

ENHANCING EFL STUDENTS’ SPEAKING PROFICIENCY THROUGH TASK-BASED LEARNING: A ROLE-PLAY APPROACH

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Abstract. This study examines the effectiveness of task-based instruction (TBI) in improving the speaking skills of intermediate-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at Uzbekistan State World Languages University. Specifically, it explores how role-plays, as a TBI method, contribute to fluency, accuracy, and confidence in spoken English. The research compares students’ speaking proficiency before and after the implementation of TBI. The results indicate that role-plays significantly enhance students’ ability to communicate in English. The findings suggest that task-based approaches should be integrated into EFL curriculum to foster effective oral communication skills.

Keywords: Task-Based Instruction, Speaking Skills, Role-Plays, EFL, Communicative Competence

Introduction. Speaking is one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners due to limited exposure to authentic communication. Traditional teaching methods often focus on grammar and vocabulary rather than practical language use, leading to passive learners with poor speaking abilities. Task-Based Instruction (TBI) offers a communicative approach that encourages students to engage in meaningful conversations. This study investigates the impact of role-plays as a TBI method on the speaking proficiency of second-year students at Uzbekistan State World Languages University. The research aims to determine whether task-based activities improve students’ fluency, accuracy, and confidence in speaking English.

Literature Review. Task-Based Instruction (TBI) is an approach rooted in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that emphasizes real-world communication tasks. Ellis (2003) defines tasks as activities requiring learners to use language meaningfully rather than focusing solely on form. Several studies support the effectiveness of TBI in language learning. Nunan (2004) highlights that task-based learning improves students’ speaking skills by engaging them in interactive situations. Willis (1996) suggests that role-plays, simulations, and problem-solving tasks create authentic language use, leading to improved fluency. Previous research (Skehan, 1998) also emphasizes the role of task complexity in language development, indicating that well-designed tasks enhance both accuracy and fluency.

Despite the advantages, some challenges exist in implementing TBI, such as time constraints and students' reluctance to participate. However, research by Richards (2006) suggests that with appropriate scaffolding and support, students can develop greater confidence in speaking. Given these findings, this study aims to measure the direct impact of role-plays on EFL learners' speaking abilities in a structured classroom environment.

Methods. The study involved 40 second-year students from Uzbekistan State World Languages University, all at an intermediate level of English proficiency.

Procedure:

1. Pre-Test: Students participated in a speaking assessment where they described a topic for two minutes. Their fluency, accuracy, and confidence were evaluated.
2. Task-Based Instruction: Over four weeks, students engaged in role-plays covering real-life situations (e.g., ordering food, job interviews, travel conversations). Each session included pre-task preparation, task performance, and post-task reflection.
3. Post-Test: After completing the TBI activities, students took a similar speaking test to assess their progress.

Data Collection and Analysis. Students' speaking performances were recorded and analyzed based on three criteria:

Fluency: Measured by the number of words spoken per minute and hesitation frequency.

Accuracy: Evaluated based on grammatical correctness and pronunciation.

Confidence: Assessed through self-reports and teacher observations.

The pre-test and post-test results were compared using a paired t-test to determine statistical significance.

Results. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' speaking abilities:

Fluency: Increased from an average of 80 words per minute in the pre-test to 105 words per minute in the post-test.

Accuracy: The number of grammatical errors per 100 words decreased from 12 to 7.

Confidence: 85% of students reported feeling more comfortable speaking in English compared to 50% before the experiment.

These results indicate that role-plays provide a practical, engaging approach to enhancing speaking proficiency.

Discussion. The study supports previous research highlighting the benefits of TBI in language learning. The increase in fluency and accuracy suggests that role-plays create a risk-free environment where students can practice and refine their speaking skills. Furthermore, the rise in confidence levels indicates that task-based activities

help reduce language anxiety. However, some students initially hesitated to participate due to fear of making mistakes, which aligns with Richards’ (2006) findings on student reluctance in communicative tasks.

Despite these challenges, the overall improvement demonstrates that integrating TBI into EFL instruction can effectively address common speaking difficulties. Future research could explore long-term effects and the impact of other task-based activities.

Conclusion. This study confirms that task-based instruction, specifically role-plays, significantly enhances EFL students’ speaking skills by improving fluency, accuracy, and confidence. The findings suggest that EFL teachers should incorporate communicative tasks into their teaching strategies to promote meaningful language use. Implementing TBI in university curricula can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical language application, ultimately fostering more proficient English speakers.

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