



Enhancing Speaking Confidence in Elementary Students through Task-Based and Communicative Approaches: A Community-Based Study at Rumah Tahfiz Daarul Uswah

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Abstract. Speaking fluency and confidence are crucial in second language acquisition, particularly for young learners who require engaging and interactive methods to enhance their communication skills. Traditional rote-based learning often fails to provide meaningful practice, leading to anxiety and lack of confidence in speaking. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in improving elementary students' confidence and fluency in speaking English. The research was conducted over eight sessions using a qualitative approach. Interactive teaching methods, including songs, roleplays, games, and self-description competitions, were implemented. Data were collected through observations and student progress evaluations, focusing on pronunciation, sentence construction, and fluency. The findings indicate that task-based activities significantly improved students' confidence, fluency, and engagement. Initially, students faced challenges such as speaking anxiety, low participation, and disruptive behavior. However, through interactive strategies, they gradually overcame these difficulties. By the final session, most students demonstrated the ability to introduce and describe themselves fluently, showcasing the effectiveness of TBLT and CLT in ESL education. This study highlights the importance of student-centered, communicative learning approaches in fostering fluency and confidence in young ESL learners. The success of TBLT and CLT suggests that interactive, task-based instruction should be encouraged in ESL education to ensure learners can effectively use English in real-life situations.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, ESL Learning, Interactive Learning, Speaking Fluency, Task-Based Language Teaching.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the persistent challenges in English language learning for elementary students is the development of speaking confidence and fluency. Many traditional teaching approaches prioritize grammar instruction and memorization over interactive communication, resulting in students who may perform well in reading and writing but struggle with oral proficiency (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This issue is particularly significant as global communication increasingly demands practical speaking skills in English. Therefore, there is a pressing need for teaching methods that not only improve linguistic competence but also foster confidence and fluency in young learners.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) have emerged as effective methodologies for addressing these challenges. TBLT, rooted in constructivist theory (Piaget, 1950; Vygotsky, 1978), promotes learning through meaningful,

real-life tasks that enhance student engagement and interaction. Research by Willis (1996) demonstrates that task-based activities encourage learners to develop their language skills in an authentic, communicative context, improving both fluency and confidence. Similarly, Khan et al. (2022) highlight how TBLT fosters active participation, allowing students to construct knowledge through social interaction, which is essential for language acquisition.

CLT, on the other hand, is grounded in Communicative Competence Theory (Hymes, 1972), which emphasizes the ability to use language appropriately in different social contexts. Canale and Swain (1980) expanded this concept, introducing four components of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. Studies by Le Thi Ngoc Hien (2020) and Littlewood (2007) indicate that CLT increases learners' motivation and speaking confidence by focusing on meaningful communication rather than rote memorization. Kadian et al. (2021) further argue that CLT, especially in a technology-enhanced environment, provides students with greater exposure to interactive and authentic learning resources, facilitating spontaneous language use.

Empirical research supports the effectiveness of TBLT and CLT in improving speaking confidence among elementary students. A study by Ellis (2003) found that students engaged in task-based learning activities demonstrated higher fluency and confidence compared to those taught through traditional methods. Putri (2021) also reports that communicative language teaching enhances student engagement by incorporating role-playing and group discussions, leading to greater willingness to participate in oral communication. Fauzi and Ridwan (2025) observed that elementary students exposed to CLT-based instruction exhibited significant improvements in their ability to express thoughts, negotiate meaning, and interact in English with minimal hesitation.

Despite their advantages, both TBLT and CLT present challenges, particularly for young learners. Common issues include speaking anxiety, low engagement, and disruptive behavior, which can hinder language development (Sholeh et al., 2019). However, interactive teaching methods, such as roleplays, games, and collaborative tasks, have been shown to mitigate these difficulties by creating a supportive and engaging learning environment (Richards, 2015).

Given these insights, the current study aims to investigate the effectiveness of Task-Based and Communicative Language Teaching (TBLT & CLT) in improving elementary students' confidence and fluency in speaking English, examining how these interactive methods contribute to enhanced pronunciation, sentence construction, and overall speaking ability. Additionally, this study explores the challenges that elementary students face in

learning English speaking skills, such as speaking anxiety, low engagement, and disruptive behavior, while analyzing how interactive teaching strategies, including roleplays, games, and collaborative activities, can help overcome these difficulties and create a supportive learning environment. By analyzing students' progress throughout the study, this research seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on ESL pedagogy and offer practical recommendations for enhancing communicative competence in young learners. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for educators and curriculum developers seeking to implement more effective and engaging English language teaching strategies.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative action research approach to enhance elementary students' confidence in speaking English through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Action research is particularly effective in educational settings as it allows teachers to implement interventions, observe their impact, and make iterative improvements (Burns, 2010). The research involves 20 students from grades 2 to 6, who gather at Masjid Al-Istiqomah, Laut Dendang, as part of a community service program. These students, who come from different schools, primarily attend the mosque for hafiz (Qur'an memorization) activities. In collaboration with Rumah Thafiz Daarul Uswah, English-speaking lessons were introduced to help them develop confidence in using the language. The learning materials are designed based on established references and research articles on task-based and communicative approaches. TBLT, as proposed by Ellis (2003), emphasizes the use of real-world tasks to develop communicative competence, while CLT, as defined by Richards and Rodgers (2001), prioritizes interaction and fluency over grammatical accuracy. Lessons focus on fun and interactive speaking activities, including role-playing (Littlewood, 2007), storytelling (Wright, 2008), picture descriptions (Ellis & Brewster, 2014), group discussions (Nunan, 2004), and language games (Wright et al., 2006), which encourage students to practice speaking in an engaging and enjoyable environment.

The lessons are delivered in three structured stages, following the framework of Willis (1996):

- 1) Introduction – Students are introduced to the topic and key vocabulary.
- 2) Speaking Tasks – Students participate in activities that require interaction and real-life communication in English.
- 3) Feedback and Reflection – Students receive feedback from both teachers and peers to help refine their speaking skills.

Data is collected through classroom observations, student recordings, interviews, and teacher reflections to assess students' progress in fluency and confidence. Observations focus on students' participation and engagement, while recorded speaking activities provide insight into pronunciation, sentence construction, and overall fluency. Additionally, semi-structured interviews and short surveys capture students' experiences, difficulties, and perceptions of their learning progress (Dörnyei, 2007). To ensure validity, thematic analysis is used to identify patterns in students' confidence levels, fluency improvements, and common challenges (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The study also examines difficulties such as speaking anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986), low engagement, and hesitation in using English (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991), while documenting strategies that effectively address these issues. To create a supportive learning environment, students are encouraged to speak without fear of making mistakes, an approach supported by Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which states that reducing anxiety enhances language acquisition. Their identities and responses remain confidential, and parental consent is obtained before their participation, following ethical research guidelines (Cohen et al., 2018). By integrating TBLT and CLT, this study seeks to offer a more engaging and practical approach for young learners to develop speaking confidence. The interactive tasks and real-life speaking opportunities aim to help students overcome their fear of speaking English while making the learning process enjoyable.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to develop speaking confidence and fluency among learners preparing for employment in English-speaking environments. Through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches, participants engaged in structured yet interactive learning experiences. Data collected from observations, recorded speech samples, and learner feedback over eight sessions indicate a notable improvement in speaking abilities. One of the primary indicators of success was the improvement in speaking fluency, as measured through word count per minute and reduction of pauses in recorded speech samples. At the beginning of the program, many learners struggled with even basic greetings, frequently pausing or relying on their native language. However, by the final session, participants could deliver clear and structured self-introductions with significantly fewer interruptions.

Survey data and instructor observations further support these findings. Initially, only 40% of learners expressed confidence in speaking English, often hesitating or avoiding participation. By the end of the course, confidence levels had surged to 85%, with students

actively engaging in roleplays, discussions, and presentations. This aligns with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which emphasizes that reducing learner anxiety creates an optimal environment for language acquisition.

Table 1. Quantitative Comparison of Learner Progress

Noby	Speaking Skills	First Session	Last Session	Improvement (%)
1	Fluency (words/min)	45 words/min	78 words/min	73%
2	Number of pauses (>2 sec)	15 times	7 times	53%
3	Confidence level (survey)	40%	85%	112%

Based on Table 1 above, the descriptive statistical results indicate a significant improvement in students' speaking skills after eight sessions of learning using the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches. In terms of speaking fluency, the average number of words spoken per minute increased from 45 words/min in the first session to 78 words/min in the final session, reflecting an improvement of 73%. This suggests that students became more fluent and capable of expressing their thoughts more quickly and naturally. Additionally, the number of long pauses (lasting more than 2 seconds) decreased from 15 times in the first session to 7 times in the last session, with an improvement rate of 53%. This indicates that students became more confident and were less likely to pause while speaking, demonstrating enhanced fluency and spontaneous speech production. The final measured aspect was confidence level, based on a survey conducted before and after the learning program. The results show an increase from 40% to 85%, meaning students' confidence improved by 112%. This increase highlights the effectiveness of interactive learning methods in reducing anxiety and encouraging students to use English more actively.

A crucial aspect of this research was evaluating how well learners retained the material and how actively they engaged with different teaching methods. Observations revealed that interactive activities, such as songs, games, and roleplays, significantly enhanced participation and retention. For instance, in the early sessions, many learners struggled to recall simple vocabulary and phrases. However, incorporating structured repetition, such as daily greetings through songs and the "Find Someone Who..." group activity, led to better retention and more fluid application of learned phrases in real-world contexts.

Furthermore, reviewing previous lessons at the start of each session helped reinforce learning and encourage recall. This aligns with Richards' (2022) findings on Communicative Language Teaching, which stress that active participation in meaningful interactions strengthens language retention. Unlike rote memorization, which often leads to short-term

recall, contextual learning experiences ensured that students internalized vocabulary and expressions more effectively. A key observation was that students engaged more readily in speaking tasks when they had clear, structured goals. By the seventh session, where learners prepared for a self-introduction competition, many students demonstrated a natural command of expressions and improved pronunciation, indicating the success of interactive and task-driven learning approaches.

The findings of this study strongly support the effectiveness of TBLT and CLT in improving fluency and confidence in spoken English. The structured yet interactive nature of these approaches allowed learners to develop their speaking skills gradually while remaining engaged in meaningful, real-world tasks. This research aligns with previous studies, particularly those of Ellis (2021) and Nunan (2004), who emphasized that task-based learning enhances fluency by shifting the focus from grammatical accuracy to effective communication. The use of structured tasks, such as introductions, roleplays, and competitions, encouraged learners to use English in practical contexts, reinforcing the principle that language learning is most effective when it mirrors real-life use.

Additionally, these findings are consistent with Supardi & Leonard's (2010) research, which concluded that second-language learners benefit most from immersive, conversation-based learning experiences. The observed reduction in speaking hesitation and the increase in words spoken per minute suggest that frequent exposure to structured speaking opportunities accelerates fluency development.

Despite the overall success of the program, several challenges were identified, particularly in the early stages of implementation. These challenges were categorized into three key areas:

1) Speaking Anxiety and Low Confidence

- Many learners were hesitant to speak in front of their peers, fearing mistakes.
- Small-group discussions and pair-based speaking exercises helped ease this anxiety, supporting Lightbown & Spada's (2023) research, which states that peer interaction in language learning reduces anxiety and increases willingness to communicate.

2) Limited Vocabulary and Expression

- Some students struggled to construct longer sentences, often reverting to simple phrases.

- This challenge was addressed through structured repetition and contextual usage. According to Richards & Rodgers (2001), vocabulary retention is strongest when words are repeatedly encountered in diverse, meaningful situations.

3) Classroom Disruptions and Uneven Participation

- A few learners became disengaged or distracted during activities, especially when tasks felt repetitive.
- By introducing game-based learning elements (e.g., reward systems, competitions), participation rates increased. This is consistent with Nation's (2022) study, which found that gamified learning enhances motivation and reduces disruptive behavior in second-language learners.

The final session of the program provided clear evidence of the long-term benefits of task-based and communicative learning strategies. During the self-introduction competition, learners confidently introduced themselves using full sentences with correct pronunciation and intonation. Instructors noted that the majority of students demonstrated fluency improvements of over 70%, while nearly all participants expressed motivation to continue learning English independently. This supports Kolb's (2023) Experiential Learning Model, which states that learning is most effective when learners actively engage in real-world tasks. The success of this approach highlights the importance of meaningful, interactive learning experiences in ESL education, particularly for individuals preparing to work in English-speaking environments.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in improving elementary-level ESL students' confidence and fluency in speaking English. Over eight sessions, students showed significant improvements in their ability to introduce themselves, express their thoughts, and engage in conversations. The structured yet highly interactive approach provided them with real-life communication practice, enabling them to gradually overcome speaking anxiety, improve retention, and build fluency. Additionally, the study identified common challenges in learning English speaking skills, such as low confidence, hesitation, and anxiety, and demonstrated how engaging activities like songs, roleplays, games, and competitions effectively helped students overcome these barriers. The findings support previous research, affirming that language acquisition is most effective when learners actively engage in meaningful and interactive communication. Furthermore, quantitative data—such as increased

fluency (words per minute), reduced pauses, and higher confidence levels—provided strong evidence of the effectiveness of these methods.

The results of this study confirm that TBLT and CLT are highly effective in enhancing students' fluency, confidence, and motivation to speak English. By engaging students in task-based and communicative learning, the program successfully encouraged active participation and real-world language use, ensuring that students did not merely learn English but also felt confident using it in everyday interactions. Given these findings, future research could explore the long-term impact of these teaching methods across different learner demographics or educational settings. Additionally, further studies could investigate how TBLT and CLT strategies can be adapted for online or hybrid ESL learning environments. This study underscores the importance of interactive and student-centered ESL instruction, providing valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in shaping more effective language-learning programs.

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