

# The Impact of Task-Based Learning on EFL Reading Comprehension in Medical Education

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## Abstract

English is the predominant global language, especially in the medical field, where professionals need to engage with research and communicate efficiently. Despite this necessity, numerous medical students face challenges in reading comprehension due to the complexity of medical terminology and conventional EFL teaching methods prioritizing rote memorization rather than practical application. This article studies the impact of Task-Based Learning (TBL) on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading comprehension within a medical context. This study investigates how TBL, focusing on significant communication and practical application, can improve medical students' comprehension of complex medical texts written in English. The research compares the reading comprehension skills of medical students taught using TBL with those of students instructed by the traditional grammar-translation method (GTM). The results indicate that TBL can significantly improve EFL learners' reading comprehension in medical settings, especially by improving vocabulary development, inferencing abilities, and understanding of authentic medical texts. In this study, a mixed-methods approach was applied, and medical students from Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute participated. The target group received instruction using the TBL method and was compared with the group that received GTM. During the study experimental students engaged in vocabulary development, diagram analysis, and medical text interpretation. Pre- and post-tests assessed reading comprehension, with additional qualitative data collected via surveys and interviews. Results indicated that TBL noticeably enhanced reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, inferencing skills, and student engagement compared to traditional methods. These findings suggest that TBL is a valuable pedagogical approach for improving medical EFL students' reading proficiency.

**Keywords:** Medical settings, reading comprehension, task-based learning, EFL learners, vocabulary acquisition.

## Introduction

English has become the lingua franca globally as well as in the medical field. It is essential for medical students and professionals increasingly needing to access and understand research, and publications, and communicate with colleagues in English (Flowerdew, 2015). Effective reading comprehension skills are essential for medical professionals to access the information they need to provide high-quality patient care, as this knowledge is often disseminated through medical texts and scientific articles. Furthermore, many medical students struggle with the medical terminology and medical discourse. Traditional EFL instruction, often focused on memorization and grammar rules, may not adequately prepare students for the demands of reading authentic medical materials. Task-Based Learning (TBL), an approach that centers on engaging learners in meaningful tasks that require them to use the target language to achieve real-world goals, has shown promise in enhancing language learning outcomes (Willis, 1996). This article investigates the impact of TBL on EFL reading comprehension in medical contexts, hypothesizing that students exposed to TBL will demonstrate greater improvement in their ability to understand medical texts compared to those receiving traditional instruction.

## Literature Review

The theoretical foundation of TBL is rooted in communicative language teaching, an approach that underscores the significance of creating meaning and engaging in interaction for successful language acquisition (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). TBL focuses on completing tasks that reflect real-life conditions, encouraging learners to use the target language to solve problems, exchange information, and express their ideas (Willis & Willis, 2007). In medical education, reading comprehension is crucial for understanding textbooks, research articles, and clinical guidelines. Research indicates that medical students benefit from TBL, as it encourages them to engage more deeply with the material and improves their skills in making inferences and expanding their vocabulary (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Studies have shown that TBL can enhance vocabulary acquisition by providing learners with opportunities to encounter words in meaningful contexts (Ellis, 2003). Furthermore, TBL supports the development of inferencing skills, as learners need to presume meaning from context to complete tasks (Carrell, 1988). In the context of medical English, TBL can be particularly beneficial by exposing students to authentic medical texts and tasks that simulate real-world scenarios faced by medical professionals.

## Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection. Medical students from two groups at the Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute participated in the research. The experimental group was taught using TBL, while the control group followed the traditional GTM. The experimental group engaged in a series of TBL activities related to medical topics, such as introducing new vocabulary and terminology, analyzing diagrams, interpreting medical charts, and summarizing authentic texts. The control group received traditional instruction focusing on grammar rules and translation exercises. Reading comprehension was assessed using pre- and post-tests consisting of authentic medical texts and comprehension questions. Pre- and post-tests assessed reading comprehension levels, and student feedback was collected through surveys and interviews.

## Statistical Results of the Study

Measure	Experimental Group (TBL)	Control Group (GTM)	Difference
Pre-Test Mean Score	52.4%	51.8%	+0.6%
Post-Test Mean Score	78.9%	65.2%	+13.7%
Improvement Rate	+26.5%	+13.4%	+13.1%
Vocabulary Acquisition	High	Moderate	-
Inferencing Skills	Strong Improvement	Slight Improvement	-
Student Engagement	High	Moderate	-
Motivation Level	Increased	Unchanged	-
Confidence in Reading	Improved	Limited Improvement	-

## Key Observations:

- Students in the TBL group showed a significant higher improvement in reading comprehension.
- The TBL method led to better vocabulary acquisition and inferencing skills.
- Engagement and motivation levels were higher in the TBL group.
- The traditional GTM method resulted in lower overall improvement compared to TBL.

## Results

The results indicated that students in the TBL group achieved higher results in their reading comprehension compared to the control group. Qualitative data from student feedback highlighted increased engagement, motivation, and confidence in reading English medical materials. Moreover, the TBL group demonstrated notable improvements in vocabulary acquisition, inferencing skills, and overall comprehension of medical texts. The results show that TBL is a more effective approach to developing the reading skills necessary for the medical education of EFL learners.

## Conclusion

The findings of the study highlight the advantages of the TBL method in improving reading comprehension and demonstrate that it is a more effective approach than the GTM method for enhancing EFL reading comprehension in medical education. Precisely, engaging medical students in meaningful tasks that require them to interact with authentic medical texts can lead to improved vocabulary acquisition, inferencing skills, and overall comprehension. Moreover, TBL reinforces language learning through communicative and contextualized tasks, which lead to active participation and deeper cognitive engagement. The results of the study indicate that the experimental group, which participated in TBL activities, achieved higher post-test scores, demonstrated increased motivation, and showed greater confidence in reading English medical materials. Besides the ability to analyze diagrams, interpret medical charts, and summarize texts, these skills contributed to a more holistic understanding of medical English, preparing students for practical scenarios they will encounter in their professional careers.

Future research could further explore the long-term effects of TBL on reading proficiency and its impact on other language skills within medical contexts. Overall, this study reinforces the

pedagogical value of TBL in equipping medical students with the linguistic competence required for academic and professional success.

## References

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