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# EFFECT TASK-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY ON UPPER BASIC II STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS IN DEKINA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KOGI STATE

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*This study investigates the effects of task-based instructional strategy (TBIS) on the academic performance of upper basic II students in English speaking skills in Dekina Local Government Area, Kogi State, Nigeria. The importance of English as a medium of instruction and communication in Nigeria underscores the need for effective teaching methods to enhance students' speaking abilities. Despite the significance of speaking skills, many students struggle with proficiency, often due to traditional teaching methods that prioritize grammar over practical usage. The research employs a quasi-experimental design, comparing the outcomes of students taught using TBIS with those taught through the discussion method. A total of 120 students, comprising both urban and rural participants, were selected through a stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using the English Language Speaking Skill Performance Test (ELSSPT), focusing on aspects such as fluency, accuracy, and vocabulary. Findings reveal that students exposed to TBIS exhibited significantly higher mean scores in speaking skills compared to their counterparts in the discussion method group, indicating that TBIS is more effective in fostering student engagement and language proficiency. Gender and location were also examined, with results showing no significant differences in performance based on these factors. The study concludes that task-based instructional strategies can significantly enhance English speaking skills among secondary school students in Kogi State. It recommends that educators adopt TBIS to create more interactive and communicative learning environments, and that curriculum planners integrate this approach into teacher training programs. By doing so, the educational system can better equip students with the necessary skills to thrive in their academic and professional endeavors.*

***Keywords: Task-Based, Instructional Strategy, Students, Academic Performance and English speaking Skills***

## Introduction

The importance of the English language in the modern age is undeniable, serving as a global medium of communication. According to Ugboja and Ijoko (2022), Nigeria is a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural nation with diverse language characteristics. The country faces several social challenges including political, economic, linguistic, and religious problems. In particular, the various tribes in Nigeria speak multiple languages, ranging from the major ethnic groups such as Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, to minority groups including Efik, Ibibio, Ijaw, Idoma, Mumuye, Kanuri, Fulfude, Tiv, Gwari, Igala, among many others. In such a linguistically divergent environment, effective interaction and relationships among these distinct groups would be difficult, if not impossible, without an independent and neutral language that many people can speak and understand freely. Because of the strong monolingual tendencies among different actors in various fields, mutual distrust and suspicion would arise among the operators of national affairs, potentially leading to hatred and insecurity if there were no common language linking the diverse linguistic and cultural groups. For instance, the three major ethnic groups may view each other with suspicion, while the numerous minority groups may perceive these major groups as forming unholy alliances against them. This mutual distrust among ethnic groups would naturally have a devastating impact on Nigeria's overall development. The socio-cultural and linguistic fragmentation could significantly hinder the achievement of national and global peace. English, in this context, acts as a crucial medium of communication to bridge these divides and promote unity (Ugboja & Ijoko, 2022).

Language is the primary means of communication, whether spoken or written, enabling us to share ideas, opinions, views, and emotions with others. The ultimate goal of every nation is to produce manpower that contributes meaningfully to its growth and development. This goal cannot be attained without formal education, which is defined as official, planned, regulated, and organized learning provided by public or recognized private institutions, involving definite stages (Young, 2016). Formal education is largely classroom-based and delivered by trained teachers. The 2010 National Policy on Education of Nigeria states that the broad aim of junior secondary education is to prepare students for useful living within society and for higher education. This implies that effective teaching of English requires teachers to select instructional methods that are appealing to students regardless of their gender or background, arouse their interest, and enable them to achieve excellent results. Adeniji (2019) critiques the conventional teaching method for molding students into passive recipients of information, making them highly dependent on teachers. Traditional teaching methods such as the direct method are still widely used because they allow teachers to deliver lessons quickly within the limited time allocated to each subject. However, this method is not ideal for

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mastery of content, highlighting the need for more learner-centered, interactive, and engaging approaches like the task-based learning method.

Task-based learning is rooted in the Communicative Language Teaching Method, where teaching is carried out entirely through communicative tasks (Jeon & Hahn, 2015). It is a student-centered approach focusing on second language acquisition by having students use authentic language and project-based assignments to complete meaningful tasks that mimic real-world situations (Sobirjon & Umarkhanova, 2019). Breen, cited in Muhammed, Kisman, and Dan (2021), defines task-based learning as any structured language learning endeavor with a specific objective, appropriate content, defined procedures, and expected outcomes. For language acquisition to be effective, it must have real meaning and be used in natural contexts. Task-Based Instructional Strategy (TBIS) emphasizes acquiring language naturally by accomplishing various meaningful tasks, which increases learners' motivation. TBIS comprises key elements such as goals, procedures, and specific outcomes. It supports content-oriented and meaningful activities rather than focusing solely on linguistic forms (Ellis, 2013; Adirika, 2012; Skehan, 2018). There is therefore a need to explore the effectiveness of methods beyond the conventional direct method, such as task-based learning, to determine if they can improve the performance of both male and female students in English. Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of task-based learning in various aspects of English, including grammar (Ehsam, Ghssem, and Abdolreza, 2017), speaking accuracy and fluency (Munirah and Arief, 2015), and reading comprehension (Sinaga, 2015). TBIS is a student-centered approach that focuses primarily on meaning. Students communicate meaningfully at both the pre-task and task-cycle stages, which enhances their language learning experience. While TBIS emphasizes meaning, it does not exclude focus on form, although some scholars argue against "focused" tasks being labeled as tasks (Nunan, 2004).

Traditional language teaching methods, in contrast, are teacher-centered and involve face-to-face interaction primarily from teacher to student. These methods focus on analyzing written language through translation exercises, reading comprehension, and written imitation, relying heavily on mastering grammatical rules and memorizing vocabulary lists. Examples of such methods include the direct method, grammar translation, audio-lingual, natural approach, silent way, and communicative language teaching. Speaking is one of the four essential language skills, alongside listening, reading, and writing. It plays a vital role in supporting the other skills. Recent research highlights oral interaction as critical in shaping learners' developing language abilities (Hilferty, 2005). Learning to speak effectively enhances the development of reading, writing, and listening competencies (Trachsel & Severino, 2004). It is therefore crucial for ESL and EFL learners to acquire speaking skills that allow them to communicate naturally with native speakers. Speaking requires both motor-perceptive skills to use language sounds and structures correctly, and interactional skills to employ those abilities in communication. Brown (2001) explains that learners need to understand how native speakers use language in structured interpersonal exchanges where many factors interact. Thus, ESL/EFL students must develop knowledge of these aspects to engage successfully in spoken communication.

Gender refers to socially constructed differences between males and females. Scholars and educators widely agree that gender differences have significant effects on academic performance. Studies conducted worldwide have found consistent gender differences, often showing that female students outperform their male counterparts (Orabi, 2007; Khwaileh & Zaza, 2010). Ghazvini and Khajehpour (2011) argue that cognitive functioning differences exist between genders in academic settings, with girls generally being more adaptive to varied learning environments. Peterson (2010) notes that girls' superior writing ability contributes significantly to their language development. Research by Tsaousis, Mohammed, and Alghamdi (2022) also supports the finding that females generally perform better academically than males. Despite this, concerns remain about the perception that English is a feminine subject and that females consistently outperform males in it. In primary education, female students tend to excel in reading and writing. However, in science subjects, boys and girls perform similarly at younger ages, with boys surpassing girls by adolescence, particularly in middle and high school (Hurst & Johansen, 2006). The causes of these achievement gaps remain complex and not fully understood.

This study aims to investigate the effects of Task-Based Instructional Strategy on the speaking skills of Basic II students, considering gender differences. The research will also compare TBIS with the discussion method, another student-centered approach. Discussion as a teaching method involves dividing the class into small groups to talk effectively about a topic, problem, or issue. It is a student-centered approach that encourages active participation, with the teacher serving as a moderator rather than a lecturer. Effective discussions enable the free flow of ideas between students and between students and teachers (Yusuf, 2012). Oyedeji (1996) explains that the discussion method harnesses the collective knowledge and ideas of many people to solve problems or explore topics. This method promotes critical thinking and develops social skills such as listening and speaking. However, it can also present challenges, such as dominance by certain individuals, digressions from the topic, and potential conflicts due to disrespect for differing opinions. When properly managed, discussion promotes teamwork, clarifies ideas, and encourages active student involvement. Learners process information more deeply when they actively engage in discussions, turning information into knowledge (Akinleye, 2010). Discussion formats can vary, including small group talks, debates, panel discussions, and round tables (Adewuya, 2003). This study will therefore examine the effects

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of both Task-Based Instructional Strategy and discussion methods on the academic performance of Basic II students in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, with a focus on speaking skills development

**Statement of the Problem**

The English language plays a vital role in Nigeria's educational system, serving as a medium of instruction and a key to unlocking various opportunities. However, many basic II students in Dekina Local Government struggle with English language proficiency, particularly in speaking skills. Despite efforts to improve English language instruction, students' performance in English speaking skills remains very poor. One of the significant challenges to this persistent poor performance could be the use of traditional teaching methods employed in English language instruction. That is why the present study seeks to find out if task-based instructional strategy to find out if it can improve students speaking skills in basic II classes. The prevalent focus on grammar and theories/method coupled with inadequate practice and feedback could also hinders students' ability to develop practical speaking skills. Furthermore, the limited exposure to authentic English language usage and the dominance of native languages in students' daily lives can as well exacerbate the situation, and that is why the present study becomes very necessarily to investigate effect of task-based instructional strategy on basic II students' academic performance in speaking skills. The consequences of limited English language proficiency among basic II students in Dekina Local Government are far-reaching. Students' inability to communicate effectively in English could be the reason behinds the poor academic performance of basic II students in speaking skills and that is why this study seeks to examines effect of task-based instructional strategy and academic performance basic II students speaking skills in Dekina LGA, Kogi State.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of task-based instructional strategy on junior secondary school students' academic performance in English Speaking skills in Dekina Local Government Area. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determining the mean difference in the academic performance of students taught English speaking skills using tasks-based instruction strategy and those taught using discussion method.
2. Determining the effect of gender on students' academic performance in English speaking skills when taught using task-based instructional strategy

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the mean difference in the academic performance of students taught English speaking skills using tasks-based instructional strategy and those taught using discussion method?
2. What is the effect of gender on students' academic performance in English speaking skills when taught using task-based instructional strategy?

**Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

H1: There is no significant difference in the mean score of students taught English speaking skills using tasks-based instruction strategy and those taught using discussion method

$Ho_2$: There is no significant effect of gender on students' academic performance in English speaking skills when taught using task-based instructional strategy

**Methodology**

The study employs a quasi-experimental design, specifically a pre-test, post-test non-equivalent control group design. In this design, intact classes were utilized, meaning that subjects were not randomly assigned. The experimental group received instruction in English speaking skills using a Task-Based Instructional Strategy, while the control group was taught using a traditional discussion method. The research was conducted in Dekina Local Government Area (LGA), The target population for this study consisted of all Basic II students within Dekina LGA. There are 1,831 public secondary schools in the area, with a total population of 34,487 Basic II students according to data from the Statistics Unit of the Secondary Education Board of Kogi State for the 2020/2021 academic session. A sample of 120 Basic II students was drawn from both urban and rural secondary schools. Two schools were selected from urban areas and two from rural areas using a coin toss method. In urban schools, 61 students (33 females and 28 males) were selected, while in rural schools, 59 students (35 females and 24 males) were chosen through simple random sampling techniques. One school from each setting was assigned to the experimental group and the other to the control group via coin toss. Data were collected using the English Language Speaking Skill Performance Test (ELSSPT). Data collection commenced with the administration of the ELSSPT as a pre-test for both groups. To reduce the potential for revision using the pre-test materials, all question papers and answer scripts were retrieved immediately after the test. Two instructional packages were developed: one for the Task-Based Instructional Strategy and another based on the discussion method, both covering the same content. Following the pre-test, English Language teachers

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implemented the instructional packages during regular school hours over four weeks. At the conclusion of the intervention, the post-test was administered. To control extraneous variables that might influence internal validity, the researcher provided teaching guides for both groups to ensure adherence to the instructional packages. Teachers were instructed to have one test graded by three research assistants to minimize marking errors. Separate training sessions were conducted for the teachers to align them with the instructional strategies. The researcher closely monitored the implementation to ensure compliance with the specified procedures.

Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to address the research questions. Null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 significance level using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to account for potential errors arising from non-equivalence in the groups. This methodological approach ensured a robust analysis of the impact of the instructional strategies on students' academic performance in English speaking skills.

**Results**

**Research Question 1: What is the mean difference in the academic performance of students taught English speaking skills using tasks-based instructional strategy and those taught using discussion method?**

**Table 1**: **Mean and Standard Deviation of Pretest and Posttest Academic Performance Scores of Upper Basic II Students taught English Speaking Skills using Task-based Instructional Strategy and those taught using Discussion method.**

| Variable | | Pre test | | Posttest | | Mean gain | Mean Differences |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Strategies** | **N** | $\bar{x}$ | **SD** | $\bar{x}$ | **SD** | | |
| Task-Based Strategy | 68 | 40.74 | 8.68 | 68.21 | 8.50 | 27.47 | 10.05 |
| Discussion Method | 52 | 40.71 | 8.55 | 58.13 | 9.15 | 17.42 | |

Results on Table 1 show that the experimental group taught English speaking skills using tasks-based instructional strategy had a pretest mean score of 40.74 with a standard deviation of 8.68 and a posttest mean score of 68.21 with a standard deviation of 8.50. The difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores for the experimental group was 27.47. The control group taught English Speaking Skills using discussion method had a pretest means score of 40.71 with a standard deviation of 8.55 and a posttest mean score of 58.13 with a standard deviation of 9.15. The difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores for control group was 17.42. However, for each of the groups, the posttest mean scores were greater than the pretest mean scores with the experimental group having the highest mean gain. A mean difference of 10.05 was obtained from the result. This is an indication that tasks-based instructional strategy had effects on Upper Basic II students' academic performance in English Speaking Skills.

**Research Question 2: What is the effect of gender on students' academic performance in English speaking skills when taught using task-based instructional strategy?**

**Table 2**: **Mean and Standard deviation of pretest and posttest scores of male and female students ` academic performance when taught English Speaking Skills with Task-Based Instructional Strategy**

| Variable | | Pretest | | Posttest | | Mean gain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | N | $\bar{x}$ | SD | $\bar{x}$ | SD | |
| Male | 33 | 45.65 | 7.73 | 69.45 | 9.74 | 23.08 |
| Female | 35 | 42.54 | 7.52 | 65.95 | 9.55 | 23.41 |

Results on Table 2 showed the pretest and posttest mean and standard deviations of male and female students taught English Speaking Skills using task-based instructional strategy. Result showed that the male students had a pretest means score of 45.65 with a standard deviation of 7.73 and a posttest mean score of 69.45 with a standard deviation of 9.74. The difference between the pretest and posttest mean score for the male students was 23.08. Result also showed that the female students taught English Speaking Skills using task-based instructional strategy had a pretest mean of 42.54 with a standard deviation of 7.52 and a posttest mean of 65.95 with a standard deviation of 9.55. The difference between the pretest and posttest mean score for female students was 23.41. However, for both male and female students, the posttest mean scores were greater than the pretest mean scores with the female students having the higher mean gain. This result showed that task-based instructional strategy had effect on male and female students in favor of female students with higher mean gain.

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**Hypotheses 1: There is no significant difference in the mean score of students taught English speaking skills using tasks-based instruction strategy and those taught using discussion methods**

**Table 3: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of students' Academic Performance in English Speaking Skills when taught with Task-Based Instructional Strategy and Discussion Method**

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared | Dec. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 3037.067[a] | 4 | 1518.533 | 20.246 | .000 | 0.33 | |
| Intercept | 12618.687 | 1 | 12618.687 | 168.236 | .000 | 0.24 | |
| Pretest Scores | 516.910 | 1 | 516.910 | 6.892 | .010 | 0.21 | |
| Methods | 2367.845 | 1 | 2367.845 | 32.561 | .000 | 0.22 | S |
| Error | 11775.927 | 113 | 75.006 | | | | |
| Total | 653765.000 | 120 | | | | | |
| Corrected Total | 14812.994 | 119 | | | | | |

**Note:** S = Significant, NS = Not Significant and $\eta^2_p$ = partial eta squared

The result in Table 3 shows that with respect to the academic performance mean scores of upper basic II students taught English Speaking skills with Task-based instructional strategy and those taught with discussion method, an F-ratio of 32.561 was obtained with associated exact probability value of 0.00. Since the associated probability value (0.00) was less than 0.05 set as bench mark, the null hypothesis ($H_{01}$) which stated that There is no significant difference in the mean score of students taught English speaking skills using tasks-based instructional strategy and those taught using discussion method was rejected. Thus, inference drawn is that, there was a significant difference in the mean score of students taught English speaking skills using tasks-based instruction strategy and those taught using discussion method with the students taught using tasks-based instruction strategy having a higher mean in the posttest. This result showed that tasks-based instruction strategy of teaching resulted in an improvement of students' academic performance in English Speaking Skills. The result further showed the effect size ($\eta^2_p$ = 0.22), which indicates that twenty-two percent (22%) variance in the mean academic performance of students in upper basic II when exposed to tasks-based instruction strategy can be attributed to the use of the treatments.

**Hypotheses 2: There is no significant effect of gender on students' academic performance in English speaking skills when taught using task-based instructional strategy**

**Table 4: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of male and female Upper Basic II students taught English Speaking Skills with Task-Based Instructional Strategy**

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. | Partial Eta Squared | Dec. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 134.759[a] | 4 | 67.380 | .912 | .406 | 0.53 | |
| Intercept | 6863.610 | 1 | 6863.610 | 92.880 | .000 | 0.33 | |
| PretestScore | 133.496 | 1 | 133.496 | 1.806 | .183 | 0.43 | |
| Gender | .114 | 1 | .114 | 2.102 | .462 | 0.30 | NS |
| Error | 5690.128 | 113 | 73.898 | | | | |
| Total | 366689.000 | 120 | | | | | |
| Corrected Total | 5824.888 | 119 | | | | | |

**Note:** S = Significant, NS = Not Significant and $\eta^2_p$ = partial eta squared

The result in Table 4 shows that with respect to the academic performance mean scores of male and female upper basic II students taught English Speaking Skills with Task-Based Instructional Strategy, an F-ratio of 2.102 was obtained with associated probability value of 0.462. Since the associated probability value (0.462) was greater than 0.05 set as bench mark, the null hypothesis ($H_{02}$) which stated that there is no significant effect of gender on students' academic performance in English speaking skills when taught using task-based instructional strategy was accepted. Thus, inference drawn is that, male and female students taught English Speaking Skills with Task-based instructional strategy did not differ in their performance. This result showed that gender is not a significant factor affecting student's performance when taught English Speaking Skills with Task-based instructional strategy. The result further showed the effect size ($\eta^2_p$ = 0.30), which indicates that thirty percent (30%) variance in the mean academic performance of male and female students in upper basic II can be attributed to the use of Task-based instructional strategy.

**Discussion of Findings**

The result of the study showed that, task-based instructional strategy improved students' learning in English Speaking Skills more than discussion method with task-based instructional strategy proving more efficacious. This implies that task-based instructional strategy had positive effect on the mean academic performance scores of students in English Speaking Skills. The finding of the study is also supported by the test of hypothesis one which found that, there was a statistically significant difference in the mean academic performance of students in English Speaking Skills when exposed to task-based instructional strategy and conventional discussion method in favour of task-based instructional strategy, with high mean. This implied that

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twenty-two percent (22%) variance in the mean academic performance of students in English speaking skills can be attributed to the use of task-based instructional strategy. This finding agree with Ahmed and Btbidin's (2016) who investigated on the effectiveness of task based language teaching (TBLT) in promoting writing skills of EFL learners enrolled in undergraduate programs at public sector Malaysian universities and found that, the use of existing linguistic resources is a fundamental principle of TBLT as it leads the EFL learners to be Fluent and confident users of English language both inside and outside the classroom in real life situations. The finding is in consistent with Uzoegwu (2004) who examined the Co-operative Learning Method on Students Achievement in English Essay Writing in Nsukka, Nigeria and found that, students in the experimental group significantly outperformed those in the control group. The finding also agrees with Sameer, Al-Hirsh and Baniabdelrahman (2020) who found that, there was a significant difference in the mean scores of students taught using the task-based instructional strategy compared to those taught using the conventional approach. The finding also agrees with Chen and Zhang (2015) who examine the effect of task-based interaction pedagogy in English speaking instruction and the study task-based interaction pedagogy was more effective in improving students' English-speaking ability. Most of the students' English-speaking abilities in the experimental group met the basic requirement of College English Curriculum Requirements, whereas many students in the control group did not. From the discussion, task-based instructional strategy showed a significant result in spoken English students.

Result showed that female students performed higher in academic performance than their male counterparts' in English speaking skills. The finding of the study is also supported by the test of hypothesis two which found that, there was no statistically significant difference between the mean academic performance of male and female students taught English speaking skills using task-based instructional strategy in favour of female counterparts. This implied that thirty percent (30%) variance in the mean academic performance of male and female students taught English speaking skills using task-based instructional strategy can be explained by gender. The finding of the study is in agreement with Nget, Pansri and Poohongthong (2020) who investigated on the effect of TBI on ninth-graders' English Speaking skills and their satisfaction toward the experience with this approach and found a no significant difference in academic performance of the male and female students in favour of the males when taught with task-based teaching strategy. The finding is also agreed with c who conducted an experimental study of how to improve the English spoken proficiency of Indian engineering students using task-based approach and found no significant effect between male and female students' performance in English spoken proficiency. The finding of the study was in agreement with Pham and Nguyen (2014) who investigated on the effect of TBI on the speaking skills of the 1st year students and found that students had mixed experiences with remote TBI-based on academic performance of students in speaking skills. The study finding agrees with the finding Parajuli and Thapa (2020) who examined gender differences in the academic performance of students and found no significant difference between male and female students.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings and discussion of the study, the following conclusions were made:

The finding shows that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean academic performance scores of students in English speaking skills when exposed to task-based instructional strategy and discussion strategy in favour of the treatment group with high mean. The finding indicated that, there was no statistically significant difference in the mean academic performance score of male and female students taught English speaking skills using task-based instructional strategy. The finding also shows that, there was no statistically significant difference in the mean academic performance score of urban and rural students taught English speaking skills using task-based instructional strategy. The finding shows that, there was no statistically significant interaction effect of methods and gender on academic performance of students in English speaking skill

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. In other to enhance students' academic performance of students in English, the use of task-based instructional strategy should be encouraged in English classes in upper basic education schools.
2. Seminar and workshops should be organized for teachers so as to; update their knowledge in the use of c strategy in teaching and learning of English studies.

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