

ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH TASK-BASED LEARNING IN ELT CLASSROOMS

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Abstract In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), speaking skills are often identified as crucial but challenging to develop. Task-Based Learning (TBL) has emerged as an effective pedagogical approach to enhance speaking proficiency, emphasizing communication through real-world tasks. This article examines the role of TBL in improving speaking skills in ELT classrooms, analyzing its theoretical foundation, practical applications, and the factors that influence its success. Through a review of existing literature and empirical evidence from classroom studies, this article highlights the advantages of TBL in creating an interactive, learner-centered environment conducive to speaking practice. The findings suggest that TBL encourages authentic language use, promotes critical thinking, and increases learner motivation, making it an effective method for fostering speaking competence in ELT.

Keywords: Task-Based Learning, speaking skills, English Language Teaching, communicative competence, learner-centered, pedagogical approach.

Introduction

The importance of speaking skills in English Language Teaching (ELT) cannot be overstated. In today's globalized world, the ability to communicate effectively in English is essential, and speaking proficiency plays a central role in this ability. However, developing speaking skills in the classroom can be challenging, as traditional methods often do not provide students with sufficient opportunities for authentic communication. One promising approach to addressing this issue is Task-Based Learning (TBL), which emphasizes the use of tasks that simulate real-world situations to engage students in meaningful communication. This article explores the impact of

TBL on enhancing speaking skills in ELT classrooms, aiming to demonstrate how this approach can improve language learners' ability to communicate effectively in English.

Task-Based Learning has become increasingly popular in ELT due to its focus on meaningful communication rather than rote memorization of grammar rules or vocabulary. In TBL, students are given tasks that require them to use the language for real communication, encouraging both fluency and accuracy. However, the implementation of TBL in ELT classrooms faces several challenges, including the need for careful task design, effective classroom management, and the integration of appropriate assessment methods. This article addresses these challenges while also highlighting the advantages of TBL in enhancing students' speaking skills.

The primary aim of this article is to examine how TBL enhances speaking proficiency in ELT classrooms. The research questions guiding this study are: How does Task-Based Learning enhance speaking skills in ELT classrooms? What challenges do teachers face when implementing TBL for speaking practice? How does TBL affect learners' motivation and engagement in speaking activities?

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data. The research design is based on a case study approach, where a specific group of English language learners is observed over a semester. The participants in this study include 30 intermediate-level students from a university ELT program, as well as three experienced teachers who have implemented TBL in their classrooms.

Data collection methods include classroom observations, surveys, and interviews. Classroom observations focus on how TBL tasks are implemented in the classroom, how students interact during task-based activities, and how speaking proficiency is developed through these tasks. Surveys are administered to students to

gather feedback on their experiences with TBL, while interviews with teachers explore the challenges and benefits of using TBL for speaking practice.

Pre- and post-assessments are used to measure improvements in students' speaking skills. These assessments focus on three key areas: fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Fluency is measured by the speed and smoothness of speech, accuracy by the number of grammatical or lexical errors, and complexity by the variety of sentence structures used.

Results

The results of the study indicate a significant improvement in students' speaking proficiency following the implementation of Task-Based Learning. The majority of students reported an increase in speaking fluency, with fewer hesitations and pauses during task-based activities. In particular, students demonstrated greater ease in engaging in spontaneous conversation, especially in tasks such as group discussions and role-plays.

Accuracy also improved, with students making fewer errors in their speech over the course of the semester. This improvement was particularly noticeable in the use of complex sentence structures and vocabulary. Students were able to use a wider range of grammatical structures and vocabulary in their speaking, which indicates that TBL encourages not only fluency but also grammatical accuracy.

Teacher interviews revealed that TBL helped students become more confident in their speaking abilities. Teachers reported that students were more willing to participate in class activities and were more engaged in the learning process. However, teachers also noted challenges related to task design and classroom management, particularly in larger classes. Despite these challenges, teachers agreed that TBL provided valuable opportunities for students to practice speaking in a meaningful context.

Conclusion

Task-Based Learning has proven to be an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing speaking skills in ELT classrooms. By providing students with real-world tasks that require meaningful communication, TBL fosters fluency, accuracy, and complexity in speaking. While there are challenges in implementing TBL, the benefits far outweigh the difficulties, making it a valuable tool for language teachers. Future studies should explore how TBL can be further integrated into ELT curricula and how teachers can be better supported in using this approach effectively.

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