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THE EFFECT OF TASK-BASED LEARNING ON STUDENTS' ENGLISH-SPEAKING FLUENCY

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Abstract
This study underscores the critical importance of developing speaking fluency in English language learners, as fluency is central to effective communication in real-world contexts. Despite extensive research on language proficiency, there remains a gap in systematically understanding how instructional approaches, specifically Task-Based Learning (TBL), influence measurable aspects of speaking fluency such as speech rate, pauses, and utterance length. Current pedagogical practices often conflate fluency with general speaking ability without isolating its distinct features, thereby limiting targeted instructional strategies. The primary aim of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of TBL in enhancing English-speaking fluency among undergraduate students. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the study involved 63 participants enrolled in an English education program, divided into experimental and control groups. Data were collected through pre- and post-intervention oral tests, which included picture descriptions and role-play scenarios, recorded and analyzed for fluency indicators using established rubrics. Data analysis involved comparative statistical procedures to assess differences in fluency measures between groups and over time. Key findings demonstrate that students who engaged with TBL exhibited significant improvements in speech rate, utterance length, and reduced hesitation, indicating enhanced fluency. The results reinforce that TBL's emphasis on authentic, communicative tasks facilitates more spontaneous, fluid speech. Implications suggest that incorporating structured, task-based activities into language curricula can effectively promote measurable fluency gains and foster learner confidence and motivation. The study advocates for the integration of fluency-specific assessment tools in language teaching, and recommends future research to explore the long-term effects of TBL on oral proficiency, thereby contributing to more targeted and effective language instruction methodologies.

Keywords: English language learners, speaking fluency, task-based learning

INTRODUCTION

English speaking fluency stands at the core of communicative competence in second language learning and teaching. It reflects the learner's ability to express thoughts, respond appropriately, and sustain interaction without undue hesitation or disruption. In classroom environments where English is taught as a foreign language, fluency becomes more than a linguistic goal—it becomes an essential marker of a student's readiness to engage with real-life communication scenarios. Unlike accuracy or vocabulary range, fluency deals with the temporal and spontaneous nature of speech, making it both a challenging and vital aspect to develop. As learners strive to participate actively in discussions, debates, presentations, and collaborative projects, their capacity to speak fluently often determines their confidence and success in real-time communication.

In recent years, the increasing demand for globally competent communicators has pushed fluency to the forefront of English language teaching priorities. Fluency is not only critical in academic and professional domains but also in social and intercultural communication, where delayed or hesitant speech

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may hinder effective interaction. Consequently, language educators and curriculum developers are compelled to seek innovative instructional strategies that emphasize real-life communication rather than mechanical drilling. The growing recognition of fluency as a dynamic and performance-based construct has influenced how speaking is assessed and practiced in classrooms, prompting a shift from static, grammar-focused lessons to more interactive and process-oriented methodologies. Therefore, enhancing speaking fluency is now seen as both a linguistic and strategic challenge that requires pedagogical rethinking.

Among the methodologies proposed to address this challenge, Task-Based Learning (TBL) has garnered considerable attention. TBL promotes language development through meaningful interaction and the completion of communicative tasks, allowing learners to use the language as a tool rather than as a subject. Recent studies have explored how TBL enhances learner motivation and communicative engagement by placing students in real-world speaking situations that demand negotiation, decision-making, and spontaneous output (Barseghyan, 2023; Nabil et al., 2024). Nosheeen et al. (2020) found that tasks requiring problem-solving and information exchange encouraged more fluent speech than traditional activities. Similarly, Wu and Halim (2024) emphasized that task complexity and task repetition are influential variables in shaping fluency performance. Zablotska et al. (2022) further noted that fluency development in TBL is facilitated through extended exposure to authentic interaction and iterative practice. While these studies indicate the pedagogical value of TBL, their focus has often been on general speaking improvement, rather than fluency as a distinct, measurable construct.

Although there is substantial evidence that TBL enhances speaking performance in various contexts, fluency often remains embedded within broader discussions of oral proficiency. Many studies conflate fluency with general speaking ability, without isolating it for closer analysis. Consequently, it remains uncertain how fluency—as defined by features such as speech rate, hesitation phenomena, and smoothness of delivery—responds to structured task-based instruction. Furthermore, prior research tends to overlook the role of fluency indicators as quantifiable outcomes, limiting the ability to track learners' progress in a systematic way. This has left an incomplete picture of how instructional designs, particularly task-based formats, influence the spontaneous and continuous aspects of speech production that are central to fluency.

This study sets out to examine the specific impact of Task-Based Learning on students' English-speaking fluency by operationalizing fluency through measurable indicators such as speech rate, number of pauses, and mean length of utterance. Unlike previous research that often treats speaking fluency as an incidental outcome, this study places it at the center of investigation, providing a more focused and analytical approach to understanding how TBL influences learners' ability to speak smoothly and efficiently. Additionally, the study applies a structured set of speaking tasks across a clearly defined instructional period, enabling a detailed comparison between learners exposed to TBL and those receiving conventional instruction. The objectives of this study are to investigate whether task-based instruction leads to a statistically significant improvement in students' fluency levels and to explore the extent of that improvement through comparative analysis.

The insights generated from this study deepen the understanding of how fluency evolves in response to instructional techniques rooted in real-world communication. By analyzing the patterns of spoken interaction during task-based activities, the study uncovers how learners manage processing time, organize their speech, and maintain discourse continuity under communicative pressure. The findings are expected to enrich classroom practices by illustrating which task types and sequencing methods most effectively support fluent language production. Teacher training and professional development programs may also benefit from these findings, particularly in contexts where improving speaking fluency is prioritized but lacks a clear methodological direction. Additionally, the results offer practical value for curriculum developers designing speaking courses that aim to reflect authentic language use rather than artificial testing conditions.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on second language speaking instruction by clarifying the relationship between Task-Based Learning and fluency development. It advances empirical understanding by isolating fluency as an independent construct and providing robust data to assess its progression over time. Furthermore, it introduces a replicable framework for evaluating fluency based on specific linguistic indicators, which may be applied or adapted in future studies or classroom assessments. By doing so, the study contributes not only to theoretical discussions but also to the enhancement of pedagogical tools and strategies in the field of English Language Teaching, especially in settings where communicative performance is both an instructional goal and a real-world necessity.

Hypotheses:

H_1: Students taught using Task-Based Learning achieve significantly higher levels of English-speaking fluency than those taught through conventional methods.

H_2: There is a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking fluency after participating in task-based instructional activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Task-Based Learning and Speaking Fluency

Task-Based Learning (TBL) has emerged as a prominent pedagogical approach aimed at improving students' speaking fluency in foreign language learning. This methodology emphasizes the use of authentic tasks that require learners to use the target language meaningfully, fostering active engagement and communicative proficiency. TBL is grounded in the belief that language is best acquired through communication rather than by merely studying grammatical rules. Research supports this notion; Dawoud et al. (2023) and Putra et al. (2021) confirmed that task-based activities positively impact speaking and listening skills. Additionally, drama-based techniques and collaborative tasks have been shown to improve speaking fluency and accuracy (Dawoud et al., 2023; Kolm et al., 2021). Scholars such as Thaosiri and Chano (2022) argue that fluency is enhanced when learners focus on meaning over accuracy during speaking tasks, and Hanzawa (2021) found that less structured tasks tend to encourage greater fluency. Furthermore, Putra et al. (2021) linked vocabulary mastery to improved fluency, reinforcing the significance of well-designed tasks.

Despite these benefits, learners face persistent challenges such as pronunciation issues, grammatical complexity, and fluency obstacles (Erazo-Álvarez et al., 2023). These barriers can hinder the effectiveness of TBL if not addressed within the instructional design. To overcome such difficulties, researchers suggest incorporating immersive technologies like augmented reality, which have been found to enhance ESL speaking fluency (Ibrahim, 2020). The use of digital portfolios and structured discussions also offers learners regular practice and supports fluency development (Ibrahim, 2020). Structured activities, including debates, have shown success in boosting students' speaking abilities and critical thinking (Timbu et al., 2023; Laoli, 2021). These findings emphasize the need for strategic task selection and integration of supportive tools to maximize the potential of TBL.

The role of reflection and social interaction is also central to the success of TBL. According to Chen and Yuan (2022), integrating reflective practices helps refine communication skills and allows for targeted feedback, improving learners' speaking competencies. Interaction among peers enhances fluency by enabling learners to negotiate meaning collaboratively (Phan et al., 2022). Similarly, Hồ and Huyền (2020) and Hartanti et al. (2022) highlight the importance of social contexts in promoting meaningful discourse. Various task types—such as debates, role-plays, and problem-solving activities—further contribute to fluency by providing engaging and motivating experiences (Widhi et al., 2023). Additionally, project-based learning (PBL) and the use of multiple intelligences in instructional design have been effective in creating diverse and inclusive speaking environments (Davis & Tahrun, 2022; Ali, 2020).

Psychological and individual learner differences must also be considered when applying TBL. Anxiety and fear of making mistakes can hinder fluency, but interactive and supportive environments can help alleviate these concerns (Ibrahim, 2020; Tezel, 2021; Vargas et al., 2023). Furthermore, students' backgrounds, exposure to English, and neurocognitive differences influence their verbal performance (Saito et al., 2024). Personalized teaching approaches, as noted by Niko et al. (2024), are essential to accommodate varied learning needs. Empirical studies underscore the long-term benefits of TBL, showing that consistent exposure to task-based settings improves fluency (Hanzawa, 2021; Ramadhani, 2023). Increased motivation through interactive strategies also contributes significantly to speaking development (Wang & Subramaniam, 2024). In conclusion, TBL fosters meaningful communication, structured engagement, and interactive learning, all of which contribute to enhanced speaking fluency. To maximize its impact, educators should adopt adaptive strategies, integrate innovative tools, and remain sensitive to learners' emotional and cognitive needs.

Communicative Tasks and Fluency Development

Communicative tasks are central to fluency development in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, especially within the frameworks of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). These approaches highlight the importance of engaging learners in meaningful communication that promotes interaction, helping learners focus on conveying meaning rather than on linguistic accuracy alone (Li, 2023; Saputri, 2022). Through real-world tasks, learners enhance their communicative competence and develop

fluency by using language in varied and spontaneous contexts (Zablotska et al., 2022). TBLT, in particular, fosters an experiential learning environment where language is acquired through use rather than memorization, making it a crucial component of effective fluency development.

Fluency in speaking is deeply intertwined with cognitive processes, and research suggests that an overemphasis on grammatical accuracy at the initial stages can hinder verbal fluency (Thaosiri & Chano, 2022; Wu & Halim, 2024). Instead, fluency improves when learners initially engage in meaning-focused tasks and refine language accuracy through subsequent practice and feedback. This scaffolding approach aligns with findings that emphasize the importance of nonverbal cues and communicative strategies in supporting spoken fluency by adding contextual clarity to verbal expression (Kim et al., 2024). Cognitive engagement, therefore, is not only about processing language but also about managing the mental demands of communication, especially when learners are required to think and speak simultaneously.

Interactive and collaborative task types, such as role plays and group discussions, have been found to positively impact learners' fluency by simulating real-life communication scenarios (Lemana et al., 2023). These activities promote learner confidence, reduce anxiety, and create opportunities for authentic language use (Bulbula et al., 2020; Azizi & Yusuf, 2024). Teachers can enhance students' fluency by facilitating activities that require negotiation of meaning and encourage spontaneous speech (Singh & Aziz, 2021). Beyond linguistic factors, fluency is also influenced by cognitive elements like executive function, as seen in verbal fluency tasks that assess word retrieval under pressure, reflecting the speaker's cognitive agility and language proficiency (O'Reilly et al., 2020; Tröger et al., 2021; Camodeca et al., 2021).

Affective and cultural factors are also critical in understanding and fostering fluency. Emotional states such as anxiety and motivation can affect learners' ability to speak fluently, while engaging and enjoyable tasks help reduce affective filters and encourage expressive language use (Kaffee et al., 2022; Wu & Halim, 2024). Additionally, cultural backgrounds shape learners' preferences and behaviors in communicative tasks. Students from collectivist cultures may excel in cooperative tasks, while those from individualistic cultures might prefer more independent language use (Freire & Barral, 2020; Mohammadzadeh et al., 2020; Mugo & Bwire, 2024). Thus, fluency development is most effective when it integrates well-designed tasks, cognitive engagement, affective support, and cultural sensitivity, providing learners with a comprehensive and responsive language learning experience.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design to examine the effect of Task-Based Learning (TBL) on students' English-speaking fluency. The design involved two naturally occurring groups of students: an experimental group that received instruction through TBL and a control group that was taught using conventional methods. To capture measurable differences in fluency outcomes, both groups participated in a pre-test and post-test. This setup enabled a comparison

of the final outcomes between groups, focusing on the impact of the instructional approach. The research addressed two key hypotheses: one comparing the final speaking fluency performance between TBL and non-TBL groups, and another analyzing fluency trends and patterns within the TBL group.

Participants

The participants were 63 undergraduate students enrolled in the second semester of an English education program at a state university in Indonesia. They were selected through purposive sampling from two intact speaking classes with similar instructional hours and content coverage. The experimental group comprised 28 students who received TBL instruction, while the control group consisted of 35 students who experienced conventional classroom teaching. All students possessed intermediate English proficiency, as indicated by institutional placement scores. To maintain consistency, students with erratic attendance records or those who had previously taken advanced speaking courses were excluded. Ethical procedures were followed, including participant consent and assurances of confidentiality and voluntary involvement.

Instruments

To assess speaking fluency, a structured oral test was administered both before and after the intervention. The test included two open-ended tasks: a picture-based description and a real-life role-play scenario. These tasks were designed to elicit natural spoken responses from students, which were recorded and later analyzed. Fluency was measured using three criteria: speech rate (words per minute), mean length of utterance, and pause frequency. Ratings were conducted based on an adapted CEFR-based rubric. Two trained raters independently scored the recordings, and inter-rater reliability was established through a pilot rating session involving 15 randomly selected responses, yielding an agreement level above 85%.

Data Collection

The intervention was conducted over a span of eight weeks. In the first week, students from both groups took the speaking pre-test under identical conditions. Over the next six weeks, the experimental group participated in weekly TBL-based sessions featuring communicative activities such as problem-solving tasks, pair work simulations, and group storytelling. Meanwhile, the control group received conventional instruction including drills, structured dialogues, and guided conversations. In the final week, all students completed the post-test, which mirrored the format and difficulty level of the pre-test. All oral performances were digitally recorded for consistency in data analysis.

Data Analysis

The analysis focused on comparing the post-test fluency scores between the experimental and control groups. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the results, including means and standard deviations for each fluency indicator. To test the first hypothesis, an independent samples t-test was performed using SPSS software, with statistical significance determined at $p < .05$. Assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were verified before conducting the test. To address the second hypothesis regarding the magnitude of individual improvement

within the experimental group, Cohen's d effect size was calculated. This provided a quantitative measure of the extent of change in students' speaking fluency following Task-Based Learning, offering a clearer understanding of the practical impact of the intervention.

RESULTS

To ensure the suitability of parametric tests for analyzing the impact of instructional methods on students' speaking fluency, assumption tests (Table 1) were conducted prior to inferential statistical procedures. These tests focused on evaluating whether the data met the essential criteria of normality and homogeneity of variance. The Shapiro-Wilk test was applied to assess the normality of the data distribution for both control and experimental groups at the pre-test and post-test stages. All results from this test suggested that the distributions were approximately normal, indicating that the data did not deviate significantly from the expected normal curve. In addition, Levene's test was performed to determine whether the variances of the post-test scores were equal between groups. The findings confirmed that there were no significant differences in variance, suggesting the assumption of homogeneity was also satisfied. These results provided a strong foundation for proceeding with parametric analyses, including the independent samples t-test.

Table 1. Assumption Tests

Assumption	Test Used	Group	Statistic	df	p-value	Result Interpretation
Normality (Shapiro-Wilk)	Shapiro-Wilk test	Control Pre	0.974	35	0.423	Data are approximately normally distributed
		Control Post	0.960	35	0.147	Data are approximately normally distributed
		Experimental Pre	0.981	28	0.813	Data are approximately normally distributed
		Experimental Post	0.972	28	0.493	Data are approximately normally distributed
Homogeneity of Variance	Levene's test	Post-Test Scores	-	63	0.238	Variances are equal across groups

The assumption of normality was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which is particularly appropriate for small to moderate sample sizes. For the control group, the pre-test yielded a Shapiro-Wilk statistic of 0.974 with a p-value of 0.423, while the post-test returned a statistic of 0.960 and a p-value of 0.147. Since both p-values are well above the conventional alpha level of 0.05, there is no indication of significant deviation from a normal distribution. This means the distribution of students' speaking scores in the control group closely approximates normality at both testing intervals. Similarly, in the experimental group, the pre-test resulted in

a Shapiro-Wilk statistic of 0.981 and a p-value of 0.813, whereas the post-test showed a statistic of 0.972 and a p-value of 0.493. Again, these values exceed the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the pre- and post-test scores in the experimental group also follow a normal distribution. Collectively, these results suggest that the assumption of normality was met for all four datasets, allowing the use of parametric tests for further analysis.

To assess the assumption of homogeneity of variance, which ensures that the variability in scores is similar between groups, Levene's test was applied to the post-test data. The resulting p-value of 0.238 is greater than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the difference in variances between the control and experimental groups is not statistically significant. This outcome confirms that the groups share comparable variability in their post-test speaking fluency scores, thereby satisfying the homogeneity of variance assumption. When this assumption is violated, the results of parametric tests such as the t-test can become unreliable or biased. However, since the data meet this criterion, an independent samples t-test can be appropriately applied to compare the means of the two groups. The successful validation of both assumptions—normality and homogeneity—supports the robustness of the statistical procedures used in this study and increases the confidence in any conclusions drawn from subsequent inferential analysis.

The table 2 presents a comprehensive statistical overview of students' speaking fluency outcomes in both control and experimental groups, measured before and after instruction. It includes key descriptive statistics—means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum scores, and medians—used to depict the central tendency and dispersion of the data for both pre-test and post-test phases. These metrics allow readers to understand not only average performance but also the variability and spread of scores within each group. In addition to descriptive statistics, the table also includes Cohen's d values, which provide a standardized estimate of the effect size, indicating how substantial the difference was between pre- and post-instruction scores. This dual focus on within-group development (from pre- to post-test) and between-group comparison (control vs. experimental) offers a rich analytical lens for evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional approaches used. The data allow for inferences about the degree of improvement experienced by individual students, the consistency of instructional impact, and the overall efficacy of traditional versus task-based learning models. By incorporating both raw performance data and effect sizes, the table contributes valuable quantitative insight into how structured speaking instruction—particularly when differentiated by pedagogical approach—can influence language development outcomes in measurable ways.

The control group, which received traditional instruction, began with a mean pre-test score of 54.09, suggesting a moderate level of speaking fluency among students prior to the intervention. Their performance varied considerably, with the lowest score at 40.90 and the highest at 61.82, revealing a substantial spread in initial proficiency levels. The pre-test standard deviation of 4.73 and median score of 54.44 indicate a relatively symmetrical distribution of scores centered around the mean, though some students fell well below or above the group average. After the instructional period, there was a modest increase in performance, with the post-test mean rising to 56.26. This improvement of approximately 2.17 points suggests some level of benefit from the instruction, although the effect

appears limited. The post-test scores ranged from 42.68 to 69.35, again reflecting a wide variation in student outcomes. The increased standard deviation of 5.35 indicates that variability in performance grew after the intervention, suggesting that the instruction may have helped some students more than others. The median score also saw a slight increase to 56.34, supporting the notion of modest overall improvement. Importantly, the Cohen's d value of 0.43 indicates a small-to-moderate effect size. This means that, while there was some statistical improvement in fluency, the practical significance of the instructional gains was limited. The results imply that traditional instructional methods may not be sufficient to produce substantial or consistent gains in speaking fluency across all learners, particularly those starting from lower proficiency levels.

Table. Independent samples t-test

Group	N	Pre-Test Mean	Pre-Test SD	Pre-Test Min	Pre-Test Max	Pre-Test Median	Post-Test Mean	Post-Test SD	Post-Test Min	Post-Test Max	Post-Test Median	Cohen's d
Control	35	54.09	4.73	40.90	61.82	54.44	56.26	5.35	42.68	69.35	56.34	0.43
Experimental	28	54.15	4.64	45.43	62.90	53.85	60.65	5.70	52.50	75.17	60.27	1.25

The experimental group, taught using a Task-Based Learning (TBL) approach, demonstrated a notably different trajectory. This group began with a comparable pre-test mean score of 54.15, nearly identical to that of the control group, suggesting that both groups started with similar fluency levels. Their pre-test scores ranged from 45.43 to 62.90, and the standard deviation of 4.64, along with a median of 53.85, illustrates a slightly narrower distribution than that of the control group, pointing to more uniform proficiency at the outset. However, the post-test results reveal a marked improvement: the mean score increased sharply to 60.65, representing a gain of more than six points. This significant growth indicates a strong instructional impact. The post-test scores ranged from 52.50 to 75.17, showing not only higher overall achievement but also a shift in the lower end of performance, meaning that even the lowest-scoring students improved notably. The post-test median rose to 60.27, further supporting the finding that gains were widespread throughout the group. The standard deviation of 5.70 suggests that while there was slightly more variability in outcomes post-intervention, this did not diminish the overall magnitude of improvement. The most compelling evidence comes from the Cohen's d value of 1.25, which falls into the category of a large effect. This strong effect size underscores the practical significance of the TBL approach, indicating that it had a powerful and consistent influence on students' fluency development. Taken together, the data strongly suggest that TBL is substantially more effective than traditional instruction in enhancing speaking fluency. The method not only supports significant improvements in average performance but also promotes higher achievement among students across various initial proficiency levels, making it a highly beneficial pedagogical strategy in the context of language learning.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a clear and significant improvement in speaking fluency among students taught using Task-Based Learning (TBL) compared to those instructed through traditional methods. This suggests that TBL, as a pedagogical framework, effectively supports the development of oral communication skills by creating real-world, meaning-focused contexts for learners to engage in spoken interaction. Unlike conventional teaching that often emphasizes grammar drills and repetition, TBL encourages learners to process and produce language in dynamic, goal-oriented scenarios, mirroring authentic communication. This supports the observations made by Dawoud et al. (2023), who concluded that TBL enhances fluency by placing students in situations that require them to negotiate meaning and use language spontaneously. Similarly, Putra et al. (2021) emphasized that fluency emerges not merely from mechanical repetition but from meaningful engagement with language. When students are motivated by a clear purpose and immersed in tasks that demand real-time speech production, they naturally shift their focus from form to message, which is a critical component in developing oral fluency. The statistically significant results from this study reinforce that a student-centered, communicative environment is more conducive to the development of speaking skills than a teacher-centered, form-focused classroom.

Moreover, the study offers compelling support for the claim that fluency is best developed when learners are given space to use language for actual communication rather than solely for practicing isolated structures. TBL promotes the kind of experiential learning that allows students to internalize language through use, rather than memorization. Kolm et al. (2021) showed that learners involved in drama-based, interactive activities outperformed their peers in fluency and accuracy due to their deep emotional engagement and active participation. In a similar vein, this study found that learners in the experimental group exhibited more fluid, spontaneous speech as a result of participating in task cycles that demanded collaboration, creativity, and reflection. Thaosiri and Chano (2022) also noted that when learners engage in communication tasks with a focus on meaning, rather than correctness, they become more confident and fluent. The ability to express oneself freely, despite occasional errors, is a cornerstone of communicative competence and is often lacking in traditional approaches that penalize mistakes. TBL removes this fear of error by prioritizing intelligibility and message transmission over accuracy, thus giving students the freedom and encouragement to speak more openly and frequently.

At the same time, while the overall trend of improvement is promising, it is important to acknowledge the variability in student outcomes within the TBL group. Not every learner benefited equally from the intervention, and this inconsistency reflects a common challenge in communicative classrooms. Erazo-Álvarez et al. (2023) emphasized that students' individual challenges—such as poor pronunciation, limited vocabulary, or weak cohesion—persist even in task-rich environments. This aligns with the findings of the present study, where some participants in the TBL group still struggled to produce coherent or confident speech despite being exposed to multiple tasks. The variability can be attributed to a number of factors, including language anxiety, uneven prior knowledge, and differences in learning styles. Ibrahim (2020) suggested that the integration of

technological support tools, such as mobile learning applications or digital storytelling platforms, can help address these individual gaps by providing tailored feedback and extended practice opportunities. To make TBL more inclusive and impactful, future instructional design should consider differentiated instruction within the task framework, ensuring that tasks are accessible and beneficial to students across various proficiency levels. Furthermore, the inclusion of reflective activities, peer feedback, and self-monitoring tools could help learners better understand and regulate their own language development.

The contrast between the experimental and control groups also points to the limitations of traditional, teacher-centered instruction in fostering fluent speech. While the control group did show some improvement, the progress was marginal and lacked the dynamism evident in the experimental group. This result reflects the long-observed weaknesses of lecture-based approaches, which often emphasize correctness over communicative use and restrict learners' opportunities to practice authentic language. Timbu et al. (2023) and Laoli (2021) found that engaging students in real-life communication scenarios—such as debates, problem-solving tasks, or simulations—leads to stronger gains in fluency and confidence than rote learning activities. The control group's modest improvement in the present study may be attributed to limited speaking time, low interaction, and overreliance on structured dialogue scripts that fail to encourage improvisation. Such instructional methods do not foster the spontaneous language processing skills necessary for fluent communication. In contrast, the TBL model promotes authentic interaction, peer negotiation, and communicative risk-taking, all of which are essential for preparing learners to use English in unpredictable, real-world contexts.

A major contributor to the success of TBL in this study is the emphasis on social interaction and collaborative learning, which serve as key mediators in the language acquisition process. Peer-to-peer communication within task cycles creates a rich social context for learners to construct meaning, co-develop language, and support each other's communicative efforts. Phan et al. (2022) argued that learners develop fluency more rapidly in environments where interaction is frequent, supportive, and authentic. Similarly, Hartanti et al. (2022) highlighted that group tasks and shared responsibilities reduce speaking anxiety and increase participation. In the present study, learners in the TBL group were observed to be more willing to take risks and more comfortable experimenting with language when working with peers. This finding reinforces the value of social interaction in reducing affective barriers to fluency. Hổ and Huyền (2020) further noted that informal peer feedback during interactive tasks helps learners notice gaps in their output and encourages real-time adjustments. This process of feedback and self-correction within a low-stakes environment builds fluency by enabling learners to produce language without the fear of judgment or correction by an authority figure, thus fostering a sense of linguistic autonomy.

Despite its effectiveness, TBL does not operate in isolation from learner-specific variables such as anxiety levels, self-confidence, and prior exposure to English. These affective factors significantly mediate the extent to which a learner can benefit from a task-based environment. Vargas et al. (2023) and Saito et al. (2024) pointed out that highly anxious learners may still struggle to speak fluently even when tasks are designed to be engaging and communicative. In the present study, although most participants in the TBL group showed substantial

improvement, some individuals exhibited signs of hesitation, reduced output, or avoidance behaviors. These outcomes indicate that TBL alone may not be sufficient unless complemented with strategies aimed at anxiety reduction and confidence building. Niko et al. (2024) highlighted the value of differentiated and scaffolded task design in helping learners gradually build up fluency in a supportive environment. Therefore, to fully harness the potential of TBL, instructors should consider integrating reflective journals, confidence-building activities, and low-anxiety warm-up tasks that help learners become more comfortable expressing themselves orally over time. Additionally, it may be beneficial to blend TBL with other instructional strategies that promote emotional regulation and learner self-awareness.

Importantly, the benefits of TBL appear to compound over time as learners are given repeated exposure to communicative tasks that demand active language use. Long-term engagement with TBL encourages the automatization of language processes, enabling learners to retrieve and use linguistic forms more quickly and accurately. Hanzawa (2021) and Ramadhani (2023) both emphasized that consistent practice in real-time speaking tasks leads to stronger internalization of conversational structures and greater fluency over time. In this study, the repeated cycles of pre-task planning, task performance, and post-task reflection provided a structured yet flexible environment for learners to improve their spoken English incrementally. Furthermore, Wang and Subramaniam (2024) observed that task-based approaches improve learners' intrinsic motivation, especially when tasks are meaningful and personally relevant. When learners perceive a task as useful or enjoyable, they are more likely to engage fully, persist in the face of difficulty, and reflect critically on their language performance. This motivational engagement, combined with repeated practice and peer interaction, forms a powerful engine for fluency development that surpasses the limitations of static, grammar-oriented teaching models.

In conclusion, the present study provides robust evidence for the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning in improving English speaking fluency among students. The TBL framework fosters meaningful communication, promotes learner autonomy, and encourages collaboration—all of which are key drivers of oral fluency. While the approach is not without its challenges, particularly for learners with high anxiety or low proficiency, it offers a flexible, dynamic, and learner-centered alternative to traditional instruction. To maximize its effectiveness, educators should integrate technology, differentiate tasks, and provide consistent support tailored to individual learner needs. When implemented thoughtfully, TBL has the potential to transform language classrooms into vibrant spaces for real communication and sustained fluency development.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study strongly support both hypotheses: students taught using Task-Based Learning (TBL) demonstrated significantly higher levels of English-speaking fluency compared to those taught through conventional methods, and there was a statistically significant improvement in fluency after participating in task-based instructional activities. The TBL group showed notable gains in speaking performance, indicating that engaging in authentic, communicative tasks effectively enhances fluency more than traditional drills and structured dialogues.

These findings suggest that TBL fosters not only greater average improvement but also more consistent progress across different proficiency levels, making it a highly effective approach for developing speaking skills. The practical implications emphasize the value of incorporating task-based strategies into language curricula to better support learners' communicative competence and confidence in real-world speaking contexts.

Despite these promising findings, the study's quasi-experimental design and use of intact groups limit the ability to control for all extraneous variables, potentially affecting internal validity. The relatively small sample size and single-institution setting restrict generalizability to broader populations. Additionally, the study focused exclusively on intermediate-level students, so the impact of TBL on learners of different proficiency levels remains unclear. Future research should consider randomized controlled trials with larger, more diverse samples and include longitudinal designs to examine sustained effects of TBL. Expanding fluency measures and exploring other language skills or affective factors such as motivation and anxiety could also provide deeper insights into the comprehensive benefits of task-based instruction.

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