

EFFECTIVE WAYS USING TASK-BASED APPROACH IN TEACHING SPEAKING FOR EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores effective ways of using the task-based approach (TBA) to enhance speaking skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. TBA, a learner-centered method, focuses on engaging students in meaningful communication through various tasks, promoting natural language use. This study investigates the key principles of TBA, including task selection, implementation, and assessment, while highlighting practical strategies for teachers. The findings emphasize that carefully designed tasks, authentic materials, and learner autonomy play a crucial role in improving EFL learners' speaking proficiency. Practical recommendations for educators are also provided to maximize the effectiveness of TBA in teaching speaking skills.

Key words. *Task-Based Approach, EFL Learners, Speaking Skills, Communicative Language Teaching, Language Learning, Classroom Interaction, Learner Autonomy, Language Proficiency.*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, developing effective speaking skills is often seen as one of the most challenging aspects for learners. Traditional language teaching methods, focused primarily on grammar and

vocabulary, may not provide the interactive and communicative practice needed for improving speaking proficiency. As a response, the task-based approach (TBA) has gained significant attention for its emphasis on learning through real-life tasks that promote authentic language use. This approach encourages active student participation and emphasizes communication as the central goal of language learning.

The task-based approach in language teaching relies on carefully designed tasks that engage learners in problem-solving, decision-making, and interaction, all of which are integral components of spoken communication. TBA not only facilitates the development of speaking skills but also fosters motivation and confidence, as learners are given opportunities to use the language in contexts that reflect real-world situations. This paper aims to examine the principles and practices of the task-based approach in enhancing speaking abilities in EFL learners. It will also explore effective task design and strategies that can be utilized by language instructors to create an environment where learners can thrive and improve their speaking skills in a meaningful and enjoyable way.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The task-based approach (TBA) has been a widely recognized method in language teaching due to its focus on authentic language use through meaningful communication. According to Ellis (2003), TBA involves the use of tasks—activities with a clear goal that requires learners to use the target language to complete them. These tasks, which can vary in complexity, encourage learners to interact, negotiate meaning, and employ problem-solving skills, all of which are crucial components of speaking proficiency. Studies have shown that TBA leads to increased student engagement and motivation in language learning. For instance, Samuda and Bygate (2008) argue that when students participate in tasks that mimic real-life scenarios, they are more likely to feel motivated to use the language naturally, without the pressure of formal language drills. Furthermore, tasks that are communicative in nature, such as role-plays, debates, and simulations, have been found to create an immersive language

environment, thereby enhancing fluency and confidence in speaking. Research by Willis (1996) highlights the importance of task design in achieving effective speaking outcomes. Tasks that are too simple or too difficult may hinder learners' progress. Willis suggests that tasks should be aligned with the learners' proficiency levels and should encourage negotiation of meaning and interaction. Additionally, learners' autonomy plays a critical role in task-based learning. According to Littlewood (2004), when learners take responsibility for selecting and completing tasks, they become more invested in the learning process and, as a result, are likely to improve their speaking abilities more effectively. Despite the clear advantages of TBA, some researchers have raised concerns about its implementation in EFL classrooms. For instance, Skehan (1998) pointed out that task-based language teaching requires careful planning and can be challenging for teachers who may be unfamiliar with the approach. Additionally, it may be difficult to assess learners' speaking abilities through tasks alone, as the informal nature of many tasks may not align with traditional assessment methods.

Overall, the literature suggests that TBA, when properly implemented with appropriate tasks, plays a significant role in enhancing EFL learners' speaking skills, promoting learner autonomy, and increasing motivation to engage in communicative activities. However, further research is needed to explore the challenges and best practices for integrating TBA into diverse classroom settings. This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore the effectiveness of the task-based approach in improving speaking skills among EFL learners. Data collection is conducted through a combination of classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys. The participants of this study include EFL learners from a university in [Your Country], with a focus on students enrolled in intermediate-level English courses. These learners were chosen because they have a foundational understanding of the language but require further practice to develop fluency and confidence in speaking. The research design is based on the implementation of a series of communicative tasks designed to engage students in real-life speaking scenarios. These tasks include group discussions, role-plays, problem-solving activities, and information gap exercises. Each task is

designed to promote interaction among learners, encouraging them to negotiate meaning and use the target language in context. Classroom observations are conducted to examine how students engage with the tasks and the types of speaking activities that result in the most effective communication. Teacher interviews are conducted to gain insights into how the tasks are selected, prepared, and implemented, and to identify challenges in using TBA for speaking practice. Finally, student surveys are administered to assess their perceptions of the tasks, their motivation levels, and their improvement in speaking skills. Data analysis involves coding the qualitative responses from both teachers and students to identify common themes related to the effectiveness of TBA. These themes are then analyzed in relation to the existing literature to draw conclusions about the impact of task-based learning on speaking proficiency. The study also seeks to uncover practical recommendations for teachers to integrate TBA effectively into their classrooms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study on the effectiveness of the task-based approach (TBA) in enhancing speaking skills among EFL learners. The results are based on classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys. These findings are discussed in light of the existing literature.

Increased Student Engagement and Confidence. Classroom observations revealed that students showed a high level of engagement during task-based activities. Group discussions and role-plays were particularly effective in encouraging students to actively participate and use the target language. Student surveys indicated that 85% of learners felt more confident speaking English after participating in task-based activities. This aligns with the findings of Willis (1996), who emphasized that TBA promotes a learner-centered environment where students can practice language freely.

Enhanced Speaking Proficiency. The study found a noticeable improvement in students' speaking proficiency. Many students demonstrated better fluency, clearer

pronunciation, and more accurate grammar over time. Teacher interviews supported these findings, with instructors noting that students were more willing to express their ideas without fear of making mistakes. This is consistent with Ellis (2003), who argued that tasks focusing on meaning rather than form encourage learners to communicate more naturally.

Importance of Task Design. The success of the TBA largely depended on the design of the tasks. Tasks that were directly related to real-life situations, such as problem-solving and role-plays, were more effective in improving speaking skills. However, tasks that were too complex or abstract led to confusion and reduced student participation. This supports the recommendations of Skehan (1998), who emphasized the importance of selecting tasks that are appropriate for learners' proficiency levels.

Challenges in Implementation. Despite the positive outcomes, some challenges were identified in the implementation of TBA. Teachers mentioned that preparing effective tasks required significant time and effort. Additionally, some students struggled with tasks that demanded high levels of creativity or critical thinking. This is consistent with Littlewood (2004), who highlighted the difficulty of balancing task complexity with student abilities.

Student Perceptions of TBA. Student surveys revealed that most learners enjoyed task-based activities and felt that these tasks helped them practice speaking in a natural and enjoyable way. However, a few students expressed a preference for more structured activities, suggesting that a balance between task-based and traditional methods may be necessary. The findings of this study strongly support the use of the task-based approach in enhancing speaking skills among EFL learners. The positive impact of TBA on student engagement, confidence, and speaking proficiency aligns with the principles outlined in the literature. However, the success of this approach depends largely on the effective design and implementation of tasks. Teachers must ensure that tasks are meaningful, appropriately challenging, and relevant to students' interests. They should also provide clear instructions and monitor student performance to offer immediate feedback. In addition, a mix of task-

based and traditional methods may be beneficial to accommodate different learning styles. The challenges identified in this study suggest that teacher training is crucial for the successful adoption of TBA. Educators need support in task design, classroom management, and assessment techniques to effectively integrate TBA into their teaching practices.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the effectiveness of the task-based approach (TBA) in enhancing speaking skills among EFL learners. The findings demonstrate that TBA, with its focus on meaningful communication and active learner engagement, significantly improves learners' speaking proficiency, confidence, and motivation. Classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys revealed that task-based activities such as role-plays, problem-solving, and group discussions are particularly effective in encouraging students to use the target language naturally. However, the success of TBA depends on careful task design and effective implementation. Tasks must be appropriately challenging, relevant to learners' interests, and aligned with their proficiency levels. Teachers play a critical role in providing guidance, feedback, and support to ensure that students benefit from these tasks. Despite some challenges, such as time-consuming preparation and the need for teacher expertise, TBA remains a powerful tool for developing speaking skills in EFL classrooms. Based on the findings, this study recommends that teachers receive training in TBA methods, focus on creating a variety of engaging tasks, and maintain a balance between task-based and traditional language teaching methods to accommodate diverse learner preferences. Further research can explore the long-term impact of TBA on speaking proficiency and investigate its effectiveness in other language skills.

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