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RESEARCH PAPER

Integrating Generative AI into Technology-Mediated Task-Based Language Teaching (TMTBLT) for Enhancing English Language Learning in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Pakistani undergraduate students face difficulties shifting from traditional methods of English Language Teaching (ELT) towards experiential approaches which could prepare them better for professional contexts. This study explores the integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools into Technology-Mediated Task-Based Language Teaching (TMTBLT) for English Language Teaching (ELT) at this level. It uses a mixed-methods approach to examine the impact of these tools on learners' communicative competence, speaking confidence, and motivation. Results indicate that AI-powered TMTBLT fosters significant improvements in language skills, and particularly benefits students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. However, limited technological access and digital literacy appear to be the major barriers in realizing its full potential. The study recommends systemic reforms for bridging equity gaps, enhancing real-world communication skills, and preparing learners for global challenges.

KEYWORDS Artificial Intelligence, Educational Equity, EFL, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Technology-Mediated TBLT

Introduction

Undergraduate students in Pakistan find it difficult to meet the requirements of a globalized society due to the problems in our English Language Teaching (ELT). Although it is considered essential for career advancement and is also the primary medium of instruction at universities, the traditional methods of teaching English still revolve around rote learning and memorization, and limit students' potential to practically use the language (Ayesha et al., 2022). They seem to focus on reading and writing skills in isolation, leaving out listening and speaking, which are essential for developing effective communication skills (Shagufta, 2023). These issues are disproportionately amplified for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, as they often have limited exposure to English outside of school. This results in increasing their language anxiety and reducing confidence (Kamran & Siddiqui, 2022). All these issues seem to have a combined effect on students leading to inequalities in the society instead of promoting inclusivity and educational equity (Tayyaba, 2014). Therefore, we need to reform the ELT practices in Pakistan in a way that bridges these gaps. This necessitates the exploration of innovative, student-focused approaches which promote practical language skills and inclusivity.

Experiential learning in general, and Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) in particular are increasingly being recognized all over the world as more suitable approaches for English language teaching due to their primary focus on developing communicative competence and actual language use (Furrakh et al., 2021). TBLT actively engages students

by organizing learning around practical tasks which fosters strong language skills as well as motivation (Hua, 2024). However, Pakistani higher education still seems to be struggling with shifting towards TBLT due to various reasons including a lack of teacher training and uneven access to resources (Laiba et al., 2024). Recent developments in AI technologies present opportunities to address those challenges and facilitate this transition.

Particularly, Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) offers a wide range of cost-effective opportunities to easily adapt and further enhance TBLT frameworks. These AI tools have the power to create the learning environment suitable for language learning in a holistic way. They can provide immediate feedback, help in developing personalized learning paths, and create dynamic content tailored to individual learner needs (Mohammed et al., 2024). They can also empower students to practice their skills independently along with teacher-led instruction without any high stakes or fears of errors (Alessia et al., 2024). However, AI integration needs to be equitable, so that we may address problems like digital divide, insufficient infrastructure, and the lack of digital literacy among the students as well as the teachers.

This study explores how integration of Technology-Mediated TBLT (TMTBLT) with GenAI tools can help address these challenges. It investigates the impact of AI's adaptive capabilities combined with task-based learning on student engagement and learning outcomes.

The main objective of this research is to assess the impact of AI-assisted TMTBLT on students' language acquisition, motivation, and readiness for professional communication. By linking TBLT with AI, this study aims to provide a scalable, context-sensitive framework for equitable ELT suitable for resource constrained contexts like Pakistan. This will highlight the potential of GenAI tools to develop and adapt inclusive and effective educational practices.

Literature Review

The integration of technology into Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) opens up new avenues for English language teaching. In Technology-Mediated TBLT (TMTBLT), technology plays a central role, utilizing various digital tools to boost interaction, engagement, and the authenticity of learning tasks. González-Lloret and Ortega (2014) argue that technology allows the opportunity to provide customized input, promoting learner autonomy and meaningful communication. This addresses the limitations of traditional methods by replicating real-world tasks in a cost-effective and efficient way, enabling adaptive and personalized learning paths.

The recent developments in Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools have further increased the capabilities of TMTBLT. With the help of these technologies, we can easily simulate conversation scenarios, provide instant feedback, and handle complex content. These features complement TBLT and enhance learners' ability to practice language in different realistic contexts (Sewell, 2022). However, as Jian (2024) points out, there are a few problems like unequal access and training for AI tools and an overreliance on such technologies which raise ethical concerns. Therefore, it's important to ensure a balance between technology and human interaction to maintain critical thinking and communication skills.

The theoretical foundations of TMTBLT align closely with the principles of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) which emphasize interaction and task engagement (Skehan, 1998). TMTBLT promotes meaningful language use by creating realistic scenarios. The

combination of TBLT and technology, particularly GenAI, allows learners to complete tasks tailored to their specific needs and offers opportunities to practice their skills in a low-stakes environment (Kim & Kim, 2019). They can recreate real-world communication scenarios in a cost-effective way, helping in the development of relevant language skills. TMTBLT also has a significant impact on feedback delivery. González-Lloret (2024) notes that AI allows immediate, individualized feedback—something traditional classrooms have struggled with for long. This increases learners' engagement and helps them complete the assigned tasks more efficiently. However, this reliance on AI means that educators need to guide students in responsibly using these tools to maintain the integrity of the learning process and prevent issues like plagiarism (Jian, 2024).

There are, however, a few potential barriers in this integration of technology into TBLT. Almekhlafi and Almeqdadi (2010) highlight the issue of the digital divide, where unequal access to technology may increase educational inequities. Also, the successful use of AI tools depends on teacher preparedness as well. This requires significant investments in teacher training programs (Mohammad & Al-khresheh, 2024). These challenges are especially aggravated in contexts like Pakistan, where limitations in terms of technological resources compound with various internet governance models (Ahmed, Yilmaz, Akbarzadeh, & Bashirov, 2024b) to discourage any innovations.

The existing research seems to have extensively studied TBLT and technology integration, but few studies have explored its use in resource-constrained contexts like Pakistan. Also, the potential of GenAI tools combined with TBLT to address socio-economic challenges and meet specific learner needs is yet to be investigated. These gaps form the foundation of this study, which aims to analyze how AI can improve learners' communicative competence, motivation, and professional readiness in such settings.

Material and Methods

This study uses a mixed-methods research design to examine the impact of AI generative tools on language learning outcomes within a Technology-Mediated Task-Based Language Teaching (TMTBLT) framework. It captures the measurable improvements in language skills as well as the deeper insights into learners' experiences by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. This methodology is guided by the pragmatic research paradigm which prioritises practical outcomes and contextual relevance. The fundamental focus on practical application and adaptability makes pragmatism a suitable lens for exploring the interaction between learners, GenAI tools, and task-based activities (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The sample consisted of 30 undergraduate students enrolled in a communication skills course at a private university in Pakistan. It uses a purposive sampling method to ensure diversity across socio-economic and educational backgrounds. This allowed for an in-depth analysis of disparities in English proficiency and technology access. Participants were stratified into two groups: Type A included students from rural or under-resourced areas with limited exposure to technology and lower English proficiency, while Type B comprised urban students with greater technological familiarity and higher baseline English skills.

Technology-Mediated TBLT is still in its infancy in the context of Pakistani higher education. Therefore, the sample size was modest, but it was sufficient to uncover detailed foundational insights into participants' learning experiences. The findings of this study should be interpreted this way for further research involving larger and more representative cohorts (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Data Collection Procedures

Pre-Test Survey

A self-designed questionnaire informed by a sociolinguistic study identifying key factors influencing English language proficiency in Pakistani university students, including socio-economic status, educational background, and parental involvement (2022) was used to gather baseline data on participants' English proficiency, communication confidence, and familiarity with AI tools. This alignment of the survey's focus with these factors allowed for a nuanced understanding of participants' language skills and technological familiarity. It combined Likert-scale items with open-ended questions to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, and it was administered via Google Forms to ensure easy accessibility. A pilot test was also conducted involving five students to ensure the clarity and relevance of the instrument, and refinements were made in terms of rewording questions about AI exposure to distinguish between casual and academic use. The data collected through this instrument provided critical baseline insights into disparities between Type A and Type B participants, shaping the design of post-test interviews and informing the subsequent analyses.

Post-Test Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 participants selected from both Type A and Type B groups at the end of the semester. This purposive subsampling helped in gathering a range of perspectives while maintaining a manageable scope for detailed analysis. These interviews explored participants' experiences with the TMTBLT framework, focusing on perceived changes in English proficiency, confidence, and real-world communication skills. Students were asked about the challenges faced, the role of AI tools, and their reflections on task-based learning. These interviews were conducted in a quiet, neutral environment to ensure participant comfort and minimize distractions. Each session was approximately 30–45 minutes long, was audio-recorded with consent, and detailed field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details. In order to further enhance the credibility of this study, participants were invited to review and validate their interview transcripts for member-checking.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative Analysis

In view of the small sample size and to avoid overgeneralization, the quantitative data was analyzed through exploratory descriptive statistics after summarizing participants' demographic profiles, self-reported proficiency levels, and familiarity with AI tools. It highlighted trends and disparities between Type A and Type B groups, providing a contextualized understanding of participants' baseline conditions. These trends helped in the qualitative analysis by identifying areas which required deeper interpretive insights.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data from the post-test interview data was analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' subjective experiences. It was systematically coded using NVivo to ensure transparency. The coding process involved the following stages:

- Initial Coding: Reviewing transcripts to identify salient themes and patterns.

- Iterative Refinement: Grouping codes into broader categories to capture relationships between themes.

- Validation: Cross-validating emergent themes through triangulation with survey data and member-checking of interview findings.

In order to form overarching insights into learner empowerment and technological facilitation, themes such as "confidence boost," "AI assistance," and "task relevance" were synthesized. This helped in connecting the quantitative and qualitative findings into a coherent narrative.

Reflexivity and Methodological Rigor

Throughout the research process, I regularly examined my positionality as the researcher, acknowledging potential biases about the role of technology in language learning. This reflexive approach ensured a balanced and transparent interpretation of the data. The pilot testing of research instruments further helped with methodological rigor, ensuring reliability and alignment with the study's objectives.

The data was triangulated to strengthen the validity of findings by integrating survey insights with interview narratives. This provided a comprehensive understanding of participant experiences from different angles. A peer-review by an experienced researcher in mixed-methods studies was also conducted to further enhance objectivity. The interpretations were based on detailed contextual descriptions and direct participant quotes to represent participants' voices in an authentic way. All of these measures helped in upholding the credibility of this research in accordance with the established standards of mixed-methods research.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of the Pre-Test Survey

The pre-test survey helped in developing a foundational understanding of participants' English language proficiency, communication skills, and technological familiarity, which provided a critical context for the findings of this study. It highlighted significant socio-economic and geographic disparities, which reflected the problems this TMTBLT-based course aimed to address. Among the 30 participants, 16.7% were categorized as A1 (basic users), and 60% were classified as A2 (elementary users) based on the British Council Online English Level Test. These results reflected a predominantly elementary proficiency level, and major differences between Type A learners (rural, limited technological access) and Type B learners (urban, greater technological exposure). Type A learners reported an average self-assessed proficiency score of 2.1, compared to 3.8 for Type B learners on the 5-point Likert scale.

One particularly problematic area reflected in the data was listening and speaking skills, with 60% of participants rating their listening abilities as poor or very poor, and 40% expressing low confidence in speaking. Type A learners appeared to be significantly affected by this, citing limited exposure to English in academic and social contexts. Type B learners seemed comparatively less affected by this, but they also reported difficulties articulating complex ideas. This indicated that communicative challenges were not confined to socio-economically disadvantaged learners only.

In addition to this, the survey also revealed a sharp digital divide in AI tool familiarity. Approximately 30% of participants who were predominantly Type A learners

reported no prior exposure to such technologies. This finding highlighted the need for foundational training to integrate AI tools effectively within the TMTBLT framework. A combined analysis of these results reveals the structural and contextual barriers which shape learners' initial conditions, and helps in evaluating the impact of this on communicative competence and equity.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Post-Test Interviews

The post-test interviews helped in capturing learners' perspectives on their experiences during the TMTBLT-based English Communication Skills course. They highlighted the transformative impacts of this approach across four major themes: Improved Speaking Confidence, Real-Life Language Application, Integration of AI Tools, and Aspirational Shifts.

Improved Speaking Confidence

An increase in speaking confidence appeared to be a significant outcome, particularly for Type A learners who initially struggled with expressing their ideas using English. They consistently associated their improved confidence to the scaffolded task-based activities and the supportive, low-stakes environment provided by the course. R1, a Type A participant, observed: "I feel confident now when it comes to speaking English. Although I still make slight mistakes, I do not hesitate in speaking." This progress aligns with task-based language acquisition principles, which focus on the value of reframing language errors as opportunities for learning (Skehan, 2018).

Sub-Theme: Reduction in Error Anxiety

Reduced levels of error anxiety appeared as a major factor towards improved confidence of the students. They reported that the supportive nature of the course and constructive feedback allowed them to focus on communication without fear of judgment. This aligns with previous research indicating that minimizing error correction anxiety can significantly enhance learner engagement (Ellis, 2003).

Although Type B learners started from a higher baseline, they also reported improvements in fluency and coherence. This suggests that the TMTBLT framework is adaptable across various proficiency levels. These qualitative findings correspond with pre- and post-test quantitative results, which indicate a general upward trend in English proficiency levels for both groups.

However, some participants continued to face challenges articulating complex ideas. This underscores the need for more targeted activities to support advanced communicative skills.

Real-Life Language Application

The course's emphasized on authentic task-based activities which replicated real-world scenarios involving English communication through various technologies. Participants highlighted this relevance of tasks simulating professional scenarios, such as report writing, collaborative problem-solving, and multimedia presentations. This significantly enhanced learners' ability to apply English in real-life contexts, addressing the research question on skill acquisition. R8, a Type B participant, remarked: "The course has equipped me with the necessary academic skills so that I can acquire a more advanced understanding of language and culture."

These activities were particularly transformative for Type A learners who reported an improved level of confidence for academic and professional interactions in English. However, they also reported challenges in cultural and contextual relevance. Tasks sometimes reflected scenarios which seemed outside learners' lived experiences, potentially hindering a deeper engagement. These tasks were adapted from Widgets Inc, a task-based course in workplace English (Benevides & Valvona, 2018) suitable for CEFR B1 and above students. In order to enhance the relatability and effectiveness of tasks aligning with Kumaravadivelu's (2001) emphasis on context-sensitive pedagogy, localized tasks incorporating culturally familiar contexts like local business practices or community interactions could be developed.

Integration of AI Tools: Opportunities and Challenges

The integration of AI generative tools presented some opportunities as well as a few challenges (Culp, 2023). Learners appreciated the tools' ability to provide immediate feedback and support personalized learning. R3 noted: "Using the AI tools helped me understand my mistakes and improve faster than I expected." This particularly is an area where the traditional methods of English teaching have struggled a lot, especially in resource-constrained contexts like Pakistan. This is certainly a blessing in overcrowded classrooms where it is difficult to cater to individual student needs.

Sub-Theme: Perceived Limitations of AI Feedback

AI tools were deemed helpful for addressing surface-level errors. However, the students reported their limitations in resolving context-specific language issues. This aligns with earlier findings in the literature, which emphasize the complementary role of human-led instruction alongside AI tools (Nguyen & Widodo, 2020). For Type A learners, barriers such as limited access, connectivity issues, and difficulty interpreting AI outputs further highlighted the need for equitable technological access and tailored training in consideration of varied competence of students.

Aspirations and Future Directions

The course also inspired broader shifts in aspirations beyond immediate skill acquisition, particularly among Type A learners. Participants from this group described the course as transformative in expanding their horizons and fostering confidence to pursue opportunities previously perceived as inaccessible. R9 remarked: "This course has shown me that I can achieve much more than I thought possible, including applying for scholarships abroad."

Type B learners also reported an increase in this area, but the impact on socio-economically disadvantaged participants was particularly significant. These findings highlight the transformative potential of TMTBLT frameworks in addressing equity gaps by empowering learners to envision and pursue long-term goals.

Table 1
Synthesizing Key Findings and Thematic Insights, Aligning Pre-Test Data with Post-Test Qualitative Results

Quantitative Finding	Qualitative Theme	Implications
40% of participants reported low speaking confidence. Type A learners: 2.1/5 avg Type B learners: 3.8/5 avg	Improved speaking confidence through scaffolded tasks.	Confidence-building activities within the TMTBLT framework were effective for both groups.

60% of participants rated their listening skills as poor or very poor.	Authentic tasks improved listening comprehension, especially for Type A learners.	Real-life tasks were effective but they need to be designed with more cultural and contextual relevance.
30% of participants had no prior exposure to AI tools. Most of them were Type A students.	AI tools provided valuable feedback but participants faced challenges in accessibility and usability.	It is important to address the digital divide for an equitable AI integration.
Type A learners reported lower aspirations and fewer perceived opportunities.	The course expanded horizons, particularly for Type A learners.	TMTBLT frameworks can play a transformative role in fostering equity and aspiration.

The study reveals a significant potential of integrating Technology-Mediated Task-Based Language Teaching (TMTBLT) with Generative AI tools to address the problems related to teaching English communication skills faced by Pakistani university students. Initial pre-test results revealed low proficiency levels among many participants, especially in communicative tasks, listening comprehension, and English self-efficacy. These findings endorse previous research that highlights the obstructive role of language anxiety and limited exposure in learners' progress (Hermagustiana et al., 2021). Also, the fact that most of the students were found to be at A1 and A2-level unveils the systemic gaps in foundational English education. We need targeted, context-sensitive interventions which would prioritize communicative competence and learner confidence. This can be achieved by adopting TMTBLT as it offers a cost-effective and low-stakes transition from traditional-methods towards more experiential ones.

Integration of AI Tools in TMTBLT: Benefits and Barriers

The integration of GenAI tools into the TMTBLT framework presents opportunities as well as a few challenges. On one hand, learners appear to have benefitted from these tools through receiving immediate feedback on their work, low-stakes error correction, and personalized learning pathways. These positive findings regarding AI's potential to enhance language learning through individualized support are supported by previous research as well (Su & Zou, 2022). However, Type A learners from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds faced issues in terms of limited access to reliable internet and devices. This digital divide highlights the need for systemic investments in educational infrastructure to ensure equitable access to technology-mediated learning environments. It also points towards the need to at least spare educational institutions from strict internet governance models and "Digital Authoritarianism" to manage political dissent (Ahmed, Yilmaz, Akbarzadeh, & Bashirov, 2024) as it appears to disproportionately affect the already disadvantaged sections of society. The participants also expressed concerns about the limitations of GenAI tools in capturing the nuances of context-specific language use. This aligns with constructivist theories that signify the importance of human scaffolding alongside (Vygotsky, 1978). Future interventions should focus on developing critical AI literacy, encouraging students to use these tools in an analytical way while remaining cognizant of their limitations as well. This approach will not only support effective learning but also prepare students for the complexities of real-world communication.

Enhanced Communicative Skills and Motivational Outcomes

The participants showed significant improvements in speaking confidence and professional communication skills, and associated these improvements with the real-world focus of this TMTBLT course. This corroborates Mortazavi and Davarpanah's (2021) argument that authentic, contextually relevant tasks enhance language transferability and practical proficiency. Type A learners had initially reported significant problems in articulating their thoughts in English. However, they progressed considerably in this aspect through the low-stakes practice and iterative feedback in the course. This aligns with

various studies in second language acquisition which emphasize the importance of reframing errors as opportunities for learning (Skehan, 2018).

The notable shifts in motivational levels in this study highlight the transformative potential of aligning language tasks with learners' professional and academic goals. Participants reported a major increase in their enthusiasm and aspirations. However, these shifts need to be investigated further in order to determine their sustainability in the long-term. It was also noted that the tasks should be developed around culturally familiar scenarios in order to make them feel more relevant to the students and foster a deeper learner engagement. These ideas align with the previous studies which emphasize more culturally inclusive educational practices which could cater for diverse learner backgrounds and experiences (Byram, 1997).

Addressing Socio-economic Barriers and Equity Issues

This research further unveils the systemic barriers, including socio-economic disparities and infrastructural limitations, that shape learners' engagement with TMTBLT and AI tools. Type A participants' with lower initial proficiency and technological unfamiliarity appear to be affected more by these issues. This inequity necessitates exploring holistic and customized interventions, such as hybrid delivery models for bridging these gaps and developing inclusive learning environments. It also calls for lenient internet regulatory policies which would enable seamless access to high-speed internet in educational institutions so that they may benefit from the affordances of contemporary teaching methodologies.

Limitations and Future Directions

The study offers valuable foundational insights, however, they should be interpreted cautiously due to certain limitations. The current availability of only a small sample size and reliance on self-reported data may limit the generalizability of these results. Also, a long-term assessment of these impacts on learners' communication skills and professional development is necessary to arrive at reliable conclusions. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to evaluate the sustained effectiveness of AI-powered TMTBLT. Furthermore, a larger participant pool spanning over diverse geographic, cultural, and institutional contexts could also provide a more comprehensive understanding of its scalability. Similarly, comparative studies examining the application of TMTBLT in different regions could further help in verifying its adaptability, and develop best practices for integrating AI tools in education.

Broader Implications for Technology-Mediated Education

This study is a humble contribution towards a growing body of research on AI-powered language teaching and learning, particularly in resource-constrained contexts like Pakistan. The TMTBLT framework offers a model for utilizing AI tools to address basic issues of communicative competence, digital literacy, and motivational engagement in equitable and contextually relevant ways. However, its implementation must be accompanied by systemic reforms that address infrastructural inequities, ensuring that all kinds of learners can benefit from technological advancements instead of further widening the digital divide. As educational systems worldwide struggle to keep pace with the rapid developments in AI, this study highlights the importance of designing interventions that are not only innovative but also inclusive, culturally sensitive, and sustainable.

Conclusion

This study reveals the untapped potential of AI-powered TMTBLT in fostering communicative competence, bridging equity gaps, and preparing learners for global professional environments. It underscores the supportive role of GenAI tools in transitioning from traditional methods of ELT towards more experiential, holistic, and inclusive ones. However, collective efforts are needed to address the systemic barriers, develop critical digital literacy, and sustain learner motivation over the long term in order to realize the true potential of these technologies. This study provides a foundation for advancing equitable, context-sensitive, and impactful pedagogical practices by situating these ideas within broader debates on technology-mediated education.

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