

## Analysis of Lexical and Cohesive Ties usage in Undergraduate Students' Writing by Applying Task-Based Language Learning Methodology

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### Abstract

The present scenario fact that the English is a language of modern technological and scientific developments, text is a primary tool for students to gain the knowledge in writing skills. However, most male Saudi students show minimum efficient in L2 writing skill and do not have sufficient competence for writing the authentic English passages. To enhance this various study were undergone to cope up the gap between the student's use of lexical and cohesive ties by applying task-oriented teaching. However, the immediate need to fill the gap, the researchers made pioneer study on this filed. The present study investigates analysis of lexical and cohesive ties usage in undergraduate students' writing by applying task-based language learning methodology. The study was performed by thirty-five students from an advanced ESL Reading class at King Saud University, Arts College in Riyadh for 15 weeks. This study has been investigated by Four English passages including behavioral psychology, scientific and two general passages throughout the semester respectively. The analysis of the obtained data proved that the students' language abilities in grammar and vocabulary significantly improved especially in the discourse analysis passages. In addition, the results of the study evidenced that students are more engaged and motivated during group work activities, and learn more about structure, identifying, cause and effect, purpose and function and if clause of analyzing passages. Proficiency of grammatical category results concluded among the 35 students, average 60% of the students were prefect in tenses, passive structures, if clause, cause and effect, purpose and function, documented 37.14,57.14,54.28 and 77.14% respectively. Overall, the present study concludes with pedagogical implications that ESL teachers might consider a task in their ESL classrooms.

**Keywords:** ESL learning, lexical and cohesive ties, task-based language learning, passage analysis, undergraduate students, vocabulary acquisition

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## Introduction

Long's (2015, p. 369) states the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an innovative approach that to catch on and spread sure involvement of teachers and practical demo are in order. Education in the current scenario provides creative innovation and quality to the students. The classroom learning could be creative and interesting for the learners particularly from the rural for this study. The Advanced method of teaching and learning will provide a fair environment for active learning. Teaching tasks in the classroom provides special importance to the needs and proficiencies of the learners to develop the language learning skills. The medium of teaching to undergraduate education is English, and it remains to be the language needed for profession in business and other occupations. It is necessary to improve employability for the learners and learning environment, which must be student-centered.

There is a need for accuracy and fluency in English. The students show their interest in acquiring language skills in order to get a better job. It is also essential for many learners, who wish to pursue their higher studies in overseas. Everybody feels ponder of knowledge of English as it is a significant requirement to grasp professional prospects. The second language English speaker catches courteous replies in many situations than does the native speaker. Most of the skilled workers who are fluent in English enjoy the profits of good jobs in multinational business companies. In addition, online education also increases responsibility for giving quality education for the learners. There is a need for accuracy and fluency in English. The students show their interest in acquiring language skills in order to get a better job. It is also essential for many learners, who wish to pursue their higher studies in overseas. Everybody feels ponder of knowledge of English as it is a significant requirement to grasp professional prospects. The second language English speaker catches courteous replies in many situations than does the native speaker. Most of the skilled workers who are fluent in English enjoy the profits of good jobs in multinational business companies. In addition, online education also increases responsibility for giving quality education for the learners.

## *Technology in Education*

Technology grounded education stimulates the learners' ability in attitude and interest which consider vital for learning skills. The e-learning setting helps the learners to attain knowledge over critical thinking. Education becomes meaningful and the learning methods increase self-esteem and confidence among the students. It comforts them to overwhelm the existence of affective filter. Moreover, Technology-based learning gives an easy entry to web-based sources and the students are able to use these resources to improve their knowledge. Ziegler (2016, p.136) argues a common relationship between TBLT and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has enriched over the years and the researchers fascinated in tasks and technology has brought to not only study of how technology might support and facilitate during learning, but how TBLT engages as a framework to investigate CALL. E-learning plays a significant role in providing virtual (face to face) learning situations in the classroom. The computer-based language teaching enhances easy language learning. Even personal computer fetches a drastic change in the learning process. The digital networking motivates the learners and has the incredible effect of their attitude and attention to learning the language. This kind of improved motivation emphasizes the quality of work and enhancement in learners' attitudes towards their learning skills.

## *Teaching English in the Classroom*

### *Role of Teacher and Students*

In the present scenario, education is no longer a matter of personality development and general understanding it could be a professional method of education and training for the learners to meet the competition of this era. In the context of the teacher's side, the learners do not feel adequately motivated to acquire the language and they are unwilling to put in the necessary amount of hard work to imbibe the necessary language skills. The teacher's respective questionnaire should be administered at 99%. The language educators have been using Task-based language teaching (TBLT) in the classroom for the past 35 years. This strategy is considering a process-oriented method for language teaching that unifies language teaching at the center of syllabus design and instructional goals. (Littlewood, 2004; Nunan, 2004; Richards, 2005). The syllabus is properly designed with clear objectives by specialists in the English Language Teaching and the only cause for the inadequate (poor) results is the study habits and the improvised socio-economic background of the learners (students) which cannot be either helped or changed in the short time available to them. It is beyond their scope and only the administration with backing and support of the university can improve the conditions of learning. On their part, they feel doing their best to keep the level and position of learning though it needs co-operation from the learners and administration to reach the preferred results.

There is an immediate need to innovate and re-model classroom teaching from a traditional method to an interactive one (learner center method), which is more or less compel the students to imbibe and activate the patterns of language learned in the classroom. The language courses should be revised, restructured and redesigned from time to time to incorporate changes coming into English language usage and the changing demands of the market.

Likewise, Workshops, retraining programs dealing with the improvement of language skills ought to be conducted frequently, to impart new strategies for teachers to progress their classroom presentation and support of the supervision. The Appropriate task should be adapted during the course of the year for testing language skills. The acquired language is consolidated and framed so that the teachers and administration will know the language progress of the learners and methods of enhancing and reinforcing the process, further it also helps the teachers to equip their teaching methodology as per need.

The TESOL training must be organized to meet the requirement of teachers for dealing confidently in the new styles of teaching. The training must be made compulsory to every teacher in all levels of teaching. This training should be learners centered rather than teacher-centered. The language should not be treated as a simple course syllabus to educate but it is an effective communicative tool and having functional value used for factual life situations. The latest methods of utilizing educational technology and gadgets to improve learning should be introduced along with innovative class-room teaching to relieve the monotony and motivate the learners' interest.

Unfortunately, a few colleges not having the necessary tools/software for learning a language like any kind of audiovisuals aids to help the learner acquire the language and they feel totally alien to their culture. So, teaching in colleges today is challenging. The pressures are greater

now than ever before. Such exchanges among teachers do not occur as frequently as they should. Teachers must equip their students in order to get better jobs in the society. For this demanding time, the researcher needs to discuss present problems and emphasize the importance of TBLT. The common platform of teachers is to share their ideas, to know common approaches and to part their experiences. This attempt may pay attention to a great number of the language teachers, are willing to agree with the new methods and approaches leaving behind the traditional approaches of practice in the EFL Classroom.

## Literature Review

### *Second Language Learning with Task -Based Teaching*

The researcher experience as an assistant professor of English, learners with many years of experience in the English learning classroom still have considerable difficulty in coping with English in its normal communicative use. In order to improve communicative competence, students have to look for additional tasks in the Discourse analysis. They mainly want to acquire accuracy and fluency for learning the English language. Task-Based technology of Language teaching and its focus on accuracy and fluency look exactly what the learner's need. An experimental program called the "Access Microscholarship English Language Program was familiarized as an endeavor to hone" communicative competence among the students who study through a non-English medium, by changing the formalized, structured pattern of conventional classroom teaching. This program succeeded to a great extent due to its task-based approach. Ellis (2009, p. 221) stated TBLT basically for teachers and students to forget where they are and why they are there. It is hard to understand for considering the "educational[ly] imperative" nature of the EFL (Goffman, 1981, p.53).

For the past 20 years, TBLT grabs the attention of English language educators. It considers a process-oriented approach for language teaching and merges the process of communicative language teaching in the center of syllabus design and instructional goals (Littlewood, 2004; Nunan, 2004; Richards, 2005). "Coring the language education with a task is expected to offer learners an experiential process of learning wherein they use the target language for meaningful and this negotiate language process will spur and promote the students' language acquisition skills" (Samuda & Bygate, 2008, p. 590).

Most of the challenges occurred in the time-based and physical constraints of the ESL syllabus and potentially reduced with the help of technology. So, the communication and technology increase the range of tasks in the classroom with web resources (Skehan, 2003; Stone & Wilson-Duffy, 2009), improve the validity of tasks and motivation for implementing a task in the learning environment (Sadler, 2009; González-Lloret, 2003), facilitate learners ownership of and agency in the tasks (Kern, 2006; Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2004; Reinders & White, 2010). TBLT suggests the use of tasks as a vital element in the Second Language classroom because it provides well contexts for stimulating student acquisition processes and supporting L2 learning (Shehadeh, 2005; Prabhu, 1987). For initiating the task-based technology of teaching and learning a second language in an ESL classroom, grounded on the idea for effective learning when learners are fully involved in language learning with the task.

The TBLT theory states English Language Learning is a process of communication rather than a theory of language construction. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 228) suggest that "tasks are believed to be a process of negotiation, modification, rephrasing, and experimentation that are at the heart of second language learning".

### ***Focus on Meaning in the Task-based Learning***

The students can learn plenty of vocabulary during paragraph writing in L2 use in the learning environment, accessed in active lessons in the classroom with no presentation of structures or rubrics and no motivation for students to realize themselves. It states an analytic syllabus and structure of the language come from the learner's intention (Wilkins, 1976).

### ***Focus on Form in Task-based Learning***

The attention of form arises when attention is typically on meaning but is moved to form seldom when a communication breakdown happens. Many skills are used to encounter this goal, such as "recasts" in which the teacher offers a remedial reformulation of the learner's incorrect discourse creation or understanding (Long, 1985).

The TBLT is the starting point for language development and form is developing from the meaning. If we take this goal, initially teachers have to encourage learners to use the language in the classroom as much as possible without worrying too much about formal accuracy. Further, a form-focused stage gives them the opportunity to see in detail at some of the forms that have been used in the classroom. Since this focus on form comes after learners have experienced the language in use, they have a context that will enable them to feel of the new language.

Tasks must be applicable to real-life to help students accomplish the tasks and show their analytical competence of sentence/structure in the classroom teaching and real-life situations (Willis, 1996, p. 149). In addition, task types include picture stories, puzzles and games (Nunan, 1989); interviews, discussions, and debates (Nunan, 1989; Oxford, 1990; Richards & Rodgers, 2001); everyday function, such as service encounters and telephone conversations (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). These tasks are valuable learning activities in the classroom environment.

### **3. Methodology**

The present study examined thirty students, selected randomly from the classroom out of 54 students. The researcher assigned four passages; Behavioral psychology, Scientific and two general passages. Moreover, assessment and analysis were based on the three aspects namely Lexis, Grammar, Syntax, and Discourse (direct and inferential). Under the heading Lexis: Synonyms, Antonyms, One Word Substitution, Idioms, Word Formation with Affixes were given. In the second part (Grammar and Syntax) focused on Tense identification and their usage and differences in the structure, identifying "cause and effect", purpose and function", "if clause" and "passive" statements from the passages were given. In the third part-inferential and text-oriented questions were given to examine their talent to infer meaning, guessing and understanding the passage based on contextual clues.

At the beginning of the task, the participants wrote two passages, after which the researcher collected the passages. The researcher then read each passage and at the end of each passage, he

wrote a comment. The comment motivates self-confidence and improves writing. However, the researcher does not comment on the grammar mistakes and vocabulary employed (as the main goal is to continue the writing process). The feedback of the task is given to the learners in the next lecture hour, and the learners are requested to continue writing passages.

In the classroom, the researcher pinpoints the main features of cohesive devices and lexical items. He describes what he liked most and what he liked least of their written passages. The classroom group discussion does not take longer than 20 minutes, where learners also discuss the problems they faced in the task, and the errors they might change in the next task. This discussion is to pay attention to an indirect way of guiding the learners more active. The group discussion is later minimized to 10 minutes. In the fifteenth week, all the tasks of learners are collected to evaluate the number of passages they wrote and calculated the comments with the change in writing quality, quantity, and styles. The data is calculated in terms of mean and average percentage. The researchers also entered an average score of the vocabulary, grammar, and cohesion between the pre-test and post-test differences.

#### 4. Result

##### 4.1 Task 1. Lexis

From the finding of the sample task given to a group of 35, It is inferred that only 20 students scored in synonyms and 22 of one-word substitution. Further, 18 students scored off antonyms out of the 35. Only 15 students have scored of idioms and 14 of word formation with affixes. From this, we come to understand that 20/35 students who attempted synonyms have limited vocabulary ability, In terms of synonyms the word 'span' written as 'lifetime' and the word 'chronicle' as 'story' or book' etc. While in the context of antonyms test found difficult because little importance was given to the study of antonyms right through their schooling years. For example, like antonyms, the given word was 'similar', 'perpetual', 'demote', 'political', 'sophisticated' for which most of the students written as 'non-similar', 'perpetual,' remote.' political or nonpolitical' respectively. Only 15/35 scored about idioms and 14/35 about word formation with affixes. This means that 15/35 students were fairly poor in terms of the two areas because they lacked proper grounding and usage of knowledge of the communicative language.

Table 1. *Students score in the proficiency of lexical words and means score between them*

Sl. No.	Task	Students scale (proficiency test)		Means score between both	Percentage %
		Actual participant	Participant's Scores		
1	Synonyms	35	20	15	57.14
2	One word substitution	35	22	13	62.85
3	Antonyms	35	18	17	51.42
4	Idioms	35	15	20	42.85

5	word formation with affixes	35	14	21	40
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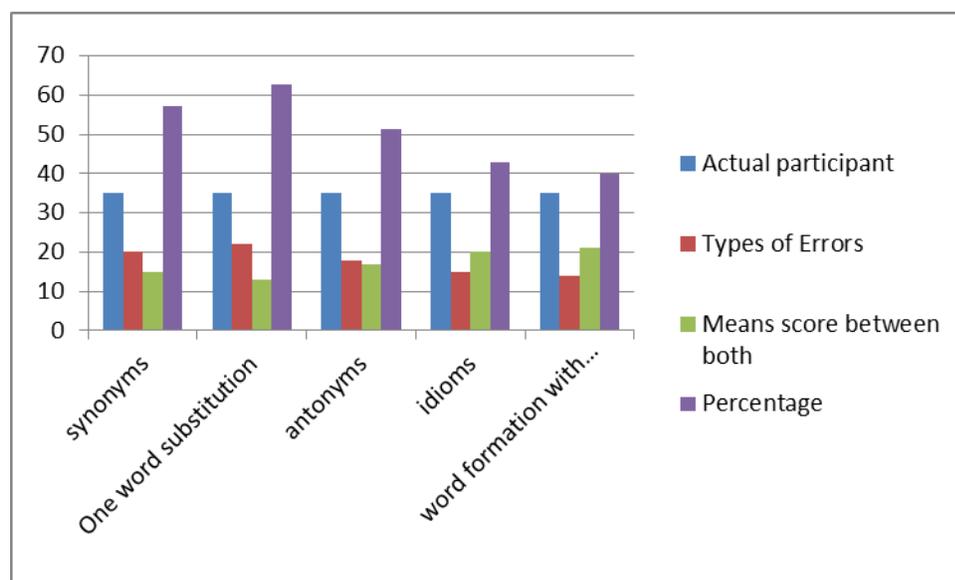


Figure.1 Lexical words

**4.2 Task 2. Grammar and Syntax (Grammatical category)**

In the grammatical category, students were tested in ‘Tenses’, ‘If Clause’, ‘Cause and Effect’, ‘Purpose and Function’ and ‘Passive Structures’. The results indicate that 13-15 students were able to score in these categories. A major number of students (35) did not perform well in the If Clause because they only had a vague idea of the subdivisions (in tense) in each category, only 13 students performed well. Hence, regarding the Cause and Effect, they attained 20 and Purpose and Function scored 19. The participants show a keen interest in Passive Structures and gained 22. Moreover, they were not able to identify and differentiate between the connectives to be used for Cause and Effect, Purpose and Function, etc. One of the reasons for their poor performance could be associated with the importance given to only prose and poetry during their schooling years which lacked in a technical approach for learning the above concept.

Table 2. Students score in the proficiency of grammatical category and means score between them

Sl. No.	Task	Students scale (proficiency test)		Means score between both	Percentage %
		Actual participant	Participant’s Scores		
1	Tenses	35	15	20	42.85
2	if clause	35	13	22	37.14
3	cause and effect	35	20	15	57.14

4	purpose and function	35	19	16	54.28
5	passive structures	35	22	13	62.85

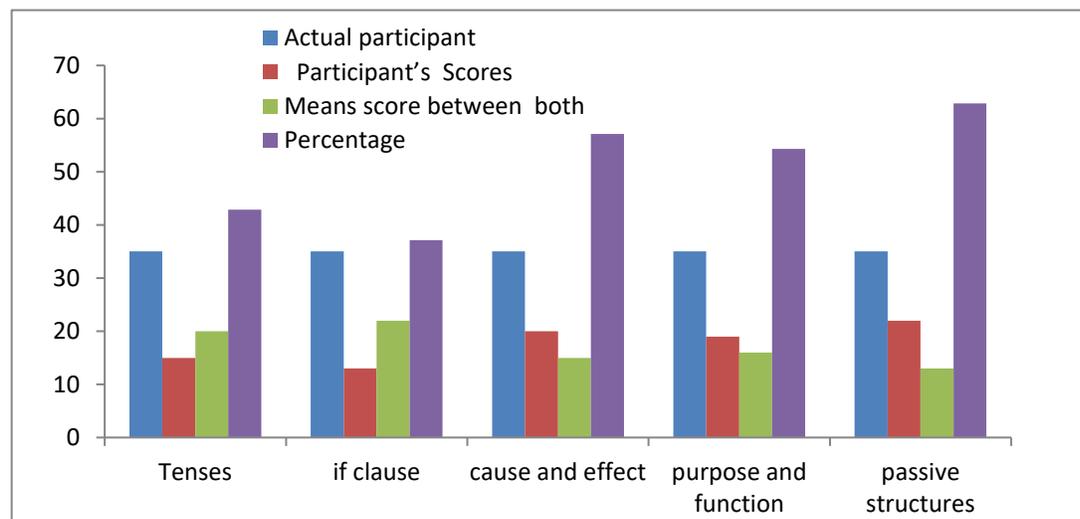


Figure.2 Students score in the proficiency of grammatical category and means score between them

#### 4.3 Task 3. Discourse

In the third part, the participants tested in three dimensions: 1. the text-based questionnaire, Non-text -based questionnaire and Inferring idea. The participants were assigned to four different groups and have done fairly in all the tasks with motivation and they scored 30 in Inferring idea, 27 in Text-based Question and 18 in Non-Text- based question respectively. The results indicate that students were able to answer the questions that were direct and text-based for which they only have to pick lines from the paragraph.

Table 2. Students score in the proficiency of discourse and means score between them

Sl. No.	Task	Students scale (proficiency test)		Means score between both	Percentage %
		Actual participant	Participant's Scores		
1	Inferring idea	35	30	5	85.71
2	Text- based Question	35	27	8	77.14
3	Non-Text based question	35	18	17	51.42

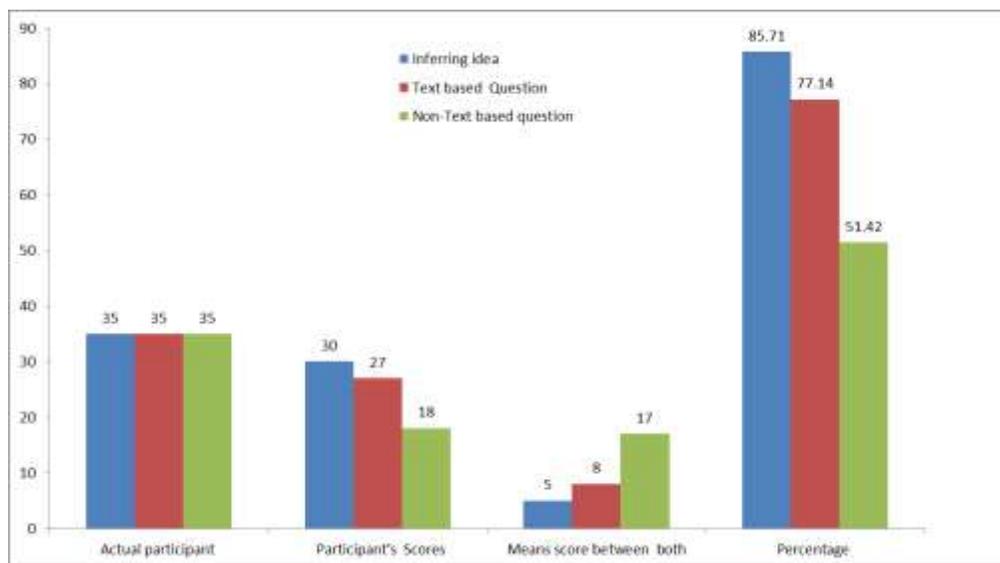


Figure.3 Discourse

## 5. Discussion

Willis, (1996) described the task-based framework as a model consisting of pre-task (introduction to topic and task), task cycle (task, planning, and report) and language focus (analysis and practice). This allows learners to focus on meaning by using the limited vocabulary they have in the first two stages and then only in the last stage is there an emphasis on form and function, about accuracy. By the involvement of students in meaningful tasks provides regular opportunities to use discourse markers practice skills in a language they might need in real life. Task motivates students as they want to achieve the task outcomes. As learners choose the language they need, they are more likely to acquire it. Most importantly, language focuses on the last stage which prevents learners from fossilization and creates opportunities for improvement in language skills.

The researcher observed that engagement of tasks promotes learner's confidence by giving them many opportunities to practice language inside the classroom and no fear for making mistakes once they begin to analyze the language.

During the group discussion, the learners used lexis, discourse markers and organizational patterns to signal how a text should be understood. These organizational structures demonstrated by students fairly well.

Strategy training is another way to provide comprehension instruction. Asking students to engage in prediction, clarifying questioning, reviewing and noting text organizations will provide real comprehension instruction.

While advanced texts are typically denser and present more complex information than texts of a more general nature, they are, nevertheless, assumed to be understandable with relatively little ambiguity. One of the major reasons for this assumption is the role played by discourse structure in text.

The test is an eye-opener on the fact that students, especially at the graduate level, need exposure to comprehension passages and knowledge on the discourse that help for improving the analytical thinking approach of the students.

The challenge of teacher for applying task-based techniques in the EFL classroom is how to choose and implement tasks to create a balance between focus on meaning and form. On the whole, researcher's experiments with self-created TBLL tasks worked quite well. The learners remained active and engaged in the tasks. However, to develop their interlanguage system learners have to face the challenge of talking in front of the whole class. They need to practice the language while focusing on accuracy and fluency. By giving time to prepare the report encourages them to think about what they are going to say. This motivates the learners to ask about the language they need and are more likely to acquire it.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study concludes that analysis of lexical and cohesive ties usage in undergraduate students' writing by applying task-based language learning methodology. Thirty students randomly selected for this study and examined in 15 weeks. The researcher assigned four passages; Behavioral psychology, Scientific and two general passages. It came up with a number of interesting findings; teachers can especially focus on improving the students' verbal efficiency. There is a greater dependence on extrinsic and instrumental motivation to learn the language. The teachers should consistently motivate learners. Special attention should be given to the sentence structure, grammar, and Syntax, discourse markers or connectives. It has also been noticed that the learners who are shy tend to become very anxious when they have to analyze a sentence/ clause in front of the whole class. These challenges can be very well taken care of through practice, planning, and encouragement. The researcher suggests that more efforts to be taken to develop the students' discourse competence skill in the course of English Language teaching and also the practical discourse analysis techniques will enrich the students' knowledge to comprehend any passage. Therefore, these suggestions help tasks-based technologies on second Language learners not only focus on task-based class but also across context areas where TBLL is the fundamental tool for understanding the subject matter. The language teachers may implement above strategies in the EFL class rooms to enhance the effective class room environment.

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