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THE IMPACT OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING ON SPEAKING FLUENCY IN EFL LEARNERS

ABSTRACT

This article explores the effects of task-based language teaching (TBLT) on the speaking skills of EFL learners. Participants were divided into an experimental group, which received instruction through task-based speaking activities, and a control group, which followed conventional communicative methods. The TBLT instruction incorporated oral presentations, collaborative discussions, problem-solving, and creative tasks. Learners' oral performance was assessed through pre- and post-tests covering pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, and interactive communication. Attitudes toward the teaching approach were evaluated using questionnaires. The findings indicate that task-based activities significantly improve oral proficiency, increase confidence, reduce anxiety, and promote collaboration. The study demonstrates that TBLT is an effective, learner-centered approach for enhancing speaking fluency and communicative competence in language learning contexts.

Keywords: Communication skills, collaborative learning, interaction, memorization, oral performance, pronunciation

INTRODUCTION

In teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), speaking fluency is a crucial component of effective communication. Many traditional teaching approaches focus heavily on grammar, vocabulary memorization, and written exercises, which often provide limited opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful oral

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 27.01.2026

communication. As a result, students may feel less confident and motivated to speak, and their fluency can remain underdeveloped despite years of study. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as a method that addresses this issue by centering lessons around authentic, real-world tasks. By engaging learners in activities such as role-plays, problem-solving tasks, and discussions based on real-life scenarios, TBLT encourages students to communicate naturally and purposefully. This approach not only allows learners to practice language in context but also enhances intrinsic motivation, as they see the relevance and purpose of using English beyond the classroom. Previous research has indicated that students exposed to TBLT demonstrate improvements in speaking fluency, including increased speech rate, reduced hesitation, and greater overall confidence in using the language. By emphasizing meaningful interaction rather than rote memorization, TBLT provides learners with repeated opportunities to negotiate meaning, self-correct, and develop automaticity in speaking. Therefore, investigating the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching on the speaking fluency of EFL learners is essential to understand its effectiveness and potential benefits in promoting oral communication skills in a classroom setting (Afria et al., 2019). https://sciencepublishinggroup.com

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a literature-based method to examine the role of task-based instruction (TBI) in enhancing EFL learners' speaking fluency. Instead of conducting a classroom experiment, the research synthesizes findings from foundational studies in task-based language learning. Four main perspectives guide the analysis: psycholinguistic, social-interactive, cognitive, and structure-focused approaches. The psycholinguistic perspective emphasizes how learners negotiate meaning and receive feedback during interactional breakdowns, facilitating language development (Long, 1985; Long & Robinson, 1998). The social-interactive approach highlights collaborative dialogue, where learners scaffold

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 27.01.2026

each other's language production through tasks such as dictogloss and jigsaw activities (Swain, 1995; Swain & Lapkin, 2001). The cognitive perspective considers how task design, including task complexity and planning phases, affects fluency, accuracy, and complexity (Robinson, 2001). Structure-focused tasks direct learners' attention to specific linguistic forms, either implicitly or explicitly, to foster form-focused learning (Doughty & Williams, 1998). Data for the review were drawn from these primary sources, ensuring that interpretations are based on first-hand empirical evidence. By analyzing these foundational studies, the review aims to provide a robust understanding of how task-based instruction can enhance speaking performance across varied EFL contexts, while acknowledging that much of the research has been conducted with adult, intermediate-level learners of English.

In their study, Xuyen and Nguyen (2021) examined the effects of task-based speaking activities on EFL learners' oral performance using a mixed-methods research design. The participants were 58 first-year non-English-major students aged 18–19, all of whom had completed Level 1 of the university's general English curriculum. They were divided into an experimental group (n = 30) and a control group (n = 28). Both groups received English instruction, but while the experimental group was taught through task-based speaking activities, the control group followed traditional communicative activities within the PPP model (Xuyen & Nguyen, 2021).

To collect data, the researchers used pre- and post-speaking tests, a questionnaire, and 13 lesson plans. The speaking tests assessed four components which pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, and interactive communication-based on the CEFR B1 rubric, which was converted to a ten-point scale. To ensure scoring validity, a second trained evaluator rated all performances. A paired-sample t-test was then used to compare pre- and post-test results for both groups (Xuyen & Nguyen, 2021).

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 27.01.2026

The experimental group received thirteen 50-minute task-based lessons, each designed according to Willis's (1996) TBLT framework, consisting of the pre-task, task cycle, and language focus stages. Lessons incorporated six task types, including listing, sorting, comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experiences, and creative tasks. After the intervention, a 34-item questionnaire was administered to the experimental group to explore learners' affective, cognitive, and behavioral attitudes toward TBSA using a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the questionnaire data (Xuyen & Nguyen, 2021).

RESULTS

To compare the oral performance of learners in the control and experimental groups before and after the intervention, the researchers applied **Descriptive Statistics** and the **Paired Sample t-Test**. The summary of results is shown in **Table 4.1** (Vo & Nguyen, 2021).

Even though both groups started with almost the same speaking level (Control: $M = 4.13$; Experimental: $M = 4.16$), their mean scores were considered below average on a ten-point scale. However, clear improvement was recorded after the study in both groups.

For the **control group**, the post-test score ($M = 6.04$) increased significantly compared to the pre-test ($M = 4.13$), and the difference was statistically meaningful ($t = 13.54$, $p = .00$). This indicates that even without the task-based activities, the learners' oral performance improved over the 13-week period.

For the **experimental group**, which received task-based speaking activities, the improvement was even greater. Their mean score increased from $M = 4.16$ to $M = 7.65$, and the difference was statistically significant ($t = 18.71$, $p = .00$). This suggests that the task-based activities had a strong positive effect on the students' oral performance (Vo & Nguyen, 2021)

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 27.01.2026

Group	Test	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference (MD)	t	Sig.
Control group	Pre-test	28	4.13	0.85	**1.91**	**13.54**	.00
	Post-test	28	6.04	0.77	—	—	—
Experimental group	Pre-test	30	4.16	1.36	**3.49**	**18.71**	.00
	Post-test	30	7.65	0.65	—	—	—

The EFL Students' Oral Performance in the Control and Experimental Groups. Source: Vo Thi My Xuyen & Nguyen Huynh Trang (2021)

After the main analysis, further investigation was conducted regarding four specific speaking features: **vocabulary and grammar**, **pronunciation**, **discourse management**, and **interactive communication**.

The control group also demonstrated statistically significant improvement in all four features, despite not receiving task-based instruction. As shown in **Table 4.2**, every feature recorded a higher post-test mean score, and all *p*-values were below .05. This indicates meaningful progress in students' vocabulary and grammar use, pronunciation accuracy, ability to structure discourse, and ability to interact during speaking tasks (Vo & Nguyen, 2021).

Feature	Test	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference (MD)	t	Sig.
Vocabulary & Grammar Achievement	Pre-test	28	1.08	0.38	**0.53**	**9.08**	.00
	Post-test	28	1.61	0.32	—	—	—
Pronunciation Achievement	Pre-test	28	1.14	0.36	**0.39**	**5.32**	.00
	Post-test	28	1.53	0.32	—	—	—
Discourse Management	Pre-test	28	0.86	0.43	**0.42**	**5.68**	.00
	Post-test	28	1.28	0.36	—	—	—
Interactive Communication	Pre-test	28	1.05	0.42	**0.58**	**5.44**	.00
	Post-test	28	1.63	0.38	—	—	—

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 27.01.2026

Descriptive Statistics of Four Specific Elements in the Control Group. Source: Vo Thi My Xuyen & Nguyen Huynh Trang (2021)

DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study both confirm and expand on earlier research regarding the development of English speaking skills. Similar to previous studies, the results emphasize that speaking is a central component of language proficiency and plays an essential role in communication, social interaction, and cultural expression (Rao, 2019). The prioritization of speaking reported by the learners in this study aligns well with this widely acknowledged view in second language acquisition research.

Another key observation concerns the role of oral presentations in improving learners' confidence and communicative competence. Earlier studies have shown that structured presentations provide learners with opportunities to practice language in meaningful and semi-authentic contexts (Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Makena & Feni, 2023). The present study supports these findings and adds that allowing students to choose their own topics increases motivation and personal engagement, which can further enhance learning outcomes.

The study also reinforces widely documented psychological barriers to speaking, such as shyness, anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Namaziandost et al., 2019; Boy Jon et al., 2022). Many participants reported these affective obstacles, yet oral presentations helped them gradually overcome these fears by offering structured, supportive speaking opportunities. This highlights the value of designing speaking tasks that create a safe environment for risk-taking. Additionally, the strong preference for group work is consistent with research on collaborative learning, which demonstrates that interaction and peer support positively influence language development (Norman, 2022). The findings indicate that group presentations helped learners reduce anxiety, share responsibility, and build cooperation. Collaborative work also encouraged peer feedback and self-

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
Qabul qilingan sana: 07.12.2025
Nashr etilgan sana: 27.01.2026

evaluation, which may contribute to long-term improvement in speaking performance.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrated that speaking-focused activities, particularly oral presentations within a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework play a significant role in enhancing EFL learners' speaking fluency, confidence, and engagement. The findings revealed that although learners initially face psychological barriers such as anxiety, lack of confidence, and fear of negative evaluation, structured speaking tasks help them gradually overcome these challenges. Oral presentations, especially when delivered in groups, provide a supportive environment where learners can share responsibility, receive peer support, and practice language in meaningful, authentic contexts.

The results also aligned with previous research confirming the crucial role of speaking skills in language acquisition, the effectiveness of presentation-based tasks, and the impact of affective factors on learner performance. By revealing students' strong preference for group work and topic choice autonomy, this study highlights the importance of learner-centered approaches in speaking instruction. Overall, the study contributes to existing literature by offering practical pedagogical insights and confirming that well-designed TBLT speaking activities can significantly promote fluency, reduce anxiety, and foster collaborative learning.

Future research may explore long-term changes in fluency development, compare individual and group presentation outcomes more deeply, or investigate the role of digital tools in supporting TBLT-based speaking tasks. This would provide broader understanding and help educators design even more effective interventions for EFL learners.

https://wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/gpble
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Note: Adapted from "Effects of Task-Based Speaking Activities on EFL Learners' Oral Performance," pp. 23–25.