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## Review of the effects of Task-based Language Teaching on EFL learners' speaking performance: What remains to be researched?

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### ABSTRACT

*Given the research trend on task-based language teaching (TBLT), several reviews have been conducted on its effects. However, no review has explored specific skills. This study aims to review previous studies with a focus on the improvement of EFL learners' speaking performance. The main purpose is to reveal a gap for future study. Using the systematic review approach, we selected 25 qualified studies from different databases. Results showed that TBLT implementation promoted both general speaking and speaking components (i.e., complexity, accuracy, and fluency). Most of the studies either employed or adapted Willis' model. The present study suggests that future research could explore the comparative effects of various task-based methodological options. Moreover, the text-driven approach to task design and implementation can be further researched to enhance EFL learners' engagement and speaking performance.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A major concern among researchers has been to seek the most effective approach to teaching English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) learners with various characteristics (i.e., motivation, needs, socio-cultural values). Over the past decades, researchers have conducted various studies to compare methods and approaches, with the hope of offering optimal measures in teaching EFL (Adiantika & Purnomo, 2018; Benitez-Correa et al., 2019; Van Loi & Thanh, 2022; Yen Phuong et al., 2015; Ellis & Shintani, 2015). Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has been promoted for classroom practices as one of the most effective measures because it is grounded in knowledge about how a second language is learned (Van den Branden et al., 2009, cited in East, 2017; Ellis, 2009a). Noticeably in this approach, natural language use embedded in communicative tasks is a prerequisite for language development agreed by numerous researchers (Ellis,

2003; Harris & Leeming, 2022; Long, 1985; Nunan, 1991; Skehan, 1996).

The proliferation of research on TBLT may be because the approach offers a flexible, adaptable measure for various contexts and learners. In Vietnam, where English instruction at school mainly prepares students for examinations, not communication (Chau, 2014; Nguyen, 2011; Trinh, 2005; Yen Phuong et al., 2015), recent decades have witnessed several studies on the application of TBLT in English classrooms at different levels (Bui, 2019; Do, 2021; Nguyen & Jaspaert, 2021; Yen Phuong, 2015; Trinh & Ha, 2017). In congruence with studies around the world, the research results point to the outweighing effects of TBLT.

Several review papers have summarised the issues related to implementing TBLT such as effects of specific task features and overall program-level elements on various learning outcomes, and its

challenges in specific settings (e.g., Bryfonski & McKay, 2019; Qin & Lei, 2022). However, few studies focus the review of TBLT on specific skills such as speaking. This paper aims to fill this gap by focusing on two questions:

1. What methodological frameworks of TBLT have been employed in research on EFL learners' speaking performance?
2. What effects does TBLT have on the EFL learners' speaking performance?

The paper limits the review to the learning of EFL speaking for some reasons. First, speaking is believed to be essential for EFL learners, but there remain intractable difficulties in teaching and learning this skill. Several researchers (Hojati & Afghari, 2013; Jaya et al., 2022) describe core problems learners face in speaking performance such as affective problems (self-confidence and anxiety), socially related problems (inadequate opportunities to learn and comprehend English in speaking class), and linguistic problems (fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar). Dan et al. (2018) notes that cultural barriers as face-saving, collectivism and conflict avoidance affect Vietnamese EFL learners' speaking performance. Moreover, EFL learners can be driven to the verge of nervousness and embarrassment created through cognitive processing demands (Tomlinson, 2013). Those aforementioned hindrances may downplay their chances of performing the speaking skill. A focus on speaking may give insights into what specific effects TBLT has on this skill, which could offer pedagogical implications and probably space for future research.

To approach the problem, we first briefly revisit the foundations and models of TBLT and speaking performance; then we present how the review was conducted. Next, we present the results by categorising TBLT according to its methodological frameworks, and reviewing its effects on general speaking proficiency and specific dimensions of speaking performance. By examining and synthesising research findings related to the two questions, we point out what remains to be further researched.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Given the focus of this paper, this section will present the conceptualization of task-based language teaching and speaking performance.

### 2.1. Task-based Language Teaching

Task-based language teaching has acquired popularity for years, and given its nature as an approach, different interpretations and models exist. Basically, central to the task-based approach is the concept of tasks defined as "a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form" (Nunan, 1989, p.10). Several recent reviews (see Do, 2021; Long, 2015 for details) have discussed the theoretical foundations of TBLT. Herein this study, we briefly summarise TBLT principles reported by Richards and Rodgers (2014, pp.188-189).

- i. Language is a means for meaning making and achieving real-world goals.
- ii. Language use involves integrated skills and spoken interaction.
- iii. Language learning is internally guided by learners, not external factors.
- iv. A focus on form facilitates language learning.
- v. Meaning negotiation provides learners with comprehensible input and modified output.
- vi. Tasks provide opportunities for learners to 'notice the gap'.
- vii. Interaction and communication through tasks provide opportunities for scaffolded learning.
- viii. Learning difficulty can be negotiated and fine-tuned for particular pedagogical purposes.

In terms of task selection, four must-have characteristics involve a focus on meaning, presence of potential information gaps, learners' involvement in linguistic and non-linguistic targets on their own, and a clearly defined outcome rather than the mere use of language (Ellis, 2009a). These elements distinguish tasks from what is labeled as "situational grammar exercise" (Ellis, 2009a, p.223). Some researchers (e.g., Long, 2015) put an emphasis on target real-life tasks, focusing strongly on message and content, excluding linguistic forms. Ellis (2009a) called this type unfocused tasks to distinguish it from focused tasks, which refers to ones intentionally designed to draw learners' attention to form while they engage in communication.

It is worth mentioning that the naturalness of language use, learner-centeredness, and meaning-focused tasks make TBLT a strong communicative approach. These significant features provoke EFL learners' exposure to the use of target language through a sequence of purposeful/communicative tasks (Harris & Leeming, 2022). Therefore, there is a wide consensus among researchers that this approach is an evolutionary shift in curriculum which contributes to an encouragement of communicative orientations among EFL learners, particularly in Vietnam (see Do, 2021; Nguyen & Jaspert, 2021; Phuong et al., 2015).

A task-based syllabus makes up the core of TBLT. This comprises real-life and pedagogic tasks (Long, 2015; Nunan, 1989). Long (2015) argues a task syllabus is supposed to undergo transformations at different chronological stages: needs analysis, target tasks, target task-types, pedagogical tasks, and a task syllabus. A very first step in designing the task syllabus, therefore, is an analysis of learners' needs, taking account of both linguistic and non-linguistic factors (e.g., L2 proficiency, individual differences, learning styles, ages, outcomes, etc.). Relevant tasks are then put into a logical sequence. According to Ellis (2003, 2009a, 2017), tasks can be integrated to provide opportunities for communication. This is called a task-supported learning model, where the last stage of a lesson may engage learners in communicative tasks. He also suggests the task syllabus consists of focused tasks which are designed to attract learners to form while they are engaged in meaning expression.

At the methodological level, Prabhu (1987) initiated task-based language teaching in his project in primary schools with a focus on the pre-task and task phase, using three main task types: information gap, opinion gap, and problem solving. The pre-task is supposed to direct learners to perform two tasks of the same kind (i.e., a teacher-guided, whole-class activity, and a learner-led activity) as teacher-class negotiation (i.e., question and answer), which is considered as a scaffolding stage for learners to perform the main task on their own. A three-phase classroom procedure was then developed with different approaches (Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996). Skehan follows a cognitive approach to impacting aspects of performance, whereas Willis concurs with an integrated skills approach. The pre-task stage, according to Skehan, can engage learners in language restructuring and allow them to plan their work, reducing their cognitive load. For Willis, in contrast, the stage aims to prepare learners for task

requirements. The task cycle in Skehan's manipulates task features and conditions to affect the writing or speaking performance outcomes; in contrast, in Willis' model learners engage in doing tasks, planning and reporting their results. A focus on form can be primed by assistance with the language when learners feel the need for it. The last phase, according to both models, aims to enhance accuracy by using various techniques to enhance attention to form, but for Skehan, fluency can be pushed with public performance and provision of extended tasks.

**Table 1. Three-stage task-based models**

Framework	Phases	Examples of options
Willis (1996)	Pre-task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduction to the topic and task</li> </ul>
	Task Cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Task Planning</li> <li>● Drafting and rehearsal</li> <li>● Assistance with language</li> <li>● Report</li> </ul>
	Language focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Analysis</li> <li>● Practice</li> </ul>
Skehan (1996)	Pre-emptive activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consciousness raising, Planning</li> </ul>
	During task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Task choice (difficulty)</li> <li>● Pressure manipulation (Conditions e.g., time pressure, modality)</li> </ul>
	Post-task work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public performance</li> <li>● Transcription analysis</li> <li>● Testing</li> <li>● Extension (task sequence, families)</li> </ul>

Subsequently, Ellis (2006) synthesised different designs based on his review of various approaches to task-based language teaching (e.g., Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996). Ellis' work offers the teacher a wide range of methodological options to implement TBLT in the classroom. To illustrate, the

pre-task phase is to prepare learners for next phases by engaging them in a variety of task and non-task-based activities i.e., learning of new language, consolidation of linguistic knowledge, and familiarization of tasks. The during-task phase comprises two methodological options (1) *task-performance options* in which the teacher plans for how tasks can be conducted and thus selected for the actual performance, and (2) *process options* which are implemented by two agents in classroom i.e., teachers and learners to opt for how to perform the task. The post-task phase is aimed at three pedagogical goals namely an opportunity to repeat a task, reflections on task performance, and scant attention to forms that lead to learners’ challenges to perform the task.

**2.2. Speaking performance**

Speaking known as an oral production of language takes forms of monologue and dialogue (Karpovich et al., 2021). Of four macro skills, growth in L2 speaking performance is mainly targeted by EFL teachers and learners (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016; Boonkit, 2010; Jaya et al., 2022). This is because humans seem to encounter most spoken communications rather other forms (i.e., reading, writing). Researchers have acknowledged outstanding benefits of this skill in both work and life i.e., job interviews, business, group work, and knowledge exchanging from different backgrounds when one is competent in speaking (Goh, 2007; Rao, 2019).

Karpovich et al. (2021) highly recommend that speaking should be regularly practiced. To foster learners’ maximal involvement in speaking practice, teachers should focus on not only general speaking but also specific aspects of performance. Skehan (1996, 2018) argues the development of speaking performance in terms of complexity, accuracy, and fluency. Measures of complexity, accuracy, and fluency triad (CAF) were used in various studies to examine the effects of task conditions i.e., pre-planning, on-line planning, careful planning on oral production including monologue and dialogue (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Ahmadian, 2012; Chau, 2014; Ellis, 2009b; Javad et al., 2015; Seifoori & Vahidi, 2012). Dimensions of measured CAF triad are various, but Table 2 illustrates the frequently measured CAF framework.

**Table 2. CAF measures in speaking performance (Adapted from Javad et al., 2015, p.48)**

Items	Dimensions for measurement
Accuracy	Percentage of error-free clauses; all syntactic, morphological, and lexical errors were counted  Percentage of correct verb forms in terms of tense, aspect, modality, and subject–verb agreement.
Complexity	Syntactic complexity (amount of subordination): the ratio of clauses to AS units. AS unit is essentially syntactic and syntactic units are genuine units of planning (Foster et al., 2000), which might make them good units for analysing spoken language.  Syntactic variety: the total number of different grammatical verb forms used: Tense (e.g., simple present, simple past, past continuous, etc.), modality (e.g., <i>should, must</i> , etc.)
Fluency	Rate A: number of syllables produced per minute of speech divided by the number of seconds used to complete the task and multiplied by 60.  Rate B: Rate A’s procedure is repeated, but all syllables, words, phrases that were repeated, reformulated, or replaced are excluded.

**3. METHOD**

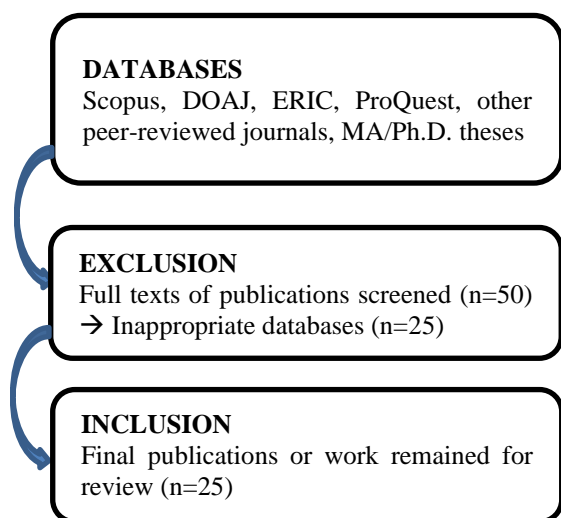
**3.1. Process for systematic review**

The current study followed the systematic review approach, but the procedure was adapted in order to make it more appropriate with the flow of the study. Robinson and Lowe (2015) suggest that there should be at least 10 and at most 50 publications for a systematic review.

**Table 3. Suggested stages for a systematic review adapted from Uman (2011), Robinson and Lowe (2015)**

<p><b>Stage 1: Focus of review</b> Establish review questions. This provides a backbone for the further analysis in case of redundant studies.</p>
<p><b>Stage 2: Data collection</b> -Establish inclusion and exclusion criteria. Features of a study like population, intervention, comparison, outcomes (and context) are carefully investigated prior to selection. Uman (2011) suggests what types of studies to include and exclude (e.g., qualitative research or quasi-experimental designs), the minimum number of participants, published versus unpublished studies, etc. -A set of comprehensive keywords are generated.</p>
<p><b>Stage 3: Data extraction</b> Necessary information for the review focus is extracted; two or more researchers undertake data extraction.</p>
<p><b>Stage 4: Data analysis</b> Data are compared, contrasted and categorised.</p>
<p><b>Stage 5: Data Presentation</b> PRISMA/CONSORT or similar chart/table of included papers is constructed.</p>
<p><b>Stage 6: Outcome</b> Actions/directions are based on evidence from reviewed papers.</p>

**3.2. Overview of selection**



**Figure 1. Flowchart process selection**

(Adapted from Dehghanzadeh et al., 2021)

The aims of the current study are to (1) reveal what TBLT models have been studied for the effect on EFL learners’ speaking performance and (2) to review what effects these models have on EFL learners’ speaking performance. Several keywords were employed for the selection of reviewed articles or theses such as task-based language teaching, task-based language learning, task-based instruction, enhanced-technology TBLT, speaking abilities, speaking performance, oral skills, and EFL. *Figure 1* illustrates how the articles were systematically selected, screened, excluded, and included for final review.

**3.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

A set of fixed criteria should ensure the quality of included publications for the systematic review (Dehghanzadeh et al., 2021; Lin & Lin, 2019) so that the analysis of results can be triangulated more effectively. Therefore, inclusion criteria for selecting research about effects of TBLT on EFL learners’ speaking performance was established as listed below:

- Included works comprise published articles and unpublished MA/Ph.D. theses on effects of TBLT on speaking performance or general proficiency which reported speaking as a component.
- The time range of selected studies was from 2000 to 2022 to ensure the most appropriate and state-of-the-art literature to capture the overgeneralization of the study.
- The selected studies used quantitative data or both quantitative and qualitative data to analyze and explain the effects of treatment
- Studies were conducted in classroom-based, virtual or face-to-face contexts.
- Publications focused on effects of traditional TBLT, technology-enhanced TBLT, or a comparison of TBLT with other approaches (i.e., Direct Method, PPP) on speaking performance per se or as a component of proficiency.
- Target participants were learners of English as a foreign or second language.
- Full texts of articles, or MA/Ph.D. theses were available and verified in terms of quality.
- Research design and methods are well-defined (closely scrutinized for studies on emerging journals in terms of validity and reliability).

Having applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria, we decided to include 22 published articles and 2

unpublished Ph.D. theses, 1 published MA thesis for the systematic review.

### 3.4. Data analysis

Twenty-two published articles, two unpublished Ph.D. theses, and one published MA thesis on a journal were consecutively added to represent studies about the effects of tasks directed under TBLT in enhancing speaking performance. The studies were categorized according to some parameters: (1) *TBLT frameworks*; (2) *modes of TBLT*: face-to-face or technology-mediated; (3) *learning outcomes*: increased general speaking/general proficiency or speaking components (i.e., complexity, accuracy, and fluency) (see the appended table for details).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. TBLT frameworks for enhancing EFL learners' speaking performance

**Table 4. Brief report on selected studies**

Parameters		Frequency (N)
Frameworks	Willis (1996)	11
	Combined	14
	Face-to-face TBLT	22
Modes	Technology-mediated TBLT	3
	Speaking as part of general proficiency	2
Learning outcomes	Speaking only	23
	Assessment of speaking	CAF measures
Rubrics		21

*Note.* "Combined" refers to an adaptation of different TBLT models or perspectives

**Table 5. Effects of TBLT on general speaking and speaking components**

Speaking outcomes	Frequency (N)	
Increased general speaking	10	
Increased Complexity (C), Accuracy (A), Fluency (F)	CAF-based	4
	Rubric-based	11

Regarding the research questions, we have focused on in-depth analysis on the effects of TBLT in two aspects: general speaking performance and components of speaking (i.e., complexity, accuracy, and fluency). Therefore, parameters of articles such as TBLT frameworks or models as the independent

variables (i.e., TBLT or technology-enhanced TBLT) and the dependent variables (general speaking performance or components of speaking) as the corresponding outcomes were decided for selection.

As illustrated in Table 4, there are 25 quantitative studies selected for the review on the effects of TBLT. Noticeably, two of them (Nguyen & Jaspaert, 2021; Harris & Leeming, 2022) were intentionally conducted to examine the effects of task-based instruction on EFL learners' L2 proficiency and increased speaking performance as part of L2 proficiency. An analysis directed under a systematic review aimed at revealing the differential effects of task-based of language teaching in comparison with other approaches (i.e., PPP or direct method) on learners' speaking performance.

A total number of 11 studies made use of the TBLT framework developed by Willis (1996), accounting for nearly 44% studies. The rest included 14 studies that combined Willis' (1996) with parts of other frameworks (e.g., Skehan, 1996) or perspectives (e.g., Vygotsky) in designing and implementing tasks. Regardless of different approaches, most of the studies have contributed to the literature strong evidence that TBLT is beneficial for EFL learners' speaking performance measured as part of general proficiency and specific speaking components (i.e., complexity, accuracy, and fluency).

### 4.2. Effects of TBLT on speaking performance

A consistent result from twenty-five studies shows that task-based instruction has contributed to improving EFL learners' general speaking regardless of different task sequences adapted from Willis (1996) and the mixed frameworks (Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996) which were operated in either face-to-face or technology-mediated TBLT classroom. In order for improvement of speaking to be recognized, it is essential to zoom in on speaking components (i.e., complexity, accuracy, and fluency) in nineteen systematically analyzed studies. In this way, speaking gains can be evaluated from various angles to provide a convincing conclusion about its effect. Four studies (Albino, 2017; Ahmed, 2018; Do, 2021; Rahimpour, 2008) used a speaking test that pursues the CAF framework (Skehan, 2018) to examine the effects of TBLT on speaking component. Remarkably, Albino (2017) concluded forty Grade-9 learners' speaking fluency experienced a significant increase, measured by counting the number of spoken words transcribed from speaking tests. The absence of

comparison group is, however, the weakness of this study. Contrary to the aforementioned studies, the remaining studies measured CAF by using speaking rubrics and standardized tests (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL, PET).

To make it brief for a detailed analysis about CAF framework used for measuring speaking performance in the systematic review, we labelled them as the traditional CAF (Skehan et al., 2012; Skehan, 2018) and the adapted CAF (following speaking rubrics). Although speaking performance was graded regarding the standardized tests with a focus on the CAF triad, the authors just made a general conclusion about the impact of TBLT on general speaking rather than complexity, accuracy, and fluency of speaking (Nguyen & Jarpaert, 2021; Harris & Leeming, 2022). However, with respect to the adapted CAF designed by researchers or teachers, there were eleven studies. The results all showed growth in both speaking components (15 studies, 60%) and general speaking (10 studies, 40%).

Obviously, the traditional CAF in assessing speaking components was more often used than the adapted CAF. This can be because modification or adaptation in measurement methods depends on certain contexts in which the traditional CAF could not be used to triangulate results. Moreover, it might be understood that different TBLT frameworks or perspectives were used for treatment, leading to the use of a different set for measures. Dimensions of speaking performance measured in terms of adapted CAF are varied since they were defined differently in speaking rubrics. Despite this, enhanced speaking components were still witnessed in eleven studies, i.e., complexity, accuracy, and fluency (Mulyadi et al., 2021; Nget et al., 2020; Torky, 2006; Majeed & Memon, 2022; Panduwangi, 2021); complexity and accuracy (Sarıçoban & Karakurt, 2016; Yaprak & Kaya, 2020); complexity and fluency (Fang et al. 2021); fluency (Khoshsima & Bajool, 2015); accuracy and fluency (Munirah & Muhsin, 2015; Murad & Smadi, 2009). It is worth mentioning that growth in speaking fluency mostly received recognition among eleven studies irrespective of the traditional or adapted frameworks in which

differently defined speaking components (i.e., complexity, accuracy, and fluency) were measured.

However, it is noteworthy that effects of this approach on speaking performance might be biased. First, TBLT models are variously applied for the development of corresponding activities based on the researchers' interpretations and analysis of their contexts for research. Second, the effects can be attributed to various task types or characteristics, e.g. reasoning gap and information-gap (Prahbu, 1987); listing, comparing, experience sharing, ordering, sorting, creating, and problem-solving (Willis, 1996); collaborative learning (Chen, 2021); role-play (e.g., Albino, 2017; Mulyadi et al., 2021); personal information exchange, narrative and decision-making (Nguyen & Jaspert, 2021). Different measures of speaking performance may account for the different outcomes. Some researchers (Ahmed, 2018; Mulyadi et al., 2021; Torky, 2006) analyzed speaking tasks to measure speaking performance while others (e.g., Harris & Leeming, 2022; Nguyen & Jaspert, 2021) used standardized tests to measure speaking proficiency.

Overall, a majority of reviewed studies either use or adapt Willis' framework as the main classroom procedure in the implementation. Few studies use Skehan's approach per se as the major approach in their studies. No research has yet to compare the effects of methodological task-based options on overall speaking proficiency. In terms of perspectives, TBLT currently advocate a cognitive, socio-interactionist approach that emphasizes cognitive, psychological processes in language learning. Affective factors seem to be ignored or given less attention. A text-driven approach that combines both affective and cognitive principles in second language learning has been proposed and implemented (Tomlinson, 2013). Cognitively and emotionally engaging texts are selected and drive the design of tasks, combined with techniques such as visualization, imagery, imagination, acting out, and so on to prepare learners for the main task. The framework comprises several stages to developing task materials for enhancing second language learning as presented in the table below.

**Table 6. Text-driven framework for task-based teaching extracted from Tomlinson (2013, p. 24)**

Stages	Learners' activities	Principles
(i) Readiness activities	Thinking about something personal which will help them connect with the content of the core text	Personal connection. Visual imaging. Use of inner speech.
(ii) Initial response activities	Linking the images and thoughts from the readiness activities to the text when first experiencing it.	Personal connection. Visual imaging. Use of inner speech. Affective and cognitive engagement. Use of high-level skills. Focus on meaning.
(iii) Intake response activities	Developing and then articulating personal responses to the text.	Personal connection. Visual imaging. Affective and cognitive engagement. Use of inner speech. Interaction.
(iv) Development activity 1	Developing the text by continuing it, relocating it, changing the writer's views, personalizing it, responding to it, etc.	Personal connection. Visual imaging. Use of inner speech. Affective and cognitive engagement. Use of high-level skills. Focus on meaning. Interaction. Purposeful communication
(v) Input response activity	Focusing on a specific linguistic, pragmatic, discourse, genre or cultural feature of the text and in order to make discoveries about its use.	Personal connection. Visual imaging. Use of inner speech. Affective and cognitive engagement. Use of high-level skills. Interaction. Noticing.
(vi) Development activity 2	Revising the first draft from 4 above making use of their discoveries in 5 above	As for 4.

Zhang et al. (2022, p.2) claimed that “not all tasks engage learners”. In this respect, Tomlinson (2018) argues that a text-driven task-based approach can enhance EFL learners’ cognitive and affective engagement, increase the educational values and content values of a unit, and stimulate authentic tasks in which learners can be more exposed to rich and meaningful input.

The gap remains as to empirical research on enhancing language skills using this framework. In a recent publication, Van Loi and Thanh (2022) concluded that most of the text-driven approach studies are case studies or action research. Their quasi-experiment study illustrates that the text-driven approach had an effect on EFL learners’ reading performance. Further research is needed to test the effect on other skills. Speaking learning

could be an option because theoretically the approach aims to promote learning conditions based on text-driven tasks that engage learners cognitively and emotionally, which may promote learners’ engagement, comprehension and production of language.

**4.3. Conclusions and suggestions for future research**

After scrutinizing the 25 quasi-experimental/classroom studies conducted mainly to assess the effects of TBLT on EFL speaking performance, we have concluded that the majority of them have indicated an enhancement of EFL learners' general speaking performance and specific speaking components (i.e., complexity, fluency, accuracy). Various tasks were employed in treatments such as narrative, role play, technology-mediated tasks,



collaborative tasks, and so on. The results imply TBLT could be an effective measure to enhance EFL learners' speaking. Despite the research findings, further research is still needed to advance task-based language pedagogy, especially adding diversity to how tasks can be designed and

implemented from various perspectives. Comparative research on task-based methodological options can be conducted. The text-driven approach, with its principles drawing on second language acquisition research, could also be an option for advancing TBLT.

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