

# IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING STRATEGIES

Sahar Samy El-Sadat El-Nashar

## Abstract

This study aimed to examine the impact of using task-based language teaching strategies in improving speaking skills for preparatory school students. The study adopted the quasi-experimental design employing two groups: experimental and control. The Task-based language teaching strategies were used in teaching the experimental group in the second term of the academic year (2017- 2018). A Speaking test was designed and validated to be used as a pre-posttest. The data of the study were analyzed statistically. Also, t-test for paired and independent groups was used to measure the statistical differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control groups. The study indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of experimental group and control group students on the post administration of the speaking test in favor of the experimental group. The results showed that the use of Task-based language teaching strategies had a significant impact on improving students' speaking skills. In conclusion, the study recommended that EFL teachers have to update their methods of teaching to be professional English language teachers; they shouldn't limit themselves to teacher guide or textbook activities. They should adapt the curriculum according to their pupils' needs and interests. It was also suggested that further research should be conducted related to Using online TBLT strategies based programs to develop various language skills.

**Keywords:** Task-based language teaching, speaking skills, preparatory stage pupils.

## Introduction:

Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Bueno&McLaren(2006) considered speaking as one of the most difficult skills language-learners have to face.

Ellis (2003) reports that task-based language teaching (TBLT) is a form of teaching that treats language primarily as a tool of communicating rather than as a subject for study or manipulation. It's clear that if learners are to develop the competence they need in order to use a second language easily and effectively in the kinds of situations they meet outside the classroom, they need to experience how language is used as a tool for communication within it. Task serves as the most obvious means of organizing teaching along these lines. The most effective way to teach a language is by engaging learners in real language use in the classroom. This is

done by designing tasks, discussions problems, games, and so on which require learners to use the language by themselves. (Willis& Willis, 2007:1).

By using TBLT, learners are able to use their communicative abilities to shift from the first language to target language and present a chance for them to learn cooperatively (Lin, 2009). The task-based language teaching approach consists of an integrated set of processes that involves the specification of both what and how, in other words, the methodology is highly emphasized in the task-based pedagogy. Designing the task-based approach involves making decisions about what tasks learners will do and then the order in which they will perform the tasks. In task-based approach, learners have to participate, communicate and cooperate when carrying the task. In order for students to work cooperatively, they have to learn the skills of how to learn cooperatively.

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### **Review of literature**

Speaking is one of the most difficult skills language learners have to face. It is a very vital language skill as it is an interactive process which creates meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information orally (Florez, 1999). Hatala & Friesen (2002) considered speaking skills as communicative productive. They include creating, obtaining and managing information to master the target language.

Hatala & Friesen (2002) considered speaking skills as communicative productive. They include creating, obtaining and managing information to master the target language. Thornbery (2005) clarified that Speaking is also a multi-sensory activity because it involves paralinguistic features such as eye-contact, facial expression, and body language

#### **The importance of speaking skills:**

language is a means of communication. We communicate with others to express our ideas, and to know other ideas as well. Without speech, we can't communicate with one another. So the importance of speaking skills hence is enormous for the learners of any language. Without speech language is reduced to a mere script. The use of language is an activity which takes place within the confines of our community.

Speaker cannot produce effective and appropriate outcomes till they have been exposed to some specific linguistic competences such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, as well as the sociolinguistics competence such as the register of the expressions. Teachers were used to focus on teaching grammar and vocabulary in isolation which makes it difficult if not impossible for teachers and assessors to assess language usability (Mckey, 2006:48)

Speaking skills are important to achieve career success and enhance one's personal life by giving opportunities for

travel, Promotion, and international meeting. It is a process that includes activities that occur prior to, during, and after the real speaking practice (Richards, 2012). For example, before the real speaking activity happens, the speaker should realize the actual content of the message, how it should be presented, and what kind of listener will be hearing the message. By the end of the speaking activity, the speaker may comment, answer questions, explain concepts, assess the process, summarize, and give feedback on the speaking topics.

Speaking is a very important part of second language learning. The ability to communicate in the second language clearly and efficiently contributes to the success of the learner in school and their success later in every phase of life. Therefore, speaking class should have more portions. It means that the teacher has to give time as much as possible for the students to speak. Kingen (2000) emphasized that the importance of speaking is apparent in the multi functions that it does.

Richards (2007) indicated the function of speaking is divided into three types and they are talking as interaction, talk as a transaction, and talk as performance. In talk as interaction, to be able to speak well is required for good communication. This is a reason for some pupils to keep silent in a different situation as they lack words and feel difficulty in speaking. The best examples of good interaction appear in the conversation. Talk as transaction refers to situations where the focus is on what is said or done, the situation where the focus is on giving and receiving information and where the participants focus on what is said or achieved. Talk as performance refers to public speaking; such as giving a class with a report about a school trip, class debate and giving a lecture (Richards, 2007).

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### Strategies for developing speaking skills

Douglas (2007) proposed these speaking strategies so that students are able to communicate in an oral way:

- ❖ Asking for clarification(what)
  - ❖ Asking someone to repeat something ( pardon me, Excuse me)
  - ❖ Using fillers (uh, I mean, well) in order to gain time to process.
  - ❖ Using conversation maintenance cues (right, yeah, okay)
  - ❖ Getting someone attention (hey, say, so)
- Sparkes&Turkey (2006) clarified some of the main speaking strategies.

- ❖ **The predicting strategy** which helps students to stimulate their former knowledge of a framework or topic, letting them merges what they know with the new information.
- ❖ **Self- questioning strategy** which refers to effective speakers continually think and ask a wide range of questions before, during and after speaking, they use these questions to help them and make meaning.
- ❖ **Paraphrasing and summarizing strategy:** paraphrasing is a strategy speakers use to restate a spoken text in a way that retains the sense of meaning and provides an explanation for understanding.
- ❖ **Comparing and contrasting strategy** in which making comparisons relates strongly to, and it is an extension of, the connecting strategy.
- ❖ **Inferring strategy** refers to successful speakers as they take meaning from verbal texts, and then add their own ideas to make inferences.
- ❖ **Synthesizing strategy** is when composing and comprehending text, effective speakers use synthesizing to piece together information from different resources.

### Speaking sub-skills

Chodkiewicz&Trepcznska (2014) stated that Speaking consists of the subsequent

sub-skills or competencies. These competencies include the following:

**1-Linguistic competence:** contains the subsequent skills below:

- ❖ Utilizing clear pronunciation
- ❖ Pursuing grammatical regulations correctly
- ❖ Utilizing related, a sufficient and Suitable variety of vocabulary
- ❖ Discourse competence: Contains the following subsequent skills
- ❖ Organizing discourse logically and consistently
- ❖ Controlling conversation

**2-Pragmatic competence:** Contains the subsequent skills:

- ❖ Stating a variety of purposes and properly as indicated by the context and schedule.
- ❖ Fluency: Implies speaking smoothly showing a logical pace of speech.

### Task-based language teaching

Nunan(2005) stated that TBLT is an approach that enables skills integration. It lets students understand, produce, manipulate, or interact in the classroom. This approach usually requires real tasks in which students have the main roles and use the four skills; this helps them to explore the possibilities of communicating orally and comprehending the text to complete the task.

### Types of Task:

Ellis (2003) classified tasks into the following types:

**Unfocused tasks** are ones that encourage learners to use English freely without concentrating on just one or two specific forms (i.e., a replication activity), Pedagogical tasks have a psycholinguistics basis in SLA theory and research but do not necessarily reflect real-world tasks. For example, four students are given pictures and must describe them to the rest of the class. The other students ask the four students questions about their pictures, and a student then tries to tell a story

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**Rehearsal task** which The teacher gives pairs of students' two different pictures and then asks each one to talk to their partner about the differences between the pictures, Real- world tasks; Tasks are everywhere in everyday life. Washing our face is a task, as is preparing breakfast, going to work, etc. Tasks are a part of our lives and a **focused task** (Ellis, 2003) is either a consciousness-raising activity that focuses on examining samples of language to explore particular features. This is sometimes called "metacognitive" activities. Examples of this are classifying the uses of a verb plus-"ing" or identifying phrases from a spoken transcript containing the preposition in and categorizing them into time.

**Task-based teaching framework (TBLT Methodology)**

The components of task-based teaching consist of three major phases. (Ellis, 2003). **Pre-task stage** prepares learners to perform tasks. For Example; teachers present new vocabulary. This stage is important in a way that teachers suggest to learners on how to do tasks (Lee, 2000; Dornyei, 2001) with opportunities to encourage the learners to do the task.

**During-task stage**, teacher provides the learners with the task this occurs through communicating in pair or group work, doing activities such as information gap and retelling story. Then, the learners prepare to present the task. The teacher suggests how to use vocabulary, sentence, language or idioms and practice for presentation. The learners should be confident enough to speak and report their task. Then they discuss or share some ideas, and feedback.

**Post-task stage** focuses on two goals: The language analysis stage and extended practice. Language analysis refers to the way students analyze the language used while doing the task. The other alternative included extended practice that

requires students to continue using language in doing similar tasks.

Ellis (2003) asserted that the design of a task-based lesson involves consideration of the stages or components of a lesson that has a task as its principles components which consists of three phases, the first phase is 'pre-task' and concerns the various activities that teachers and students can undertake before they start the task; whether students are given time to plan the performance of the task. The second phase, the "During task" phase centers on the task itself and offered various instruction options, including whether students are required to operate under time pressure. The final 'post-task' phase involves procedures for following up on the task performance.

**Studies related to Task-based language teaching and developing speaking skills:**

Muhsin (2015) investigated the effectiveness of using the task-based approach in improving the students' speaking accuracy and fluency. It aimed to find the improvement of the students' accuracy and fluency by using a task-based approach at SMA. A task-based approach was used in classroom action research (CAR). It had been conducted in two cycles. It employed speaking test and observation as an instrument. A number of research subjects were 37 students in the class. The research finding showed that the task-based approach improved students' speaking skills from cycle to cycle; it gave a significant contribution to the learning process of speaking accuracy and fluency.

Sofyana(2015) examined the effectiveness of task-based teaching in improving students' speaking skill through cartoon story maker, this research goal was to know the implementation of TBLT in improving students' speaking skill through cartoon story maker , this research was accomplished at the tenth grade students in social science, the sample was 38 students

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at class. instrument of this research used CAR which consists of four phase, planning, acting, observing and reflecting per cycle. The data collected by observation and interview on the other hand by pre-posttest, the results of the study showed that the implementation of TBLT developed students' speaking skill through cartoon story maker was effective.

#### **Statement of the problem**

Based on the review of the literature and the pilot study, the problem of the study can be stated as follows:

EFL second year preparatory stages students have difficulty in speaking skills (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency)

#### **Questions of the research:**

**The present study attempted to answer the following questions:**

1. What are the Task-based language teaching strategies necessary for developing second-year preparatory stage pupils speaking skills?
2. What are the EFL speaking skills necessary for second-year preparatory stage pupils?
3. What is the effectiveness of task-based learning strategies in developing pupils' speaking skills?

#### **Hypotheses:**

**This study tested the following hypotheses:**

1. There is a statistically significant difference in the mean score between the experimental group and control group in the post speaking test in favor of the experimental group.
2. There is a statistically significant difference in the mean score at the .01 level between the experimental group students on the pre and post administration of the speaking test in favor of the post one.

#### **Significance**

The present study was significant in a number of ways:

1. It is important to teachers, researchers, course designers, and curriculum developers to be aware of the task-based language teaching in enhancing speaking skills for second-year grade prep pupils.
2. It provides a model of task-based language teaching activities for improving speaking ability.
3. It increases students' interaction and participation in classroom activities.

#### **Delimitations of the study**

The present study was limited to:

- 1- A sample of 35 second year preparatory students in Om- El-Moameneen school, Elmanzala, Daquhlah.
- 2- Second term student text book (Hello2)
- 3- The use of (12) task-based language teaching strategies ( Discussion, brainstorming, definition list, ARM, Stop the bus, Narrate a story, Hot seat, Similarities and differences, Quick revision games, Describe a picture, Erase the dialogue) for developing grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency for second year prep stage students.

#### **Methods:**

##### **Participants and settings:**

The participants of the present study consisted of second-year classes from Om-El-Moamnen, preparatory school, El Manzala, Dakahlia governorate. One class of 35 pupils included the experimental group and received Task-based language teaching strategies. The other class of 35 pupils served as a control group and received the regular teaching methods. Both groups studied EFL for seven years and have the same teacher.

##### **Design**

The researcher adopted the quasi-experimental design to investigate the effectiveness of using task-based language teaching strategies in improving English language speaking skills for preparatory stage pupils.

**Instruments:**

For meeting the purpose of the study, the following instruments were used by the researcher and validated by the jurors:

1. A questionnaire to investigate the major speaking skills necessary for EFL second year preparatory stage pupils was applied to the jurors.
2. A pre-posttest speaking skills test to measure pupils' speaking skills, mainly (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency)
- 3- A rubric to score the pupils' speaking skills during the pre-post test

**Results and discussion**

**Testing the first hypotheses**

The first hypothesis stated that:

There is a statistically significant difference in the mean score between the experimental group and control group in the post speaking test in favor of the experimental group.

Following are the results of the t-test comparing results of the control and experimental groups post-test on sub-skills and the total score of the test.

**Table (8):** Comparison between the experimental and control group on the post speaking test

| Skills               | experimental group |           | control group |           | T-value | Sign. |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------|-------|
|                      | mean               | Std. Deve | Mean          | Std. Deve |         |       |
| <b>Grammar</b>       | 4.87               | 1.15      | 3.67          | 1.60      | 3.58    | 0.01  |
| <b>Pronunciation</b> | 8.65               | 1.27      | 6.98          | 2.24      | 3.82    | 0.01  |
| <b>Fluency</b>       | 1.55               | 0.49      | 1.05          | 0.59      | 3.83    | 0.01  |
| <b>Vocabulary</b>    | 1.41               | 0.57      | 0.85          | 0.61      | 3.92    | 0.01  |
| <b>Total</b>         | 16.5               | 3.02      | 12.57         | 4.37      | 4.36    | 0.01  |

The results in Table 8 indicated that there is a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level between the mean score of the experimental group and those of the control group on the speaking skills post-test in favor of the experimental group, as all t values are statistically significant at 0,01 level. The fact that the experimental group outperformed the control group may be attributed to the effect of the proposed Task-based language teaching strategies.

**Testing the second hypothesis**

The second hypothesis stated that:

There is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores between the experimental group students on the pre and post administration of the speaking test in favor of the post one.

The following are the results of the t-test comparing the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group on sub-skills and the total score of the test.

**Table (9) :** Comparison of the performance of the Experimental group on the pre-post speaking skill test

| Skills               | Exp. Group Pre |           | Exp. group Post |           | T-value | Sign . | Eta <sup>2</sup> |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|---------|--------|------------------|
|                      | mean           | Std. Deve | mean            | Std. Deve |         |        |                  |
| <b>grammar</b>       | 2.9            | 1.37      | 4.87            | 1.15      | 10.25   | 0.01   | 0.75             |
| <b>pronunciation</b> | 6.2            | 1.69      | 8.65            | 1.27      | 13.69   | 0.01   | 0.84             |
| <b>Fluency</b>       | 0.91           | 0.53      | 1.55            | 0.49      | 6.20    | 0.01   | 0.53             |
| <b>vocabulary</b>    | 0.62           | 0.44      | 1.4             | 0.57      | 8.12    | 0.01   | 0.65             |
| <b>Total</b>         | 10.65          | 3.20      | 16.5            | 13.03     | 22.07   | 0.01   | 0.93             |

Briefly, Table (9) indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in mean score at the .01 level between the experimental group students on the pre and

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post administration of the speaking test in favor of the post one.

T- Value is between (6, 20, 22, 07) at, 01 for post-application, it proves the effect of program researcher calculate the value of Eta square, the researcher found that it's a high efficiency and it's between (, 53 -, 93) .the fact that the experimental group outperformed the control group may be attributed to the effect of TBLT program in improving and developing speaking skill.

The results of the study came in accordance with other studies in the field Mohsen (2015); Sofyana (2015); Amir (2011); Tabrizi (2011); Aliakbari&Jamalvandi (2010), and Kasap (2005). These studies assured the effectiveness of using TBLT strategies and activities in improving students speaking skills at different school levels and in various educational settings.

#### **Recommendations**

In the light of the results and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Curriculum designers, EFL teachers, and school administrators should include more task-based language teaching strategies as a useful method to help pupils to improve their speaking skills.
2. EFL teachers should make use of TBLT and other interesting techniques inside the classroom.
3. Ministry of education should train in-service teachers on the different strategies of task-based language teaching strategies in order to help their pupils to learn speaking skills.
4. EFL teachers have to update their methods of teaching to be professional English language teachers; they shouldn't limit themselves to teacher guide or textbook activities. They should adopt the curriculum according to their pupils' needs and interests
5. Pupils should be encouraged to speak the target language with their classmates.
6. EFL researchers should concentrate on speaking skill as it is the major of language learning and should look for new trends to the English language.

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