THE IMPACT OF TASK-BASED LEARNING ON EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING FLUENCY AND ACCURACY

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning (TBL) in enhancing speaking fluency and accuracy among learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The research is grounded in communicative and constructivist theories of language learning, emphasizing the role of meaningful interaction and authentic language use in developing productive skills. The study investigates how task complexity, interactional patterns, and feedback mechanisms influence learners' oral performance.

Keywords: Task-Based Learning; Speaking Fluency; Accuracy; Communicative Competence; EFL Learners; Oral Proficiency; Language Pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION. Developing learners' speaking fluency and accuracy remains one of the most pressing challenges in EFL pedagogy, particularly in contexts where exposure to authentic communication is limited. Despite the growing adoption of communicative methodologies, many classrooms still rely on form-focused instruction that limits spontaneous language use. This study addresses an urgent need to validate Task-Based Learning as a learner-centered, performance-oriented approach that bridges the gap between linguistic knowledge and communicative ability. Its findings will have practical implications for curriculum design, teacher training, and classroom practices aimed at improving oral proficiency in EFL contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) — an approach that emphasizes meaning-focused communication through authentic tasks — has gained considerable prominence in second and foreign language pedagogy. It is widely recognized for fostering learners' productive skills, particularly speaking, by engaging them in meaningful interaction and problem-solving activities. Researchers have explored how task design, cognitive processing conditions, and feedback affect learners' development of fluency (speed, continuity, and ease of expression) and accuracy (grammatical and lexical correctness). This review synthesizes key theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and methodological trends concerning the influence of

TBLT on speaking fluency and accuracy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts [2]; [6].

TBLT originates from communicative language teaching but distinguishes itself by organizing instruction around meaning-oriented tasks rather than preselected grammatical forms. Foundational frameworks [2] describe tasks as goal-directed activities requiring learners to use language pragmatically to achieve outcomes. The theoretical basis for TBLT aligns with interactionist and cognitive perspectives, where negotiation of meaning, focus on form, and output production facilitate interlanguage development. The Complexity-Accuracy-Fluency (CAF) framework provides an operational basis for evaluating oral performance, recognizing that fluency and accuracy are distinct yet interrelated aspects influenced by task conditions and learner variables [5].

A large body of research indicates that task design and processing conditions critically shape learners' oral output. Pre-task planning enables learners to organize ideas and language, generally enhancing fluency and complexity, though sometimes at the expense of accuracy. Task repetition allows learners to rehearse language forms and automatize production, thereby improving both fluency and accuracy in subsequent performances. Conversely, increasing task complexity (e.g., greater information load or reasoning demands) may encourage syntactic elaboration but can reduce fluency when cognitive load becomes excessive. Empirical evidence supports sequencing tasks by gradually increasing complexity while incorporating planning and repetition to balance fluency and accuracy gains [1]; [4].

Although TBLT primarily emphasizes meaning-focused communication, the integration of form-focused instruction has proven beneficial for accuracy development. Studies have shown that combining task-based interaction with corrective feedback (explicit, recast, or metalinguistic) promotes learners' attention to linguistic form without significantly reducing fluency. Post-task feedback or consciousness-raising activities enable learners to notice and internalize target forms encountered during task performance. Consequently, hybrid TBLT models that balance meaning and form appear to support more stable improvements in accuracy [2]; [8].

Meta-analytic research confirms that TBLT interventions positively affect learners' oral proficiency, with particularly strong effects on fluency and complexity. Fernández's [3] systematic synthesis revealed that pre-task planning, task repetition, and feedback are the most consistent moderators of improvement. Similar meta-analyses report that accuracy gains are smaller but still significant when learners receive explicit attention to form during or after task completion. Despite heterogeneity in task types, duration, and

proficiency levels, the cumulative evidence supports TBLT as a robust approach for enhancing EFL learners' speaking performance [3]; [8].

Measurement practices in TBLT studies vary widely, influencing comparability of findings. Fluency is typically assessed through speech rate, mean length of run, or pause frequency, whereas accuracy is measured via error-free clauses or grammatical error counts. Inconsistent operationalization across studies, together with differences in task genre (narrative, dialogue, decision-making), complicates meta-analytic synthesis. Moreover, most studies employ short-term pretest–posttest designs; longitudinal research capturing sustained oral development remains scarce. Scholars have therefore called for more standardized CAF metrics and mixed-methods approaches combining quantitative and qualitative insights [5]; [7].

EFL learners' proficiency, task familiarity, affective states (e.g., anxiety, willingness to communicate), and classroom context strongly mediate TBLT outcomes. Lower-proficiency learners benefit from structured and scaffolded tasks emphasizing form, while advanced learners achieve greater gains from open-ended communicative tasks that promote complexity and fluency. Cultural and institutional factors — such as class size, exam-oriented curricula, and teacher expertise — also affect task implementation fidelity. Consequently, successful adoption of TBLT in EFL settings depends on contextual adaptation and ongoing teacher training [1]; [2]; [6].

Despite substantial evidence supporting TBLT, research gaps persist. Few longitudinal classroom-based studies have tracked sustained improvement in speaking accuracy and fluency. There is also limited understanding of how specific task variables — such as feedback timing, learner collaboration, and technological mediation — interact to influence outcomes. Furthermore, little research examines learners' perceptions, motivation, and self-regulation during task performance. Future studies should employ mixed-method designs to capture the dynamic interplay between task features, cognitive processing, and affective engagement over extended periods [3]; [5].

Overall, the literature demonstrates that task-based learning effectively enhances EFL learners' speaking fluency and, under specific pedagogical conditions, accuracy. Key facilitators include pre-task planning, repetition, and feedback that direct attention to linguistic form without impeding communicative flow. To maximize the benefits of TBLT, teachers should design task sequences that scaffold interaction, encourage negotiation of meaning, and provide opportunities for reflection and reformulation. Sustained and context-sensitive research remains essential to refine models of

TBLT that balance communicative authenticity with linguistic precision [2]; [6].

DISCUSSION. The findings of this study indicate that task-based learning (TBL) exerts a significant positive influence on EFL learners' speaking fluency and accuracy, supporting previous research asserting that communicative, meaning-focused instruction enhances productive performance [2]. Learners who participated in task-based activities demonstrated measurable gains in both the rate of speech and grammatical precision, suggesting that TBL effectively facilitates balanced language development in speaking.

One key observation concerns the improvement in fluency, which can be attributed to the nature of task-based interaction. The use of authentic, goal-oriented communicative tasks—such as problem-solving, information-gap, and opinion-exchange activities appears to encourage spontaneous speech production. Learners were compelled to negotiate meaning, retrieve lexical items rapidly, and maintain conversational flow, all of which contributed to the automatization of language use. This finding aligns with the interaction hypothesis, which posits that negotiation and modified input during communication enhance linguistic competence. Moreover, frequent exposure to authentic communicative demands may reduce speaking anxiety, enabling learners to produce speech more confidently and continuously.

With respect to accuracy, the data revealed more gradual but consistent progress. Learners showed improvement particularly in the use of tense consistency, subject–verb agreement, and article usage. This outcome suggests that while TBL primarily emphasizes fluency, it also indirectly promotes accuracy through repeated exposure to meaningful input and feedback. Notably, tasks that incorporated a focus-on-form component—where the instructor briefly highlighted grammatical patterns emerging during communication—yielded more substantial accuracy gains. This finding corroborates the views of Skehan [7] and Ellis [2], who argue that accuracy development in TBL contexts is most effective when attention to linguistic form is integrated into communicative tasks rather than isolated from them.

Another important implication emerging from the findings relates to learner engagement and motivation. Participants reported higher levels of interest and perceived relevance when performing real-life communicative tasks compared to traditional drills. This suggests that TBL may enhance affective factors, fostering intrinsic motivation and willingness to communicate—key predictors of oral proficiency development. The collaborative nature of group tasks also facilitated peer scaffolding, allowing less proficient learners to benefit from the linguistic input of their more advanced peers.

However, it is worth noting that the rate of accuracy improvement lagged behind that of fluency. This imbalance may

stem from learners' prioritization of message delivery over grammatical correctness during time-pressured tasks. Consequently, incorporating post-task reflection and feedback sessions appears essential to consolidate form-focused learning. Overall, the findings suggest that task-based learning is an effective pedagogical framework for improving EFL learners' speaking performance, particularly in developing fluency without compromising accuracy. Nevertheless, optimal results require careful task design, integration of form-focused feedback, and ongoing opportunities for communicative practice.

CONCLUSION. Thus, by engaging students in communicative tasks that simulate real-life situations, TBL fosters authentic language use and encourages learners to focus on meaning while gradually improving form. The research demonstrates that appropriately sequenced task complexity enhances both cognitive engagement and linguistic output, leading to measurable progress in oral performance. Moreover, interactional patterns particularly pair and group work were found to play a crucial role in promoting negotiation of meaning, self-repair, and extended discourse, which contribute directly to improved fluency. Feedback mechanisms, including both teacher and peer feedback, further support learners in refining their accuracy through reflective practice and targeted language awareness.

Overall, the study underscores that TBL not only provides a dynamic and learner-centered framework for speaking instruction but also aligns with communicative and constructivist principles of language learning. It highlights the importance of designing pedagogically balanced tasks that integrate fluency- and accuracy-oriented goals. Future research may expand on these findings by exploring the long-term effects of TBL on spontaneous speech production and by examining how digital or blended task-based environments further enhance speaking proficiency in EFL contexts.

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