

Assessing the effectiveness of task-based learning to enhance B1 EFL students' speaking skills

Evaluación de la eficacia del aprendizaje basado en tareas para mejorar las habilidades orales de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera de nivel B1.

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Resumen

El desarrollo de las habilidades orales es un componente clave en el aprendizaje del inglés, aunque los métodos tradicionales centrados en la memorización y la práctica gramatical suelen ser insuficientes para promover la competencia comunicativa. El Aprendizaje Basado en Tareas (TBL) ofrece una alternativa al involucrar a los estudiantes en actividades significativas y auténticas que favorecen la interacción. Este estudio cuasi-experimental evaluó el impacto del TBL en las habilidades orales de 124 estudiantes de nivel B1 de inglés como lengua extranjera en una universidad privada de Ecuador. Los participantes se dividieron en un grupo experimental ($n = 99$), que trabajó con TBL durante 14 semanas en 25 sesiones de 50 minutos, y un grupo de control ($n = 25$), que siguió un enfoque tradicional. Se aplicaron pruebas orales tipo Cambridge PET antes y después de la intervención para medir gramática y vocabulario, manejo del discurso, pronunciación y comunicación interactiva. El grupo experimental mostró mejoras significativas en todas las áreas, especialmente en manejo del discurso ($d = 1.35$) y pronunciación ($d = 1.28$), con tamaños del efecto grandes, mientras que el grupo de control evidenció progresos limitados, sobre todo en gramática. Además, un cuestionario tipo Likert reveló que los estudiantes percibieron el TBL como una metodología más motivadora, relevante y útil para desarrollar sus habilidades orales. Los resultados respaldan la eficacia del TBL como estrategia pedagógica para potenciar la expresión oral, aunque se recomienda replicar el estudio en muestras más amplias y con distintos niveles de competencia mediante diseños experimentales.

Palabras clave: *Task Based Learning* (TBL); desarrollo de habilidades orales; competencia comunicativa; tareas auténticas; estudio cuasi-experimental; percepciones de los estudiantes

Abstract

Developing speaking skills is essential in English language learning; however, traditional methods that emphasize rote memorization and extensive grammar drills often fail to promote communicative competence. Task Based Learning (TBL) addresses this gap by engaging students in meaningful, real-world tasks that promote interaction and skill acquisition. This study aimed to assess the impact of TBL on speaking skills of B1 level EFL learners from a private university in Ecuador. This quasi-experimental study involved a total of 124 students divided into an experimental group (n= 99) taught via TBL with a control group (n=25) using conventional methods. Over 14 weeks the experimental group engaged in 25 sessions of 50 minutes each, while the control group followed a traditional curriculum. Pretest and post-test scores were collected using the Cambridge PET speaking criteria, which evaluate grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, pronunciation, and interactive communication. The results showed that the participants in the experimental group made significant gains across all subskills, particularly discourse management ($d = 1.35$) and pronunciation ($d = 1.28$) with large effect sizes. In contrast, the control group demonstrated slight gains, primarily in grammar. Furthermore, a post-intervention Likert scale questionnaire showed that students perceived TBL as more engaging, relevant and useful to improve their speaking skills. These findings demonstrate that TBL can be a useful approach for improving speaking skills in language learners. While these results seem promising, further studies are recommended to test these outcomes in larger groups or across different proficiency levels through an experimental design.

Keywords: Task Based Learning (TBL); speaking skills development; communicative competence; authentic tasks; quasi-experimental study; learner perceptions

Introduction

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context the development of speaking skills remains a challenge, particularly at the intermediate (B1) level. Traditional activities, while effective for developing structural accuracy, often emphasize rote memorization, provide limited opportunities for authentic oral communication and fall short in the development of key speaking skills. In contrast, Task Based learning (TBL) has emerged as a promising approach that aims to bridge this gap and enhance speaking skills through a real-life approach to learning a language by the implementation of authentic and meaningful tasks that replicate real-life contexts (Van den Braden, 2006).

Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT), grounded in the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, has been widely recognized since the 1980s as a prominent approach to fostering authentic communication through meaningful tasks that mirror real-world language use across both productive and receptive skills. (Richards, 2006). TBL functions as a practical methodology to encourage language acquisitions through meaningful, real-world and goal-oriented activities. (Ellis, 2003). The pedagogical benefits of TBL are supported by several theories. The interactionist theory developed by (Long, 1996) emphasizes the significance of meaning negotiation in interaction for language development. Sociocultural theory (Lantolf et al., 2014), based on Vygotsky's work places a strong emphasis on social scaffolding and collaborative learning. Furthermore, according to the Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) engaging tasks aid in the management of cognitive demands, allowing the learners to concentrate on the production of language.

As East (2021) argues, TBL not only promotes linguistic development but also involves comprehending, manipulating and interacting in the target language, which in turn enhances communicative competence. First conceptualized by Willis (1996), TBL frames language as a tool for achieving communicative goals. More recently, Van de Branden (2025) characterizes TBLT as a learner centered method rooted in exploration, where meaningful tasks are developed emphasizing real world language use, problem solving and collaboration. The TBL framework proposed by Willis (1996) and refined by Corwin (2022) includes the following stages:



- **Pre-task:** Task introduction, task instructions and vocabulary preparation.
- **Task:** Collaborative task execution with teacher monitoring.
- **Planning:** Students assume roles, rehearse and prepare to present.
- **Report/Present:** Students present and receive feedback from peers and the teacher.
- **Feedback:** Post-task reflection and formative feedback (p. 2)

In this model, the teacher is neither an absent figure nor the star of the classroom, the teacher acts as a facilitator who plays a pivotal role in selecting tasks that promote communication, encourage participation, collaboration and mutual respect among students. (Pingmuang & Koraneekij, 2022). In addition to improving speaking proficiency, TBL has demonstrated to boost speaking confidence, with sustained engagement critical for enhancing cognition, attention and interaction. Integrating digital tools further amplifies these benefits (Cifuentes & Arias, 2019) Empirical studies consistently highlight TBL's role in promoting authentic language use. Willis D (2007), emphasizes the pedagogical value of problem-solving and role playing, while experimental research demonstrates that TBL groups significantly outperform control groups in post-tests. (Skehan, 2014) These findings underscore TBL's efficacy in improving speaking confidence and skills, notably fluency, lexical range and grammatical accuracy (Nunan, 2004).

Speaking is widely regarded as a cornerstone of language learning as it allows individuals to communicate properly with others. It encompasses subskills such as vocabulary, grammar pronunciation, fluency and auditory comprehension. Effective speaking requires producing comprehensible speech that conveys coherent messages with accurate pronunciation. (Nunan, 2015). Given its centrality, it is crucial to provide opportunities for learners to practice speaking and gradually improve their fluency, for which research has proved that TBL significantly aids the development of speaking skills. Similarly, Jyothi and Sripada (2020), obtained significant improvements in oral fluency through this approach, particularly through real world communication.

Further research also has added evidence of the efficacy of TBL in speaking frameworks. Pre-speaking activities activate prior knowledge and prepare learners for a successful task, while speaking tasks such as role plays, debates, interviews are means of practical application, and post-speaking activities permit reflection and learning consolidation.



(Ahmadian, 2011) Overall, research converges on TBL's advantages for communicative competence, including increased engagement, confidence, reduced hesitation, and improved lexical and grammar precision.

Current research examines the speaking subskills that benefit most from Albino (2017) demonstrated how picture description improved grammatical accuracy and fluency. On the other hand, mobile assisted project-based learning has proven successful in the development of vocabulary and grammar variety. (Benlaghrissi & Ouahdi, 2024) Meanwhile, technology mediated voice recording and map tasks have demonstrated to be effective in improving suprasegmental accuracy, stress, intonation and pronunciation. Task -based pronunciation teaching (TBPT), which incorporates pronunciation as a function of task completion, has demonstrated to be effective in Intelligibility and stress patterns, which further aids learners' speaking skills (Mora & Mora-Plaza, 2023)

Research has demonstrated that TBL proves to be a meaningful approach for language learners to acquire fluency and develop their overall speaking skills such as fluency, speech rate, lexical range and syntactic complexity. (Odeh, 2020) Studies also demonstrated that TBLT helps learners reduce pauses, balance speech pace, and overall communicate more clearly. Authentic tasks and language use also foster engagement and positive perceptions towards TBLT in the EFL context with increased motivation and improvement in both receptive and productive skills (Zúñiga et al., 2023) However, there is a lack of empirical evidence comparing TBL to traditional methods at an intermediate level, particularly in the context of Latin America.

This mixed methods study aims to assess the effectiveness of TBL interventions to enhance speaking skills in EFL learners at an intermediate level across the four Cambridge PET criteria. Specifically, the research questions are:

- To what extent does TBL impact B1-Level students speaking proficiency?
- Which speaking subskills (pronunciation, fluency, interactive communication) show the most significant gains through TBL interventions?
- What are learners' perceptions of TBL on their speaking performance?

By addressing those questions, this research aims to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and classroom practice while providing potential insight for EFL education and curriculum design.

Materials and methods

Type of Research

The present study employed a quasi-experimental mixed method approach. It is quasi experimental in nature because participants were selected from established classes, and a non-equivalent control group design was used as it was impractical to allocate participants to groups at random due to the limitations of operating in an actual educational environment.

Two groups participated in the study: a control group that was taught using the conventional teaching methods used at the university, and an experimental group that was instructed using TBL principles. The study is quantitative as it uses data from pre-test post-test assessments (using the Cambridge PET criteria) and a post-intervention Likert-scale questionnaire to evaluate both the effectiveness of TBL on speaking skills and students' perceptions on this methodology.

Research Scope

This study was carried out at a private university in Ecuador in a general English course focused on B1 level learner, where English was taught as a foreign language to non-English majors. The primary aim was to assess the effectiveness of TBL to enhance speaking skills including grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, pronunciation, and interactive communication. The intervention was applied over the course of one academic semester equivalent to fourteen weeks of class applying a total of twenty-five interventions lasting fifty minutes each.

Selection of Participants

Power analysis was conducted using G Power 3.1 to identify a statistically significant difference between groups using an independent samples test with ($\alpha = 0.5$, power = .80, expected effect size $d=0.5$) assumed based on benchmarks and comparable studies in educational research. To detect such an effect, a sample size of ($n=128$) participants would be required. However, the number of participants that was possible to recruit for this study



was (n=124) B1-level students aged (16-24) Participants were drawn from existing classes already established by the university. No exclusion criteria were applied beyond verifying B1 proficiency verified through the levels approved by the participants. The experimental group consisted of (n= 99) participants, while the control group had (n= 25) participants. Although the groups are unequal in size, the total sample size is sufficiently close to the required one, and the larger experimental group enhances the study's sensitivity. Random assignment was not possible due to the non-equivalent, quasi-experimental control group design and the constraints of operating in a real educational environment. Despite this, the approach maintains sufficient power to find medium to large impacts, acknowledging the limitations of field-based research.

Table 1

Sample Population by Group and Gender

Group	Total Participants	Men	Women
Experimental Group	99	63	36
Control Group	25	10	15
Total	124	73	51

Source: authors

Description of the instruments

Three main instruments were used to align with the research objectives:

1. **Speaking Pretest and posttest:** At the beginning and end of the intervention, a speaking test, aligned with the Cambridge PET speaking criteria, was administered to both groups. (See appendix A) The four main speaking subskills were assessed: pronunciation, fluency, interactive communication, and lexical accuracy and range.



(Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2020). Both tests followed a similar structure aligned with the standardized format including four parts:

Part 1: Personal interview whose purpose is to assess fluency, grammar and vocabulary in a specific context.

Part 2: Collaborative task to evaluate interactive communication, and discourse management.

Part 3: Individual long turn in which discourse management, vocabulary range and fluency are assessed.

Part 4: Discussion section in which participants need to demonstrate a higher level of interactive communication.

2. **Post Intervention Questionnaire:** At the end of the intervention, a 10 item Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to participants in the experimental group to gather data about the perceived benefits and challenges of TBL, focusing on confidence in speaking, task engagement, collaboration and fluency development. The survey included items with response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Appendix B)
3. **Task materials:** The tasks included in the intervention were designed to be meaningful, authentic, relevant to students' lifestyles and included:
 - Role plays
 - Interviews
 - Debates
 - Discussions
 - Problem solving
 - Information gap activities
 - Storytelling

These tasks were selected due to their potential to enhance communicative competence. (Van den Branden, 2025)

Procedure and Data Collection



1. **Pretest (week 1):** Both groups completed the speaking pretest, scores were systematically recorded using standardized rubrics adapted from the Cambridge PET (see Appendix C)
2. **Intervention (weeks 1-14):** The experimental group participated in 25 TBL-based interventions (50 minutes each), throughout 14 weeks using the Willis (1996) task cycle with a pre-task, task, and language focus stages. Teacher feedback was provided following each task (see appendix D for the feedback template). In contrast, the control groups received traditional instruction based on grammar and pronunciation drills, vocabulary memorization, and teacher-led discussions with minimal speaking practice.
3. **Post-test and Questionnaire (week 15):** Both groups were administered a post-test to identify changes in speaking proficiency at the end of the semester. The experimental group also responded the post-intervention questionnaire distributed via Google Forms.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS (version 31). The following procedures were applied:

Descriptive statistics: Means and standard deviations were calculated for the control and experimental groups pre and post intervention. Responses to the 10-item Likert scale questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviation, and frequency distributions for each item. This analysis shed light on participants' insights into TBL interventions, particularly regarding engagement, confidence and speaking fluency.

Paired samples t-tests were used to compare scores pre and post-test interventions within both control and experimental groups, the significance level was set at $p < 0.05$.

Independent-sample t-tests were used to compare post-test results between experimental and control groups. The magnitude of TBL's impact on speaking skills was calculated using Cohen's

Ethical considerations

All participants provided consent and agreed to voluntarily participate in this study. Likewise, students were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. This research followed the ethical guidelines of the University and received approval from the



Director of the language center and the Research Ethics committee. Student anonymity and the right to withdraw at any point were respected throughout the research process.

Results

The present study employed a quasi-experimental design to assess the effectiveness of Task Based Learning (TBL) to enhance speaking skills in B1 level EFL students. Specifically, this research aimed to investigate to what extent TBL influences students speaking skills, which speaking subskills (grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, pronunciation, interactive communication) show the most significant results after TBL intervention and finally this study aimed to obtain learners' perceptions of TBL on their speaking skills. The data was collected through pre and pos-test assessments following the Cambridge PET criteria for speaking skills, and a Likert scale (1-5) questionnaire with 10 items to investigate students' perceptions about TBL in speaking skills. The results are presented below.

Descriptive statistics

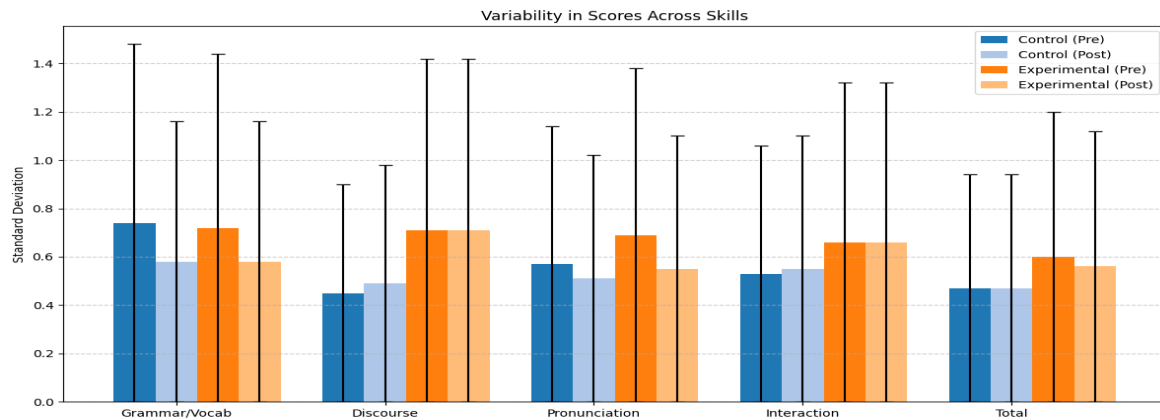
Table 2 below presents a comparison between mean and (SD) scores for the control group and experimental group pre- and post-intervention. The control group received instruction based on fill in the blank grammar activities, mainly from the course textbook, pronunciation drills, scripted and memorized role plays, and teacher-led discussions. The overall mean score increased from (M= 1.97 to 2.25) The most notable gains were grammar and vocabulary (M = 2.23 to 2.58) and pronunciation (M = 2.19 to 2.50). These findings demonstrate that traditional methods are effective in lexical and structural accuracy, however higher order communicative skills such as interactive communication and discourse management may be neglected.

Conversely, the experimental group exposed to TBL through 25 interventions such as debates, improvised role plays, students lead discussions, storytelling, interviews, picture description, problem solving, and presentations demonstrated significant improvement in all subskills. The overall mean score increased from 2.10 (SD = 0.60) to 2.75 (SD = 0.56) in the post test results, indicating that the TBL interventions had a statistically significant impact on overall speaking

proficiency in the participants. Notably, the lower standard deviations indicate greater consistency and homogeneity in post-test scores highlights the effectiveness of this approach in learners speaking proficiency.

Graph 1

Standard Deviation comparison



Note: The lower SDs in post tests indicate a more consistent performance after intervention which suggests significant improvement in all skills for the experimental group.

Table 2

Pre-test and Post-test Speaking SDs in Control and Experimental Groups

Skill	Control Group Pre-test (M ± SD)	Control Group Post-test (M ± SD)	Experimental Group Pre-test (M ± SD)	Experimental Group Post-test (M ± SD)
Grammar and Vocabulary	2.23 ± 0.74	2.58 ± 0.58	2.43 ± 0.72	2.95 ± 0.58
Discourse Management	1.73 ± 0.45	1.92 ± 0.49	1.83 ± 0.71	2.60 ± 0.71
Pronunciation	2.19 ± 0.57	2.50 ± 0.51	2.34 ± 0.69	2.89 ± 0.55
Interactive Communication	1.73 ± 0.53	2.00 ± 0.55	1.81 ± 0.66	2.54 ± 0.66
Total	1.97 ± 0.47	2.25 ± 0.47	2.10 ± 0.60	2.75 ± 0.56

Source: authors



Inferential statistics

Post Test Comparison Between Groups

Table 3 presents results from the independent sample t-tests which confirmed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group across all four subskills. Notably, discourse management and interactive communication exhibited the largest size effects (Cohen's $d > 1$), indicating that TBL had a strong impact on these subskills adding further evidence to the effectiveness of this methodology to foster real world communicative competence. Even grammar and vocabulary and pronunciation showed moderate effect sizes, suggesting that TBL had overall meaningful advantages over traditional instruction.

Table 3

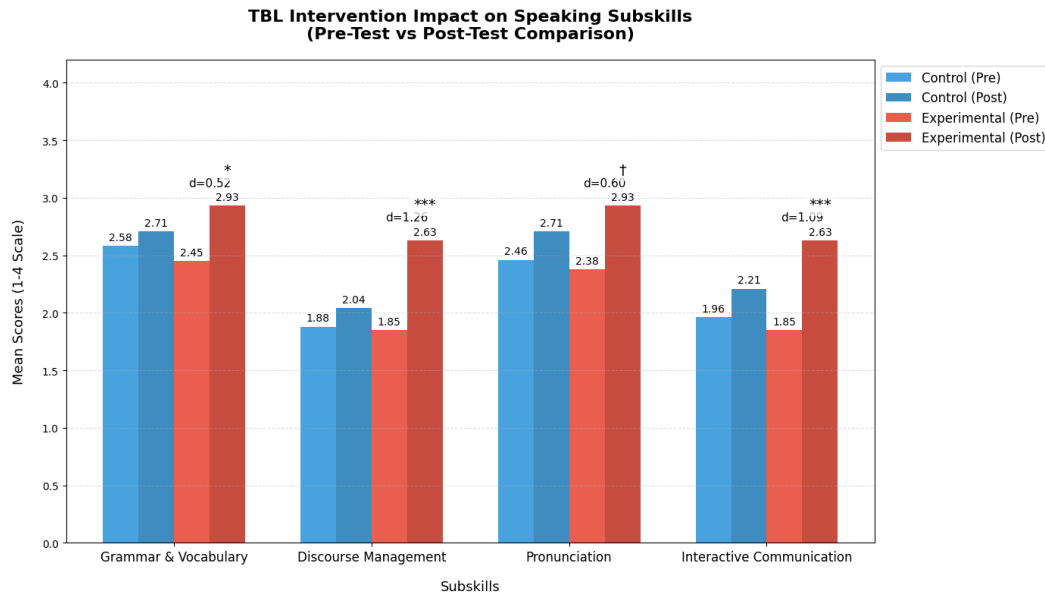
Independent Sample t-Test comparison between Post-test Mean Scores for Control and Experimental Groups

Group	Total Participants	Men	Women
Experimental Group	99	63	36
Control Group	25	10	15
Total	124	73	51

Note. All differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.005$).

Graph 2



Comparison of pre post-test scores for subskills between control and experimental groups

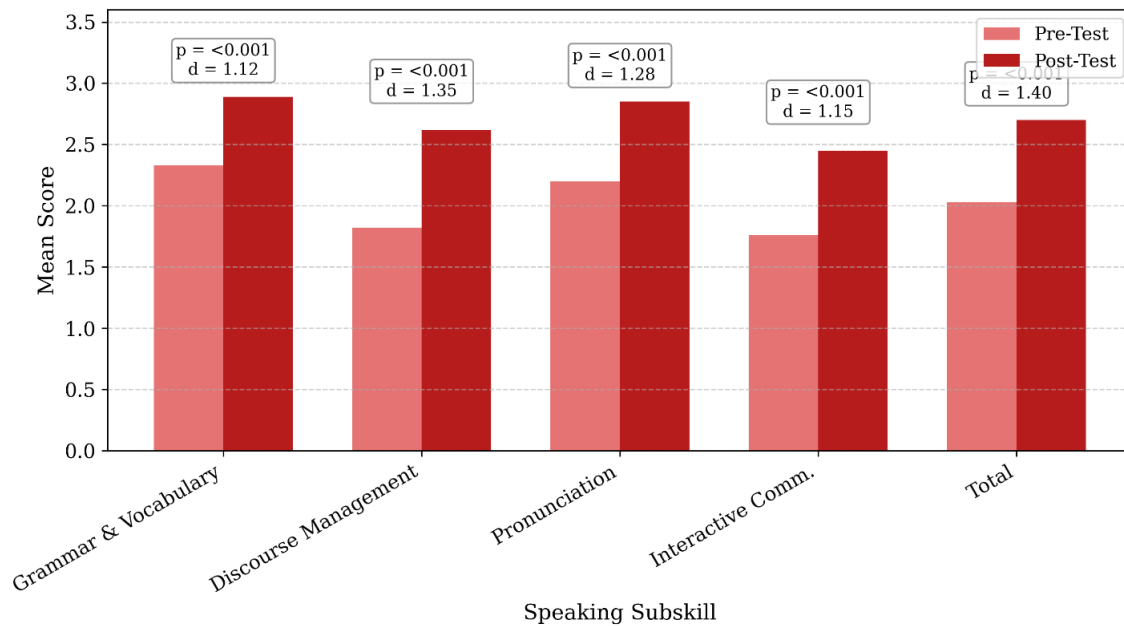
Note. Effect sizes (Cohen's d) are displayed above each subskill showing a large effect size for discourse management and interactive communication ($d > 1$) moderate effect size for Grammar and vocabulary ($d = 0.52$) and pronunciation. Degrees of freedom (df) were 108 for all tests.

Subskill improvement

Table 3 summarizes which speaking subskills (grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, pronunciation, interactive communication) show the most significant results after TBL intervention. To assess within group progress, paired samples t-tests confirmed statistically significant improvements across all subskills (<0.001) in the experimental group with large Cohen's d effect sizes.

Graph 3

Pre-test and post-test paired t-test results in experimental group speaking skills

Improvement in Speaking Subskills: Pre-Test vs Post-Test

Note. The p value < 0.001 indicates high statistical significance for all skills. Cohen's d values above 0.8 indicate a larger effect size adding to the effectiveness of TBL.

These findings suggest that TBL had a substantial impact on learners' speaking skills. Notably, discourse management and pronunciation had a particularly large effect sizes with Cohens d (1.35) and (1.28) respectively. This sheds light on the influence of TBL on real-world communicative competence, highlighting the effectiveness of this methodology to foster sustained spontaneous, coherent and intelligible speech.

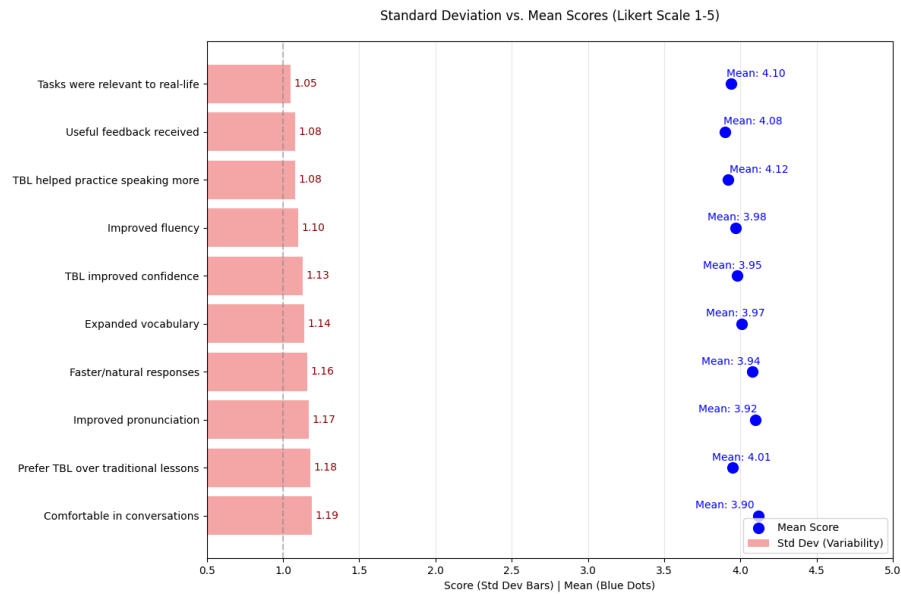
Survey results: Learners' perceptions

The survey results shed light on the third research question investigating participants' perceptions of TBL on speaking performance. Descriptive analysis showed significantly positive perceptions from learners. Most respondents (82%) agreed that TBL helped them practice speaking more than traditional methods ($M = 4.12$), 80% found the tasks relevant to real life communication ($M = 4.10$), A significant 79% of participants appreciated receiving useful feedback on their overall performance ($M = 4.08$). This survey also showed strong preference (77%) for TBL over conventional approaches ($M = 4.01$).

Graph 4



Standard deviations for Likert scale questionnaire responses

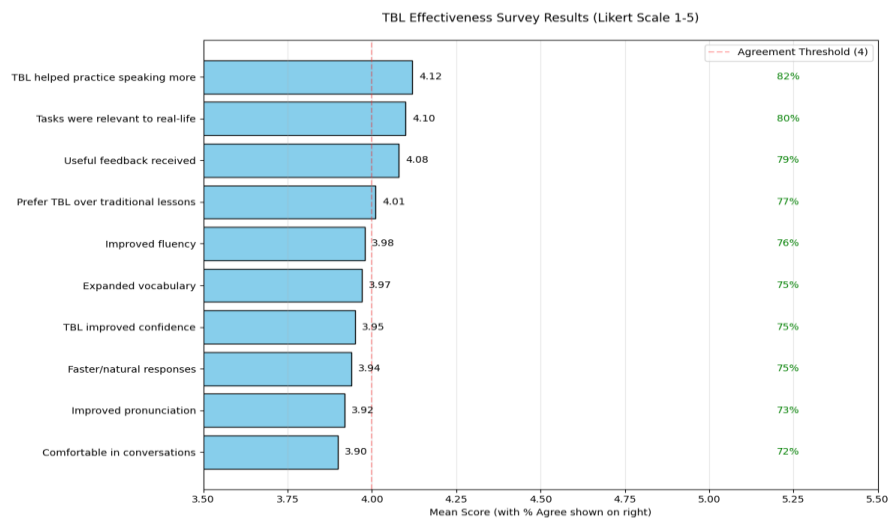


Note: Lower variability in standard deviations suggest consistent agreement

The clustering of responses around 4 points, together with the low standard deviations demonstrates strong preference and satisfaction from participants for TBL. These findings add to the existing literature on TBL adding emphasis on the motivational and affective benefits of incorporating this methodology in EFL instruction.

Graph 5

TBL effectiveness Likert scale distributions



Note: The results for the Likert scale questionnaire (1-5) show responses clustering around 4, indicating positive perceptions toward TBL.

Discussion

This study sought to assess the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning on the development of speaking skills in B1-level EFL learners. It aimed to determine to what extent and which subskills, namely grammar and vocabulary, discourse management, pronunciation, and interactive communication, benefit most. Furthermore, this study investigated learners' perceptions of TBL in a post-intervention questionnaire.

Impact of TBL on speaking proficiency

The experimental group showed significant improvement in overall speaking performance, with mean scores rising from 2.10 to 2.75 across the PET Cambridge criteria for the speaking test. The control group also showed some improvement, going from a mean of 1.97 to 2.25. However, these gains are considerably smaller and limited to grammar and vocabulary. These results align with prior research comparing TBL with traditional methods, suggesting that although traditional methods may be beneficial for linguistic accuracy, they often fall short in promoting communicative competence, a main objective in language learning, particularly at the B1 level (Morales et al., 2024). Additionally, the large effect sizes observed in the experimental group (Cohen's $d > 1$ across all subskills) contribute to the understanding of TBL being a particularly effective method for enhancing speaking proficiency in EFL learners.

Impact of TBL on subskills

Discourse management and pronunciation

The remarkable gains in discourse management ($d=1.35$), pronunciation ($d=1.28$) confirm TBL's alignment with the core principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) with a focus on real-life, authentic interaction where meaning and learner interaction are prioritized over isolated grammar practice. These findings are in line with previous research that demonstrated that learners who engage in authentic and contextualized tasks with real-life meaning demonstrate measurable improvements in speaking skills, particularly fluency and coherence. (OMAR et al., 2021)



Interactive communication

The collaborative nature of TBL activities suggests a notable gain in Interactive communication ($d=1.15$). Activities such as role plays, discussions, problem solving, and debates generate a meaningful space for interaction and allow for development real-life communication skills, as found by Jyothi & Sripada (2020).

Grammar and vocabulary

Interestingly, grammar and vocabulary also showed a significant improvement ($d=1.12$). This supports the notion that, in contrast with traditional methodologies, TBL fosters lexical and structural acquisition in meaningful contexts rather than isolated rote grammar and vocabulary memorization. (Odeh, 2020)

Additionally, the lower standard deviation in the post-test scores in the experimental group indicate a more consistent level of performance in all participants. This suggests that learners who begin at a lower proficiency level may enjoy a similar level of benefits as better performing learners. This is particularly important to promote equity in language learning.

In words by Ellis (2003) TBL is a ‘strong form on the communicative approach because learners learn the language through communication not for communication.’ Recent research aligns with these findings positioning TBL as an effective methodological approach to promote communicative competence enabling learners to negotiate meaning and solve problems in real life contexts (Van den Branden, 2025)

Participants’ perceptions of TBL

The results of the post-intervention survey indicated that over 80% of participants perceived TBL as beneficial for speaking skills performance, particularly for real-life relevance (4.10/5), useful feedback (4.08/5), and confidence (4.12/5). This is particularly important because, as noted by Cifuentes & Arias (2019), Pingmuang & Koraneekij (2022) and Mora and Mora-Plaza (2023) TBL fosters emotional engagement, confidence, motivation, and collaboration, which are crucial for language learning.

Implications for EFL instruction and Curriculum Design

Taken together, these findings suggest that TBL represents a solid foundation for teaching speaking skills, not just an addition to language instruction. This is a particularly effective methodology for B1 learners who often face challenges from textbook-based practice and



controlled practice to more spontaneous and natural communication. This is to say that the structured yet communicative nature of TBL tasks provides learners with the opportunity to obtain real interaction and support at the same time.

Incorporating TBL into the EFL teaching curriculum could help address the frequent imbalance found in traditional English teaching methodologies, which favor grammar over speaking practice. Moreover, the constant strong preference from students toward TBL activities over conventional approaches demonstrates that its implementation could be beneficial toward more engaging learner-centered classroom environments.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study offers promising results, several limitations need to be acknowledged. First, despite the power analysis supporting the sample size, the unbalanced group sizes may influence the generalizability of the results. This study focused on B1 level students at a university level; further studies could investigate whether TBL is equally effective at beginner (A1) or advanced (B2-C1) levels applied to different age groups in other cultural or educational settings. Additionally, this research was not randomized, which is common in educational settings; however, future studies could include a randomized controlled trial to reduce the extent to which causality could be inferred. Finally, the focus of this study was speaking; future investigations could explore the benefits of TBL on other skills, such as writing or listening, and measure long-term effectiveness through longitudinal studies

Conclusions

This study aimed to investigate the impact of Task-Based Learning (TBL) in enhancing speaking skills in intermediate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at a private university in Ecuador. The results showed a significant improvement in participants in the experimental group compared to the control group, measured through the Cambridge PET criteria. Discourse management, pronunciation and interactive communication had larger size effects demonstrating the effectiveness of TBL to improve communicative competence. Additionally, a post-intervention survey showed that participants appreciate working with authentic, meaningful tasks and receiving feedback after them, which is relevant to increasing their motivation



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Annexes

Annex A

B1 PET Test

**B1: Preliminary
Speaking Test**

Part 1 (2–3 minutes)

Phase 1
Interlocutor

To both candidates Good morning/afternoon/evening.
Can I have your mark sheets, please?

Hand over the mark sheets to the Assessor.

I'm and this is

To Candidate A What's your name? Where do you live?
Thank you.

To Candidate B And what's your name? Where do you live?
Thank you.

Back-up prompts

B, do you work or are you a student?

Do you have a job?
Do you study?

What do you do/study?

What job do you do?
What subject do you study?

Thank you.

And A, do you work or are you a student?

Do you have a job?
Do you study?

What do you do/study?

What job do you do?
What subject do you study?

Thank you.



Phase 2
Interlocutor

Select one or more questions from the list to ask each candidate.
 Ask Candidate A first.

How do you get to work/school/university every day?	Back-up prompts Do you usually travel by car? (Why/Why not?)
What did you do yesterday evening/last weekend?	Did you do anything yesterday evening/last weekend? What?
Do you think that English will be useful for you in the future? (Why/Why not?)	Will you use English in the future? (Why/Why not?)
Tell us about the people you live with.	Do you live with friends/your family?
Thank you.	

Speaking Test 1	Part 2 (2–3 minutes)
1A Learning a language	
Interlocutor	Now I'd like each of you to talk on your own about something. I'm going to give each of you a photograph and I'd like you to talk about it. A, here is your photograph. It shows people learning a language. <i>Place Part 2 booklet, open at Task 1A, in front of candidate.</i> B, you just listen. A, please tell us what you can see in the photograph. Back-up prompts • Talk about the people/person. • Talk about the place. • Talk about other things in the photograph.
Candidate A © approx. 1 minute	
Interlocutor	Thank you. (Can I have the booklet please?) Retrieve Part 2 booklet.
1B At a party	
Interlocutor	B, here is your photograph. It shows people at a party. <i>Place Part 2 booklet, open at Task 1B, in front of candidate.</i> A, you just listen. B, please tell us what you can see in the photograph. Back-up prompts • Talk about the people/person. • Talk about the place. • Talk about other things in the photograph.
Candidate B © approx. 1 minute	
Interlocutor	Thank you. (Can I have the booklet please?) Retrieve Part 2 booklet.

1A



1B



Speaking Test 1 (Work and Relaxation)

Parts 3 and 4 (6 minutes)

Part 3

Interlocutor

Now, in this part of the test you're going to talk about something together for about two minutes. I'm going to describe a situation to you.

Place Part 3 booklet, open at Task 1, in front of the candidates.

A young man works very hard, and has only one free day a week. He wants to find an activity to help him relax.

Here are some activities that could help him relax.

Talk together about the different activities he could do, and say which would be most relaxing.

All right? Now, talk together.

Candidates

 *approx. 2-3 minutes*

Interlocutor

Thank you. (Can I have the booklet please?) *Retrieve Part 3 booklet.*

Part 4

Interlocutor

Use the following questions, as appropriate:

- What do you do when you want to relax? (Why?)
- Do you prefer to relax with friends or alone? (Why?)
- Is it important to do exercise in your free time? (Why?/Why not?)
- Is it useful to learn new skills in your free time? (Why?/Why not?)
- Do you think people spend too much time working/studying these days? (Why?/Why not?)

Select any of the following prompts, as appropriate:

- How/what about you?
- Do you agree?
- What do you think?

Thank you. That is the end of the test.

Annex B



Task-Based Learning Effectiveness Survey

This survey aims to gather your perspectives on Task-Based Learning (TBL) and its impact on your speaking skills. Please rate each statement on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Your responses are anonymous and will be used for research purposes only. This survey is voluntary and optional and will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation

Section 1: Biological Factors

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Age: _____

For sections 2 and 3, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements using the scale below:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Section 2: Task-Based Learning (TBL) Effectiveness

1. TBL activities (e.g., role-plays, discussions, problem-solving tasks) helped me practice speaking more than traditional exercises.
2. TBL made me feel more confident when speaking in English.
3. The tasks in TBL were relevant to real-life communication situations.
4. I received useful feedback during TBL activities that helped me improve my speaking.
5. I would prefer more TBL activities over traditional grammar-focused lessons.

Section 3: Speaking Skills Improvement

1. My fluency (smoothness, fewer pauses) in speaking has improved due to TBL.
2. I have expanded my vocabulary and can express myself better after TBL activities.
3. My pronunciation has improved because of speaking practice in TBL tasks.
4. I feel more comfortable participating in conversations in English after TBL.
5. TBL helped me think faster and respond more naturally in spoken English.



Annex C

Preliminary English Test (PET) Speaking Assessment Rubric (Pre-test and Post-test Rubric for B1)

Category / Level	5	4	3	2	1
Grammar and Vocabulary	Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary and structures. Errors do not impede communication.	<u>Uses</u> sufficient vocabulary and structures to communicate. Occasional errors but meaning is clear.	Limited range of vocabulary and structures. Errors sometimes cause strain in communication.	Very limited range. Frequent errors that often obscure meaning.	Extremely limited vocabulary and structures. Communication is severely hindered by errors.
Pronunciation	Pronunciation is clear and natural. Rare mispronunciations do not affect understanding.	Generally clear pronunciation with occasional lapses that do not hinder comprehension.	Pronunciation is sometimes <u>unclear</u> but listener can understand with effort.	Frequent mispronunciations make understanding difficult.	Pronunciation is very poor; communication is nearly impossible.
Discourse Management	Maintains conversation with ease, using a range of cohesive devices and strategies.	<u>Generally</u> maintains interaction with some use of cohesive devices.	Maintains interaction but with limited contribution and cohesion.	Limited ability to maintain conversation; responses are short and disconnected.	Unable to maintain conversation; responses are minimal or inappropriate.
Interactive Communication	Fully engages in interaction, responding promptly and appropriately.	Good engagement with occasional need for prompting.	Some engagement but may require support or prompting.	Minimal <u>engagement</u> ; often needs prompting.	Very little engagement; unable to respond without significant help.

Annex D

TBL group feedback template for B1 EFL learners

The following chart was used to provide group feedback to students following the task cycle, focusing in communicative competence over structural accuracy.

Group Name Members:

Task Title:

Date:

TBL Phase	Focus Area	What you did well	Suggestions for improvement
1. Pre-task	Preparation, task understanding, vocabulary support	e.g., You clarified the task well and asked useful questions.	e.g., Review key vocabulary or ask for clarification when uncertain.
2. During Task	Interaction, collaboration, use of English, fluency	e.g., You worked collaboratively and used English consistently.	e.g., Try to reduce L1 use and take more risks speaking in full sentences.
3. Planning	Organizing ideas, preparing to present, language refinement	e.g., You rehearsed clearly and structured your ideas well.	e.g., Use more linking words for clarity and cohesion.
4. Report/Presentation	Pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, audience engagement	e.g., Your pronunciation was <u>clear</u> and your delivery organized.	e.g., Make more eye contact or use expressive intonation.
5. Language Feedback	Lexical and grammatical accuracy, effective language use	e.g., 'In my opinion, the best solution is...' was a good phrase.	e.g., Work on subject-verb agreement: 'He speak' → 'He speaks'.
6. Overall Comments	Strengths and focus areas	e.g., Strong group collaboration and turn-taking.	e.g., Focus on elaborating ideas with more detail.