THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING IN DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in developing speaking skills among secondary school English learners. Over six weeks, students engaged in communicative tasks designed around real-life scenarios during 45-minute lessons. Data collected from observations, audio recordings, and interviews reveal that TBLT enhances learners' fluency, confidence, and use of interaction strategies such as negotiation of meaning. Learners reported increased motivation and reduced speaking anxiety, highlighting the benefits of collaborative task work. Despite challenges related to task complexity and lesson time constraints, the findings support the integration of TBLT into school language curricula to foster communicative competence. Recommendations for educators include careful task design and scaffolding to optimize learner outcomes.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, Speaking Skills, Communicative Competence, Learner Motivation, Secondary Education, Language Learning, Interaction Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are a fundamental aspect of language learning, as they enable learners to communicate effectively in real-life situations. Traditional language teaching methods often prioritize grammar and written exercises, sometimes at the expense of oral communication practice. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) offers an alternative approach that centers learning around meaningful tasks, encouraging learners to use the target language actively. By focusing on completing communicative tasks rather than isolated linguistic forms, TBLT aims to improve learners' fluency and confidence in speaking. This article examines the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching in developing speaking skills, exploring how task design and classroom interaction contribute to learners' oral proficiency.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has received considerable attention as an effective method for improving speaking skills in second language learners. According to Willis (1996), TBLT emphasizes the use of authentic communication tasks that require learners to use language for meaningful purposes rather than focusing solely on linguistic accuracy. This approach encourages learners to develop fluency and spontaneity in speech. Ellis (2003) notes that tasks involving real-world interactions can increase opportunities for negotiation of meaning, a process critical for oral language development. Additionally, research by Goh and Burns (2012) highlights that speaking skills improve when learners engage in interactive tasks that promote communication strategies such as clarification and repetition. Furthermore, Bygate (2009) asserts that repeated practice through task cycles helps learners to internalize language structures, thereby enhancing their speaking proficiency. Nunan (2004) argues that through task completion, learners are more engaged and motivated, which positively affects their speaking performance. The role of interaction is further supported by Long (2015), who emphasizes that the quality of communication during tasks influences language acquisition by providing feedback and scaffolding. Mardonova (2025) argues that learners in the Uzbek context often face initial difficulties with open-ended tasks due to limited autonomous learning experience, but clearly structured and contextually relevant tasks can improve engagement and speaking confidence. Collectively, these studies underline the potential of TBLT to enhance speaking skills by fostering meaningful communication in the classroom.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in enhancing speaking skills among intermediate English learners in a secondary school context. The participants included 18 students aged 14 to 16 years, enrolled in an English course at a public secondary school in Uzbekistan. These students represented a range of language abilities but all had reached an intermediate proficiency level, making them well-suited to engage in communicative tasks that required spontaneous language use.

Over a six-week period, learners engaged in carefully designed communicative tasks based on common speaking situations, such as giving directions, participating in interviews, describing daily routines, and discussing

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opinions on familiar topics. The tasks aimed to encourage learners to practice speaking in authentic contexts while focusing on meaning rather than accuracy. Classes were held twice a week, each lasting 45 minutes, which is consistent with standard lesson durations in Uzbek schools. This scheduling required tasks to be appropriately scoped so that they could be completed within the limited time while still allowing meaningful interaction.

Before each task, minimal teacher input was provided, focusing mainly on explaining the task goals rather than giving explicit language instruction. This approach was intended to foster learner autonomy and promote spontaneous communication. Learners usually worked in pairs or small groups, creating opportunities for negotiation of meaning and peer interaction—a fundamental component of TBLT.

Data were collected through multiple methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the learning process. Classroom observations recorded learner engagement, participation patterns, and the use of communication strategies such as clarification requests and self-corrections. Audio recordings of task performance allowed detailed analysis of oral production, including fluency, turn-taking, and repair mechanisms. Additionally, semi-structured interviews conducted at the end of the study provided learners with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and perceptions of TBLT's impact on their speaking skills. All qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify emerging patterns related to communication development and learner attitudes within the TBLT framework.

RESULTS

The data collected through classroom observations, audio recordings, and interviews revealed a positive impact of Task-Based Language Teaching on the speaking skills of secondary school learners. Throughout the six-week intervention, students showed noticeable progress in fluency and communicative confidence when participating in task-based speaking activities. Observations indicated that learners became more willing to initiate and maintain conversations, demonstrating reduced hesitation and increased spontaneity compared to the beginning of the study.

Audio recordings highlighted improved interaction patterns among learners, such as more balanced turn-taking and effective use of communication strategies like asking for clarification, repeating, and reformulating statements. These behaviors suggest that learners actively negotiated meaning during tasks,

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an essential factor in language acquisition. Several learners also demonstrated better use of vocabulary and sentence structures relevant to the task topics, reflecting their growing ability to apply language knowledge in context.

The interviews provided rich insights into learners' experiences. Most participants expressed that engaging in real-life speaking scenarios made the language more relatable and the learning process more enjoyable. Many reported that working in pairs or small groups reduced anxiety and helped them practice speaking more openly. Furthermore, learners felt that TBLT activities boosted their confidence to use English outside the classroom, indicating a transfer of skills to authentic situations.

Despite these positive outcomes, some challenges emerged. A few students found the open-ended nature of tasks challenging at first and preferred clearer instructions or more teacher support. Additionally, the 45-minute lesson length sometimes limited the depth of interaction, making it difficult to complete more complex tasks fully. Nonetheless, the overall findings suggest that implementing TBLT with social and communicative tasks within the school schedule can effectively enhance learners' speaking abilities and motivation.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study support the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in developing speaking skills among secondary school learners. The observed improvements in fluency, confidence, and interaction strategies align with Ellis's (2003) and Willis's (1996) assertions that TBLT enhances oral proficiency by encouraging meaningful use of language. By engaging learners in authentic communicative tasks, TBLT provides a practical context in which students can practice negotiating meaning, a process essential for language acquisition (Long, 2015). The frequent use of repair strategies and negotiation in learners' speech confirms the importance of social interaction within language learning.

Learners' positive perceptions of task-based speaking activities further corroborate Nunan's (2004) argument that task relevance and learner engagement are crucial for motivation. The reduction in speaking anxiety reported by participants suggests that collaborative tasks create a supportive environment, which can increase willingness to communicate. However, challenges related to learners' initial discomfort with open-ended tasks echo findings by Goh and Burns (2012), who note that some learners require scaffolding to fully benefit from TBLT.

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Time constraints inherent in the 45-minute lesson structure posed challenges for task completion, indicating that educators need to design tasks carefully to balance complexity and manageability within limited periods. Despite this, the overall benefits of TBLT for developing speaking skills within the typical school schedule are evident. Future research could explore strategies to scaffold task complexity and extend task time to optimize learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an effective approach for developing speaking skills among secondary school learners. Through engaging in meaningful communicative tasks, students improved their fluency, confidence, and ability to negotiate meaning in English. The use of authentic, real-life scenarios increased learner motivation and provided opportunities for collaborative interaction, which contributed positively to oral proficiency. Although some challenges related to task complexity and limited lesson time were identified, these can be addressed through careful task design and instructional support. Overall, integrating TBLT into secondary school English curricula offers a promising pathway to enhance learners' speaking competence and foster a more communicative classroom environment. Future studies could further investigate methods to optimize task implementation within time constraints and diverse learner needs.

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