



The Development of Thai EFL Students' English Speaking Skills Using Task-Based Learning

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Abstract

The development of English speaking skills has been regarded as a major problem for Thai EFL students at all levels of education, including the tertiary level. Many students have not been able to communicate fluently, confidently, and willingly in English. This quasi-experimental research was carried out to investigate the development of Thai EFL students' English speaking skills through Task-Based Learning (TBL) and to survey their opinions on this learning approach. The participants were 23 undergraduates taking an English for Communication course at That Phanom College, Nakhon Phanom University. They were selected through purposive sampling. Quantitative data were collected by means of a pre-test, a post-test, and a questionnaire; these were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and a paired-sample t-test. Qualitative data collected from students' journals were analyzed by content analysis. Results showed that students' English speaking skills improved significantly after learning through TBL at a significant level of .05. The findings also indicated that students had positive opinions toward TBL in terms of motivation, confidence in speaking English, learning collaboration, and development in English speaking ability. Additionally, the results from students' journals revealed that this learning approach stimulated active participation, increased self-confidence, and nurtured responsibility for learning; therefore, such a learning approach would be effective for developing their ability to speak English.

Keywords: English Speaking Skills, Task-Based Learning, Thai EFL Students

Introduction

The development of English speaking skills has been widely identified as an important challenge for Thai learners (EF English Proficiency Index, 2025). Many students still encounter this problem and cannot use English for communication effectively. This issue is often linked to students' reluctance to use this language, which reduces opportunities to practice and raises ongoing concerns about the effectiveness of English education in Thailand (Kositthaivat, 2025). This problem has been consistently reported in previous studies at the secondary and tertiary levels. Secondary school graduates have been noted to exit school without sufficient competence in communication skills, while university students have been observed to struggle with even the most basic spoken communication. Factors such as shyness, fear of making mistakes, anxiety, and lack of interest restrict their chances of using and practicing oral proficiency both in and out of class (Tridinanti, 2018). Based on this information, it is necessary to apply an effective and appropriate learning approach to improve English speaking skills.

Given this challenge, the difficulties Thai EFL students face in speaking can be seen across five specific areas: fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension. Many students struggle to speak smoothly and tend to pause or hesitate when trying to express themselves, which affects their overall fluency (Beding & Inthapthim, 2019; Nget et al., 2020). A limited range of vocabulary also makes it hard for them to say what they mean clearly, and pronunciation errors often lead to misunderstandings in communication (Aqila, 2025; Poonounin et al., 2024). In addition, weak grammatical performance affects the overall quality of their spoken output, and poor comprehension skills make it difficult for them to follow and respond meaningfully to what others



say (Wangmo & Sakulwongs, 2025). These difficulties also tend to make numerous students feel anxious about speaking English, which leads to even less practice and lower confidence (Krashen, 1985; Sukmana et al., 2023). For this reason, a learning approach that can develop all these areas is needed.

Based on the information regarding learning approaches, Task-Based Learning (TBL) has been found to be an effective method that can be applied to solve the problem. When students are given real-life tasks to complete, they are naturally encouraged to speak more fluently, draw on a wider range of vocabulary, and pay more attention to accuracy and pronunciation (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Willis, 1996). The task-based classroom also tends to create a low-anxiety setting, where students feel more comfortable taking risks and learning from their mistakes, which gives them more chances to practice and improve their comprehension through real interaction with others (Krashen, 1985; Beding & Inthapthim, 2019). Therefore, TBL appears to be a suitable approach for developing all five components of speaking within a single instructional framework.

In Thailand, some conventional teaching approaches that stress grammar and rote memorization rather than meaningful communication continue to be popular. Students who learn under such teacher-centered approaches often lack confidence and are reluctant to participate in speaking activities (Allen, 2016; Royal Education Council, 2018). This reluctance is further strengthened by the predominance of drills and controlled practice, which do not adequately equip students for real-life tasks involving spoken English (Singay, 2018). As a result, most Thai learners remain unprepared for any English communicative demands, such as oral exams, class presentations, or job interviews. Thus, learning activities and practices are very important for developing oral communication, and Task-Based Learning (TBL) is an effective learning approach that promotes these learning procedures.

TBL has become known as a communicative alternative that aims to overcome the limitations of form-focused instruction. The organizing principle of TBL is tasks rather than language forms or structure. Tasks require learners to use language forms but focus on meaning and interaction during the task. The emphasis is on fluency during the task; reflection on form and accuracy occurs after the task (Ellis, 2003). Therefore, TBL encourages authentic interaction and creates student-centered environments where learners are encouraged to use English meaningfully in context (Richards, 2006). Besides, the theoretical foundations of TBL are variously presented. Ellis (2003) identified several defining characteristics of tasks, including their orientation toward meaning, reliance on learners' resources, and outcomes beyond language practice. Prabhu (1987) classified tasks into information, reasoning, and opinion gaps. Each requires learners to collaborate and negotiate meaning. This framework is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), in which learners can achieve more with the support of teachers and peers. Within this paradigm, TBL tasks can be used to develop linguistic competence, critical thinking, and problem-solving as well.

Moreover, several pieces of evidence from both international and Thai studies further demonstrate that TBL is quite effective in developing English speaking skills. Studies have indicated improvements in fluency, accuracy, interactive speaking, learner confidence, and willingness to speak (Hasan, 2014; Beding & Inthapthim, 2019; Tipmontree & Tasanameelarp, 2020; Lume & Hisbullah, 2022; Cutrone & Beh, 2024). Some studies found that this learning approach is more engaging and motivating than other methods. TBL helps students reduce their speaking anxiety and increase their participation in class activities (Chanaroke & Niemprapan, 2020). These results confirm the potential of TBL to address both linguistic and affective dimensions of speaking instruction (Kashinathan & Aziz, 2021). A number of recent studies also support these findings. Wangmo and Sakulwongs (2025) used TBL and found significant improvement in English speaking scores after the intervention, with

students reporting a high level of satisfaction. Similarly, Nget et al. (2020) also reported significant improvement of English speaking skills through this learning approach. The study of Aqila (2025) found that students who received TBL instruction improved their English speaking skills. Moreover, the findings of Chen (2025) confirmed the positive effects of TBL on students' language proficiency and motivation. In addition, Poonounin et al. (2024) showed that combining TBL with YouTube improved Thai students' conversational skills, and Bhandari et al. (2025) reported positive effects of technology-mediated TBL on English speaking fluency and accuracy.

Although previous studies have focused on the enhancement of English proficiency through Task-Based Learning (TBL), most research in Thailand has been conducted with secondary school learners or general EFL students. There is a lack of research on Thai university students, particularly those in the sciences. This is an important gap because science undergraduates represent a significant portion of the population in higher education institutions across Thailand and are required to possess good skills in speaking English. Their specific needs and context for learning English have not been thoroughly explored. Therefore, it is still unknown how this group's ability to speak English can be improved through this method of learning.

The present study focuses on developing the English speaking skills of Thai EFL students at the university level, majoring in science, using Task-Based Learning (TBL). For focusing on this group of learners, the findings can provide new empirical evidence for the growing body of research on TBL in Thailand. Moreover, they can also extend the understanding of how this learning approach can be effectively applied in specialized fields within higher education.

Purposes of the Research

1. To examine the development of Thai EFL students' English speaking skills using Task-Based Learning.
2. To survey the opinions of Thai EFL students on the development of English speaking skills using Task-Based Learning.

Research Questions

1. Would Thai EFL students' English speaking skills be developed after using Task-Based Learning?
2. What are the opinions of Thai EFL students on the development of English speaking skills using Task-Based Learning?

Scope of the Research

The study contains two variables, which are explained as follows.

1. Independent Variable

The independent variable of the research is Task-Based Learning.

2. Dependent Variable

The dependent variables of the research consist of the level of English speaking skills and opinions on the development of English speaking skills through Task-Based Learning.

The variables of the research can be summarized as follows:

Theoretical Framework

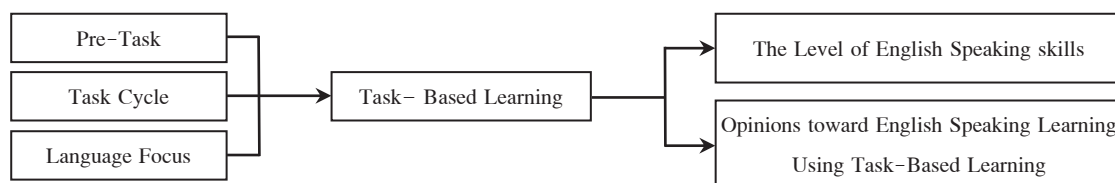


Figure 1 Independent and dependent variables of the study.



Literature Review

Speaking Skills

Speaking can be considered the most important skill for learners to learn a foreign language. It involves the ability to express thoughts, ideas, feelings, and wishes verbally in order to communicate in academic, professional, and social contexts (Fulcher, 2003). Speaking is a skill that requires both linguistic knowledge and the ability to use this knowledge to produce spoken language in real-life situations. It also plays an important role in language learning. Speaking involves the grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic aspects of language use, including discourse competence, and emphasizes the importance of coherence and cohesion in oral communication (Canale, 1983). Many studies have pointed out that speaking requires linguistic accuracy, fluency, interaction, and pragmatic appropriateness. Bygate (1987) argued that speaking includes motor-perceptive skills such as the correct pronunciation of sounds and grammar, as well as interactional skills allowing learners to exchange ideas with others. These skills are necessary for achieving fluency because learners need to access linguistic forms and use them appropriately when communicating with others. McKay (2006) also emphasized that assessment of oral communication should be considered in relation to its context, curriculum, and the communicative needs of learners so that it reflects the effective use of language.

In practice, oral proficiency is shaped by several components that work together in communication. According to Harris (1969); Rora (2015) and Omari (2015), these include fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension, each of which plays an important role in spoken interaction. Fluency refers to how smoothly and continuously a speaker can deliver a message; when fluency is lacking, the communication tends to break down and become harder for listeners to follow (Gyeltshen & Chalermnirundorn, 2018). Vocabulary is also central to speaking, as it allows speakers to express what they mean clearly and appropriately in different situations, and growth in vocabulary generally supports improvement in other aspects of language use (Lhamo, 2021). Pronunciation affects how well a speaker can be understood, and good pronunciation, including clear articulation and appropriate phrasing, can also help build confidence when speaking (Prashant, 2018). Grammatical accuracy gives structure to what a speaker says and helps listeners follow the message more easily (Shakir & Jabbar, 2021). Finally, comprehension allows listeners to understand a speaker's message; without it, effective communication may be difficult to achieve (Omari, 2015). Since these five components are closely related and each contributes to effective oral communication, they were used as criteria for assessing students' speaking ability in this study. For this research, these components of speaking skills were employed to measure the students' English speaking ability. They were also applied to the speaking rubric as a criterion for measuring English speaking skills.

Based on the information regarding speaking skills, it can be stated that speaking requires a balance between linguistic competence and interactional fluency. Thus, effective instruction should create opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning, practice authentic discourse, and develop confidence in communication, in which task-based learning is a learning approach assisting learners to improve their English for communication.

Task-Based Learning

Given the difficulties with which English speaking proficiency is often associated, it is essential to seek pedagogical approaches that do not solely concentrate on form but instead offer opportunities for genuine oral interaction. One such learning approach is Task-Based Learning (TBL), which directly addresses the need for communicative competence in EFL contexts. TBL stands in contrast to grammar-translation or teacher-fronted

approaches by emphasizing learner-centeredness, authentic communication, and tasks that resemble real-life communicative situations (Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996).

This learning approach can be defined in its most fundamental form as an approach that organizes language learning around tasks rather than around the linguistic elements. A task may be described as an activity in which learners carry out an operation using the target language with a communicative purpose, drawing upon their linguistic, cognitive, and interactive skills (Lee, 2000). Prabhu (1987) indicated that every learner needs to use language to fill this gap with some clear purpose. Nunan (2004) further elaborated on task design by identifying five components: goals, input, procedures, roles, and settings. Learning tasks should also be authentic and contextualized as well as interesting. Sae-ong (2010) argued that when new information is connected to what learners already know, tasks will become more meaningful, enjoyable, and memorable.

This framework is widely acknowledged as consisting of three phases: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. The teacher activates schemata and prepares students for the linguistic demands of a task during the pre-task stage (Nunan, 2004; Zakime, 2018). The task cycle is when students execute the task properly, then prepare a report, and finally give feedback in a group setting while the teacher observes them (Nunan, 2004). The last stage is where students think about form and accuracy based on what they have just done communicatively (Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007).

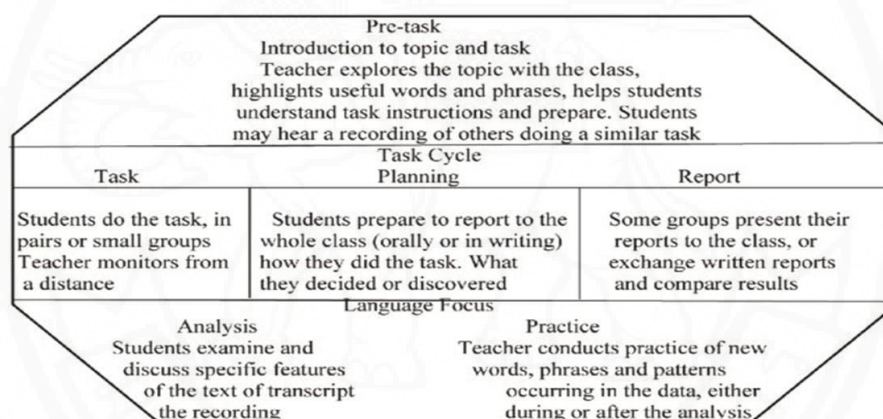


Figure 2 Three stages of the task-based learning. (adapted from Willis, 1996; Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004)

English Speaking Development through the Task-Based Learning Approach

Previous studies have reported that Task-Based Learning (TBL) is an effective approach to enhance speaking skills. McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) indicated that TBL gives learners a chance to discover and talk about topics of personal interest, which increases motivation towards tasks and makes it easier for them to apply what they learn in other areas. Masuram and Sripada (2020) noted that learner interest, engagement, and meaningful interaction are key factors in achieving fluency and reducing hesitation or anxiety in speech. Al-Zoubi (2018) found that frequent exposure to the L2 in TBL contexts provides opportunities for speaking practice, leading to gains in proficiency. Other studies also showed that tasks help reduce anxiety and encourage more student talk.

Moreover, this learning approach is based on collaborative learning theory and constructivism. It supports positive interdependence, individual accountability, and interaction among learners. This is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) view that social interaction is necessary for cognitive development (Chalermnirundorn, 2015; Om & Chalermnirundorn, 2019). By participating in meaningful group tasks, students can develop language



competence, critical thinking skills, self-confidence, and the ability to cooperate with others, which are highly valued in both academic environments and professional settings.

A few recent studies also support these findings. Wangmo and Sakulwongs (2025) found that the students' English speaking proficiency improved significantly after the intervention, and the students also reported a high level of satisfaction. Nget et al. (2020) found that TBL made a significant contribution to the speaking skills of the students, with positive opinions on learning through the approach. For the study of Aqila (2025), it indicated that the experimental group scored significantly higher on all speaking components. According to the study of Chen (2025), it reported that TBL had a positive effect on English language proficiency, classroom engagement, and motivation among university students.

Furthermore, the use of digital tools alongside TBL has also received attention in recent research. Poonounin et al. (2024) found that combining TBL with YouTube improved the English conversational skills and motivated the students to interact with tasks or activities to develop their English speaking skills. Similarly, Bhandari et al. (2025) reported positive effects on students' fluency, accuracy, and language complexity, as well as on motivation and engagement. These studies point to the value of incorporating technology into TBL activities, particularly in EFL contexts where students have few opportunities to use English both inside and outside the classroom.

While the existing studies confirm the effectiveness of TBL in developing speaking proficiency, they also highlight how TBL responds to specific challenges faced by learners regarding English speaking skills. By emphasizing authentic communication and learner engagement through tasks, TBL addresses problems such as lack of fluency, fear of making mistakes, and insufficient practice opportunities. Its interactive and learner-centered approach provides an effective solution framework for overcoming shyness, anxiety, and low motivation within the classroom environment.

Methodology

Research Design

A quasi-experimental single-group design was used to examine the development of Thai EFL students' English speaking skills through Task-Based Learning (TBL) and their opinions of this approach. Quantitative data were collected via an English speaking test and a questionnaire. An English speaking pre-test assessed students before the Task-Based Learning course. Students then studied English for Communication, focusing on oral skills with TBL over ten weeks. An English speaking post-test with the same topic was administered after learning through TBL. Qualitative data came from student journals. Each data type was analyzed separately. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods supports a comprehensive understanding of research issues (Leavy, 2017).

Participants

This study involved 23 first-year undergraduate students: six from Energy Engineering, nine from Electrical Mechanical Manufacturing, and eight from Machinery. All participants attended a required English course in the second semester of the 2024 academic year at That Phanom College, Nakhon Phanom University. The group included 21 males and 2 females, aged 18–22, all Thai EFL learners. The small sample size suits intensive classroom-based research. Purposive sampling enabled the selection of participants who met criteria relevant to the research objectives (Leavy, 2017).



Instruments

Lesson Plan

For this instrument, the researcher created six lesson plans based on the principles of Task-Based Learning (TBL) and English speaking skills, with the six topics selected from the Interchange Student Book (Intermediate level, Cambridge). These topics included various tasks: sharing self-experiences, showing opinions, and analyzing information. Each lesson plan contained three stages: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. First, the pre-task was used to activate the students' background knowledge, prepare them for meaningful tasks, and clarify task instruction. Second, the task cycle was employed to encourage the students to perform tasks, prepare for the presentation, and share their ideas with other students. Third, the language focus was conducted to engage the students in using the language during each task. Before these lesson plans were implemented, they were checked by three experts in teaching English to measure the appropriateness: essence, learning purposes, learning contents, learning activities, learning materials, and learning evaluation. For the overall evaluation of the lesson plans, the appropriateness mean score was 4.25, and the standard deviation was 1.12. Thus, it was suitable for use in the study. Moreover, the lesson plans were revised according to the experts' suggestions to improve their effectiveness.

English Speaking Test

The English speaking test, which contained a pre-test and post-test, was created based on the contents of the English for Communication course to analyze the participants' English speaking skills. The pre-test was conducted before learning through Task-Based Learning (TBL), whereas the post-test was conducted after learning through this approach. The same topic for both the pre-test and post-test was used to assess the participants' English speaking skills with five components: fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension. The rubric for measuring English speaking skills was adapted from the speaking section of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Mukminatien (2000). A rating scale for measuring each component of the test was specified from 0–4: 0 = very poor, 1 = poor, 2 = average, 3 = good, and 4 = very good.

The participants were asked to respond to two questions regarding study and free time activities, which were the learning topics in the English for Communication course. They had 10 seconds for preparation and 50 seconds to respond to each question. In order to avoid bias, they were assessed by three raters: the researcher, a Thai lecturer who was teaching English, and a foreign lecturer (Native Speaker) who was teaching English. For the quality of the English speaking test and the rubric, they were checked to measure the appropriateness by the same experts who evaluated the lesson plans. They were measured regarding the content and the language use. The appropriateness mean score of the first item of the English speaking test was 4.25, and the standard deviation was 1.12. For the second item of the test, the mean score was 4.25, and the standard deviation was 1.25. Regarding the appropriateness of the rubric, the mean score was 4.15, and the standard deviation was 1.35. Thus, they were suitable for use in the research. Besides, these instruments were revised according to the experts' suggestions to improve their effectiveness. In addition, both the pre-test and post-test used identical questions to allow for direct comparison of performance before and after the intervention. The test prompts were: 1) "Tell me about your studies. What do you enjoy about your program?" and 2) "What do you like to do in your free time? Please describe your activities". These prompts were selected because they matched the course content and were familiar enough to all participants to minimize the effect of topic unfamiliarity on performance.



Survey Questionnaire

A questionnaire is normally used as a systematic tool to gather independent responses from a group of participants (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). It offers convenience, flexibility, and honest responses (Walliman, 2011). In this research, a questionnaire was used to survey the students' opinions on the development of English speaking skills through Task-Based Learning (TBL). It consisted of 2 sections with 12 questions. The first section consisted of 2 demographic questions, and the second section consisted of 10 Likert-type items that were partly adapted from Nunan (2004) and Meksophawannagul (2015). The participants were required to respond to each question using a five-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. In order to confirm the validity and the reliability of this questionnaire, it was evaluated by the same experts who evaluated the lesson plans. The Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was used to confirm the content validity. The items that had scores equal to or higher than 0.5 were reserved, whereas the items with scores lower than 0.5 were revised according to the experts' suggestions. The overall score of IOC was 0.89. For the reliability of the questionnaire, it was determined to ensure that the responses collected through this instrument were reliable. The pilot survey was conducted with 20 first-year students who were not in the group of participants. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to evaluate the reliability of each item of the questionnaire. The result of the reliability value was 0.879. Therefore, the questionnaire was valid and reliable for use in the research. The 10 items in the second section measured students' opinions across four key dimensions: 1) motivation and enjoyment in learning through TBL, 2) confidence in using English during tasks, 3) perceived benefits of collaborative and peer learning, and 4) overall development of English speaking ability through TBL activities.

Students' Journals

This instrument was used to record the students' experiences related to the development of English speaking skills using Task-Based Learning (TBL). Mainly, the purpose of using this instrument was to illustrate the participants' experiences more clearly after they learned through the learning approach to develop their English speaking skills. In the tenth week, each participant was asked to write down in Thai about the benefits and problems of developing their English speaking skills through TBL. Each item was checked to evaluate the appropriateness of using language by the same experts who evaluated the lesson plans. For the overall evaluation of the students' journals, the appropriateness mean score was 4.50, and the standard deviation was 0.25. Therefore, this instrument was suitable for use in the research. Moreover, the instrument was revised according to the experts' suggestions to improve its effectiveness. To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative data from the journals, member checking was employed as a verification strategy. After the key themes had been identified from the journal entries, a summary of the findings was shared with five participants, who were asked to confirm whether the identified themes accurately reflected their experiences. All five participants agreed that the themes were consistent with what they had written, which helped to strengthen the credibility and dependability of the qualitative findings (Leavy, 2017).

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Human Ethics Committee of Nakhon Phanom University on December 4, 2024. The project number is HE2868.

Data Collection Procedure

Week 1: In the first week of the study, the researcher provided an introduction about the study's purpose, research methods, and ethical considerations to all subjects. An explanation was given about the Task-Based Learning approach and its components: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus, so that participants could understand this instructional method. Then participants took the English speaking pre-test, which was intended to



determine their proficiency level before instruction. A LINE group was created for communication purposes among students in which they could ask questions, reflect on things happening in class, and receive feedback during the experiment.

Weeks 2–9: For eight weeks, participants were instructed with six lesson plans following the principle of Task-Based Learning (TBL). Each lesson followed the three stages of TBL:

1. **Pre-Task Stage:** Activation of background knowledge about a topic and clarification about tasks to be performed.

2. **Task Cycle Stage:** Carrying out communicative tasks, preparing reports, and presenting them in groups for more interaction and fluency.

3. **Language Focus Stage:** Reflection on how language is used, correction of errors made by students, and feedback provided by the researcher.

The researcher acted as a facilitator during these sessions, guiding students' progress while encouraging collaborative learning among them through interactions with one another in class activities. Students' participation and task performance were observed continuously to ensure they met lesson objectives.

Week 10: At the end of the experiment, participants took an English speaking post-test with similar topics as in the pre-test for direct comparison before instruction and after instruction. Subsequently, students were asked to answer a questionnaire to express their opinions on learning through TBL. They wrote reflective journals in Thai describing the benefits, problems encountered, and personal experiences during the learning process through this learning approach.

All data comprising pre-test and post-test scores, responses to questionnaires, and reflections from journals were prepared for analysis. Quantitative data were statistically analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and a paired-sample t-test, while qualitative data from journals were thematically content analyzed to identify themes related to students' learning experiences.

Data Analysis

The data in this research were analyzed in two parts: quantitative and qualitative.

For the quantitative data, the scores from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation and compared by a paired-sample t-test to determine whether students' English speaking performance improved after the intervention. The questionnaire items were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to identify students' opinions toward learning through Task-Based Learning (TBL). All quantitative data were analyzed using the SPSS program. The mean scores from the questionnaire were interpreted using the following criteria adapted from Poonounin et al. (2024): 4.51–5.00 = Very High, 3.51–4.50 = High, 2.51–3.50 = Moderate, 1.51–2.50 = Low, and 1.00–1.50 = Very Low.

For the qualitative data, students' reflective journals were analyzed using a thematic content analysis. The entries were read several times to ensure thorough understanding. Statements with similar meanings were grouped into categories, and the key ideas of each category were summarized and interpreted to capture students' experiences and perspectives on learning through the learning approach.

Results

In order to answer the first research question, the students' English speaking performance was measured before and after learning through Task-Based Learning (TBL). Speaking performance was evaluated in five main



components: fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension. The pre-test and post-test results were analyzed using the mean, standard deviation, and a paired-sample t-test. The findings are presented and explained in Tables 1–4.

Table 1 Mean scores of English speaking tests before and after learning through TBL (Overall findings)

Test (20 Points)	n	M	SD	Mean Difference	df	t-value	p-value
Pre-test	23	6.61	1.56	3.87	22	7.68*	.00
Post-test	23	10.48	1.60				

* $p < .05$

According to Table 1, the overall findings of the pre-test mean score of the English speaking skills was 6.61 (SD = 1.56) and the post-test mean score of 10.48 (SD = 1.60), resulting in an average difference of 3.87. This difference was statistically significant ($t = 7.68$, $p < .05$), which implied that there was an improvement in the students' English speaking skills after learning through TBL.

Table 2 Mean scores of English speaking tests before and after learning through TBL ($n = 23$)

Components	Test (4 Points for Each)	M	SD	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Fluency	Pre-test	1.33	0.43	0.76	7.43*	.00
	Post-test	2.09	0.39			
Grammar	Pre-test	1.29	0.43	0.78	7.53*	.00
	Post-test	2.07	0.38			
Vocabulary	Pre-test	1.32	0.40	0.80	7.74*	.00
	Post-test	2.12	0.37			
Pronunciation	Pre-test	1.31	0.42	0.78	7.56*	.00
	Post-test	2.09	0.39			
Comprehension	Pre-test	1.36	0.44	0.75	7.78*	.00
	Post-test	2.11	0.42			

Based on Table 2, the results showed that the students' English speaking skills improved significantly across all five components after learning through TBL. At the component level, vocabulary showed the highest mean improvement with a mean difference of 0.80 ($t = 7.74$, $p < .05$), followed by grammar with a mean difference of 0.78 ($t = 7.53$, $p < .05$), pronunciation with a mean difference of 0.78 ($t = 7.56$, $p < .05$), fluency with a mean difference of 0.76 ($t = 7.43$, $p < .05$), and comprehension with a mean difference of 0.75 ($t = 7.78$, $p < .05$). These findings indicated that TBL was effective in developing each dimension of English speaking ability.

For answering the second research question, the questionnaire and the students' journals were analyzed to examine their perspectives. The findings are presented and explained as follows.

Table 3 Participants' opinions on the development of English speaking skills using TBL from the questionnaire

No.	Contents ($n = 23$)	M	Standard Deviation	Level of Agreement
1	The tasks helped me feel more confident.	4.61	0.49	Very High
2	I think TBL helped me improve my speaking fluency.	4.47	0.53	High
3	The activities helped me use English in real-life situations.	4.35	0.61	High
4	The teacher's guidance during tasks helped me speak more accurately.	4.20	0.63	High

**Table 3** (Cont.)

No.	Contents (n = 23)	M	Standard Deviation	Level of Agreement
5	I enjoyed learning through the Task-Based Learning activities.	4.57	0.51	Very High
6	The tasks encouraged me to speak English more often in class.	4.52	0.59	Very High
7	Working with peers made me feel more comfortable using English.	4.48	0.62	High
8	The variety of tasks made the lessons more interesting and motivating.	4.39	0.56	High
9	I gained new vocabulary and expressions through TBL tasks.	4.31	0.58	High
10	I would like to continue learning through the TBL approach.	4.65	0.48	Very High
Overall		4.46	0.56	High

Note: Mean interpretation criteria: 4.51–5.00 = Very High; 3.51–4.50 = High; 2.51–3.50 = Moderate; 1.51–2.50 = Low; 1.00–1.50 = Very Low

Regarding Table 3, the overall mean score of students' opinions toward learning English speaking skills through TBL was 4.46 with a standard deviation of 0.56, indicating a high level of positive opinion.

These findings showed that the learning approach effectively promoted a positive and engaging learning environment. Students developed greater confidence, motivation, and willingness to communicate in English. This aligns with the quantitative findings from the speaking test results, confirming that this learning approach not only improved students' speaking proficiency but also fostered constructive attitudes toward English communication and collaborative learning.

Table 4 Participants' opinions on the development of English speaking skills using TBL from students' journals

Themes		Sample Responses
Positive Opinions	Motivation and More Confidence in Speaking English	"Learning through task-based activities has motivated me to speak English more confidently. I used to be afraid of making mistakes, but now I can express my ideas more naturally." (S06)
		"The tasks encouraged me to speak English more often, especially when speaking with others. This made me confident in using English outside the classroom." (S11)
		"Task-based learning made the class more fun. I was motivated to complete the tasks and wanted to speak more." (S08)
		"The topics and activities were interesting. They motivated me to participate in learning and practice." (S10)
		"This way of learning made me look forward to English class. It was enjoyable and practical." (S22)
	Learning Collaboration	"Working in groups helped me learn how to share ideas and listen to others. I learned how to use English in real communication, not only in theory." (S01)
		"The group tasks helped me improve speaking skills. My teacher and friends gave me feedback that helped me correct my pronunciation." (S14)
		"I learned from my classmates during every task. My teacher and friends suggested ways for me to improve my English speaking skills." (S18)



Table 4 (Cont.)

Themes		Sample Responses
Positive Opinions	English Speaking Development	“Task-based activities improved my English speaking because I was encouraged to learn and practice it through these learning procedures.” (S13)
		“Through task-based learning procedures, I learned how to speak English more correctly and clearly.” (S19)
		“This learning approach improved my English speaking a lot. I was encouraged to learn and practice without too much worry about grammatical mistakes. I dared to speak English more.” (S07)
Negative Opinions	Limited Duration for Practice	“Sometimes the time for speaking in each task was inadequate. I could not speak much during some tasks. I wanted more time to practice.” (S04)
	Insufficient Explanation	“Even though I practiced English speaking, it was still difficult for me. I needed more explanation from the teacher.” (S02)

Based on Table 4, most students had positive views about improving their English speaking skills through Task-Based Learning (TBL). The students reported that TBL activities increased their confidence and motivation to speak, enabling them to do so more often and with greater assurance. They valued the chance to use English in real-life conversations, which assisted them in overcoming anxiety and fear of making errors.

Moreover, the journals revealed notable improvements in English pronunciation. Students recognized that the frequent interaction required by TBL tasks helped them practice speaking continuously. The collaborative work within groups was perceived as beneficial. Students highlighted that teamwork encouraged peer support, feedback, and mutual learning, which contributed to better communication accuracy.

In addition, some negative reflections were also reported. A few students mentioned limited time for practice and insufficient explanation. These students reflected that they needed more time for practice and further explanation from the teacher. However, the overall reflections were very positive. This confirms that the learning approach successfully developed the students' English speaking skills.

Discussion

The study results revealed that the Task-Based Learning (TBL) significantly developed Thai EFL students' English speaking performance in fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension. The overall post-test mean score was significantly greater than the pre-test score, which means that after learning through task-based learning activities, the English speaking ability of the students improved. This supports the belief that speaking proficiency can be enhanced by engaging learners in meaningful and communicative tasks requiring authentic language use. Among science-major students who are typically accustomed to analytical thinking and structured problem solving, task-based activities provided a meaningful framework fitting well with their cognitive learning styles. Every task encouraged learners to actively communicate while applying logical reasoning, which may be an explanation for such significant improvement found in all components of speaking skills. These results are consistent with the principles of TBL as described by Nunan (2004) and Willis (1996), who pointed out that language learning becomes more effective when instruction is focused on meaningful communication rather than isolated linguistic forms. This also supports the finding of Sae-ong (2010) that students become communicatively competent through purposeful interaction and collaboration by actively engaging in task performance.



Regarding individual components, vocabulary showed the greatest improvement, followed by grammar and pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension, with all five reaching statistical significance. The prominent gains in vocabulary may be attributed to the communicative demands of TBL tasks, which required students to actively search for and apply appropriate lexical resources to express their ideas and complete activities successfully. The parallel improvements in grammar and pronunciation may reflect the role of the language focus stage, in which students were directed to examine linguistic features that had emerged during task performance, thereby reinforcing formal accuracy within a communicative context. Comprehension showed the smallest gain, possibly because the ability to process and respond to spoken input in real time involves a combination of linguistic and pragmatic skills that requires extended exposure to develop. However, these findings can confirm the effectiveness of this learning approach in developing speaking skills since each component was significantly enhanced. The results are in line with Nget et al. (2020), who reported significant gains across all speaking sub-skills following TBL, and with Wangmo and Sakulwongs (2025), who showed comparable improvements among the students. Similarly, Aqila (2025) found that students receiving TBL instruction significantly outperformed a control group on all speaking components. Moreover, Chen (2025) confirmed positive effects of TBLT on language proficiency and motivation at the university level, suggesting that the benefits of TBL are not limited to a single educational context.

However, it should be acknowledged that this study employed a single-group design without a control group, which means that a testing effect cannot be completely ruled out (Boers & Faez, 2026). This may be because students were already familiar with the test format from the pre-test, which could have contributed to better performance in the post-test. Nevertheless, the improvement was found consistently across all five components, and the pre-test and post-test were administered ten weeks apart, which suggests that the gains more likely reflected genuine learning through TBL than mere test familiarity.

The qualitative data from students' journals supported this interpretation. Most students reported feeling more confident, motivated, and willing to communicate in English after the various speaking tasks. They enjoyed working in groups because it helped them learn through interaction and feedback. The results showed that reduced anxiety and increased confidence can be attributed to the low-anxiety learning environment created through collaborative tasks. In such a setting, when learners perceive their classroom as supportive and non-threatening, their affective filter is lowered so that more effective language acquisition may take place (Krashen, 1985). These findings are supported by Om and Chalermnirundorn (2019), who stated that cooperative learning within the TBL framework enhances student engagement by providing a positive affective environment for communication. McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) reported that students who learned this way became more active and confident because the tasks gave them an opportunity to use English meaningfully and enjoyably.

In addition, the data from the questionnaire showed very positive attitudes toward TBL in terms of motivation, enjoyment, and interest in continuing with this approach. Such positive perceptions were reported by Masuram and Sripada (2020) in their finding that TBL activities enhanced learner participation and enthusiasm in the speaking class, which increased learners' confidence as well as communicative competence. The present findings are congruent with those of Nita et al. (2020) and Pham and Do (2021), whose studies revealed that performing tasks repetitively and interacting with peers in a TBL context were able to reduce anxiety and increase confidence in speaking skills.



Regarding the quantitative and qualitative reflections, these served to strengthen the validity and reliability of findings further. Statistical results showed measurable gains in speaking proficiency while student reflections provided insights into how learning took place within real classroom contexts. This triangulation reinforces the strength of the study's conclusions. An important insight from this study is about the integrative effect of TBL on both linguistic and affective dimensions of learning. According to information reported through their reflective journals, students not only improved their speaking ability but also developed greater motivation and a stronger sense of responsibility for their own learning. These results are consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the study of Chalermnirundorn (2015), which asserted that learning occurs most effectively through social interaction within collaborative environments supported by scaffolding. Therefore, the TBL classroom described functions as a dynamic social space wherein learners negotiate understanding, co-construct meaning, and gradually internalize communicative competence.

While the results were very positive, a few students did express some concerns related to the learning approach. They mentioned insufficient time for practice and a lack of explanation as problems. This may be because each learner group has its own characteristics; some learner groups need more time and teacher explanation to understand their lessons completely. These issues were similar to those found by Sae-ong (2010), who indicated that students in TBL contexts may require more teacher modeling and guided feedback to enhance their pronunciation and grammar accuracy. Such issues indicate that longer practice sessions and individualized feedback might improve learning outcomes in future applications of this type of learning approach.

Overall, the quantitative and qualitative evidence from this study indicates that Task-Based Learning (TBL) effectively addresses both the linguistic and affective dimensions of English speaking development among Thai EFL students majoring in science. The significant improvements across all five speaking components, together with students' positive attitudes toward the approach, suggest that TBL not only builds communicative competence but also helps students develop the confidence and motivation to use English more actively in class. These outcomes are consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the findings of Chalermnirundorn (2015), which emphasize the central role of meaningful social interaction in the learning process. The present study also contributes to the limited body of research on this learning approach within science-major university programs in Thailand, indicating that this approach holds practical value beyond general EFL instructional contexts.

Conclusion

This study investigated the development of English speaking skills of Thai EFL students at That Phanom College, Nakhon Phanom University, through Task-Based Learning (TBL). The quantitative results revealed that students' English speaking skills improved significantly across all five components — fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension — after ten weeks of TBL instruction. Vocabulary showed the greatest gain while comprehension showed the smallest, though all five components reached statistical significance. These findings confirm that TBL, by providing learners with authentic, purposeful, and communicative tasks, can effectively develop multiple dimensions of English speaking ability at the same time. This is particularly relevant for science-major students in Thai higher education contexts where English communication skills are increasingly important for academic and professional development.

The qualitative data from the questionnaires and student journals were consistent with these quantitative results. Students reported higher confidence, greater motivation, and increased willingness to communicate in English,



as well as positive attitudes toward collaborative learning. They found TBL to be a practical and engaging approach that helped reduce speaking anxiety and develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning. Although a small number of students noted concerns about limited practice time and a need for more teacher guidance, most responses on TBL were highly positive. Overall, the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that TBL effectively addresses both the linguistic and affective dimensions of English speaking development, and that its benefits extend beyond language proficiency to include learner confidence, engagement, and motivation. The present study also adds to the limited body of research on TBL with science-major university students in Thailand, and its findings suggest that this learning approach has practical value that extends beyond general EFL instructional contexts.

Implications

Based on the results, several implications for English language learning and teaching through Task-Based Learning (TBL) are presented and discussed below.

Integrating TBL into Speaking Courses

Language teachers are recommended to implement TBL principles in speaking classes to foster real communication. Lessons should be organized around tasks that reflect authentic interaction, such as problem-solving discussions, interviews, and presentations, where fluency and accuracy can be developed at the same time (Nunan, 2004; Willis, 1996).

Promoting Collaborative Learning

The results show that group work and peer interaction improve confidence in speaking as well as motivation. Teachers are recommended to create tasks that promote cooperative learning so that students can share ideas, give feedback to one another, and support each other's language use (Chalermnirundorn, 2015; Om & Chalermnirundorn, 2019).

Future Research Recommendations

Future studies should investigate the long-term effects of TBL on English speaking skills across different disciplines and proficiency levels. Studies using a control group design would also allow for stronger conclusions about the causal effects of TBL on speaking development. Another important direction for future research is the integration of digital tools and technology into TBL activities. Recent studies have shown that combining TBL with digital media such as YouTube can significantly improve students' conversational skills and motivation (Poonounin et al., 2024), while a systematic review of technology-mediated TBLT found positive effects on fluency, accuracy, and learner engagement (Bhandari et al., 2025). Future research could also explore how AI-assisted tools and mobile applications can be used within TBL to extend speaking practice opportunities beyond the classroom and support more personalized language learning.

Conflict of Interests

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Author Contributions

Ditthawat Thongsook: Conceptualized and designed the study, collected the data, analyzed the data, interpreted the results, and drafted and revised the manuscript.



Sukanya Kaowiwattanakul: Contributed to the study design, performed data analysis, interpreted the results, and drafted and revised the manuscript.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Claude and Grammarly to check and improve language, spelling, sentence structure, grammar, and readability. After using these tools, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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