowledge with communicative competence.

Sharing Personal Experiences

In this task type, learners are encouraged to narrate or describe their own experiences, opinions, or feelings. For rural engineering students, this may involve talking about their training experiences, describing a technical workshop they attended, or narrating challenges faced during internships. Sharing personal experiences allows learners to practice storytelling, self-expression, and confidence building, while also developing interpersonal communication skills.

Creative Tasks

Creative tasks are open-ended and encourage learners to generate original ideas, designs, or plans collaboratively. Examples include designing a sustainable building plan, preparing and delivering a technical presentation on innovative construction methods, or creating a role-play where students act as engineers explaining a project to clients. These tasks combine fluency, accuracy, teamwork, and innovation, pushing learners to use English dynamically in practical contexts. The findings clearly suggest that the integration of the six TBLT tasks into classroom instruction contributed to substantial improvement in students' oral proficiency. Students not only moved from lower groups to higher ones but also displayed increased confidence, accuracy, and communicative competence in English. This proves that TBLT is a practical and impact approach for enhancing oral communication skills among rural engineering students.

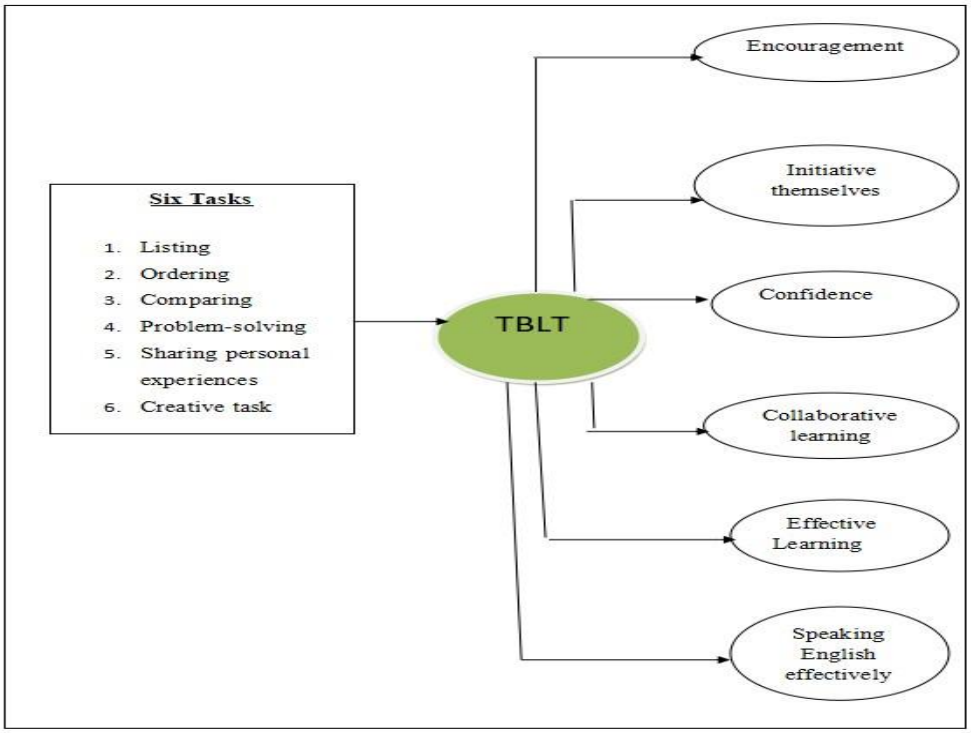

Figure 4. Outcomes After Using TASKS

V. Conclusion

The present study, titled *Task-Based Language Teaching for Enhancing Oral Proficiency in Rural Engineering Education*, examined the role of the TBLT framework in strengthening students' English speaking abilities. The pre-test findings revealed significant gaps, with only 20% of students in Group A (high proficiency) and 25% in Group D (low proficiency), confirming the need for a pedagogical shift.

The six task types—listing, ordering, comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experiences and creative tasks—served as the backbone of the intervention. Each of these tasks was designed to provide learners with authentic, meaningful opportunities for communication. Through listing and ordering, learners built vocabulary and structured information logically. Comparing encouraged analytical thinking, while problem-solving tasks promoted negotiation of meaning and teamwork. Sharing personal experiences enhanced reliability and confidence, and creative tasks nurtured innovation and open-ended communication. Together, these tasks not only engaged learners cognitively but also stimulated motivation and participation.

Aligned with these tasks, the study incorporated three instructional methods—developing fluency, ensuring accuracy, and refining pronunciation with technical vocabulary—so that learners' oral skills improved holistically. This systematic integration resulted in observable progress between the pre- and post-tests. After the intervention, the percentage of students in Group A rose sharply to 46%, while Group D reduced to only 4%. Groups B and C also shifted positively, indicating that learners across all levels benefited from the TBLT approach.

The findings also reflect the broader pedagogical outcomes that emerged through the TBLT cycle, as illustrated in the study's framework. Learners experienced encouragement to participate actively, took the initiative themselves in speaking activities, and built confidence to communicate without hesitation. The collaborative nature of tasks fostered peer learning, while the structured yet communicative approach ensured effective learning. Most importantly, these processes translated into the ability to speak English effectively in both academic and professional contexts.

Thus, the study concludes that Task-Based Language Teaching provides a powerful and sustainable framework for enhancing oral proficiency in rural engineering education. By connecting task-based activities with fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation-focused methods, and by reinforcing affective outcomes such as encouragement, confidence, and initiative, TBLT bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world communication. The post-test results, coupled with these observed learner outcomes, confirm that TBLT is superior to traditional approaches in preparing students for academic success and workplace communication.

In sum, the research demonstrates that TBLT not only enhances linguistic competence but also empowers learners with the confidence, motivation, and collaborative spirit necessary for effective English communication. Future studies could extend this model by integrating digital platforms and interdisciplinary projects, ensuring that the benefits of TBLT continue to expand in both rural and technical education.

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