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## **ENHANCING ENGLISH PROFICIENCY THROUGH TASK-BASED SPEAKING ACTIVITIES: A CASE STUDY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In a globalized world, English proficiency is essential for academic and professional success, significantly influencing educational and economic opportunities. Speaking skills are pivotal in language learning, serving various cultural and social functions in daily life. This study investigates the impact and factors influencing the effectiveness of Task-Based Speaking Activities in enhancing English speaking skills among MTS Al Ittihad students. Utilizing a quantitative research approach, this quasi-experimental design examined learners' speaking proficiency before and after implementing Task-Based Speaking Activities. Results indicate a marked improvement in students' speaking skills, with mean scores rising from 50.54 (pre-test) to 74.46 (post-test). Hypothesis testing further supports this finding, revealing a significant value of 0.00 ( $p < 0.05$ ), demonstrating the effectiveness of Task-Based Speaking Activities on learners' proficiency. Initial assessments highlighted challenges in vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation, emphasizing the need for innovative teaching strategies. The observed improvements underscore the activities' success in engaging students and enhancing their language comprehension and communication abilities.*

Keyword: *Speaking, speaking skill, task-based speaking activities*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is a unique heritage that plays a pivotal role in human life as a medium for communication. Through language, individuals can share thoughts, convey ideas, and negotiate with others, enabling the exchange of information across various domains (Rosyadi et al., 2023). Language is essential for critical areas such as education, business, and economics, as well as for intellectual, social, and emotional development. Moreover, learning a language fosters cultural appreciation, self-awareness, and empathy for diverse identities.

Acquiring a language is a multifaceted process through which cognitive, social, and emotional growth occurs. Emotional experiences, such as motivation and satisfaction, significantly influence language acquisition, as positive emotions reinforce learners' drive, while negative emotions like stress can impede progress (Aydın & Tekin, 2023; Zhu, 2024). Research shows that emotions are critical in shaping learners' attitudes and perceptions of language learning, highlighting the importance of an emotionally supportive educational

environment (Ma, 2023; Tewelde et al., 2023). In this context, language learning becomes a medium not only for communication but also for individual self-discovery and cultural appreciation (Ariyan et al., 2022; Jing & Wei, 2023).

As the most widely spoken international language, English has become essential for global communication, academic success, and career advancement. In Indonesia, English is a core subject in higher education (Assapari, 2020). Proficiency in English is vital for students to express ideas and engage in global interactions. Among the four key language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—speaking holds particular importance as it allows students to participate in meaningful communication within and beyond the classroom (Assapari & Hidayati, 2023). Without speaking proficiency, natural communication becomes nearly impossible (Sapitri et al., 2020).

Speaking as a skill involves complex processes that include pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension (Harris, 1969). As a productive skill, speaking also incorporates elements of listening as a receptive counterpart. Teaching methodologies like Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emphasize practical, real-world tasks to promote speaking proficiency. TBLT encourages students to focus on meaningful communication rather than language forms, fostering active engagement and pragmatic language use (Khan Milon et al., 2023). Research suggests that TBLT supports vocabulary growth, enhances fluency, and motivates learners through authentic activities (Dinh & Hoang, 2022; Zhang et al., 2022).

One specific application of TBLT, task-based speaking, centers on creating meaningful and communicative tasks for learners. By engaging in such tasks, students develop their ability to use language in real-life contexts, improving both their linguistic competence and confidence. Task-based speaking promotes learner autonomy, critical thinking, and practical communication skills, aligning with contemporary pedagogical approaches that prioritize experiential and learner-centered learning (Chen, 2023). Moreover, integrating technology, such as the Duolingo application, into TBLT frameworks has been shown to improve speaking fluency, pronunciation, and comprehension, while also increasing student motivation (Dearestiani et al., 2023).

Despite its benefits, implementing task-based speaking activities faces challenges, particularly in evaluating speaking proficiency. Traditional assessment methods often emphasize written skills, overlooking the nuances of oral communication. Effective assessment of speaking requires specialized tools to measure fluency, accuracy, and other components of speaking performance. Research indicates that task-based assessment can

enhance not only academic outcomes but also student participation and motivation (Nurcholis, 2019). However, there is a research gap in understanding how task-based speaking activities can be optimized for assessment purposes in diverse learning contexts.

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of task-based speaking activities in enhancing students' speaking proficiency, focusing on aspects such as fluency, accuracy, and communicative competence. Additionally, it explores students' attitudes towards these activities and their perceptions of language improvement. By addressing the gap in task-based assessment and providing practical insights, this research contributes to the ongoing development of effective strategies for teaching and evaluating speaking skills in EFL contexts.

## **METHOD**

This study utilizes a quantitative research method rooted in logical positivism, which emphasizes strict adherence to logic, truth, and prediction. A quasi-experimental design was employed to examine the effects of Task-Based Speaking Activities on students' English-speaking proficiency. This design enables the control of external variables, enhancing internal validity while using existing groups instead of random assignment. The research involved 28 purposively selected 8th-grade students from MTS Al-Ittihad Sambik Bangkol, North Lombok, in January 2024.

The research design consisted of three phases: pre-test, treatment, and post-test. During the pre-test, students described pictures to assess their initial speaking abilities, providing baseline data for comparison. The treatment phase introduced Task-Based Speaking Activities, which included vocabulary exercises, listening to English songs, and grammar instruction, conducted over one week. A post-test was then administered to evaluate progress, with significant improvements in speaking scores reflecting the intervention's success.

Data were collected through tests and questionnaires, ensuring accuracy and reliability in measuring students' proficiency. The researcher's active involvement as both instrument and data collector allowed adaptability to the field setting and responsiveness to subjects. By fostering trust and maintaining ethical standards, the researcher ensured smooth data collection and meaningful engagement with participants, producing comprehensive and reliable results.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

Before beginning Task-Based Speaking Activities, learners' English-speaking skill was assessed by a pre-TBSA test. During the second meeting, students recounted photographs selected at random from the researcher. Their performance was evaluated in four major areas: vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation. This pre-test established a baseline for assessing learners' initial abilities and highlighting areas for improvement. The findings, shown in a thorough table, emphasized the need of tailored interventions in improving students' speaking skills effectively.

**Table 1: Pre-TBSA Aspect and Criteria Assessment**

No	Name	Aspect				Total
		Vocabulary	Grammar	Fluency	Pronunciation	
1	Student1	3	2	2	2	9
2	Student2	2	1	3	3	9
3	Student3	2	3	1	1	7
4	Student4	3	2	2	3	10
5	Student5	3	2	2	2	9
6	Student6	2	2	2	2	8
7	Student7	4	3	3	2	12
8	Student8	2	2	2	1	7
9	Student9	1	1	2	1	5
10	Student10	3	2	3	3	11
11	Student11	2	2	1	2	7
12	Student12	2	3	3	2	10
13	Student13	3	3	2	3	11
14	Student14	2	3	3	3	11
15	Student15	4	3	3	4	14
16	Student16	2	3	2	3	10
17	Student17	1	1	2	3	7
18	Student18	2	2	3	2	9
19	Student19	3	2	2	3	10
20	Student20	2	3	3	3	11
21	Student21	4	3	3	3	13
22	Student22	3	3	3	4	13
23	Student23	4	4	4	5	17
24	Student24	3	3	3	3	12
25	Student25	2	3	2	2	9
26	Student26	3	2	2	3	10
27	Student27	4	3	2	2	11
28	Student28	3	3	3	2	11

Table 1. displays the pre-test results, which show that many students' English-speaking abilities were below average. The researcher used final results to classify students'

talents as low, fair, good, or excellent. The table displays the grouped results, highlighting areas that need to be improved with following actions.

**Table 2: Pre-TBSA Final Score and Categories**

No	Name	Final Score	Categories
1	Student1	45	Poor
2	Student2	45	Poor
3	Student3	35	Poor
4	Student4	50	Poor
5	Student5	45	Poor
6	Student6	40	Poor
7	Student7	60	Fair
8	Student8	35	Poor
9	Student9	25	Poor
10	Student10	55	Poor
11	Student11	35	Poor
12	Student12	50	Poor
13	Student13	55	Poor
14	Student14	55	Poor
15	Student15	70	Good
16	Student16	50	Poor
17	Student17	35	Poor
18	Student18	45	Poor
19	Student19	50	Poor
20	Student20	55	Fair
21	Student21	65	Fair
22	Student22	65	Fair
23	Student23	85	Excellent
24	Student24	60	Fair
25	Student25	45	Poor
26	Student26	50	Poor
27	Student27	55	Fair
28	Student28	55	Fair

*Source: Research Data 2024*

Table 2 summarizes the final student score categories—poor, fair, good, and excellent—based on the researchers' data analysis. Several students were categorized as poor and fair. To provide greater clarity, the researcher presented frequency data for these categories, displayed in a subsequent table for detailed interpretation.

**Table 3: Pre-test Classification**

Categories	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Poor	22-54	16	57,1	57,1
Fair	55-65	10	35,7	92,9
Good	66-79	1	3,6	96,4
Excellent	80-100	1	3,6	100,0
Total		28	100,0	

The frequency table categorizes students' pre-test scores: 1 student scored in the excellent category (80-100), 1 in the good category (66-79), 10 in the fair category (55-65), and 16 in the poor category (22-54). These results reveal that most students still struggle with vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation. The data emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to improve students' English-speaking proficiency, as a significant number fall into the fair and poor categories.

Following a one-week treatment phase that included task-based speaking activities, post-test data was obtained. Students chose photos provided by the researcher and explained them, exhibiting practical language use, comprehension, and expressive abilities. This method enabled students to demonstrate improvements in vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and fluency gained during the program. By replicating real-life communication circumstances, this assessment effectively demonstrated the effectiveness of task-based exercises in improving students' speaking abilities. The detailed post-test findings are presented in the following table.

**Table 4. Post-TBSA Aspect and Criteria Assessment**

No	Name	Aspect				Total
		Vocabulary	Grammar	Fluency	Pronunciation	
1	Student1	4	3	4	3	14
2	Student2	4	3	3	4	14
3	Student3	3	4	4	4	15
4	Student4	4	3	4	3	14
5	Student5	3	3	4	4	14
6	Student6	4	3	4	3	14
7	Student7	4	3	4	3	14
8	Student8	4	4	3	4	15
9	Student9	2	3	4	3	12
10	Student10	3	4	3	4	14
11	Student11	4	4	3	4	15
12	Student12	3	4	4	3	14
13	Student13	4	3	4	5	16
14	Student14	4	3	3	4	14
15	Student15	5	4	4	5	18
16	Student16	4	3	4	4	15
17	Student17	3	3	4	4	14
18	Student18	3	4	5	3	15
19	Student19	5	3	4	4	16
20	Student20	3	4	4	4	15
21	Student21	4	3	5	4	16
22	Student22	3	4	4	4	15
23	Student23	4	4	5	5	18
24	Student24	4	4	4	3	15
25	Student25	3	4	3	4	14
26	Student26	3	4	4	4	15

27	Student27	4	3	4	4	15
28	Student28	4	3	4	5	16

Table 4 displays the post-test results, which show improved performance relative to the pre-test. To simplify the analysis, the researcher classified students' final scores as low, fair, good, or excellent. This classification illustrates the proportion of pupils who have made substantial progress vs those who require additional assistance. The categorization offers a more sophisticated assessment of individual and group performance. The data display for the post-test score categories is detailed in the following tables.

**Table 5: Post-TBSA Final Score and Categories**

No	Name	Final Score	Categories
1	Student1	70	Good
2	Student2	70	Good
3	Student3	75	Good
4	Student4	70	Good
5	Student5	70	Good
6	Student6	70	Good
7	Student7	70	Good
8	Student8	75	Good
9	Student9	60	Fair
10	Student10	70	Good
11	Student11	75	Good
12	Student12	70	Good
13	Student13	80	Excellent
14	Student14	70	Good
15	Student15	90	Excellent
16	Student16	75	Good
17	Student17	70	Good
18	Student18	75	Good
19	Student19	80	Excellent
20	Student20	75	Good
21	Student21	80	Excellent
22	Student22	75	Good
23	Student23	90	Excellent
24	Student24	80	Excellent
25	Student25	70	Good
26	Student26	75	Good
27	Student27	75	Good
28	Student28	80	Excellent

Based on the data calculations, Table 5 categorizes the final post-test scores into four levels: poor, fair, good, and excellent. Remarkably, after implementing Task-Based Speaking

Activities, no students remained in the poor category. This significant improvement indicates that all students achieved at least the fair level. The findings highlight students' progress in vocabulary, grammar, and fluency, demonstrating the effectiveness of task-based activities in improving their speaking skills. The table provides a detailed score distribution.

To improve understanding, the researchers displayed the score categories in a frequency table, highlighting the number of students in each category. This table shows a visual snapshot of the class's overall progress, including improvements from task-based speaking activities. Examining this data allows instructors to more effectively examine learning results and identify areas that require further attention. The table is a useful tool for understanding and developing future teaching tactics.

**Table 6: Post-TBSA Test Classification**

Categories		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Fair	55-65	1	3,6	3,6	3,6
Good	66-79	20	71,4	71,4	75,0
Excellent	80-100	7	25,0	25,0	100,0
	Total	28	100,0	100,0	

Table 6 reveals that 7 students received excellent marks (80-100), 20 in the good category (66-79), 1 in the fair category (55-65), and none in the poor category (22-54). The post-test results show a considerable improvement in students' English proficiency following task-based exercises, demonstrating their usefulness in improving vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. These findings suggest using task-based techniques to improve learning outcomes.

## Discussion

The findings from the pre-test and post-test assessments reveal a significant improvement in students' English-speaking skills following the implementation of Task-Based Speaking Activities (TBSA). Prior to the intervention, most students demonstrated limited proficiency in key areas, including vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation. As shown in Table 3, a majority of students (57.1%) were categorized as poor, with only one student achieving an excellent score. These results underscored the urgent need for a targeted instructional approach to address learners' deficiencies and enhance their communicative abilities.

After the implementation of TBSA, the post-test results (Table 6) showed remarkable progress, with no students remaining in the poor category. Instead, 71.4% of students reached



the good category, while 25% achieved excellence. This shift highlights the transformative impact of TBSA, suggesting that engaging students in meaningful, task-based activities can lead to substantial gains in speaking proficiency. The improvement across all assessed aspects—vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation—further validates the approach as an effective method for fostering communicative competence in language learners.

The findings align with previous research emphasizing the benefits of task-based learning. For instance, Li et al. (2016) demonstrated that task-based instruction enhances learners' ability to use language spontaneously and accurately. Similarly, Torky (2006) reported significant improvements in fluency and confidence after TBSA implementation. This study corroborates these findings and extends them by highlighting not only fluency and confidence gains but also notable improvements in pronunciation, an area often underemphasized in task-based studies. The data suggest that TBSA provides students with the opportunity to practice and internalize pronunciation through repeated exposure to authentic speaking scenarios.

Bygate (2016) emphasized the role of task-based activities in developing communicative competence, particularly through the acquisition of both linguistic and pragmatic skills. The current study reinforces this assertion by demonstrating how TBSA engages students in real-life communicative tasks that require the practical application of vocabulary and grammatical structures. For example, tasks involving the description of randomly selected photographs encouraged students to think critically, organize their thoughts, and articulate them in a coherent manner. Such activities simulate authentic communication and foster the holistic development of language skills.

Moreover, the study confirms Izadpanah's (2010) observation that task-based learning fosters a communicative environment conducive to long-term language retention. By focusing on real-life scenarios, students were able to internalize vocabulary and grammar in context, making the learning process more relevant and effective. The increase in students categorized as good or excellent suggests that TBSA not only enhances immediate speaking performance but also contributes to building a strong foundation for future language use.

Despite the overall success of the intervention, it is worth noting some challenges that emerged during the implementation phase. For instance, some students initially struggled with the transition to a task-based approach, likely due to their limited prior exposure to communicative language teaching methods. This highlights the importance of scaffolding and gradually increasing task complexity to accommodate diverse learner needs. Future research

could explore how to optimize task sequencing and provide additional support for students with lower proficiency levels.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the effectiveness of Task-Based Speaking Activities in improving students' English-speaking skills. The significant progress observed across multiple dimensions—vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation—demonstrates the potential of TBSA to transform language learning outcomes. These results not only validate the efficacy of task-based approaches but also provide valuable insights for educators seeking to enhance their teaching practices. Future studies could investigate the long-term retention of skills gained through TBSA and its applicability in specific contexts, such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

This study highlights the significant improvement in students' English-speaking skills through the implementation of Task-Based Speaking Activities (TBSA). The approach proved effective in addressing key areas of language proficiency, including vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation. By engaging students in meaningful, real-world tasks, TBSA created an interactive learning environment that encouraged active participation and practical language use. The activities not only helped students build confidence but also fostered their ability to communicate effectively in English, demonstrating the value of task-based approaches in language learning. Moving forward, it is recommended that educators continue to explore and adapt task-based learning techniques to different contexts and learner profiles. Future research could focus on the long-term impact of TBSA on language proficiency and investigate ways to sustain students' motivation and engagement over time. Additionally, gathering insights from teachers regarding the implementation process can offer valuable perspectives for refining instructional strategies and ensuring the approach's effectiveness across diverse learning environments. Overall, this study highlights the transformative potential of TBSA in improving students' speaking skills and provides a foundation for further innovations in language teaching.

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