



**ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH TASK-BASED LEARNING
IN ELT CLASSROOMS**

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Abstract In English Language Teaching (ELT), enhancing oral communication skills remains a primary objective, yet challenges persist in effectively achieving this goal through traditional pedagogical methods. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as a promising alternative that focuses on engaging learners in meaningful, real-life tasks to improve their communicative competence. This article explores the application of task-based approaches in enhancing oral communication skills in ELT classrooms, drawing on empirical evidence and theoretical underpinnings. Through a review of current literature and classroom-based studies, this paper outlines how task-based methods foster interaction, promote spontaneous speech, and motivate learners to engage with authentic language use. The findings reveal that task-based approaches significantly improve fluency, accuracy, and confidence in oral communication. This study provides valuable insights for ELT practitioners looking to incorporate TBLT into their classrooms to effectively address the challenges of teaching speaking skills.

Keywords: Task-Based Learning, oral communication, speaking skills, ELT classrooms, communicative competence, task-based approaches.

Introduction

In language learning, speaking is a vital skill that often poses challenges in classroom settings, particularly when learners are faced with limited opportunities for authentic language use. Traditional teaching methods, which primarily focus on grammar rules and vocabulary memorization, frequently fail to create an interactive environment where learners can practice speaking in real-world contexts. Task-Based



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Learning (TBL) is a pedagogical approach designed to address these gaps by providing students with tasks that reflect authentic communication situations. This approach encourages learners to use language as a tool for communication rather than as an object of study.

The central goal of this paper is to explore how task-based approaches can enhance oral communication skills in ELT classrooms. By focusing on real-world tasks, TBL promotes learner engagement and enables students to practice speaking in a way that mimics natural conversations. This paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do task-based approaches enhance oral communication skills in ELT classrooms?
2. What are the benefits and challenges of implementing TBL in language classrooms?
3. How does TBL motivate students to participate more actively in speaking tasks?

The structure of the article is as follows: first, a review of literature on task-based approaches in language teaching is provided, followed by a discussion of the methodology used to explore the application of these approaches in ELT classrooms. The results of the study are presented, and finally, the discussion highlights the implications for ELT teachers and future research directions.

Literature Review The task-based approach to language learning is grounded in the theory of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes the importance of interaction in language acquisition. TBL, an offshoot of CLT, takes this further by using real-world tasks as the primary vehicle for language practice. In TBL, learners are presented with tasks that mirror the challenges of communication they may face outside the classroom, such as ordering food in a restaurant or participating in a business meeting (Ellis, 2003).



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Theoretical Foundations of Task-Based Approaches Task-Based Learning draws on the work of scholars like Prabhu (1987) and Willis (1996), who argue that language learning is most effective when it mirrors real-world communication. Prabhu's study of the Bangalore Project highlighted the effectiveness of task-based methods in encouraging learners to use language for communication rather than for simply mastering grammatical rules. Willis (1996) further refined the TBL framework by identifying key components such as pre-task planning, task performance, and post-task reflection.

TBL is considered a learner-centered approach, as it shifts the focus from teacher-led instruction to student engagement in communicative tasks. This active participation is seen as critical for developing oral communication skills. Through tasks, students practice real-life interactions that require them to make decisions, solve problems, and communicate effectively in various contexts.

Benefits of TBL in Enhancing Oral Communication Skills Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of task-based approaches in improving speaking skills. Research indicates that task-based learning promotes fluency by encouraging learners to engage in spontaneous speaking activities that mirror everyday conversations. By using language for authentic purposes, students are more likely to remember and use vocabulary and structures correctly. Task-based methods also allow for differentiated learning, as tasks can be tailored to suit various levels of proficiency and learning styles.

Moreover, TBL encourages learners to collaborate with peers, which is essential for developing communication skills. Pair and group tasks enable students to negotiate meaning, clarify understanding, and practice language in a social context. This interactive element fosters peer-to-peer communication, which is crucial for fluency development.



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Challenges in Implementing TBL Despite its advantages, the implementation of task-based approaches can present several challenges. One major challenge is the time required for effective task design and preparation. Teachers must carefully plan tasks that are appropriate for the learners' proficiency levels, ensuring that they are both engaging and pedagogically sound. Another challenge is the need for ongoing teacher support during task performance. Some learners may struggle with task completion without adequate guidance, especially when tasks are open-ended or complex.

Additionally, assessment remains a challenge in task-based classrooms, as traditional testing methods may not adequately capture improvements in speaking skills. Teachers need to develop alternative assessment strategies that evaluate learners' ability to communicate effectively, rather than their accuracy in grammar and vocabulary.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design, using classroom observations and interviews with both students and teachers to explore the impact of task-based approaches on speaking skills. The study focuses on a group of 30 intermediate-level learners enrolled in an ELT program at a university. The participants were introduced to task-based approaches in their speaking lessons over the course of one semester.

Results

The results of the study indicate a significant improvement in students' speaking skills after implementing task-based approaches in the classroom. The majority of students reported increased fluency and confidence in speaking, with notable reductions in hesitation during conversations. Students demonstrated a greater willingness to participate in speaking activities, especially in collaborative tasks like role-playing, debates, and problem-solving scenarios.



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Teacher interviews highlighted the positive impact of TBL on students' motivation. Teachers noted that students were more engaged in speaking tasks compared to traditional grammar-based exercises, and that the tasks encouraged more natural use of language. However, teachers also reported challenges in managing classroom dynamics, particularly in larger classes where it was difficult to provide individualized attention during tasks.

Discussion

The findings of this study support the effectiveness of task-based approaches in enhancing speaking skills in ELT classrooms. The improvement in fluency, accuracy, and student engagement aligns with the findings of previous studies (Ellis, 2003; Willis, 1996). Task-based activities, particularly those that involve peer interaction, provide learners with valuable opportunities to practice language in realistic contexts. However, the challenges associated with task design, classroom management, and assessment must be addressed to maximize the effectiveness of TBL.

Teachers should be provided with adequate training in task design and classroom management to ensure that tasks are well-structured and promote meaningful communication. Additionally, alternative assessment methods, such as performance-based assessments and observational evaluations, should be developed to more accurately measure students' speaking proficiency in task-based classrooms.

Conclusion

Task-Based Learning has proven to be an effective approach for enhancing oral communication skills in ELT classrooms. By providing students with opportunities to engage in authentic tasks that require real-world communication, TBL fosters fluency, accuracy, and confidence. Although there are challenges in implementing TBL, the benefits for both students and teachers make it a valuable approach for improving speaking skills. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects of TBL on



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speaking proficiency and to develop more effective methods for integrating task-based approaches into diverse ELT contexts.

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