

# Task-based Language Approach to Teach EFL Speaking

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## Abstract

Task-based Language Approach has emerged as a significant component in the development of the language curriculum. One of its basic principles is the use of tasks, which are goal-oriented and learner-centered, as classroom learning activities in which learners use real-life language to achieve a specific outcome. However, few task-based related research studies have been conducted in Taiwan, especially in a college EFL context. Therefore, the present study aims to explore college EFL students' perceptions of their own learning attitudes, classroom activities, and pair/group work with task-based approach, and teachers' and students' reflections on task-based approach and its assessment. The qualitative method was used in this study to investigate whether task-based approach served to improve students' oral proficiency, learning motivation, and positive attitude.

Regarding college students' learning attitude, the research findings indicate that all students valued their speaking ability, and the majority agreed that their oral proficiency was improved: they neither saw 'speaking' as a difficult skill to learn nor passively learned English in a teacher-directed environment. More opportunities were provided in engaging pair/group works for English conversation practice without anxiety, students' self-confidence therefore positively increased. In terms of their perceptions on the classroom activities, students considered that task-based activities which came with more explicit learning goals not only provided them with better understanding the usage of language, but also enhanced their motivation—through which they learned practical communicative skills to apply into real-life situations, and they also felt self-fulfillment when completing the tasks. Regarding teachers' and students' reflections on task-based learning approach and its assessment, both of them showed positive views: students preferred the analytic rating for its explicit feedback showing which parts they did well and which parts needed to be improved, according to the rating sheet. They also pointed out that task-based assessment was more challenging but also more objective than the traditional tests. Some pedagogical implications also provided to the classroom teachers who are interested in applying task-based approach into their lesson plan and assessment.

**Key words:** task-based language approach; English as a Foreign Language (EFL); oral proficiency; speaking assessment.

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## I. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Purpose

Many language experts have argued that interaction and communication are key elements in language learning (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2006), and they credited CLT which emphasize the interaction. Nunan (1992) stated that ‘task learning’ increases student talks, makes the classroom atmosphere relaxing, and reinforces students’ comprehensible input. He also pointed out that *task-based language approach* may play a crucial role in the communicative language classroom: a variety of tasks could be employed depending on students’ needs, interests, and language proficiency levels. Lee (2004) suggested that TBLT has improved the learners’ self-confidence, learning attitudes, and thinking skills.

From a pedagogical point of view, a variety of issues regarding task-based course design have been addressed including needs analysis, task design, task cycle, task sequencing, and task-based assessment (Long, 2007). However, very little research has provided empirical evidence supporting the benefits of TBLT in EFL learning in the classroom contexts. In addition, the extent to which TBLT promotes L2 learning compared to other language teaching approaches has not been empirically tested. Therefore, the effects of TBLT on Taiwanese college EFL students’ oral proficiency development and their perceptions are examined in the present study. With this in mind, the author conducted the present study to investigate the following research questions:

1. What are college students’ perceptions on (a) their English learning attitude, (b) classroom activities, and (c) pair/group work in the English classroom through task-based approach?
2. What are teachers’ and students’ reflections on using TBLT and assessing students’ oral

proficiency?

### 1.2 Significance of the Study

This study used qualitative method to explore the implementation of task-based approach in the college English classroom. During the 16-week school term, students were required to engage in different types of task-based activities for oral practice and peer interaction, and the teachers were required to score students’ performance by using holistic and analytic rating scales as their learning outcomes. Task implementation would be examined by analyzing the data from classroom observations, in-depth interviews with the teachers and the students, and pre-task and post-task evaluation questionnaires. To confirm that the task-based innovations and benefits were echoed in practice, this study aimed at seeing whether the TBLT served the function of improving students’ oral proficiency, learning motivations, and positive attitudes.

## II. Literature Review

### 2.1 Task-based Language Teaching and Learning

Tasks have been seen a primary unit of instruction or as building block of in-class language learning over the past few decades (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001; Ellis, 2003). This growing interest has been motivated by the fact that tasks provide contexts for L2 use and acquisition. Consequently, tasks have become principal to both L2 pedagogy and research, and have provided a productive common ground between these two areas (Mackey, 2007). Task, according to Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001), could be simply defined as “an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective” (p. 11). Therefore, TBLT referred to an approach that used tasks as the



core unit of planning and instruction in L2 teaching.

TBLT was a natural extension of CLT since it emphasized the task rather than the language itself (Harmer, 2007). For language learning, Willis & Willis (2007) broke TBLT into three sections: the pre-task (where students are introduced to the topic and told what the task will be), the task cycle (where the students plan the task, gathering language and information to do it, and then produce the piece of writing or oral performance that the task demands), and the language focus (students analyze the language they used for the task, making improvements and practicing any language that needs repair or development). TBLT, like the communicative methodology, allowed learners to concentrate on how they achieved things with language, and how they could use language for certain tasks. It was a significant departure from the original PPP (presentation-practice-production) sequence, since it took the third element as the starting point, not the end-point of the procedure.

## 2.2 The Framework of TBLT

According to Halliday (1985), language in general could be used for three macro-functions: to exchange goods/services, to socialize with others, and for enjoyment. Based on this concept, the point of departure for TBLT was a real-world or target task using the language. In order to create learning opportunities for the learners, these real-world tasks must be transformed into pedagogical tasks—on a continuum from rehearsal tasks to activation tasks—in the classroom (Nunan, 2004). Consequently, the teacher's role was modified to that of a helper.

How should an EFL class prepare the students to develop their oral proficiency? In general, the aim was to enable students using the target language for social functions, to convey their ideas, to handle basic interactive skills, as well as to present their needs,

such as making requests, showing directions, and expressing opinions. For those purposes, teachers might design a syllabus in which students first developed simple conversation skills, and then built on those skills in order to achieve increasingly more complex skills (Brown & Yule, 1983)—this was what the task-based approach should be. The key assumptions of task-based instruction which were summarized by Feez (1998) included:

1. The focus is on process rather than product.
2. Basic elements are purposeful activities and tasks that emphasize communication and meaning.
3. Learners learn language by interacting communicatively and purposeful while engaged in the activities and tasks.
4. Activities and tasks can be either those that learners might need to achieve in real life, or those that have a pedagogical purpose specific to the classroom.
5. The difficulty of a task depends on a range of factors including the previous experience of the learners, the complexity of the task, the language required to undertake the task, and the degree of support available.

In short, TBLT is an approach which seeks to allow learners to work somewhat at their own pace and within their own level and area of interest to process and restructure their inter-language. It moves away from a prescribed developmental sequence and introduces learner freedom and autonomy into the learning process in the classroom. In other words, TBLT provides opportunities for students to experiment with spoken language through tasks designed to engage them in authentic, practical, and functional uses of the target language for meaningful purposes (Long & Robinson, 1998).



## 2.3 The Overview of Previous Studies

Some previous studies regarding task-based application in the EFL classroom were summarized in this section to give an overview of what researchers had done so far in this new field. Fan-Jiang's (2005) study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of implementing TBLT in a Taiwanese primary school, and her finding revealed that TBLT could enhance students' motivation and attitudes toward learning English. Chao (2008) conducted a detailed qualitative study to explore the implementation of task-based learning and teaching in an elementary English class in Taiwan. The overall results of her study evinced that the implementations of task-based learning was challenging for both the teacher and students involved; however, students did enjoy working on the tasks at different levels.

Guo (2006) examined the characteristics of task-based interactions in senior high school students, their communicative competence throughout the process, and their opinions about collaborative activities. Her results revealed that there were longer turns in spontaneous speech and increasing use of interactional adjustments toward the end of the treatment period, and using supplementary cooperative materials involved students in comprehending and producing the target language more willingly and more effectively. Based on those previous studies, TBLT brought about positive learning outcomes and motivation. Especially, the task-based speaking activities helped students to cultivate better communicative skills and social skills in negotiating meaning.

In conclusion, TBLT is advantageous to the EFL students because it is more student-centered, allows more meaningful communication, and often provides practical extra-linguistic skill building. Although the teacher may present language in the pre-task, the

students in the classroom are ultimately free to use what grammar constructs and vocabulary they want. This allows them to use all the language they know and are learning, rather than just the 'target language' of the lesson. Furthermore, as the tasks are likely to be familiar to the students, students are more likely to be engaged, which may further motivate them in their language learning.

## III. The Method

### 3.1 Participants and Instruments

Participants involved in the present study were sophomore non-English major students at a technological university in southern Taiwan. At the beginning of academic year, they were asked to take an English placement test to identify their English proficiency level in order to place them into appropriate classes. The intermediate-level group sophomore classes were selected. The study was conducted for the whole semester (16 weeks): participants were taught by TBLT designed by the researcher in their English classes. In the period of experiment, all the students met twice a week, one hundred minutes a time.

In the first class period, all students were asked to complete a written English proficiency test as the pretest that focused on some grammar points (e.g. simple past time and past continuous expressions, making requests and asking permission, and countable and uncountable nouns) which were going to be taught during the semester. After the treatment period, students were asked to complete another similar test as the post-task to see their improvement of grammatical competence. In-class task activities used during a 16-week period were designed by the researcher according to each topic and language focus of the teaching units. Two in-class teachers met with the researcher two weeks before the semester



began, and all the steps of the procedure and related materials were given and explained, they were informed about the purpose and objectives of the study as well. Regarding task types used in this study, due to the goal of the teaching being oral communication, the tasks and activity types which the researcher set out were: questions and answers, dialogues and role-playing, matching activities, picture stories and description, and discussions and decisions, as shown in Table 3.1.

All participants were required to complete a pre-task questionnaire, including their personal information, general attitudes toward English learning, and their experience about in-class activities and group/pair work. Also, a post-task questionnaire had to be completed at the end of the semester. The teachers conducted six task-based activities in class designed by the researcher, and while those tasks were carried out in the classroom, they were also tape-recorded or video-recorded.

Table 3.1 Six Tasks

Task No.	Topic & Language Focus	Task skills
Task 1	Food and Drink (I) <i>Countable and uncountable nouns</i>	Question-and-answer, sharing personal information, report
Task 2	Food and Drink (II) <i>Countable and uncountable nouns</i>	Matching, sharing personal information
Task 3	Interests <i>Simple past time expressions</i>	Question-and-answer, interview, role-playing
Task 4	Telling a Story <i>Simple past and past continuous</i>	Telling personal experience, question-and-answer, decision-making
Task 5	Telling a Story <i>Simple past and past continuous</i>	Story description
Task 6	Getting Along <i>Making requests; asking for permission</i>	Problem-solving, role-playing

Regarding the assessment, TBLT defining the skills were assessed in terms of the situations and roles simulated in the test, and expressed scores in

terms of the students' ability to deal with the tasks that were included. As the first task, students were asked to design a conversation with a partner and do role-playing and other tasks; assessing scales were also provided by the researcher for teachers' marking. For the assessing scales for marking the scores in this study, the researcher provided two types for the teachers (raters): the first scale was Analytic Ratings which involved the rating systems in which the ability of various speaking skills was analyzed, and the rater evaluated a test-taker's performance in different sub-skills (such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, organization), and the second scale was Holistic Ratings which referred to one overall evaluation given to a speech sample, which might be a rating or a designation (i.e. pass or not pass), or the specific designation in systematic categories. In this study, the students were asked to complete six task-based activities for oral assessment during the semester. Of the six tasks, three tasks of the students' oral performance were rated by the analytic rating scales, and the other three were rated by the holistic rating scales. The scores marked by the two teachers were also analyzed after the period of data collection.

## 3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

### 3.2.1 Classroom Observation

According to Pawar (2007), the classroom observation method not only can collect rich and insightful data in natural settings, but also help to overcome some of the limitations of other data collecting methods such as interview and questionnaire. In the present study, the classroom observations were conducted from September 2009 to January 2010. The classroom observations were also video-recorded and tape-recorded by the research assistants. Finally, those tapes were transcribed verbatim as the major source of data analysis.



### 3.2.2 Student and Teacher Interviews

There were 98 college sophomore students in total who participated in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the present study, and then ten participated students who were randomly selected by the researcher were interviewed face-to-face individually at the end of the research process. Two instructors were also interviewed separately at the end of the semester by the researcher. All interviews were tape-recorded by the research assistants on the side in order to obtain transcription for further qualitative analysis. In terms of the research data analysis, the qualitative data played an important role in the present study. The collected qualitative data, including interviews and classroom observations, were computed by ATLAS. ti 6.0, a powerful workbench for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical, audio and video data.

## IV. Results and Discussions

### 4.1 The Results of the Open-ended Questions

Four open-ended questions, regarding students' opinions and reflections on the task-based activities in which they engaged, were included in the questionnaire. Their responses and feedback could provide the instructors with valuable advice for further consideration and revision of their lesson planning. The open-ended questions were:

1. Please describe one part you like the most about the task-based activities.
2. Please describe one part you like the least about the task-based activities.
3. In your opinion, what aspects of TBLT differs from your previous learning experience in the English class which impressed you the most?
4. In your opinion, how do (a) activities and (b) the

instructor need to be improved regarding TBLT implementation in the classroom?

The ATLAS.ti 6.0 software was used to assist the researcher in analyzing the data of open-ended questions. The open-coding and code-manager functions were the two major tools of this qualitative software that were used in the present study. In general, the participants might have “used the same or similar words and phrases to express their idea” that were close to the relevant literature review (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 37). When the same or similar words repeatedly showed up on the participants' responses, then the researcher assumed that this idea was important.

The researcher categorized the participants' repeated responses of Question 1 and 2 into two sections: the part(s) they like and dislike the most about the task-based activities which they experienced in class during the semester. The researcher calculated the frequency and percentage of the responses as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Participants' Likes and Dislikes about Task-based Activities

Opinions about Task-based Activities	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Like</u>		
Information sharing/exchange	29	30%
Interactive group work	22	22%
Creative role-playing	20	20%
Self-fulfillment	19	19%
Brainstorming	5	5%
<u>Dislike</u>		
Individual work	34	35%
Oral report	24	24%
Too noisy in class	21	21%
Decision-making in a short time	8	8%

According to Table 4.1, what the participants liked the most about task-based activities was that they could share and exchange information with their partners; doing exciting interactive group works and creative role-playing also interested them. It meant



that students preferred working and learning with partners rather than individually. In addition, they liked the feeling of self-fulfillment when completing the task. A few participants also pointed out that ‘brainstorming’ not only made the class lively but also made them smart. On the other hand, what the participants liked the least about task-based activities was the individual work (the story-telling activity), and giving oral reports which they perceived as frightening. Some participants felt the noisy class bothered them during the activities, and a few felt that some tasks which required making decisions in a very short time were too challenging.

The researcher used the same method above to analyze data of the open-ended Questions 3 and 4. Question 3 focused on the comparison of the new English learning method with the traditional one, based on students’ impressions. The participants’ responses generally could be categorized into two aspects: the difference in their personal and the difference in their learning outcome. In terms of personal aspect, the big difference which the majority of participants indicated was that they interacted a lot with peers when they engaged in task-based activities, so the learning motivation was different from their past learning experience. In addition, they pointed out TBLT tended to be learner-centered, and their learning became active, not passive as before. Therefore, they found fulfillment of their aspirations through their own efforts when they completed the tasks in class. In terms of learning outcome, the participants indicated that a great deal of oral practice in class enhanced their English speaking skills, and the tasks they asked to complete were practical and similar to real-life situation. Furthermore, some participants pointed out that the task-based activities trained not only their oral skills, but also their problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Based on participants’ opinions about the difference between

task-based experiences and traditional in-class learning activities, their responses could be categorized into two aspects: personal aspect and learning outcome.

Table 4.2 Task-based Activity: The Differences from Traditional Activity (n=98)

The Difference	Frequency	Percentage
Personal		
Interaction with peers	36	37%
Positive Motivation	28	29%
Learner-centered	21	21%
Self-fulfillment	10	10%
Learning Outcome		
Oral practice	58	60%
Practical skills	25	26%
Problem-solving & thinking skills	8	8%

In terms of personal aspect, the big difference was that they had more opportunities to interact with their classmates during the tasks, and they believed that this positively motivated their learning attitudes. Also, they enjoyed not only the type of learner-centered activity but also the feeling of self-fulfillment when they completed the task through teamwork. In other words, the way of traditional activities which tended to be teacher-centered or individual work made it harder to enhance students’ motivation. The same result was shown in Table 4.2: the participants did not prefer the activities like story-telling.

In terms of learning outcome, the majority of participants reflected that the biggest difference from the traditional in-class activity was the focus on oral practice. Also, through task-based activities, they learned more practical oral skills rather than traditional ones. A few participants also voiced that task-based activities engaged students in the problem-solving phase which could train their thinking skills.

Question 4 aimed to explore the imperfections



of task-based activities conducted for the semester, from the participants' point of view, to find out the needs for improvement. The participants' responses to the aspects of activity and teacher were illustrated in Table 4.3. In terms of activity, the participants expected the in-class learning tasks to be more creative and interesting, and a varied and wide range of topics could be provided to be discussed in the classroom, such as global issues and news. Indeed, the classroom observation record data also showed that the classes were full of noise when the task-based activities were conducted. In addition, when completing the tasks, the participants would like to have some valuable feedback from the teacher, including suggestions of students' performance, error corrections, and even a short time for group processing. Group processing, a very important part of cooperative learning even in the college classroom (Johnson et al., 1998), exists when group members discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships. Many educators believe that continuous improvement of the processes of learning results from the careful analysis of how members are working together and determining how group effectiveness can be enhanced.

Table 4.3 Task-based Activity: The Needs for Improvement (n=98)

The Needs for Improvement	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Activity</u>		
More creative/interesting tasks	39	40%
More varied topics to discuss	35	36%
Integrate multimedia into activity	4	4%
<u>Teacher</u>		
Classroom management	26	27%
Provide valuable feedback	25	26%
Controlled practice	21	21%
Clear procedure of task	9	9%

Some participants also suggested that the teacher could conduct some controlled practice before the students actually started the task. For this reason, students could be familiar with the new language structures and patterns, and then the following required task could be done efficiently.

## 4.2 Results and Discussions

### 4.2.1 Research Question One

“What are college students' perceptions on (a) their own English learning attitude, (b) classroom activities, and (c) pair/group work in the English classroom before and after task-based approach?”

Actually, students' perceptions on the three aspects all appeared quite different before and after task-based approach according to the research results. Regarding college students' English learning attitude toward four skills, the results revealed that students believed that speaking skill was necessary to learn, and they believed that their speaking skill was quite improved after TBLT. In addition, the majority of them no longer saw 'speaking' as a difficult English skill to learn and as not their weakest skill anymore. Furthermore, the results indicated that students' interest in attending English class increased a lot, and most of them enjoyed classroom discussion. Comparing with the past experience, students no longer considered that they learned English passively in a teacher-directed environment. On the contrary, they expressed that they had more opportunities to engage in pair/group work through TBLT, so that they could practice English without pressure and anxiety. Also, their self-confidence could positively increase, and they believed that their oral skills could be improved through continuously practice.

In terms of students' perceptions on the classroom activities, students considered that task-based activities came with more explicit learning goals, gave students better understanding the usage of





English language, and were more interesting to enhance their learning motivation. In addition, compared with traditional activities, the results indicated that more students enjoyed task-based activities through which they learned practical communication skills, and the important point was that they could apply the oral skills they learned into real-life situations. Finally, regarding students' perceptions on in-class pair/group work, their feedbacks appeared the surprisingly positive results. Most students agreed that the dialogues which they used in task-based pair/group work were practical to use in real-life situations, and they felt self-fulfillment when they completed the task. Also, they believed that the pair/group discussion was the best way to learn new concept or subject and to make learning interesting. In other words, students preferred the way of cooperative learning—they learned the new language from each other in an anxiety-free environment, and the learning became interesting without competition and pressure.

#### 4.2.2 Research Question Two

“What are teachers' and students' reflections on using TBLT and assessing students' English oral proficiency?”

In order to explore teachers' reflections on TBLT, face-to-face interviews were arranged with the teachers (raters) who involved in the present study. The four interview questions were: (1) In your opinion, what do you think of the 'teacher's role' in task-based learning? (2) In your opinion, what were the advantages of task-based teaching in the college English classroom? (3) In your opinion, what is your perception toward the two types of assessment methods (holistic and analytic) used in the experimental semester? (4) In your opinion, what type of task-based activity do you prefer to use in the English classroom in order to evaluate/test college

students' oral proficiency? Why?

On the other hand, the data used to analyze students' reflections on TBLT was based on students' open-ended questions of the post-test questionnaire. Finally, the ATLAS.ti 6.0 software was used again to analyze the teachers' tape-recorded interview and students' written responses.

##### 4.2.2.1 Teachers' Reflections on TBLT

Based on the summaries of the two teachers' interview responses for these two questions, their reflections of 'teacher's role' in TBLT could be categorized into three aspects:

1. The teacher as a selector of tasks: The teacher needed to select, adjust, and create appropriate in-class tasks or activities, and then he or she needed to shape these tasks in keeping with students' language proficiency levels, needs, and interests.
2. The teacher as a trainer to prepare students for tasks: The teacher needed to train students at the stage of pre-task, such as to introduce topics, to describe task instructions, to demonstrate task process, and to help students to learn or recall useful words and phrases to make the task easy to complete.
3. The teacher as a facilitator: The teacher needed to use some form-focusing techniques, including attention-focusing pre-task activities, studying the given text, guiding exposure to similar tasks, and using selected material.

In terms of the TBLT advantages, the two teachers' interview responses could be summarized as follows:

1. The teachers became more open to the students' needs. TBLT allowed students to use their L2 knowledge and apply it productively in the task as a practical experience for learning.
2. TBLT promoted students active participation in



the activities with more opportunities to display their thinking through actions—which in turn increased their positive motivation for learning.

3. Through task-based interaction, students put great emphasis on communicating meanings, and not necessarily worry about the language forms they used—the more they spoke out, the more progress they made in their oral proficiency.

#### 4.2.2.2 Teachers' Reflections on TBLT Assessment

Regarding the teachers' perception of the two types of assessment methods (holistic and analytic) used in the experimental semester, interview data revealed that both of the two teachers tended to agree to use rating scales to assess students' oral proficiency, and their responses could be summarized as follows:

1. One teacher confessed that she had never used any rating scales to evaluate her students' oral proficiency before—she usually marked the scores based on her subjective judgment. However, she showed a high willingness to try using those rating scales in the future.
2. In terms of selecting the types of rating instrument, both teachers said that it should be based on their class situations or specific needs; for example, they would like to use the holistic ratings for the beginning level students, and they might use the analytic ratings for the advanced level students.
3. Regarding the task-based activity which the teacher preferred to use for college students' oral assessment, both teachers chose 'role-playing'. Their reasons included that 1) 'role-playing' seemed to be more enjoyable for adult learners, 2) 'role-playing' could highly motivate students: to design their plot and lines in a creative way, 3) students would prefer to practice their English speaking in a team/group work rather than

individually.

4. One teacher suggested that if any task-based activity could be integrated, not only to assess students' oral skills but also their critical thinking skills, and then it would be practical and perfect for the learners.

#### 4.2.2.3 Students' Reflections on TBLT

The students' reflections on TBLT, as the research data shows in the open-ended questions of the post-test questionnaire, evince the following four aspects:

1. In general, the participants expressed a positive attitude toward engaging in the task-based activities during the experimental semester.
2. The part of task-based activities the participants liked best was that they could share and exchange information with their partners, and doing interactive tasks and creative role-playing were also interested them. They also expected more challenging tasks in the future.
3. The participants preferred working with partners rather than individually, and they enjoyed the feeling of self-fulfillment when completing the task.
4. The participants disliked the most about task-based activities was the individual work (the story-telling activity), and the task of giving an oral report also frightened them.

#### 4.2.2.4 Students' Reflections on TBLT Assessment

The data of students' reflections on TBLT assessment was based on the ten volunteer student participants' individual interviews which were conducted at the final week of the experimental semester. Those students were asked about their general perception regarding their English oral proficiency being evaluated by the form of TBLT assessment and rating scales. Their reflections could



be summarized as followings:

1. Students agreed that they were told clearly about how the task-based assessment would be conducted by the instructor and how the rating scales would work the first week of the experimental semester.
2. Because their scores were marked based on their oral performance during the activities, some students complained that their own performance was somewhat affected by their partner(s).
3. In students' opinion, the scores rated by the analytic rating scale could give them more useful and detailed feedback than the scores using the holistic rating scale. In other words, they preferred the analytic rating since they could receive an explicit feedback from the teacher's marking—for vocabulary or word choice, pronunciation, flow of speech/ fluency, and comprehensibility—which parts they did well and which parts they should improve, according to the rating sheet.
4. Based on the students' point of view, task-based assessment was more challenging but objective than the traditional English proficiency evaluation, such as pencil-paper tests. Based on their presentation of oral skills during the task, the teacher could assess their learning achievement from various angles, not only grammar and pronunciation but also their attempts, efforts, and engagement.

### 4.3 Classroom Observations

From the perspective of teacher-student interaction in the classroom, there were two major findings regarding college non-English major students who engaged in task-based speaking activities based on the recorded data of the classroom observations. First, when the instructors explained some tasks or procedures that students were not

familiar with, instructors had to rely on L1 heavily. In addition, students also used plenty of L1 during discussion within groups or asked their teacher for help, and they tended to focus on finding ways to 'complete' the task, not on using and practicing the target language. Second, only using task-based activities in the class period was impossible. Some language drills and other types of activities or exercises provided by the teacher during the process of new language acquisition were crucial for the learners' reinforcement of learning.

Besides the teacher-student interaction in the classroom, according to the recorded data of classroom observations during the experimental period, three features were deduced from the extracts of the tasks: one regarded classroom atmosphere that (1) working in pairs or groups gave the learners opportunities to learn from each other and boosted their willingness to speak out. The other two regarded the analysis of participants' discourse during the tasks that (2) the participants tended to use lots of modal particles and discourse markers, such as *mm*, *ah*, *hey*, and *okay*, and *so*, *I think*, *well*, *you know*, *just*, etc.; and (3) the majority of mistakes and errors that the participants made in their oral production were subject-verb agreement and tense.

## V. Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

### 5.1 Conclusions

The purpose of the study is to examine whether the TBLT served the function of improving college students' English oral proficiency, learning motivations, and positive attitudes. Through using task-based language approach in the college English classroom, the researcher believes that teachers' belief could guide learners toward a real-life communicative environment, and students would



benefit by interacting with peers through task-based activities—participants could have more chances to communicate in the target language and enhance their language ability. Therefore, creating a real-life environment in the classroom was needed, and pedagogical tasks provided a good model. In a teacher-centered lecture classroom, all students could do was to sit still and do the language drill practice—their motivation and interaction skills were not enhanced. On the other hand, students built up their self-confidence and self-fulfillment through task-based activities, dared to express their ideas, and learned to work together in class through task-based activities—not only their language ability but also their communicative ability improved rapidly.

## 5.2 Pedagogical Implications

As the advocates of TBLT have argued the most effective approach to teach a language is by engaging learners in real language use in the classroom, language teachers began with the notion that ‘tasks’ should be central to teaching, and then they could go on to set up or refine an approach which fits their own students and classrooms (Willis & Willis, 2007). In other words, TBLT offers an alternative teaching approach for language teachers. Unlike the traditional way of teacher-lectured classroom, the teacher does not pre-determine what language will be studied in a task-based lesson—the lesson is based on the completion of a central task, and the language studied is determined simultaneously as the learners complete the task.

The results and research findings of the present study positively proved the hypothesis that if the use of task-based approach in the college EFL classroom promotes students’ confidence by providing them with plenty of opportunities to use the target language in the classroom without being constantly afraid of making mistakes. The research results also confirmed

that once students began to use the target language for communication, their language could become more complex and more grammatical while they were given form-focused activities to help them develop that language. They practiced through repeated tasks which gave them the opportunity to incorporate some of the language they had focused on at an earlier learning stage. In other words, the initial aim of the TBLT was to encourage students to engage in meaningful exchanges with the language resources they already had at their disposal—this made students acutely aware of what they needed to learn.

As the literature and present findings have been observed, the communicative tasks could be regarded as one of the most promising pedagogic approach to enhance EFL students’ natural language development. The attempt of the present study was a good starting point for Taiwanese college EFL teachers to ponder over the teaching approaches and in-class learning tasks and activities they have implemented, besides the always focus-on-form method. Without a doubt, teachers cannot ignore the communicative purpose of learning a foreign language and deprive the learners of the opportunities to try out the forms of target language. In addition, the students reflected that they valued the setup in which they could face-to-face communicate with their partner/group members to negotiate their information: they had chances to become translators between the messages and the listeners, which in turn increased their own depth of understanding, and the pair/group work allowed more intensive verbal interaction rather than a teacher-confronted situation.

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15. 老師從事的課程活動很有趣，很能引起我的學習動機。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
16. 老師從事的課程活動有清楚的目標讓我去達成。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
17. 老師從事的課程活動能幫助我了解英文的用法。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
18. 我喜歡從事老師從事的英語教學活動。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
19. 這些英語教學活動，我已經習得了一些英語口說的溝通技巧。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
20. 承上題，在未來我可以將這些已習得的英語口說技巧實際應用在必須以英語溝通的情境中。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意

### 第三部份：關於小組(兩人)或團體(兩人以上)活動

21. 我喜歡和我的同學一起腦力激盪。 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
22. 在課堂上，我喜歡和我的同學一起分享經驗和交換心得。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
23. 我喜歡和我的同學一起分工合作以完成師長指定的任務。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
24. 在做分組活動時，除了老師，我還能向我的同學學習。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
25. 比起和老師或以英語作母語者交談，我覺得和同學用英語交談比較不緊張。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
26. 比起傳統的英文課(由老師主導)，在有小組或團體活動的英文課當中，我有較多練習「說」的機會。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
27. 我很有可使用在分組活動時所用的英文對話於日常生活情境中。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
28. 當在小組或團體中完成所指定的任務時，我會獲得成就感。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
29. 小組討論活動是學習議題和觀念最好的方法。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
30. 小組活動使得學習更加有趣。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意
31. 我認為小組活動對目標語(英語)的學習有正面的效果。  
 非常同意  同意  沒意見  不同意  非常不同意



## 運用任務型教學法於英語口說教學之研究

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### 摘 要

「任務型教學法」主要是以目標為導向及以學習者為中心為課堂之主要活動，讓學生藉日常生活語言的互動與活用，來達到特定的學習成效。目前在這領域的研究，在大學英語課堂中的研究卻是缺乏的。本研究含三大方面：(1)大學生於任務型教學中，對英語學習態度、課堂活動及分組活動的看法；(2)任務型教學中學生的英語口說互動成效；(3)教師與學生對於任務型教學及口語學習成效評量的回饋。研究方法及資料分析採用質性統計工具來進行：含師生的質性訪談外，佐以課室觀察紀錄，來瞭解課堂中的學習互動與反應。

研究結果顯示，大學生在學習態度上，普遍認同口說能力的重要性，且多數反應在任務型教學活動引導下，口說能力有明顯進步。並且學生不再是處於由教師主導的教學環境中被動的學習；其參與英文課的興趣也增多；尤其是經由完成任務的過程中，更多的機會讓他們在同儕互動中學習，自信心也因此增加。對於任務型活動及分組活動的看法，學生肯定其明確的學習目標：除了更瞭解語言用法，也提升學習動機。在學習成效上，高成就與低成就學生於口語互動溝通上，句子表達字數上皆有顯著增加，且溝通策略上也有顯著進步。在教師與學生對於學習成效評量回饋上，結果顯示兩者皆持肯定態度；學生認為分析式評量較有建設性：能呈現出他們學習表現上的優點及需要改進的缺點。同時也指出，任務型評量方式雖較具挑戰性，但比傳統型方式客觀許多。本研究結果能提供英語教師在運用任務式教學法於課堂中之經驗與建議，尤其是課堂的口語教學、訓練、評量方面上有所助益。

**關鍵字：**任務型教學法；英語教學；口說能力；語言評量。

