



THE ROLE OF TASK-BASED LEARNING IN ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

For a student, who is leaning a new language, speaking skill usually poses challenges. To address these issues, a recent teaching approach Task-Based Learning (TBL) has become popular in EFL classrooms. This article explores how TBL contributes to the development of speaking skills in EFL students. The article reviews the theoretical foundations of TBL, its benefits, implementation challenges, and practical examples of its use in the classroom. It also discusses current research and new perspectives on the use of TBL to improve speaking skills. Finally, the importance of TBL as an effective method is highlighted and recommendations for teachers are offered.

Introduction

Learning English as a foreign language (EFL) requires the development of four basic skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Among these, speaking is usually considered one of the most difficult as it requires confidence, fluency, and the ability to express thoughts in real time. Many students face difficulties such as fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and lack of practice in real situations. To address these issues, teachers are looking for effective methods, and one of them is task-based learning (TBL).

TBL is an approach in which students complete tasks that simulate real communicative situations, such as discussing travel plans, performing role plays or solving a problem in a group (Nunan, 2015). This method emphasizes the meaning and functionality of language rather than grammar rules. Despite the growing popularity of TBL, its impact on speaking skills development in EFL classrooms requires further study. This article examines the role of TBL in improving speaking skills based on current research and integrating insights from personal classroom experience. It first outlines key findings from the literature, then discusses the positive sides and common implementation challenges, presents practical example of its use and finally proposes practical strategies to maximize TBL's effectiveness in developing speaking proficiency.

Theoretical Foundations of TBL

Task based leaning (TBL) is based on the communicative approach to language teaching, which emphasizes the importance of using language in real-life situations (Willis & Willis, 2012). According to Nunan (2015), a TBL task is an activity where students use language to

achieve a specific goal, such as planning an event or solving a case. TBL consists of three stages:

- i. Pre-Task Cycle: The teacher introduces the topic, activates vocabulary, and sets the context by providing instructions and examples of how to perform a task.
- ii. Task Cycle: Students work in pairs or groups, depending on the given task, to complete a task, such as discussing a problem or creating a dialogue. The teacher's role is to observe the performance of the task.
- iii. Post-Task Cycle: The teacher and students debrief, focusing on language and errors. The teacher provides feedback and gives suggestions.

This approach supports interaction theory, which states that speaking improves through active communication and feedback (Long, 2015). TBL also follows the principles of constructivism, where students learn through experience and collaboration (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Benefits and Challenges of TBL for Speaking Skills

TBL offers several advantages which help students improve their speaking skill in EFL classrooms. Of the key benefits is its focus on real world communication. Tasks in this approach simulate real-life situations, such as discussing plans, solving problems, or working together on projects, allowing students to develop speaking skills in an authentic context. Unlike traditional methods, where students often act as passive listeners, TBL requires active participation from all students. This, as a result, creates opportunities for more speaking practice, which helps improve fluency and correct pronunciation mistakes on spot under the teacher's guidance. Additionally, this teaching method makes students feel more confident and motivated because they practice in a collaborative environment, like in pairs and in groups, rather than an individual speech, which can be stressful and overwhelming. A study by Bao and Du (2015) found that students who completed tasks such as role-plays were more motivated to speak than those who used traditional methods. Lastly, completing tasks in a specific communicative context promotes better acquisition of vocabulary and language structures, since students use language to achieve real-world goals without being limited to isolated grammar exercises.

Despite the obvious advantages, there are a number of challenges in using Task-Based Learning (TBL) to promote speaking in a class. Uneven group participation is one of them. In group assignments some shy students may be passive, which reduces their speaking practice. As shown by East's (2015) study, during the tasks, more active students often take the lead, while less confident participants remain in the background. Another significant challenge is limited resources and time. Developing high-quality tasks requires additional effort and time from the teacher, and some educational institutions do not have access to the necessary materials and technology (Willis & Willis, 2012). In addition, assessing speaking using TBL is a challenge, since tasks usually involve open-ended responses and interaction, which makes objective and standardized assessment difficult (Noonan, 2015). Students usually work in groups, with each member contributing at different levels, which makes individual evaluation difficult.

Practical Applications of TBL in EFL Classrooms

TBL can be effectively applied in EFL classrooms through a variety of tasks. Here are some examples:

• *Role-playing.* Students role-play situations such as ordering food in a restaurant or going through a job interview. This helps to practice functional language and build confidence. This activity makes the lesson interesting as students take on roles of actors to perform a certain situation.

• *Problem-solving.* Students work in groups to find a solution, such as how to budget for a trip or to come up with new ideas for solving the problem. These tasks encourage discussion and reasoning.

• *Discussions and debates.* Organizing such activities not only opens up a chance for speaking practice but also pushes students to work in a team, listen to others and express their opinions in English.

To successfully implement Task-Based Learning (TBL), teachers need to take several important steps. First, it is important to clearly state the objectives of the task so that students understand what is expected of them and how the task will help them develop their skills. Additionally, the teacher should support students by providing them with the necessary vocabulary or phrases that will help them to cope with the task effectively. It is also necessary to create a safe environment where mistakes are perceived as an integral part of the learning process, rather than failures. Such an atmosphere promotes more confident speaking practice and allows students to feel comfortable overcoming their fears and doubts.

New Perspectives on Using TBL

Modern technologies and cultural aspects open up new opportunities for the application of the Task-Based Learning (TBL) method. It is important to integrate technology into the learning process. Using video platforms such as Zoom or applications such as Padlet allows students to complete tasks online. For example, students can record their dialogues and receive feedback. Also, it is necessary to take into account the cultural context. Tasks should be in accordance with the cultural characteristics of students. For example, in groups with Asian students, tasks focused on cooperation rather than competition can be used, which is more in line with cultural norms. In addition, TBL can serve as a tool for developing emotional intelligence: tasks that involve discussing emotions or resolving conflicts contribute to improving mutual understanding between students. Finally, through the use of artificial intelligence, teachers are able to create personalized tasks that take into account the level and interests of each student. For example, a student who is passionate about sports can participate in a discussion of the Olympic Games. These approaches highlight the flexibility of TBL and its ability to adapt to the demands of the modern educational environment.

Research Analysis

Many studies support the effectiveness of TBL. For example, a study by **Siamak Rahimi (2022)**, involving 320 primary school students found that the experimental group using TBL outperformed the control group in English communication skills. Additionally, the experimental group showed a significant increase in motivation levels post-intervention. Similarly, Ellis (2018) noted that TBL promotes communicative competence by emphasizing the importance of language.

However, some studies point to limitations. East (2015) emphasizes that the success of TBL depends on the teacher's preparation and the motivation of the students. Without clear instructions, the assignments may not be effective. In addition, Van den Branden (2016) notes that cultural differences affect the perception of TBL and that teachers should adapt the

approach to the audience.

These studies show that TBL is a powerful tool, but its success depends on proper implementation and consideration of the context.

Recommendations for teachers

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations can be made for the effective implementation of the Task-Based Learning (TBL) method. First of all, it is necessary to carefully plan the tasks so that they are understandable, interesting, and correspond to the level of students' preparation. Using technology actively is needed: applications and online platforms make tasks more interactive and engaging. Teachers should create a safe learning environment in which students feel supported, receive praise for their efforts, and mistakes are considered part of the learning process. In addition, tasks should take into account the cultural context - this allows them to be comfortable and accessible to all students. Finally, an important aspect is the training of teachers: regular training and professional development will help them confidently apply TBL in practice

Conclusion

Task-based learning (TBL) plays an important role in developing speaking skills in EFL classrooms. It motivates students, improves fluency and confidence, and creates conditions for real-life communication. Despite challenges such as uneven participation or cultural barriers, TBL remains a flexible and adaptable approach. The integration of technology and cultural context opens up new possibilities for its application.

Research confirms that TBL is effective, but its success depends on teacher preparation and student engagement. Teachers are encouraged to carefully plan tasks, use modern tools, and create a supportive atmosphere. In the future, TBL can become even more personalized thanks to artificial intelligence and new educational technologies. This approach not only improves speaking skills, but also prepares students for real-life language use, making learning more meaningful and fun.

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