

The Impact And Challenges Of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) In Developing Communicative Competence Within EFL And ESP Contexts

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Abstract

This article analyzes the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in developing the speaking competence of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners. Drawing on data from diverse academic settings in Uzbekistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, the study examines the impact of meaning-focused tasks on speaking fluency, accuracy, and student motivation. The findings indicate that TBLT significantly enhances learners' communicative abilities, although it requires additional pedagogical interventions to improve grammatical accuracy and pronunciation. The article also addresses challenges such as teacher professional development and curricular constraints.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), speaking fluency, ESP, communicative competence, EFL learners, teacher challenges, Uzbekistan.

Introduction

The pedagogical shift from traditional grammar-translation methods toward communicative approaches has placed Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) at the center of modern language education. In contemporary EFL and ESP contexts, the primary challenge remains the persistent gap between students' theoretical linguistic knowledge and their practical ability to communicate spontaneously in real-world scenarios. As noted by Obilova (2025), modern education necessitates a move toward communicative competence that allows learners to engage effortlessly in interaction. This is particularly relevant in regions like Uzbekistan and South Asia, where learners often possess substantial grammatical foundations but lack the confidence to employ them orally (Ghufran et al., 2026; Ismoilova, 2026). The goal of TBLT is to bridge this divide by providing an intuitive grasp of the language through the completion of meaningful tasks (Azizifard, 2024). This article seeks to synthesize evidence from multiple empirical studies to provide a comprehensive view of how TBLT functions across various age groups and professional disciplines, while also acknowledging the multifaceted challenges encountered by educators in these specialized fields.

Literature Review

The theoretical foundation of TBLT is built upon the definition of a "task" as a work plan that prioritizes pragmatic language use to achieve a non-linguistic outcome (Ellis, 2003). Unlike traditional models like Presentation, Practice, and Production (PPP), TBLT emphasizes that acquisition occurs most effectively when learners focus on meaning rather than the conscious manipulation of form. This perspective is supported by the interaction hypothesis, suggesting that the negotiation of meaning during collaborative tasks facilitates second language acquisition (Long, 2015). A critical framework used to assess TBLT's effectiveness is the Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency (CAF) model proposed by Skehan (2009). According to Skehan, learners possess limited attentional resources, which often results in a trade-off where an increase in fluency might lead to a temporary decrease in accuracy.

Furthermore, the role of strategic planning and task repetition has been identified as a significant factor in enhancing performance. Research by Tavakoli and Skehan (2005) suggests that providing learners with preparation time allows for more structurally complex and fluent output. In the realm of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), the challenges are even

more pronounced. Abbasova (2024) points out that ESP teachers face unique difficulties in identifying student needs and designing materials that satisfy both linguistic and professional requirements. In such contexts, tasks like group oral presentations are viewed as essential tools for simulating the professional communicative demands that students will eventually face in their careers (Azizifard, 2024).

Methodology

The analysis in this study is based on a synthesis of empirical and theoretical data gathered from diverse educational contexts between 2024 and 2026. The research involved secondary school students, B1-level university students at Webster University Tashkent, and specialized learners in the fields of tourism and architectural engineering. The primary investigative methods across these sources included quasi-experimental designs, longitudinal observations, and descriptive surveys. Specifically, in the experimental studies, researchers compared the oral performance of students in TBLT-based classrooms with those in traditional teacher-fronted environments. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests to measure fluency, along with Likert-scale questionnaires to gauge student attitudes and motivation levels. Classroom observations were also employed to evaluate the level of engagement and the interactional patterns emerging during task completion. This mixed-methods approach allowed for a holistic assessment of TBLT's impact on both the linguistic and psychological aspects of language learning.

Results and Discussion

The synthesized findings reveal a consistent positive correlation between the implementation of TBLT and the development of oral fluency. In secondary education settings, learners exposed to task-based instruction demonstrated a significant reduction in hesitation and an increase in speech rate (Ismoilova, 2026). Similarly, university students in Pakistan and Uzbekistan reported that meaning-focused tasks like debates and problem-solving activities helped them overcome the "silence" often associated with traditional rote learning (Ghufran et al., 2026; Karimova, 2024). The interactive nature of TBLT appears to foster a safe environment where the focus on task completion reduces the anxiety related to making grammatical errors.

However, the data also highlights a nuanced outcome regarding linguistic precision. For instance, in a study of architectural engineering students, while the students showed high motivation and positive attitudes toward group presentations, there was no notable improvement in their pronunciation or grammatical accuracy (Azizifard, 2024). This supports the theory that while TBLT excels at promoting communicative flow, it may not naturally lead to formal correctness without the integration of specific focus-on-form stages (Ellis, 2017).

Another critical aspect of the results concerns the institutional and pedagogical barriers to TBLT. Many educators, particularly in ESP, struggle with a lack of specialized materials and limited teacher training (Abbasova, 2024; Obilova, 2025). The transition to TBLT requires teachers to act more as facilitators than authorities, a role that many find challenging due to rigid institutional constraints and exam-oriented systems that still prioritize formal grammar knowledge over communicative ability. For TBLT to be fully effective, curriculum designs must be adapted to recognize and assess communicative outcomes as primary goals.

Conclusion

Task-Based Language Teaching proves to be a highly effective pedagogical framework for enhancing the communicative confidence and oral fluency of EFL and ESP learners. By situating language learning within meaningful activities, it addresses the core needs of students who must function in real-world professional environments. However, the evidence suggests that for TBLT to be a complete solution, it must be part of a balanced approach that includes strategic feedback and form-focused interventions to ensure that grammatical accuracy is not

sacrificed for fluency. Furthermore, successful implementation depends heavily on providing teachers with the necessary training and resources to navigate the complexities of task design. Future research should continue to examine the long-term effects of task repetition and the potential of digital tasks to further bridge the gap between the classroom and the professional world.

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