

ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS IN EFL LEARNERS THROUGH TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING: A CLASSROOM-BASED STUDY

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the development of speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at the secondary school level. TBLT emphasizes meaningful communication through real-life tasks rather than isolated language exercises. A four-week intervention was conducted with 40 EFL students divided into control and experimental groups. The experimental group received instruction through TBLT activities, while the control group followed traditional grammar-based instruction. Pre- and post-tests assessed speaking performance, focusing on fluency, accuracy, and lexical resource. The results revealed that the experimental group showed significantly greater improvement in speaking fluency and vocabulary use. The study supports the use of TBLT as an effective methodology to enhance oral communication in EFL settings.

1. Introduction

Oral communication remains one of the most challenging aspects of English language learning, particularly for students in non-English speaking countries. Traditional teaching methods often emphasize grammar rules and written exercises, which may limit opportunities for authentic speaking practice. In response, **Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)** has emerged as a learner-centered approach that promotes language use through purposeful tasks. This study explores the effectiveness of TBLT in improving the speaking abilities of secondary school EFL learners.

2. Literature Review

TBLT is grounded in **communicative language teaching (CLT)** principles and focuses on completing meaningful tasks rather than memorizing linguistic forms (Ellis, 2003). According to Willis (1996), tasks can simulate real-world scenarios, encouraging learners to use language naturally. Previous studies have demonstrated the benefits of TBLT for speaking development, but its classroom application in EFL contexts remains under-explored, especially at the secondary level (Nunan, 2004; Carless, 2007). This study seeks to fill that gap by providing empirical evidence from a school-based setting.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The study involved **40 EFL learners** aged 14–16 from a public secondary school in Uzbekistan. Participants were randomly assigned to a **control group (n=20)** and an **experimental group**

(n=20). All students had intermediate-level proficiency based on their previous semester grades and a standardized language placement test.

3.2 Procedure

The intervention lasted **four weeks**, with each group receiving three 45-minute English lessons per week.

Control Group: Taught using a traditional grammar-translation approach. Lessons focused on sentence structure, grammar drills, and textbook exercises.

Experimental Group: Taught using TBLT. Lessons involved real-life tasks such as planning a trip, conducting an interview, or solving a problem in groups. Each lesson followed a three-phase TBLT model: *pre-task, task cycle, and post-task reflection*.

3.3 Instruments

Students' speaking performance was assessed through **individual oral presentations** conducted before and after the intervention. Presentations were evaluated using a rubric measuring **fluency, grammatical accuracy, and lexical resource**, based on CEFR B1 descriptors.

3.4 Data Analysis

Scores were analyzed using **paired sample t-tests** to determine within-group improvement and **independent sample t-tests** to compare gains between groups.

4. Results

The experimental group showed statistically significant improvements in **fluency** ($p < 0.01$) and **lexical resource** ($p < 0.05$), while the control group showed only marginal improvement in **accuracy** ($p > 0.05$). The **mean gain score** for fluency in the experimental group was **2.1 points**, compared to **0.6 points** in the control group.

Criterion	Experimental Group Gain	Control Group Gain
Fluency	+2.1	+0.6
Accuracy	+0.9	+1.0
Lexical Resource	+1.8	+0.7

5. Discussion

The findings suggest that TBLT is **more effective than traditional methods** in developing speaking skills among secondary EFL learners. While the control group improved slightly in grammatical accuracy, this did not translate into greater communicative competence. In contrast, the TBLT group engaged in **authentic language use**, which contributed to noticeable gains in fluency and vocabulary usage. These results align with earlier research by Skehan (1998) and Foster (2001), who emphasized the role of communicative tasks in second language development.

The limited improvement in grammatical accuracy among the TBLT group may indicate a need for **integrating form-focused instruction** within communicative tasks, as suggested by Long (1991). Future studies could explore hybrid models combining TBLT with explicit grammar teaching.

6. Conclusion

This classroom-based study demonstrates the potential of **Task-Based Language Teaching** to improve speaking skills in EFL secondary school learners. By focusing on meaningful interaction and real-world communication, TBLT enhances learners' confidence, fluency, and vocabulary. English teachers are encouraged to adopt task-based strategies, supported by adequate training and curriculum planning. A balanced approach incorporating both communication and structural awareness may offer the most effective pathway for language acquisition.

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