



EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF TASK-BASED INSTRUCTION WITH AUTHENTIC MATERIALS ON THE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF THAI HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AT MARIE UPATHAM SCHOOL

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Received: April 28, 2025; **Revised:** April 30, 2025; **Accepted:** July 21, 2025

Abstract

The purposes of this study were to: 1) compare the mean scores of students' English proficiency tests before and after receiving task-based instruction with authentic materials, and 2) examine students' overall attitude toward the instructional approach. A pre-experimental design (one-group pretest-posttest) was utilized in the study. The sample consisted of 50 eleventh-grade students from Marie Upatham School during the first semester of the 2025 academic year, selected through purposive sampling. The research instruments included: 1) 24 lesson plans based on task-based instruction with authentic materials, 2) pretest and posttest English proficiency tests, and 3) a questionnaire to gauge students' attitudes toward task-based instruction with authentic materials. Data analysis was conducted using paired-sample t-tests, means, and standard deviations. **The**



findings revealed that the mean pretest score was 30.58 (S.D. = 3.61), while the mean posttest score increased to 36.86 (S.D. = 4.01), indicating a statistically significant improvement at the 0.05 level. The attitude questionnaire showed mean scores of 4.41 (S.D. = 0.44) for task-based learning activities, 4.39 (S.D. = 0.32) for content, and 4.34 (S.D. = 0.39) for perceived benefits. The overall mean attitude score was 4.38 (S.D. = 0.34), demonstrating that students held a high positive attitude toward task-based instruction with authentic materials. These results indicated that task-based instruction with authentic materials effectively enhanced English proficiency and was positively received by students. This study provided valuable insights into enhancing English proficiency through task-based instruction with authentic materials and offered innovative recommendations for educators and researchers to improve teaching practices and educational outcomes.

Keywords: Task-based instruction; authentic materials; English proficiency; attitude

Introduction

English served as an important global language, playing a key role in work, education, and social life. It was used as the main language in international business, schools, and tourism, showing its importance for global connections. In Thailand, English was a required subject in the national curriculum, emphasizing its value in helping people communicate internationally and understand different cultures (Ministry of Education, 2017). However, despite years of learning, many Thai students, including those at Marie Upatham School, where the researcher worked, had difficulty becoming skilled in English. Common challenges included limited chances to practice real-life language use, problems with grammar and pronunciation, and a lack of confidence when speaking. Additionally, classroom teaching was often teacher-centered, leaving few chances for students to actively participate in meaningful conversations. These issues showed the need for teaching methods that focused on improving English proficiency and preparing students for real-world communication.



In response to the challenges identified, the researcher implemented task-based instruction with authentic materials as a treatment to address difficulties in English proficiency and to explore students' attitudes toward this instructional approach. The study demonstrated that this method significantly improved students' English proficiency test scores. This improvement was attributed to the emphasis on practical communication, collaborative teamwork, and the use of real-world materials in lessons. Additionally, students expressed positive attitudes toward the approach, noting their satisfaction with the engaging activities, the practical relevance of the materials, and the perceived benefits for language learning. Their feedback also included suggestions for future improvements, reflecting their active participation in the learning process. Overall, the study emphasized that innovative teaching methods focusing on authentic communication and collaboration could enhance both students' English skills and their attitudes toward learning (Asavajaruphan, 2024).

Although the study showed positive results, students identified some challenges in their responses to open-ended questions about the teaching method. While they expressed overall satisfaction with task-based instruction, they suggested allocating more time for preparing presentations and practicing English communication. This was particularly important for students with lower English proficiency, as they required extra time to manage the tasks and practice effectively. Many students also noted that they enjoyed working with their peers during the activities and believed that additional time would further enhance their practice. Furthermore, the study (Asavajaruphan, 2024) recommended further research to examine the long-term impact of task-based instruction with authentic materials on students' English proficiency and language learning outcomes. Specifically, while the study demonstrated positive short-term outcomes, it remained unclear how these benefits persisted over time. Understanding the long-term effects would provide a more comprehensive view of how sustained use of task-based instruction with authentic materials impacts students' overall language proficiency and motivation. Longitudinal studies could also reveal improvements or results that appeared only after a longer period of implementation. These insights highlighted areas where the teaching method could be refined and further developed.



Based on the findings and insights from the previous study, the researcher intended to pursue further research to examine the long-term impact of using task-based instruction with authentic materials on the English proficiency of Thai high school students at Marie Upatham School. This follow-up research aimed to address the gaps identified in student feedback, particularly regarding their need for additional preparation time and opportunities for practicing English communication. Moreover, the study sought to determine whether task-based instruction with authentic materials could consistently and significantly enhance students' English proficiency over an extended period. Additionally, it aimed to investigate students' overall attitude toward this instructional method to provide a deeper understanding of its effectiveness and potential for improvement. By addressing both short-term and long-term outcomes, the research intended to contribute valuable insights into the development of innovative teaching methods that supported meaningful language learning and sustained student engagement.

Research Objectives

1. To compare the mean scores of students' English proficiency tests before and after receiving task-based instruction with authentic materials.
2. To examine students' overall attitude toward task-based instruction with authentic materials.

Literature Reviews

Task-Based Instruction: The task-based instruction method emphasized teaching students to use the target language in meaningful and authentic ways, particularly through conversational activities. Prabhu (1987) introduced this approach during the 1980s, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing meaning and practical application in language learning. He argued that engaging learners in tasks could activate their cognitive processes and support natural language acquisition. Prabhu identified three main types of tasks for classroom use: information-gap, reasoning-gap, and opinion-gap activities. Information-gap tasks required students to exchange details to achieve communication objectives, promoting accurate language use. Reasoning-gap tasks involved problem-solving

or drawing conclusions based on given information, such as planning a trip and justifying the decisions made. Opinion-gap tasks encouraged learners to share their personal views, preferences, or beliefs, often necessitating a higher level of language ability. These tasks aimed to enhance students' logical thinking while fostering practical language skills. **Task-based Instruction Procedures:** Willis (1996) revised the task-based instruction model by organizing it into three distinct phases: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. In the pre-task phase, learners engaged in activities to familiarize themselves with the topic and were provided with clear objectives to focus their learning efforts. The task cycle, which followed, consisted of three components: performing the task, preparing outputs, and presenting results. During this phase, students shared their learning experiences through written reports or presentations, reflecting both linguistic and practical knowledge. Throughout this stage, teachers acted as facilitators, observing and assisting students rather than leading the process. The final phase, language focus, emphasized the study and practice of language, allowing students to analyze key linguistic features and work on new vocabulary, structures, and grammar. These three phases collectively aimed to ensure students had the linguistic tools needed for effective communication.

Benefits of Task-Based Instruction: The implementation of the task-based approach in English language education offered three primary benefits. Firstly, it promoted natural language acquisition through interactive activities such as group work and conversational practice. Secondly, its three-phase method provided students with extensive exposure to diverse language content, enhancing the effectiveness of the learning process. Lastly, it fostered an improved learning environment compared to traditional methods, encouraging students to freely express their ideas and engage in meaningful collaboration (Prabhu, 1987; Willis, 1996). **Authentic Materials:** Authentic materials, often referred to as contextualized materials, were items commonly encountered in everyday life (Berardo, 2006). These materials included diverse resources such as advertisements, newspaper articles, movies, comic books, maps, brochures, video CDs (VCDs), and digital versatile discs (DVDs). They primarily served real-world communicative purposes; for example, newspapers conveyed local and international news, while VCDs and DVDs provided entertainment.

Kusumawardani et al. (2018) described authentic materials as content not specifically designed for educational purposes but intended for general use by a wider audience. Similarly, Gilmore (2007) argued that authenticity could stem from various factors, such as the nature of the text, the participants, the cultural and social context, the communicative purpose, or a combination of these elements. He emphasized that the concept of authentic materials was influenced by both the origin of the content and the context in which it was produced.

Benefits of Authentic Materials: Many researchers, including Berardo (2006), strongly advocated for the integration of authentic materials in language learning due to their numerous benefits. These materials were beneficial in various ways, such as keeping the content up-to-date, boosting student motivation, enhancing comprehension, and increasing overall satisfaction. Authentic materials also served as a source of inspiration for language acquisition, providing cultural insights and exposing students to real-world language usage. Additionally, they reflected the changes in language usage, offering a diverse range of text types and versatile applications that could promote various skills. They were also flexible and could be adapted and reused, providing opportunities for regular updates and ongoing relevance in teaching (Berardo, 2006). **Attitude:** Attitude was identified as an important factor in learning English as a foreign language, as it directly influenced learners' motivation, engagement, and overall success in acquiring the language. A positive attitude toward the language itself, the teaching methods employed, and the learning materials provided significantly enhanced students' ability to succeed. It served as a driving force, helping learners persist through challenges and maintain focus on their language learning goals. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) described attitude as an individual's perceptions and feelings about various aspects of language learning, including people, ideas, and objects, highlighting its multifaceted nature. This perspective emphasized that learners' attitudes were shaped by both internal factors, such as personal experiences and values, and external influences, such as teaching approaches and classroom environments. Baker (1992) explained that attitude not only reflected learners' predispositions toward language learning but also provided valuable insights into their behavior and the level of commitment they brought to achieving specific goals. Fostering a positive attitude created a more conducive learning environment, encouraging students to actively participate and excel in their

studies. These findings underscored the critical role of attitude in shaping language learning outcomes and the need for educators to cultivate a supportive and motivating educational setting.

Research Methodology

This study utilized a pre-experimental design, specifically a one-group pretest-posttest model (Tuckman, 1999), comprising the following elements. **Population and Sample:** The population of this study consisted of 230 high school students attending Marie Upatham School during the first semester of the 2025 academic year. A sample of 50 eleventh-grade students from the fundamental English class (E32101) during the same semester was selected using purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). This selection was based on the following considerations: Tenth-grade students, being newcomers to high school, generally had less experience and a lower level of focus on their studies. Twelfth-grade students, on the other hand, were primarily occupied with preparing for university entrance exams and often finished their school year earlier than students in other grades. In contrast, eleventh-grade students had already adapted to the high school environment and gained sufficient academic experience. Therefore, they were considered the most appropriate cohort for participation in the study. They were also selected based on their previous English proficiency test scores, ensuring that all participants had similar levels of proficiency. **Instruments:** Lesson Plans: The 24 lesson plans were created using a task-based instruction framework with authentic materials, covering a period of 4 weeks. These plans were verified by five experts for content validity, and the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) scores ranged from 0.05 to 1.00, thus confirming their validity.

English Proficiency Test: The TOEFL JUNIOR, renowned for its reliability and widespread global recognition, particularly among students aged 10 to 17, was employed for both the pretest and posttest assessments, with the questions being randomly rearranged. The test comprised three sections: listening comprehension, language form and meaning, and reading comprehension, each consisting of 20 questions. The Attitude Questionnaire: The questionnaire was

designed to measure students' attitudes toward the task-based instruction with authentic materials. It employed a 5-point Likert scale, with ratings ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and was divided into four sections: learning activities, content, benefits, and suggestions. The questionnaire was validated by five experts, and the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) scores ranged from 0.05 to 1.00. The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1990), yielding a value of 0.88.

Data Collection Procedures: The study was conducted during the first semester of the 2025 academic year. At the beginning, the students completed the pretest. They were subsequently taught using task-based instruction with authentic materials, as outlined in their 24-lesson-period plans. Upon completing the instructional phase, they undertook the posttest. Finally, they were asked to complete the questionnaire. **Data Analysis:** Quantitative analysis for the first hypothesis was conducted using a paired-sample t-test to compare students' English proficiency test scores before and after learning through task-based instruction with authentic materials. For the final hypothesis, the mean and standard deviation were calculated to evaluate students' attitudes toward the instructional approach. Qualitative data obtained from the open-ended responses in the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively.

Results

Regarding the first objective, which aimed to compare the mean scores of students' English proficiency tests before and after receiving task-based instruction with authentic materials, the results were as follows:

The paired-sample t-test was conducted to analyze the difference in mean scores between the pretest and posttest. The analysis indicated that the mean score of the pretest was 30.58 (S.D. = 3.61), while the mean score of the posttest increased to 36.86 (S.D. = 4.01) (refer to Table 1).

Table 1. Paired Samples Statistics

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Posttest	36.8600	50	4.00515	.56641
	Pretest	30.5800	50	3.60889	.51037

The analysis of the comparison between pretest and posttest scores revealed the t-test value of 31.39, with 49 degrees of freedom and a significance level (sig) of less than .001 (refer to Table 2). These findings indicated that the posttest mean score was significantly higher than the pretest mean score at the 0.05 significance level, thereby supporting the first hypothesis.

Table 2. Paired Samples Test

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidences Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair1	Posttest- Pretest	6.28000	1.41479	.20008	5.87792	6.68208	31.387	49	<.001

Regarding the last objective, which aimed to examine students' overall attitude toward task-based instruction with authentic materials, the results were as follows:

Descriptive statistics were used to compute the mean scores and standard deviations for students' attitudes in three areas: task-based learning activities, content, and benefits. The results indicated that the mean attitude score for task-based learning activities was 4.41 (S.D. = 0.44), for content was 4.39 (S.D. = 0.32), and for benefits was 4.34 (S.D. = 0.39). The overall mean score across the three sections was 4.38 (S.D. = 0.34) (refer to Table 3). Furthermore, the analysis of students' responses to the open-ended question in the final section of the questionnaire suggested that students felt both motivated and satisfied by task-based instruction with authentic materials. Additionally, they reported notable

improvements in their English proficiency as a result of this approach. Therefore, these findings indicated a highly positive overall attitude toward task-based instruction with authentic materials, thereby supporting the last hypothesis.

Table 3. Statistics

Statistics					
		Students' attitudes toward task-based learning activities	Students' attitudes toward contents	Students' attitudes toward benefits	Total
N	Valid	50	50	50	50
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.4120	4.3880	4.3440	4.3813
Std. Deviation		.43968	.31793	.39288	.34035

Discussions

The findings for **the first objective** indicate that the posttest mean score is significantly higher than the pretest mean score at the 0.05 level of significance, confirming the first hypothesis that students' English proficiency improves after receiving task-based instruction with authentic materials. This improvement can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, task-based instruction focuses on activities that allow students to practice the target language individually, in pairs, or in groups. These activities provide opportunities for authentic communication and collaboration, enabling students to use the language naturally while interacting with peers. These findings align with Asavajaruphan (2024), who highlights that the task-based approach prioritizes engaging learners in meaningful language exercises through individual, pair, or group interactions, encouraging natural communication and cooperative learning with others. It is also consistent with Wu et al. (2016), who emphasize that this teaching approach fosters active engagement in meaningful tasks, thereby enhancing communication skills in practical contexts.

Secondly, task-based learning activities provide students with many opportunities to work together and share their ideas openly. This teamwork helps students feel more involved and motivated to participate in discussions. It also encourages them to use their language skills in real communication, which

improves their learning. Harper and Widodo (2020) support this by noting that the approach strengthens student-centered teaching by promoting independence and interaction. It not only enhances communication skills but also increases students' interest in learning the language. Additionally, working together on tasks helps students develop important social skills, such as teamwork, negotiation, and problem-solving. In this interactive environment, students learn from both their teachers and peers, creating more opportunities to practice and improve their language skills. Asavajaruphan (2024) discusses similarly, emphasizing how task-based learning promotes teamwork, open communication, and student engagement, ultimately enhancing language skills and motivation. It also fosters social skills and creates an interactive learning environment where students learn from both peers and teachers.

Thirdly, when using authentic materials such as movies, students are required to watch selected films and present their analysis to the class. This includes discussing the plot, character development, cultural aspects, and any lessons or messages conveyed by the film. Additionally, they are tasked with comparing and contrasting the movie with other similar films or cultural representations. This process encourages students to engage with the language and culture in a meaningful way, fostering both language development and critical thinking. Another benefit of using movies is that they expose students to real-world language, offering a dynamic and immersive learning experience. This, in turn, helps improve their listening skills, vocabulary, and understanding of cultural contexts. This aligns with Berardo (2006), who explains that incorporating authentic materials like movies into learning activities offers significant advantages, including boosting learner motivation, comprehension, and overall satisfaction.

Lastly, as proposed by Willis (1996), the task-based approach is structured around three key components: the pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. During the task cycle stage, students engage in meaningful language practice through real communication, where the primary focus is on conveying meaning rather than grammatical accuracy. This is supported by Ellis et al. (2020), who highlight that the task-based approach emphasizes completing tasks over explicit grammar



instruction, leading to enhanced fluency in communication. Additionally, the final stage, the language focus, offers students opportunities to focus on language forms and vocabulary, allowing them to practice using them correctly. This not only helps improve their fluency but also sharpens their ability to use the correct forms and appropriate vocabulary in communication. The findings of the last objective indicate that students' overall attitude toward task-based instruction with authentic materials is highly positive, supporting the last hypothesis. This is illustrated in the following sections: **In the first section**, students' attitudes toward learning activities reflect a positive perspective, emphasizing that these activities support the development of critical thinking skills and teamwork in problem-solving. They value the chance to share ideas and personal experiences within their groups, which helps create a dynamic and productive learning atmosphere. Furthermore, they interact with peers in English, assisting each other in understanding complex vocabulary and selecting suitable expressions for various contexts. The students also find the tasks enjoyable and appreciate the opportunity to use English creatively and effectively. **In the second section**, students' attitudes toward the content reveal that they find the use of authentic materials in the learning activities, such as movies, songs, and news, highly relevant to their everyday experiences. These materials allow them to engage with practical, real-life contexts, making the learning process more engaging and meaningful compared to traditional textbooks. For instance, movies provide exposure to natural language use, including diverse English accents, while songs help them learn new vocabulary and improve their pronunciation in an enjoyable way. Additionally, these materials offer insights into various cultures and traditions worldwide, enriching their understanding of global perspectives. **In the third section**, students' attitudes toward the benefits indicate that task-based instruction with authentic materials helps them expand their vocabulary and enhance their English skills. They find the approach motivating and enjoyable, as it provides practical exposure to real-world language and encourages active participation. Additionally, the flexibility it offers allows them to explore the language at their own pace, making learning more engaging and effective. **In the last section**, suggestions, students express their overall satisfaction with the instruction and highlight the positive impact of task-based instruction with authentic materials. They appreciate the opportunity to engage in activities that allow them to use English in real-life contexts, such as presentations and group



discussions. Many students mention that these activities help them feel more confident in their ability to communicate in English. They also value the support they receive from their peers during these activities, which encourages collaboration and further enhances their learning experience. Overall, students feel that the instructional approach has made learning English more enjoyable and effective, fostering a deeper connection to the language.

The findings show that students have a positive attitude toward task-based instruction with authentic materials across all sections. This insight is valuable for educators seeking to refine their teaching methods. It supports Baker (1992), who states attitude as a theoretical concept that sheds light on individuals' behavior and their level of commitment to particular activities. As a result, students' overall attitude toward task-based instruction with authentic materials is highly positive.

New Knowledges

The study reveals that providing non-native English-speaking students with adequate time during task-based instruction using authentic materials greatly improves their participation and performance. With sufficient time to complete tasks and practice presentations, students show greater confidence, enhanced communication skills, and deeper engagement in collaborative activities. These results emphasize the significance of effective time management in language learning and highlight the importance of student-centered approaches designed to meet the specific needs of non-native speakers.

Conclusions

The study highlights the effectiveness of task-based instruction with authentic materials in enhancing non-native English-speaking students' language proficiency and fostering positive attitudes toward learning. Students demonstrate significant improvement in English proficiency through meaningful language practice and authentic communication enabled by individual, pair, and group activities. The use of authentic materials, such as movies, songs, and news, enriches learning experiences, fostering critical thinking, cultural understanding,

and vocabulary development. Additionally, students express highly positive attitudes toward the approach, valuing its relevance, flexibility, and engaging nature, which motivates active participation and collaboration. By emphasizing adequate time for task completion and practice, the approach further boosts students' confidence and communication skills. These findings affirm the value of task-based instruction with authentic materials as an effective, student-centered method for supporting language development and active learning.

Recommendations and Suggestions

1. To explore the long-term effects of task-based instruction with authentic materials on language acquisition and retention. Research can explore how these teaching methods affect students with varying language skills, different age groups, or in different educational settings.
2. To explore online and hybrid learning environments: Given the increasing use of technology in education, future research can examine the effectiveness of task-based instruction with authentic materials in online or hybrid learning environments. This will help determine how technology can support interactive learning experiences and provide students with authentic materials in a virtual setting.
3. To encourage educators to collaborate with students in selecting authentic materials that connect with their interests and cultural backgrounds. Customizing learning materials to match students' preferences may further enhance their motivation and engagement.

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