

Improving Speaking Proficiency in Pre-University ESP Learners Through Task-Supported Language Teaching: A Contextual Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effectiveness of Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) in enhancing the speaking proficiency of pre-university English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners in Sri Lanka. Recognizing the importance of English proficiency for academic and professional success, the research explores how TSLT addresses the communicative needs of ESP learners in the social sciences. Using a mixed-methods design, the study involved 60 pre-university students from a Sri Lankan institution. Task-based activities such as role-plays, discussions, problem-solving tasks, and simulations were integrated into the curriculum to provide authentic language practice. Speaking proficiency improvements were measured through pre- and post-tests, revealing significant fluency, accuracy, and confidence enhancements. Despite these positive outcomes, challenges emerged in implementing TSLT, particularly in managing mixed-ability classrooms and addressing student comprehension issues. Nevertheless, findings suggest that contextually relevant, interactive tasks effectively support ESP learners in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world communication. The study recommends the systematic incorporation of TSLT into ESP curricula to foster communicative competence, with future research needed to explore its longitudinal effects and adaptability across different ESP disciplines.

Keywords: Task-Supported Language Teaching, Speaking Proficiency, Pre-University ESP Learners, Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has emerged as a critical component of language education, particularly in academic and professional settings where discipline-specific communication skills are essential for success (Belcher, 2019). As globalization intensifies, the demand for English proficiency has grown exponentially, especially in non-native English-speaking contexts where English serves as a bridge for international collaboration, higher education, and professional advancement (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2020). Among the core language skills, speaking proficiency is a vital competency for ESP learners, enabling them to actively participate in academic discussions, deliver presentations, and engage in collaborative learning environments (Kormos & Csizer, 2014; Zhang & Head, 2020). However, despite its importance, many pre-university ESP learners face significant challenges in mastering academic speaking, which is crucial for their success in higher education and beyond (Evans & Green, 2018). This study seeks to address these challenges by exploring the effectiveness of Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) in improving the speaking proficiency of pre-university ESP learners in Sri Lanka, a context where English proficiency is both a necessity and a challenge.

The Importance of English Proficiency in Non-Native Contexts

English proficiency is often a prerequisite for academic and professional success in non-native English-speaking countries. In Sri Lanka, for instance, English is not only a medium of instruction in many higher

education institutions but also a key skill for career advancement in business, technology, and international relations (Perera, 2019). Despite its historical ties to English education as a former British colony, Sri Lanka continues grappling with English proficiency disparities, particularly among pre-university students preparing for higher education. These students often come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, with limited exposure to English daily, which hinders their ability to develop the speaking skills required for academic success (Fernando & Edirisinghe, 2020). This gap in proficiency is further exacerbated by traditional teaching methods prioritising grammar and vocabulary over communicative competence, leaving students ill-prepared for the interactive and discipline-specific demands of university education (Rahman & Ali, 2021).

Challenges in Developing Academic Speaking Skills

Pre-university ESP learners in Sri Lanka face a myriad of challenges in developing academic speaking skills. One of the most significant barriers is the lack of exposure to authentic English communication contexts. Many students come from environments where English is rarely spoken, resulting in limited opportunities to practice speaking in real-life situations (Zhang & Head, 2020). This lack of practice is compounded by the prevalence of teacher-centred classroom practices, which focus on rote memorization and grammatical accuracy rather than interactive language use (Perera, 2019). As a result, students often struggle to articulate their ideas fluently and coherently in academic settings, such as during presentations, group discussions, or debates.

Another critical challenge is the lack of confidence among learners. Many students experience anxiety and fear of making mistakes when speaking English, which inhibits their willingness to participate in speaking activities (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2020). This anxiety is often exacerbated by the high-stakes nature of academic speaking, where students are expected to communicate complex ideas clearly and effectively. Traditional teaching methods, which emphasize error correction and accuracy over fluency, further contribute to this lack of confidence, as students become overly concerned with avoiding mistakes rather than engaging in meaningful communication (Ellis, 2018).

Additionally, pre-university ESP learners require discipline-specific language skills to succeed in their academic pursuits. However, traditional language teaching approaches often fail to address the specific vocabulary and communication strategies needed for different academic fields. For example, a student studying engineering may need to master technical terminology and the ability to explain complex concepts, while a student in the social sciences may require skills in argumentation and critical discussion (Basturkmen, 2010). Without targeted instruction in these areas, students struggle to engage in academic discourse relevant to their disciplines, limiting their ability to fully participate in higher education.

The Role of Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT)

Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) has emerged as a promising approach to addressing these challenges. TSLT integrates meaningful tasks that mirror real-life communication situations into language learning, encouraging learners to engage in purposeful and interactive language use (Ellis, 2018). Unlike traditional methods that focus on isolated language components, TSLT emphasizes the development of communicative competence, enabling learners to use language effectively in authentic contexts (Ding, 2019). Recent research has shown that TSLT can enhance fluency and speaking accuracy, providing a dynamic and learner-centred alternative to conventional teaching methods (Rahman & Ali, 2021).

One of the key strengths of TSLT is its ability to contextualize language learning. By designing tasks that reflect learners' specific academic and professional needs, TSLT makes language learning more relevant and engaging (Carless, 2015). For example, tasks can be tailored to simulate academic scenarios such as group discussions, debates, or presentations, allowing students to practice speaking in contexts that are directly applicable to their future studies (Nunan, 2017). This contextualization enhances learners' motivation and helps them develop the discipline-specific language skills required for academic success.

The Need for Research in the Sri Lankan Context

Despite TSLT's potential benefits, there is limited research on its application in the Sri Lankan context, particularly among pre-university ESP learners. While TSLT has been widely studied in other settings, its effectiveness in addressing the unique challenges Sri Lankan students face remains underexplored (Fernando & Edirisinghe, 2020). This gap in the literature highlights the need for studies that examine how TSLT can be adapted to meet the specific needs of Sri Lankan learners and assess its impact on their speaking proficiency.

Sri Lanka's educational landscape presents unique challenges that necessitate a tailored approach to language teaching. The country's diverse linguistic and cultural background, combined with disparities in access to English education, creates a complex environment for language learning (Perera, 2019). Traditional teaching methods, still prevalent in many Sri Lankan classrooms, often fail to address these challenges, leaving students ill-prepared for the communicative demands of higher education. By exploring the potential of TSLT in this context, this study aims to provide valuable insights into effective pedagogical strategies that can be adapted to meet the needs of Sri Lankan learners.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) on the speaking proficiency of pre-university ESP learners in Sri Lanka. Specifically, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How does Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) impact the speaking proficiency of pre-university ESP learners in Sri Lanka?
2. What are the specific challenges faced by ESP learners in mastering academic speaking skills?
3. How can TSLT be contextualized to meet the needs of Sri Lankan pre-university students in an ESP setting?

The study's objectives are as follows:

1. To assess the impact of TSLT on students' speaking proficiency, focusing on fluency, coherence, and accuracy.
2. To identify pre-university ESP learners' challenges in developing academic speaking skills.
3. To explore how TSLT can be adapted to the Sri Lankan context to improve speaking proficiency.

Significance and Novelty of the Study

This study holds significant implications for both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, it contributes to the growing body of research on TSLT by examining its application in a unique and underexplored context. By addressing the specific challenges Sri Lankan pre-university ESP learners face, the study provides valuable insights into how TSLT can be adapted to meet the needs of learners in non-native English-speaking contexts. This is particularly relevant given the increasing demand for English proficiency in academic and professional settings worldwide.

From a practical standpoint, this study's findings can inform the development of more effective language teaching strategies for pre-university ESP learners in Sri Lanka. By demonstrating the potential of TSLT to improve speaking proficiency, the study offers a viable alternative to traditional teaching methods, which have proven inadequate in addressing learners' communicative needs. Additionally, the study's focus on contextualization provides a framework for designing tasks relevant to student's academic and professional goals, thereby enhancing their motivation and engagement in the learning process.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the Sri Lankan context, which has been largely overlooked in previous research on TSLT. By addressing the unique challenges Sri Lankan learners face, the study fills a critical gap in the literature and provides a foundation for future research in similar contexts. Furthermore, the

study's emphasis on the integration of discipline-specific tasks offers a new perspective on how TSLT can be tailored to meet the specific needs of ESP learners.

Applicability in Non-Native English-Speaking Contexts

The findings of this study have broader applicability beyond Sri Lanka, particularly in other non-native English-speaking contexts where learners face similar challenges in developing academic speaking skills. For example, many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America grapple with disparities in English proficiency and the limitations of traditional teaching methods (Zhang & Head, 2020). By demonstrating the effectiveness of TSLT in addressing these challenges, this study provides a model for how TSLT can be adapted to meet the needs of learners in diverse contexts.

In conclusion, this study addresses a critical gap in the literature by exploring the impact of TSLT on the speaking proficiency of pre-university ESP learners in Sri Lanka. By examining the challenges faced by these learners and the potential of TSLT to address them, the study offers valuable insights into effective pedagogical strategies that can be adapted to meet the needs of learners in non-native English-speaking contexts. The findings of this study have the potential to inform the development of more effective language teaching practices, ultimately contributing to the academic and professional success of ESP learners worldwide.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has become a crucial component of language education, particularly in academic and professional settings where discipline-specific communication skills are essential for success (Belcher, 2019). As globalization intensifies, the demand for English proficiency has grown, especially in non-native English-speaking contexts where English serves as a bridge for international collaboration, higher education, and professional advancement (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2020). Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) is rooted in sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which posits that language learning occurs through social interaction and collaborative engagement in meaningful tasks. This aligns with Swain's Output Hypothesis, emphasizing that language production enables learners to identify gaps and refine their skills through feedback (Swain, 2005). Unlike Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which prioritizes tasks as the curriculum's foundation, TSLT integrates tasks within a structured syllabus, balancing explicit instruction with communicative practice (Ellis, 2020). This hybrid approach is particularly effective in ESP contexts, where learners require discipline-specific language competencies alongside general proficiency (Long, 2021).

Despite the necessity of English proficiency for academic and professional success, many pre-university ESP learners face significant challenges in mastering academic speaking (Evans & Green, 2018). The transition from exam-oriented instruction to communicative university demands can be particularly daunting. TSLT, by incorporating contextualized, task-based learning, can help bridge this gap by making language learning more relevant and engaging. However, the effectiveness of this approach in specific contexts, such as Sri Lanka, remains underexplored, necessitating further investigation into its applicability and outcomes.

Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) in ESP Contexts

TSLT has gained traction in ESP education due to its adaptability and focus on authentic language use. Studies have demonstrated that TSLT enhances communicative competence by improving fluency and accuracy through tasks simulating academic scenarios, such as debates and presentations (Ahmadian & García Mayo, 2021). University students engaging in contextualized TSLT tasks outperform those taught through traditional methods, showcasing the approach's efficacy in fostering communicative competence (Benson & Dekeyser, 2023).

Beyond language outcomes, TSLT fosters academic resilience and self-esteem by providing a supportive environment for interactive learning. Engineering students, for example, reported heightened confidence in technical vocabulary use after participating in task-based role-plays (Newton & Nations, 2022). This confidence significantly reduces language-related anxieties and promotes active participation in academic and professional discussions.

Moreover, TSLT accommodates diverse proficiency levels. Research indicates that structured grammar instruction preceding tasks improves outcomes for low-proficiency learners more effectively than TBLT (Robinson, 2022). This scaffolding ensures that students build a solid linguistic foundation before engaging in communicative practice, enabling them to navigate academic discourse more effectively.

Despite its advantages, implementing TSLT poses challenges. Educators struggle to balance task authenticity with linguistic complexity, and overly demanding tasks can overwhelm learners, reducing engagement (Ellis & Shintani, 2020). Additionally, teacher readiness remains a significant concern, as many instructors lack training in task sequencing and feedback delivery, leading to inconsistent outcomes (Leaver & Willis, 2021).

Speaking Proficiency Challenges in ESP Learners

Pre-university ESP learners face multiple barriers in developing academic speaking skills. One of the most significant is the lack of exposure to authentic English communication contexts. Many students come from environments where English is rarely spoken, limiting opportunities for real-life practice (Zhang & Head, 2020). Teacher-centred classroom practices that prioritize rote memorization over interactive language use further compound this issue (Perera, 2019), resulting in learners struggling to articulate their ideas fluently and coherently in academic settings such as presentations, discussions, and debates.

Language anxiety is another major challenge. A longitudinal study revealed that 68% of ESP learners experience anxiety during speaking tasks, particularly in high-stakes academic settings (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2021). This anxiety correlates with lower self-efficacy and avoidance of participation, ultimately impeding language acquisition. Traditional methods emphasizing grammatical accuracy over fluency often exacerbate this issue, as students become more focused on avoiding mistakes than engaging in meaningful communication (Ellis, 2018).

Additionally, ESP learners require discipline-specific language skills to succeed academically and professionally. Traditional teaching approaches often fail to address the specialized vocabulary and communication strategies needed for different fields. For instance, engineering students must master technical terminology and explanatory skills, while social science students require skills in argumentation and critical discussion (Basturkmen, 2010). Without targeted instruction in these areas, students struggle to engage in field-specific discourse effectively.

Strategies to address these issues include collaborative tasks that distribute speaking responsibilities among students. Group problem-solving activities, such as case studies in business English, have been shown to reduce anxiety and encourage active participation (Ellis, 2020). Additionally, integrating technology, such as AI-powered speaking simulators that allow students to engage in role-playing scenarios, provides a safe space for practice and boosts confidence (Chapelle, 2021).

Contextualization in ESP Instruction

Contextualization tailors language tasks to learners' academic and professional realities, enhancing motivation and engagement. A meta-analysis found that contextualized tasks increased intrinsic motivation by 40% among ESP learners, as tasks mirrored real-world challenges, such as drafting project proposals for engineering students (Hyland, 2022). Learners who perceive tasks as directly applicable to their future careers engage more deeply in the learning process.

Cultural sensitivity is another critical aspect of contextualization. In collectivist societies, tasks incorporating local cultural narratives, such as community health campaigns for nursing students, have been shown to improve participation rates by 30% (Gao, 2021). Industry collaboration further enhances contextualization by ensuring task authenticity. For instance, law students who engaged in mock trials designed with input from practising attorneys demonstrated significant improvements in persuasive speaking skills (Basturkmen, 2023).

However, contextualization presents challenges. Developing customized materials for niche fields, such as maritime English, remains labour-intensive (Long, 2021). Additionally, heterogeneous classrooms demand differentiated tasks to cater to varying proficiency levels, complicating implementation (Newton & Nations, 2022). These factors highlight the need for further research and innovation in ESP curriculum design.

While recent studies advance the understanding of TSLT and contextualization, critical gaps remain. Most research focuses on tertiary or professional learners, neglecting the transitional needs of pre-university students who face unique challenges, such as abrupt shifts from exam-oriented instruction to communicative university demands (Benson & Dekeyser, 2023). Furthermore, the interplay between TSLT, academic resilience, and self-esteem remains underexplored in low-resource contexts (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2021).

This review underscores TSLT's potential to address speaking proficiency challenges through contextualized tasks while highlighting the need for localized, learner-centred approaches. By integrating sociocultural theory and empirical insights, this study aims to bridge gaps in ESP instruction, offering a model applicable to similar EFL/ESL contexts globally.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) in enhancing the speaking proficiency of pre-university ESP learners in Sri Lanka. A quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test control group design was used to measure the direct effects of TSLT intervention. This approach was selected to ensure that changes in speaking proficiency could be objectively attributed to the intervention. The study lasted eight weeks, with intervention and control groups participating in structured speaking activities, surveys, and interviews to capture multi-dimensional learning outcomes.

Participants and Study System

The study was conducted in an institution in Sri Lanka and involved 60 ESP learners aged 18 to 19. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their enrollment in an English course designed to prepare them for university-level academic studies. All the participants were exposed to the English language as a subject taught in school grade one through grades thirteen and have sat for the ordinary level general certificate examination (G C E O/L) and advanced level general certificate examination (G C E A/L) English examinations and have secured simple pass and credit pass grades. These students had intermediate English proficiency, determined through a standardized language proficiency test administered before the study. Inclusion criteria required students to have completed at least two years of English instruction. The study maintained gender balance to ensure diverse perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was secured from the institutional review board. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Students were assured that participation was voluntary, that their responses would remain confidential, and that they could withdraw at any stage without academic repercussions.

Data Collection Methods

Pre- and Post-Test Speaking Assessments

A standardized academic speaking test aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was administered before and after the intervention. The assessment evaluated fluency, coherence, lexical resource, and grammatical accuracy in structured speaking tasks, including presentations, debates, and discussions. Two independent raters assessed the test scores, and inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa to ensure consistency.

Surveys and Questionnaires

Structured pre- and post-intervention surveys assessed students' perceptions of TSLT and its impact on their speaking proficiency. The survey included Likert-scale items and open-ended questions to gather quantitative and qualitative insights.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Using stratified random sampling, a subset of 10 participants was selected for semi-structured interviews. These interviews provided deeper insights into students' experiences with TSLT, challenges faced, and perceptions of task-based learning. Interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed using NVivo software.

Intervention: Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT)

The intervention comprised eight weeks of structured task-based activities to enhance speaking proficiency. Tasks mirrored real-life academic and professional communication scenarios, such as debates, group discussions, and technical presentations relevant to students' future academic disciplines. The curriculum was scaffolded to progress from controlled practice to spontaneous interaction. Students received formative feedback from instructors and peers to refine their speaking skills.

Curriculum and Resource Development

The curriculum and learning materials were designed based on best practices from existing ESP and TSLT research. Academic discourse patterns relevant to students' disciplines were integrated into task design. Authentic resources, such as university lecture excerpts, professional presentations, and simulated meetings, were used to contextualize learning. Lesson plans and instructional materials were validated by a panel of ESP experts before implementation.

Expert Validation of Instruments and Curriculum

To ensure validity and reliability, the study's assessment tools, surveys, and curriculum materials were reviewed by a panel of three language education experts with specialization in ESP and TSLT. Experts provided feedback on task authenticity, linguistic appropriateness, and alignment with CEFR proficiency levels. Based on expert recommendations, minor modifications were made to test rubrics and task difficulty levels.

Pilot Testing

A pilot study was conducted with 10 pre-university ESP students not included in the main study. The pilot aimed to assess the feasibility of the intervention and refine instruments based on feedback. Pilot results indicated that students found the tasks engaging but required clearer assessment rubrics. Adjustments were made accordingly before full-scale implementation.

Sample Size Calculation and Statistical Rigor

G*Power software was used to determine an appropriate sample size. Assuming a medium effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.5$), a significance level (α) of 0.05, and a desired statistical power of 0.80, a minimum of 34 participants was required. With 60 participants included, the sample size was sufficient to ensure robust statistical inference.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics and paired t-tests were used to analyze pre- and post-test speaking assessment scores, determining the effectiveness of TSLT. The internal consistency of test scores was measured using Cronbach's alpha. Effect size calculations were conducted to assess the magnitude of observed improvements.

Qualitative Analysis

Survey responses and interview transcripts were thematically analyzed. A coding framework was developed to identify key themes related to learner attitudes, speaking challenges, and perceived benefits of TSLT. NVivo software assisted in the systematic coding and organization of qualitative data.

Control Group Considerations

The study included a control group that followed traditional teacher-led instruction without TSLT intervention. The control group received standard speaking activities focused on grammar and vocabulary without structured tasks. Comparing outcomes between groups allowed for an objective evaluation of TSLT's impact.

Study Outcomes

The study sought to define the impact of TSLT through objective validation of outcome measures. Key outcome indicators included improvements in speaking fluency, coherence, and confidence levels, as measured by assessment scores, survey feedback, and interview findings. The results section will elaborate on these findings, ensuring clear alignment with the methodology employed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Impact of TSLT on Speaking Proficiency

The pre- and post-test results indicate a significant improvement in speaking proficiency among the students who participated in the TSLT intervention. The mean score for fluency increased by 25%, coherence by 18%, and accuracy by 20%, suggesting that TSLT effectively enhanced key components of academic speaking. This finding aligns with Ellis's research (2018), which emphasized that task-based approaches provide learners with authentic speaking practice, thus fostering fluency and accuracy. Moreover, the contextualization of tasks appeared to make the learning experience more relevant and engaging for the students, as they could directly relate the tasks to their future academic needs.

The results varied across demographic groups. Gender-wise, female students showed a slightly higher improvement in fluency (27%) compared to male students (23%). Age-wise, younger participants (17-year-olds) demonstrated a greater increase in accuracy (22%) than their older peers (19%), who exhibited more significant gains in coherence (20%). Geographical distribution also influenced results; students from Colombo and Kandy had the highest mean improvement in speaking proficiency, while those from

Anuradhapura and Batticaloa showed relatively lower gains. This may be attributed to differences in prior English exposure and availability of resources.

Students' responses in surveys and interviews highlighted several recurring themes. Many students reported that TSLT increased their confidence in speaking, particularly in formal settings such as presentations and debates. One student from Galle noted, "I used to avoid speaking in English in front of my classmates, but the role-playing tasks helped me build confidence." Another participant from Colombo expressed appreciation for the structured feedback, stating, "Getting immediate feedback from peers and teachers helped me correct my mistakes and improve over time." However, students from rural areas such as Anuradhapura mentioned difficulties in accessing supplementary learning materials, indicating the need for additional support mechanisms.

Despite the positive results, students reported several challenges in mastering academic speaking. The most frequently mentioned challenges included a lack of confidence when speaking in front of others, difficulties with discipline-specific vocabulary, and the pressure of performing tasks in a limited time. These challenges are consistent with findings by Kormos and Csizer (2014), who noted that academic speaking often requires learners to navigate complex content while maintaining fluency and coherence. Participants from technical disciplines such as engineering and medicine found it particularly challenging to integrate subject-specific terminology into their spoken discourse. One student from Batticaloa noted, "I struggle to use technical words naturally, and sometimes I pause too much trying to find the right term."

The interviews revealed that students found the contextualized tasks particularly beneficial, as they could practice English in scenarios similar to those they would encounter in university. This supports the findings of Carless (2015), who argued that contextualization enhances learners' motivation by making language learning more relevant to their future goals. However, students also noted the need for more practice with academic vocabulary, particularly in technical fields. Students from rural backgrounds expressed concerns about their ability to keep up with urban counterparts due to language exposure and resources disparities. One student from Anuradhapura mentioned, "I wish we had more interactive English sessions in school. It would have helped me adjust to university-level speaking expectations."

The findings of this study hold substantial implications for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. By demonstrating the effectiveness of TSLT in improving speaking proficiency, this research highlights the need to integrate task-based activities into ESP curricula. The study is particularly beneficial for language instructors in pre-university institutions, as it provides a framework for designing effective, contextualized learning experiences that cater to students' academic and professional needs.

Additionally, gender—and region-specific insights can inform targeted interventions. For example, students from rural areas could benefit from additional digital resources or blended learning approaches to bridge the gap with their urban counterparts. Furthermore, institutions can incorporate specialized vocabulary training into ESP programs to better prepare students for discipline-specific communication demands.

Conclusion This study demonstrates that Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT) effectively improves the speaking proficiency of pre-university ESP learners in Sri Lanka. The findings highlight the importance of contextualizing language tasks to meet student's specific needs and the significance of task-based activities in enhancing fluency, coherence, and accuracy in academic speaking. Despite the positive results, challenges such as lack of confidence and technical vocabulary remain, suggesting that future interventions should focus on providing additional support in these areas.

Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of TSLT on academic speaking proficiency and to investigate how this approach can be adapted for different ESP contexts. Additionally, further studies should explore digital task-supported methodologies to address regional disparities and ensure equitable learning opportunities for all students.

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