

The Effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching on Enhancing Speaking Skills of University Students

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Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in fostering speaking skills of university students, while also exploring their perceptions of TBLT implementation. The study examined 60 students enrolled in a classroom English course at the Faculty of Education, CMRU, during the first semester of the 2023 academic year. Employing purposive sampling, the participants were divided into two groups: a control group consisting of 30 students and an experimental group consisting of 30 students. The control group followed traditional teaching methods, whereas the experimental group engaged in TBLT. Research instruments included TBLT lessons, a speaking test, a questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview. Quantitative data underwent t-tests, means, standard deviations, and percentages analysis, while qualitative data from interviews were content-analysed. Results showed the experimental group's posttest mean was significantly higher than the control group's, indicating TBLT positively impacted speaking skills. The study also found highest overall student satisfaction with TBLT, particularly for boosting confidence in speaking English, regarding clear instructions and guidance. Some students struggled to recognise progress. Interviews highlighted engagement, confidence-building, and task effectiveness. Overall, students reported positive experiences, indicating TBLT's effectiveness in improving speaking skills.

Keywords: Task-based Language Teaching, English Language Teaching, Speaking Skills, University Student

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Introduction

Speaking appeared to be the most difficult skill for Thai students to master. This frequently came from and results in Thai students' unwillingness to speak English, which not only impeded their spoken English growth but also caused cross-cultural misunderstandings. This was often regarded as a failure of Thailand's English education system. According to Ellis (1991) and Roger (2008), there was a substantial lack of spoken English proficiency among high school graduates, whereas Cutrone and Beh (2023) and Farooq (2005) suggested that university students frequently struggled with basic English communication. Tipmontree and Tasaameelarp (2020) also found a lack of enthusiasm and willingness to speak among Thai university students, finding that students rarely initiated talks or questioned ideas, limiting interactive learning. Similarly, the evidence emerged from practices in the CMRU context found that most students were lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, feeling shy, having anxiety, and lack of motivation. Improving speaking skills was essential as they are crucial for communication in academics, business, industry, and other sectors. In daily communication, people spoke twice as much as they read and wrote (Rivers, 1981). Many language learners focused on speaking skills because they equate 'knowing a language' with 'knowing how to speak it' (Nunan, 1991; Ur, 1996). Oral interaction was also considered the best way for children to learn a foreign language, develop literacy skills, and improve academic learning. Despite its importance, speaking was often neglected in EFL classrooms due to the influence of the grammar-translation method, lack of native speakers, and large class sizes (Nation, 2011). As appeared in several studies in EFL contexts, traditional approached like grammar-translation and the presentation, practice, production (PPP) methods have long been used, leading to unsatisfactory levels of communicative skills among learners. Students' speaking abilities revealed several issues, including a lack of fluency, frequent grammatical errors, and limited vocabulary. Many students hesitated or paused often, disrupting their speech, and struggled with basic sentence structure and tense usage. Additionally, their vocabulary was restricted, limiting their ability to express complex ideas. These challenges were compounded by a reluctance to participate in speaking activities, often due to fear of making mistakes or lack of confidence. Traditional teaching methods contributed to these issues by failing to engage students effectively in speaking practice. Teacher-centred instruction often focused on memorisation and accuracy rather than real-world or meaningful communication, leaving students with few opportunities to practice in authentic settings. As a result, students lacked confidence, had limited practical language use, and experienced negative impacts on both their academic performance and future career prospects, where effective communication is vital. Addressing these issues is crucial for students' academic and professional development. Improving speaking skills enhances their performance in oral exams, presentations, and group work while preparing them for success in interviews and professional interactions. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) offers a solution by focusing on real-world tasks, meaningful

communication, and student-centred learning, providing practical opportunities for students to develop fluency, confidence, and effective communication skills essential for future success. Recent criticisms of traditional methods had led to the adoption of new teaching approaches focusing on communicative competence, such as communicative language teaching (CLT) and its extension, task-based language teaching (TBLT) (Richards, 2006; Santos, 2011). TBLT employed interactive tasks to engage learners in meaningful communication, aiming to improve speaking fluency, grammatical accuracy, and interactional language. It promoted student-centred and cooperative learning (Cutrone and Beh, 2024). Therefore, the researcher is willing to use TBLT to develop students' speaking skills.

Objectives

1. To investigate the effectiveness of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in fostering speaking skills of university students.
2. To explore university students' satisfaction with TBLT implementation.

Literature Review

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) differs from other communicative approaches like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP) in how it prioritises meaningful tasks over explicit language instruction. TBLT focuses on real-world tasks that require learners to use language naturally to achieve specific goals, with language forms learned implicitly during task completion. In contrast, CLT emphasises interaction and fluency in a broader range of communicative activities but is less task-focused, often not tied to concrete outcomes. PPP, on the other hand, is more form-driven, with a linear approach where language is first presented, then practiced in controlled environments, and finally produced in communication. Unlike TBLT, which focuses on fluency first and accuracy through reflection after tasks, PPP emphasizes accuracy from the start, often limiting opportunities for spontaneous language use. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) emphasised tasks as the core of language acquisition, focusing on communication as a process of meaning-making rather than merely learning linguistic knowledge (Nunan, 1988). Ellis (2009) identified four essential characteristics of effective tasks: prioritising semantic and pragmatic meaning processing, addressing information gaps, requiring learners to use their own resources, and focusing on achieving outcomes beyond language use itself. By integrating real-world activities (Ellis, 2009; Skehan, 1998), TBLT enhanced the relevance and practical application of language learning. Prabhu (1987) categorised TBLT tasks into three main types: information gap tasks, reasoning gap tasks, and opinion gap tasks. Information gap tasks involved learners sharing information to complete a task, such as collaboratively filling in missing elements in a picture or map. Reasoning gap tasks required learners to deduce new information from existing

knowledge, such as creating a budget under specified constraints. Opinion gap tasks encouraged learners to express personal preferences or viewpoints, fostering discussions on familiar social issues. TBLT's structured tasks aligned with theoretical principles that promoted active language use and meaningful interaction in language learning contexts. These tasks not only developed linguistic skills but also cultivated critical thinking and communicative competence among learners (Ellis, 2014; Ellis, 2021). TBLT was supported for several compelling reasons: empirical evidence from various researchers demonstrated its superiority over other instructional approaches (Crookes, 1986; Ellis, 2003, 2009; Long, 1985; Long & Crookes, 1992; Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996, 2006); traditional methods fail to effectively teach English communication skills; and TBLT was notably motivating and effective for students. Research underscored the importance of meaningful contexts in language acquisition (Cutrone, 2013; Halliday, 1975; Nget et al., 2020), contrasting with the prevalent rote learning and grammar drills in Thai EFL classrooms that inhibited student motivation. TBLT addressed these deficiencies by prioritising authenticity through tasks that incorporated real-life scenarios and authentic language use. This approach fostered practical application over memorisation, aligning tasks with students' daily lives and enhancing their intrinsic motivation to communicate effectively in English (Cutrone and Beh, 2024). Thus, TBLT presented a promising framework for EFL instructions, emphasising communication skills essential for real-world interactions and addressing the need to enhance students' communicative self-confidence and willingness to use English.

Theoretical studies on TBLT revealed various definitions and perspectives on what constituted a "task". Willis (1996) described a task as an action where learners use the target language to achieve a communicative purpose, emphasising the concept of outcome as meaning. Nunan (2006) defined a task as classroom work involving learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language, with a focus on meaning rather than form. Long (1985) expanded the definition to include everyday activities, while Ellis (2000) viewed tasks from a psycholinguistic perspective, suggesting that tasks guided learners to engage in information processing essential for language acquisition. Ellis (2006) noted that tasks reduced cognitive or linguistic demands on learners. Richards and Rodgers (2020) highlighted that tasks fostered negotiation, modification, rephrasing, and experimentation, crucial for second language learning. Ellis (2003) asserted that the design of a task-based lesson involved three principal phases: the pre-task phase, which included preparatory activities for students and teachers; the in-task phase, focusing on the task itself with various instructional options; and the post-task phase, which involved steps for monitoring task performance. These phases ensured a comprehensive approach to task-based instruction, promoting effective language learning.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), aligns with TBLT's emphasis on social interaction and scaffolding. In TBLT, tasks are designed to challenge learners within their ZPD, encouraging them to perform slightly beyond their current abilities with support from teachers or peers. This scaffolding helps learners build confidence and competence, gradually allowing them to work independently as their skills develop. TBLT fosters collaboration and language development in a natural context, promoting meaningful communication and cognitive growth through interaction, which echoes Vygotsky's view of learning as a social, co-constructed process.

In conclusion, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) offers a dynamic and practical approach to language learning that emphasises meaningful communication through real-world tasks. Unlike more traditional methods such as Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP), which focus heavily on form and accuracy before communication, TBLT promotes fluency first, allowing learners to engage in authentic language use and address accuracy through feedback after task completion. By encouraging natural interaction and language use in relevant contexts, TBLT aligns closely with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), but its focus on task completion makes it more goal-oriented and structured toward real-life outcomes. TBLT's emphasis on social interaction and collaborative learning is deeply rooted in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, particularly the concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding. The ZPD represents the gap between what learners can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance, and TBLT facilitates this by designing tasks that push students slightly beyond their current capabilities. Teachers and peers provide scaffolding during task completion, offering support through language modeling, hints, and feedback. As learners grow more confident and proficient, this support is gradually reduced, enabling them to handle more complex tasks autonomously. By fostering active engagement, collaboration, and meaningful communication, TBLT not only develops language competence but also enhances cognitive growth, making it a powerful tool for language acquisition.

Table 1 comparing the structure of TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) lessons with traditional lessons.

Aspect	TBLT lessons	Traditional lessons
Lesson Objective	Focus on completing real-world tasks and using language naturally to achieve communication goals.	Focus on learning and practicing specific language forms or grammar rules.

Table 1 (continued)

Aspect	TBLT lessons	Traditional lessons
Lesson Phases	<p>1. Pre-task: Introduce topic and task, activate prior knowledge.</p> <p>2. Task cycle: Students complete the task in pairs/groups, focusing on meaning and communication.</p> <p>3. Post-task: Reflect on task performance, language forms discussed afterward.</p>	<p>1. Presentation: Teacher introduces grammar or language forms.</p> <p>2. Practice: Students complete controlled exercises (e.g., fill-in-the-blanks, drills).</p> <p>3. Production: Students use the target language in a structured activity.</p>
Teacher's Role	Facilitator: Guides students during tasks, provides support as needed, and offers feedback after the task.	Instructor: Provides direct instruction, explains rules, and controls practice exercises.
Student's Role	Active participants: Collaborate, solve problems, and communicate using target language to complete tasks.	Passive recipients: Listen to explanations, practice language forms, and follow structured exercises.
Focus on Language	Focus on communication and meaning first, language accuracy addressed after the task.	Focus on accuracy and correct usage of language forms from the beginning.
Type of Activities	Real-world tasks (e.g., planning a trip, solving a problem, conducting interviews).	Controlled activities (e.g., grammar exercises, pronunciation drills).
Assessment	Performance-based: Evaluated on task completion, fluency, and communicative effectiveness.	Form-based: Evaluated on accuracy of language forms and correct answers.
Classroom Interaction	Collaborative: Students work in pairs or groups, promoting interaction and negotiation of meaning.	Teacher-centred: Mostly individual work or whole-class instruction led by the teacher.
Feedback	Given after task completion, focusing on both fluency and form.	Immediate correction during practice, focusing mainly on accuracy.

Table 1 (continued)

Aspect	TBLT lessons	Traditional lessons
Learning Focus	Process-oriented: Emphasises learning through doing and using language authentically.	Product-oriented: Emphasises mastering language forms before use in communication.

This table highlights how TBLT lessons prioritise communication and real-world language use, while traditional lessons focus on language form and accuracy. The role of the teacher and students, as well as the type of activities and assessment, differ significantly between the two approaches.

The importance of English speaking

Effective speaking skills were assessed based on fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and lexical complexity, but a critical element was communicative self-confidence (MacIntyre et al., 1998). This confidence helped learners overcome anxieties related to social and cultural factors. Cutrone et al. (2023) highlighted that many Japanese English as a Foreign Language (JEFL) learners possessed the linguistic ability to speak English but may choose not to due to cultural influences, such as the tendency to value shyness over verbosity (Doyon, 2000; McVeigh, 2002; Sato, 2008). Additionally, traditional non-communicative entrance exams and teacher-centred instruction in Japanese classrooms limited students' opportunities for speaking practice (Hidasi, 2004; Allen, 2016). Tridinanti (2018) found a significant correlation between self-confidence and speaking ability, suggesting that students with higher confidence speak more and therefore had more opportunities to improve their speaking skills (Chou, 2018; Yanagi & Baker, 2016). Increased speaking practice allowed students to enhance various aspects of their speech, leading to stronger speaking skills and more frequent use of communication strategies (Chou, 2021). Speaking ability was a crucial skill in language learning, involving the use of language to communicate verbally in various contexts. Learners often gauged their language proficiency by their ability to speak effectively (Nunan, 2001). Chaney & Burkk (1998) described speaking as the process of creating and exchanging meaning through verbal and non-verbal symbols. This ability was essential for effective communication, allowing individuals to convey thoughts and feelings. For ESL students, developing speaking skills was paramount, yet many found it intimidating or difficult. Teachers played a key role in creating engaging lessons that encourage students to participate actively and communicate

comfortably. The English language served as a global lingua franca, widely used in numerous industries such as education, medicine, engineering, business, and tourism. Many people worldwide were learning English as a second language, facilitating communication between individuals from different linguistic backgrounds (Saleh & Murtaza, 2018; Aziz & Kashinathan, 2021). Despite its importance, some students may overlook the necessity of English due to its non-compulsory status in some educational systems. Nevertheless, English remained a dominant global language. Proficiency in English could enhance personal and professional opportunities, making it a crucial skill for the current generation. Effective communication in English could lead to better connections and greater opportunities in education and employment.

In conclusion, developing effective speaking skills in English was paramount for students, particularly in non-native contexts such as Thailand. The integration of TBLT provided a promising approach to enhancing these skills by emphasising real-world relevance and practical application. TBLT's focus on authentic communication tasks not only improved linguistic abilities but also boosts students' confidence and willingness to communicate. This approach addressed the limitations of traditional, grammar-focused methods that often fail to engage students or develop their communicative competence. By fostering a supportive and interactive learning environment, TBLT prepared students for real-life scenarios, enhancing their ability to communicate effectively in English. This, in turn, opened up broader educational and professional opportunities, underscoring the critical importance of mastering speaking skills in today's globalised world.

In Thailand, several studies have investigated factors influencing the willingness to communicate (WTC) among Thai EFL learners. Pattapong (2015) identified cultural, social, psychological, classroom, and individual contexts as key variables affecting WTC. Similarly, Darling and Chanyoo (2018) found a positive correlation between the L2 motivational self-system and WTC among Thai undergraduates. Karnchanachari (2019) revealed that although learners preferred using Thai during brainstorming with peers, their WTC in English during class was significantly higher, with factors like personality, experience, topic familiarity, anxiety, and interlocutors playing a role. Further, studies by Beding and Inthapthim (2019) and Chaisiri (2023) demonstrated that task-based approaches and technology, such as Flipgrid and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), significantly improved learners' WTC and speaking skills, with students expressing positive perceptions of these methods despite minor challenges.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. The population for this study consisted of university students from the Faculty of Education, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University. The sample group for the experiment was selected through purposive sampling, with the criteria being primary education students who were enrolled in a classroom English course at the Faculty of Education at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University during the first semester of the 2023 academic year.

Participants

The participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling, focusing specifically on third-year university students enrolled in the Faculty of Education at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University, who were taking a Classroom English course. The sample was divided into two groups: a control group consisting of 30 students and an experimental group consisting of 30 students. Primary education students were chosen because they represent future educators, whose ability to effectively use English in the classroom is crucial for teaching younger learners. By targeting this group, the study aimed to address the specific language needs of those who will directly impact early language learning in primary schools. However, focusing solely on primary education students may limit the generalisability of the findings, as the results may not fully apply to students in other education fields or at different academic levels. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the participants had a relevant background and context for the study, allowing for a more focused investigation into the effectiveness of the intervention on students preparing to become primary school teachers.

Variables

1. Independent variable was the TBLT lessons.
2. Dependent variables were students' speaking skills and satisfactions of the TBLT implementation.

Research Instruments

The research instruments were as follows:

1. The TBLT lessons were organised into seven units, each comprising a variety of task types, including information gap tasks, reasoning gap tasks, and opinion gap tasks. These tasks encompassed seven specific types: listing, matching, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem-solving, sharing personal experiences, and creative tasks. The lessons were designed to incorporate practice activities that covered all four language skills and included game-based tasks to enhance engagement and learning.
2. The speaking test included 3 types of questions: an introduction and interview, a topic card, and discussion with the assessments of fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation.
3. The student satisfaction questionnaire comprised 12 questions rated on a 5 point scale which corresponded with the lowest and highest levels of the students' satisfaction.

4. The semi-structured interview entailed posing a series of open-ended questions to the students, supplemented by probe questions to delve deeper into their responses and the relevant topic.

The research instruments were validated using the Index of Objective Congruence (IOC) by three English language teaching (ELT) experts, resulting in a content validity index of 0.67. Based on their feedback, the instruments were revised and further developed. The criteria for evaluating the questions were as follows: If a question had an IOC value of 0.67 or higher, it was considered to have content validity. If a question had an IOC value of less than 0.67, the researcher evaluated its necessity and appropriateness by seeking recommendations and approval from the advisor to either discard or revise the question. If two out of three experts approved, or if the question achieved an IOC value of 0.67 after revisions, it could be used for data collection. Questions with expert suggestions were revised according to the feedback received.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study was conducted with two groups of students, control and experimental groups, in the first semester of the 2023 academic year from June 2023 to September 2023. The data collection procedures were divided into three phases as follows:

1. Before the experiment commenced, the students participated in an orientation session during the first week of the course, which focused on the distinctions between task-based language teaching and traditional methods. Following the orientation, the pretest was administered prior to the start of instruction.

2. During the experimental phase, the control group received traditional-method lessons, while the experimental group participated in task-based language teaching (TBLT) lessons. Both groups followed the same contents of seven units of the course.

3. After the experiment, a parallel posttest was administered to all students. Additionally, the questionnaire was only distributed to the experimental group to assess their satisfactions of TBLT. The questionnaire results were analysed for means and standard deviations. The E1/E2 formula was utilised to calculate the scores obtained from exercises in the TBLT lessons and the posttest of the experimental group, aiming to ascertain the effectiveness of the TBLT lessons. The pretest and posttest scores were compared using T-Tests, means, and standard deviations. Furthermore, some students were randomly selected for semi-structured interviews to explore their experiences with TBLT and its impact on their speaking skills. The qualitative data from these interviews were analysed and categorised to highlight positive and negative experiences, with the findings presented descriptively.

Ethical Consideration

The ethical issues in this study were guided by Caruana's (2015) recommendations for conducting research within one's academic institution. The study used pretest-posttest assessments, questionnaires, and interviews to emphasise the importance of preserving

participants' well-being and rights. Informed permission was essential for ensuring that participants knew the study's objectives, procedures, and potential dangers, as well as their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participants were briefed during an orientation session and completed consent forms before to their participation. Confidentiality was tightly maintained throughout data collection, processing, and dissemination to protect participants' names and responses. The researcher reduced hazards such as discomfort from sensitive inquiries while prioritising participant safety and mental well-being. Participation was voluntary, tension-free, and culturally sensitive, with benefits to participants and the border community outweighing any hazards. Throughout the research process, important ethical principles were followed, including secure data management and storage, as well as post-study debriefing for participants.

Results

1. The effectiveness of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in fostering speaking skills of university students

To explore the effectiveness of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in fostering speaking skills of university students, the study divided participants into two groups. the control group received traditional-method lessons, while the experimental group participated in task-based language teaching (TBLT) lessons. The effectiveness TBLT lessons was based on the 70/70 effectiveness criteria summarised in Table 1.

Table 2 The effectiveness of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in fostering speaking skills of university students

Effectiveness	Total score	Mean	S.D.	Percentage
Learning process (E1)	70	49.13	7.73	70.19
Learning product (E2)	20	14.47	4.18	72.33

Table 2 showed how successful TBLT lessons were in improving university students' speaking skills. The effectiveness of the TBLT lessons during implementation (E1) was 70.19, whereas the posttest (E2) was 72.33. It entailed that both the exercise and posttest scores fulfilled the 70/70 effectiveness criteria. As a result, TBLT lessons could potentially be used in the teaching and learning process.

Furthermore, the researcher conducted an independent sample t-test to find out the effectiveness of TBLT lessons in improving university students' speaking skills. The pretest and posttest scores of the students were examined and compared as shown in Table 2.

Table 3 Comparison of the data from the pretests of production between the control and experimental groups

Group	N	Total score	M	S.D.	t	Sig.
Control group	30	20	11.13	2.29	0.519	0.608
Experimental group	30	20	11.40	3.02		

According to Table 3, the result revealed that there was no significant difference ($t = 0.519$, $p > 0.05$) between the pretest scores of the control group ($M = 11.13$, $S.D. = 2.29$) and the pretest scores of the experimental group ($M = 11.40$, $S.D. = 3.02$). This showed that both groups were at the same level of speaking skills before the course began, so it could be indicated that the sample of the population chosen for the study was appropriate.

Table 4 Comparison of the data from posttests of production between the control and experimental groups

Group	N	Total score	M	S.D.	t	Sig.
Control group	30	20	12.20	2.12	3.225	0.003
Experimental group	30	20	14.47	4.18		

Table 4 displayed the result of the comparison of the posttest scores between the experimental and control groups. It was shown that the posttest scores of the students in the experimental group ($M = 14.47.50$, $S.D. = 4.18$) were significantly higher ($t = 3.225$, $p < 0.05$) when compared to the scores of the students in the control group ($M = 12.20$, $S.D. = 2.12$). This indicated that the TBLT implementation had a positive effect on the students' English speaking skills.

2. Students' opinions on the implementation of TLBT in the learning process

To explore students' satisfaction with the TBLT implementation, the students in the experimental group were required to complete the questionnaire by rating each item on the five-point rating scale from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, to strongly disagree. Students' self-rating scores from the questionnaire were analysed and calculated for the mean and standard deviation and interpreted into five levels as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5 The students' perceptions of TBLT implementation during the course

No.	Questions	Mean	S.D.	Level of Satisfaction
1	The tasks assigned in the TBLT classes were relevant to improving your English-speaking skills.	4.68	0.34	Highest
2	TBLT activities helped boost your confidence in speaking English.	4.71	0.23	Highest
3	I considered TBLT an effective approach for learning to speak English.	4.43	0.65	High
4	The tasks provided in TBLT classes were engaging and interesting to you.	4.64	0.41	Highest
5	You felt motivated to actively participate in TBLT activities.	4.58	0.46	Highest
6	TBLT encouraged you to use English more frequently outside of class.	4.61	0.52	Highest
7	You noticed improvements in your English-speaking skills after participating in TBLT classes.	4.36	0.44	High
8	TBLT enhanced your ability to communicate effectively in English.	4.69	0.38	Highest
9	TBLT contributed to your confidence in expressing yourself in English.	4.65	0.41	Highest
10	The lecturer provided clear instructions and guidance during TBLT activities.	4.70	0.28	Highest
11	The lecturer encouraged active participation and communication during TBLT tasks.	4.64	0.42	Highest
12	You felt supported and encouraged by the lecturer in improving your English-speaking skills through TBLT.	4.58	0.43	Highest
Total		4.61	0.41	Highest

Table 5 illustrated the students' satisfactions of the task-based language teaching (TBLT) implementation during the course. Overall, the satisfaction level was notably highest ($M = 4.61$, $S.D. = 0.41$). While all items received high ratings, there were slight variations in the mean scores of each item. Upon closer examination, it became evident that item 2 had the highest mean ($M = 4.71$, $S.D. = 0.23$). The majority of students rated this item at the highest level, indicating their agreement that TBLT facilitated an increase in their confidence when speaking English. Additionally, items 10 ($M = 4.70$, $S.D. = 0.28$) and 8 ($M = 4.69$, $S.D. = 0.38$)

received the second and third highest means respectively. Students reported that the instructions and guidance provided in TBLT were clearly articulated, contributing to the strengthening of their English communication confidence. However, item 7 received the lowest rating ($M = 4.36$, $S.D. = 0.44$). Students appeared to find it challenging to identify or acknowledge their progress.

This results section summarised the qualitative data obtained from interviews, presenting students' experiences with TBLT and its perceived impact on their English speaking skills. The students in the experimental group revealed that the students generally expressed positive experiences with TBLT in improving their English speaking skills. It emphasised themes of engagement, confidence-building, task effectiveness, and differences from traditional language learning methods. Each subsection provides descriptive insights supported by direct quotes from the interviewees, illustrating the richness of their experiences with TBLT.

"... I was satisfied and enjoyed participating in the TBLT lessons. It allowed me to use English in a meaningful context which was different from the normal English classes where the majority of the lessons were on teaching grammar in isolation." The direct quote from an interviewee translated from Thai.

"... I was happy and had fun participating with various tasks during the course. I found it difficult at the beginning as I had limited experiences in speaking English and also was afraid of making mistakes. It seemed to develop gradually throughout the course. The direct quote from an interviewee translated from Thai.

They found TBLT lessons engaging and enjoyable, providing opportunities for meaningful language use beyond traditional grammar-focused classes.

"... I was kind of like the listing task, where I could express lots of things and I loved thinking this way." The direct quote from an interviewee translated from Thai.

"... I was more likely into sharing personal experiences which allowed me to share my life story and express my thoughts. So, it seemed like a place where I could speak with someone else." The direct quote from an interviewee translated from Thai.

Despite initial challenges such as limited speaking experience and fear of making mistakes, students reported gradual development and increased comfort with speaking English. The students highlighted specific TBLT tasks as most beneficial for enhancing their speaking abilities, such as listing and sharing personal experiences, which facilitated free expression and meaningful communication. Engaging in these activities positively impacted their confidence in speaking English, emphasising task achievement over grammar accuracy and fostering comfort and motivation to discuss topics relevant to their lives.

“... It was about the dimensions of tasks that allowed students to use all linguistic resources they had to achievement the tasks, as well as the knowledge and experiences about the world. When we finished the tasks, we knew what we could do and how they meant to our lives. On the other hand, my English learning experiences were more likely to focus on grammatical features and practice them. I rarely had opportunities to use the language in meaningful communication like in TBLT.” The direct quote from an interviewee translated from Thai.

“... I think it was about the target language presentation in TBLT that differed from my English learning experiences. Most English classes I had attended always started with the teacher explaining grammatical features and then practising in a more controlled way. I had less freedom to use English and sometimes the lessons seemed to be irrelevant to my life and interests. On the other hand, tasks in TBLT emerged us in the context and saw how the target language worked and meant to us. The contents were related to our lives and integrated with other subject knowledge.” The direct quote from an interviewee translated from Thai.

Moreover, they contrasted TBLT with traditional language learning methods, noting TBLT’s focus on utilising all linguistic resources to complete tasks and integrating language learning with real-world knowledge, unlike methods centred on grammar and controlled practice.

“... I seemed to find it difficult to express my thoughts and opinions at the beginning as I had a limited vocabulary range. But as time went along with a variety of tasks, I learned from interaction with classmates and other input materials that teacher provided. Although I felt I still had little vocabulary range, it was the thing that made me want to learn English in more meaningful ways.” The direct quote from an interviewee translated from Thai.

“... I struggled with sharing or presenting in a group or with the class, as I was a shy person especially speaking English. However, after we went through a wide range of tasks, I noticed that my classmates could do the tasks even though they made a lot of mistakes, they still enjoyed participating in the tasks. Why didn’t I do that as well.” The direct quote from an interviewee translated from Thai.

Despite challenges like limited vocabulary and initial shyness in group settings, they overcame these obstacles through peer interaction, exposure to instructional materials, and adapting to diverse task formats, ultimately enhancing their participation in discussions and presentations.

“... To be honest, I rarely had a chance to use English outside the class. We lived in the university dormitory, and we mainly talked to each other in Thai. But, I think I have more confidence to communicate when I meet foreigners.” The direct quote from an interviewee translated from Thai.

“... I think I cannot assure that I will have a chance to speak English as much outside the class due to the environment we live in where we use Thai. But I think It made me want to explore other contents in English through only a platform where I can write comments or descriptions in English on social

media for example and also read English texts online.” The direct quote from an interviewee translated from Thai.

Finally, while acknowledging limited English usage opportunities outside the classroom, they felt TBLT encouraged them to explore English content online, engage in social media interactions, and read English texts, which bolstered their confidence in communicating with others in English despite constraints in daily practice.

Discussions

The results of the study were discussed regarding two main aspects including the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing speaking skills of university students and their satisfactions with the TBLT implementation.

The effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing students’ speaking skills

The results of this study provided compelling evidence for the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing university students’ speaking skills. The TBLT lessons yielded an effectiveness score of 70.19 during implementation (E1) and 72.33 in the posttest (E2). These scores not only surpassed the 70/70 effectiveness criteria but also suggested a notable improvement in students’ speaking abilities. This finding supports the notion that TBLT can be a viable method for teaching and learning processes aimed at improving speaking skills. An independent sample t-test was conducted to further assess the effectiveness of TBLT by comparing pretest and posttest scores of the control and experimental groups. As shown in Table 2, the pretest scores of the control group and the experimental group revealed no significant difference. This indicated that both groups were on an equal footing regarding their speaking skills prior to the intervention, confirming the appropriateness of the sample population selected for the study as supported by Omar et al. (2021). Table 3 presented the posttest scores, demonstrating a significant improvement in the experimental group that underwent TBLT ($M = 14.47$, $S.D. = 4.18$) compared to the control group ($M = 12.20$, $S.D. = 2.12$), with a significant difference ($t = 3.225$, $p < 0.05$). This significant difference underscored the positive impact of TBLT on students’ English speaking skills. The increase in mean scores for the experimental group highlighted how TBLT’s focus on real-world tasks and meaningful communication can effectively enhance students’ ability to speak English fluently and accurately as claimed by Omar et al. (2021) and Lume & Hisbullah (2022). These findings aligned with existing literature on TBLT, which emphasised its efficacy in promoting communicative competence and confidence in language use (Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007). By engaging students in practical, contextually relevant tasks, TBLT helped bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and actual language use, thereby improving overall speaking proficiency. Furthermore, the structured yet flexible nature of TBLT allowed for the integration of various linguistic resources, fostering a more holistic development of speaking skills. In conclusion, the study’s results

affirmed the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing university students' speaking skills. The significant improvements observed in the experimental group's posttest scores highlighted the potential of TBLT to transform traditional language teaching methods by focusing on practical application and meaningful communication. This study contributed to the growing body of evidence supporting TBLT as a valuable approach in language education, particularly in contexts where improving speaking skills was a primary objective. As teachers sought to refine their teaching strategies, the principles and practices of TBLT offered a promising framework for achieving better learner outcomes in speaking proficiency.

Students' satisfactions with the TBLT implementation

Apart from improvement in terms of academic achievement, the TBLT implementation was also evaluated for satisfaction by the students. As a result of the evaluation questionnaire, the students generally expressed positive experiences TBLT in improving their English speaking skills. This may be from the characteristics of TBLT which fostered practical application over memorisation, aligning tasks with students' daily lives and enhancing their intrinsic motivation to communicate effectively in English as suggested by Cutrone and Beh (2024) and Nget et al. (2020). This aligned with existing studies that highlighted the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing student engagement and motivation (Tridinanti, 2018; Chou, 2018; Yanagi & Baker, 2016). Specifically, the role of TBLT in boosting students' confidence in speaking English. This finding supported previous research suggesting that TBLT's focus on meaningful communication tasks can significantly enhance learners' confidence and willingness to participate in language use (Cutrone and Beh, 2024). Moreover, clear instructions and guidance during TBLT activities were pivotal in students' perceived improvement in their English communication skills. This observation was consistent with studies by Prabhu (1987) and Nunan (2004), which emphasised the importance of explicit task guidance and structure in facilitating effective language learning. The clarity of instruction likely contributed to creating a supportive learning environment, which was crucial for student engagement and confidence. However, the students found it more challenging to recognise their own progress. This may reflect a need for more explicit reflection and feedback mechanisms within TBLT frameworks to help students better track their development. As Jamrus & Razali (2019) posited that awareness and self-assessment were critical components of language learning, enabling learners to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. In summary, the high levels of satisfaction with TBLT highlighted its effectiveness in enhancing students' confidence and communication skills in English. While the overall response was positive, the findings suggested that incorporating more structured self-assessment and reflective practices could further enhance students' ability to recognise their progress. This study contributed to the growing body of evidence supporting TBLT as a valuable approach in language education, particularly in fostering meaningful and confident language use.

Concrete examples of TBLT in various educational settings

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) can be implemented across a range of educational settings with different tasks tailored to the learners' contexts. For example, in a primary school setting, teachers could design a task where students plan a birthday party, requiring them to use vocabulary related to dates, times, and invitations. In a secondary school, students could complete a research project where they gather information on an environmental issue, discuss solutions, and present findings in groups, focusing on critical thinking and communication. In a university setting, especially in a business English course, students could work in teams to develop a business proposal or product pitch, simulating real-world professional scenarios. For adult learners in a workplace, a task might involve writing emails or preparing for a negotiation, allowing them to practice language skills directly related to their job roles. TBLT's adaptability ensures that tasks can reflect real-life activities relevant to each educational context, promoting practical language use.

Challenges in implementing TBLT and strategies to overcome them

Implementing TBLT can present several challenges for teachers. One potential difficulty is time constraints, as task-based activities often require more time than traditional, form-focused lessons. To address this, teachers can break larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps, allowing students to complete tasks over multiple lessons. Another challenge is the lack of resources for creating meaningful, real-world tasks, especially in underfunded schools. Teachers can overcome this by leveraging free online tools and materials or using everyday scenarios that do not require specialized resources. Additionally, teachers may face student resistance, particularly if students are accustomed to more structured, traditional learning methods. In such cases, it is essential to gradually introduce task-based activities, explaining the benefits and allowing students to become more comfortable with the approach. Finally, assessment in TBLT can be challenging because it focuses more on process and communication than specific language forms. Teachers can address this by incorporating both formative and summative assessments, including peer feedback, self-assessments, and rubrics that focus on fluency, accuracy, and task completion.

Suggestions

For future research, several avenues could further enhance our understanding of TBLT and its impact on students' speaking skills. Firstly, investigating the long-term effects of TBLT beyond immediate posttest assessments would provide valuable insights into its sustainability and enduring impact on language proficiency. Longitudinal studies tracking students over an extended period could reveal whether gains in speaking skills persist and how they influence overall language competence. Secondly, exploring the effectiveness of TBLT across different learner demographics and contexts would contribute to its

generalisability. Comparing TBLT outcomes among diverse student populations, such as varying proficiency levels, age groups, or cultural backgrounds, could elucidate its adaptability and effectiveness in meeting the needs of a broader range of learners. Additionally, examining the role of teacher training and professional development in implementing TBLT effectively is crucial. Investigating how teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and instructional practices influence the outcomes of TBLT could provide insights into optimising its implementation in various educational settings. Furthermore, integrating qualitative methodologies alongside quantitative measures would offer a more comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions and experiences with TBLT. Qualitative research could explore students' attitudes towards TBLT, their engagement with tasks, and the perceived impact on their confidence and motivation in speaking English. Lastly, exploring innovative technological applications and digital tools that can enhance TBLT delivery and student engagement warrants attention. Investigating how digital platforms and virtual environments can support TBLT activities and facilitate authentic communication opportunities could offer new avenues for improving language learning outcomes.

TBLT can be adapted to suit various proficiency levels by adjusting the complexity of the tasks and the type of language required. For beginners, tasks can involve simple, everyday scenarios such as buying groceries or asking for directions, using basic vocabulary and sentence structures. Teachers can provide more scaffolding, such as language prompts or visual aids, to support learners. For intermediate learners, tasks might include more complex situations, such as planning a vacation itinerary or conducting an interview, which requires learners to use different tenses, question forms, and problem-solving skills. Advanced learners could engage in more abstract or professional tasks, such as debating social issues or presenting research findings, where critical thinking and advanced vocabulary are necessary. TBLT is also flexible for different learning environments, whether online or in-person. In online classrooms, teachers can utilise collaborative tools like Google Docs or video platforms for group work and discussions. Virtual tasks, such as creating a video presentation or participating in a virtual meeting, can replicate real-world communication scenarios. In large classrooms, teachers can manage group tasks by assigning specific roles to students or using breakout groups to ensure active participation from all learners. This adaptability makes TBLT a highly versatile and inclusive approach, catering to the diverse needs of learners across different proficiency levels and educational contexts.

New knowledge

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has proven to be an effective method for improving students' speaking skills by engaging them in real-world tasks that require meaningful communication. Through TBLT, students practice language in context, which promotes fluency and enhances their ability to use English naturally. Despite challenges such

as time constraints, the need for adequate resources, and potential student resistance to less structured activities, TBLT allows for flexibility in task design and can be adapted to various proficiency levels and learning environments. By incorporating strategies such as scaffolding, breaking tasks into smaller parts, and using both formative and summative assessments, teachers can overcome these obstacles and create a supportive learning environment. TBLT encourages active participation, fosters confidence in speaking, and provides practical language use, making it a valuable approach for improving students' communication skills.

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