



EFFECTS OF TASK BASED SPEAKING ACTIVITIES ON EFL LEARNERS' ORAL PERFORMANCE

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Abstract:

Task-based speaking activities have attracted considerable attention of many researchers in teaching and learning speaking skills. The current study is aimed at investigating the effects of Task-based speaking activities on non-English major students' and examining their attitude towards the implication of speaking activities based on tasks. The study was conducted at a university in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam in the second semester of the school year 2020-2021. Fifty-eight non-English major students who are all studying the second course of the General English subject at the university were recruited as participants of the study. A pre-test and post-test were used to measure the participants' oral performance and a questionnaire was employed to examine the experimental group's attitude towards the use of task-based speaking activities. The findings indicate that EFL students in the experimental group gained more development in oral performance than their peers in the control group which was instructed in the traditional method. Furthermore, EFL students not only express their completed agreement on the benefits which they receive from speaking lessons practiced with task-based speaking activities.

Keywords: task-based speaking activities, task-based language teaching, oral performance, attitude

1. Introduction

For many young people, English is considered as a key leading to success in various fields. It helps them to access to the latest achievements as much business correspondence, internet sources and research publications around the world are in English. Besides, it is also used as the international language for the world trade and commerce. In fact, due to the increasing needs in this information era, many non-native

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speakers of English learn English for different purposes. To acquire English, learners need to master four skills of language: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Brown (2001) considers speaking as a receptive skill and a significant feature in learning a language. It enables learners to convey information and opinions, express ideas and feelings, share experiences and maintain social relationship by interacting with others. In other words, speaking can be the most mutual way of delivering the message to others and the ability to communicate efficiently is a basic prerequisite which needs to be taken seriously (Azadi et al. 2015 as cited in Zyou, 2016).

In the Vietnamese context, English has been attained an important role in the society. People not only learn English as an interest to access some types of entertainment which are in English but also learn it to get better jobs. Although English has been widely taught in Vietnam from primary school to tertiary level, students' oral performance is considered not fully enhanced (Le, 1999). It can be explained that as they are learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), they lack of opportunities to practice English outside their classroom ([Samaranayake, 2016](#)). Most of speaking problems are found because the students still remain insufficient environment to use the language. It is easy for them to find books to read, CDs to listen and videos or programs to watch but it seems to be difficult for them to find users of English to speak (Albino, 2017).

Thus, creating an English environment for students to practice speaking in class is an essential task for any teachers of English. Up to the present time, much research has been carried out to study activities helping to improve students' speaking skill and problems related to this skill. Among various teaching methods that are helpful for the students' oral communication, Task based language teaching (TBLT) is an approach which can be employed to enhance language skills of EFL learners. Nunan (2004) highlights that TBLT focuses on learners' using language naturally in pairs or group work and allows them to share their ideas. Importantly, task based speaking activities (TBSA) have been proven to provide a real context for language learners and real communications in the target language.

In order to enhance oral performance of EFL learners, the current study titled "Effects of task-based speaking activities on EFL learners' oral performance" was conducted with the hope that the implementation of TBSA can improve EFL learners' speaking proficiency.

Based on the statement of the problems, the study will be guided by the following questions:

- 1) What are the effects of task-based speaking activities on EFL students' oral performance?
- 2) What did the EFL students think about the use of task-based speaking activities?

2. Literature review

2.1 The importance of speaking skills

Ur (1996) emphasizes that speaking seems to be the most important skill and those who know a language are referred to as speakers of that language. The role of speaking a

language is not only from home to school but also in workplaces, parties, social and political meetings (Rahman, 2010). The importance of oral skills in the nature of knowledge and its use are emphasized by DeKeyser (2015).

Chaney (1998, as cited in Zyoud, 2016) says that speaking skill is a complex process in which speakers build and share particular verbal or non-verbal messages to purposely express themselves. Cameron (2001, as cited in Pham et al. 2020) confirmed that *“speaking is the active use of language to express meanings so that other people could make sense of them.”*

Briefly, it is very important to gain the ability to speak a language and improving oral skills through oriented activities when learning a language.

2.2. Overview of task-based language teaching

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an approach developed on the basis of employing tasks as the fundamental unit of planning and giving instruction in learning and teaching language (Richards and Rogers, 2001). In this section, some literature related to TBLT will be viewed to guide the study.

2.2.1. Definition of task and task-based speaking activities

The term *“task”* has been defined by various scholars across studies. Richard, et al. (1986) defines a task as *“an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language”*. In a similar way, Prabhu (1987: 24) explains a task as *“an activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process.”* Then, in his study of *“Task-Based Language Teaching”*, Nunan (1988: 10) describes a task as *“a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is primarily focused on meaning rather than form”*. For Skehan and Foster (1996), tasks are meaning focused communicative activities which resemble to students' real life language use and are assessed based on the level of task fulfillment. In the framework of task-based learning proposed by Willis (1996), tasks are defined as classroom activities for students to use the target language for communicative purposes in order to achieve an outcome. Branden (2006: 4) states that *“a task is an activity in which a person engages in order to attain an object, and which necessitates the use of language”*.

In their study, Humanez and Arias (2009) approve that task-based speaking activity is a method to encourage oral interaction. Awang and Penedidikan (2011) consider a task based speaking activity as a kind of platform which is designed to invite students in practicing communication in English. Similarly, based on Willis' (1996) viewpoint, Pham and Nguyen (2014) developed task activities into task-based speaking activities (TBSA) which are considered as offspring of the TBLT and are designed for students to improve their oral performance.

In general, tasks are viewed as classroom activities giving students more opportunities to use the target language and enhance their communicative competence.

2.2.2. Types of tasks

There are different considerations of task types which can be appropriately used in language learning. Every task type correlates to other tasks and may be a starting point or an objective point for another task that is similar.

In task-based language learning, Prabhu (1987) classifies tasks into three types that are *information-gap*, *reasoning gap*, and *opinion-gap*. Like Prabhu, Skehan and Foster (1996: 307) also divide tasks into three types which are personal information exchange task, narrative task and decision-making task. However, Willis (1996) develops tasks into six types, namely *listing*, *sorting*, *comparing*, *problem-solving*, *sharing personal experiences*, and *creative task*. According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), tasks are categorized into seven types: *information-gap task*, *opinion-gap task*, *reasoning-gap task*, *unfocused task*, *focused task*, *input providing task*, and *output-prompting tasks*. It can be concluded that although tasks are classified into various types, all aim at giving EFL learners more opportunities to use the language.

In the current study, all TBSA applied in speaking lessons are designed based on the task types proposed by Willis (1996).

2.2.3. Stages/ components of TBLT

Although the design of a task-based lesson has been proposed by different authors such as (Estaire and Zanon, 1994; Lee 2000; Prabhu, 1997; Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996), they all have in common three principal phases (Ellis, 2006). For instance, Willis (1996) proposed the framework in which the learning process through task-based teaching is guided in three stages which are *Pre-task*, *Task cycle* and *Language Focus* (post-task). The aim of the *pre-task* stage is to introduce the topic and task as well as to activate topic-related words and phrases. Stage 2 is *task cycle* which gives students more opportunities to use the language in pairs or small groups aiming to achieve the goals of the task. Al-Tamimi, Abudllah and Bin-Hady (2020) said that in this stage, real situations for communication purposes should be performed and students have a chance to exchange each other in the target language. Teachers in this phase should engage students in several activities during the process to enhance their speaking competence. This stage is comprised of three components, i.e., *task* (students do the task in pairs or small groups and gain the fluency and confidence when acting as communicators), *planning* (students prepare to report to the whole class how they did the task, what they decided or discovered) and *report* (some groups/ pairs are selected to report to the whole class). The last stage is *language focus* which includes *analysis* (students discuss their friends' report and then compare with their own report) and *practice* (students practice the new language that has come up).

Similarly, Ellis (2006) identifies the three phases of a task-based lesson as *pre-task*, *during-task* and *post-task*. In pre-task phase, variety of activities both the teacher and students can undertake such as giving time to plan the performance of task. *During-task* is considered obligatory. During this phase, the students carry out the tasks that their teacher assigned. The last phase is post-task which involves procedures for following-up activities to perform the task.

2.2.4. The effects of TBLT on students' oral performance

In recent years, TBLT has been attracted by many researchers in EFL settings due to its effectiveness on EFL learners' speaking ability.

For example, Torky (2006) did a research to explore the effectiveness of communicative interactive tasks to develop secondary students' speaking skills. The results indicated that the tasks could enhance the motivation of the students and their speaking ability was improved. The study also found that the students had positive attitudes towards speaking.

Considering tasks as a vehicle that encourage students to speak English in classes, Humanez & Arias (2009) conducted the study "Enhancing Oral Interaction in English as a Foreign Language Through Task-Based Learning Activities" at a public school in Planeta Rica, Córdoba, Colombia. In their study, classroom observation, interview, transcripts of interaction, and a questionnaire were used to collect the data. The results of the study showed that students' oral presentation skills have been improved and the students held positive attitudes towards some speaking tasks.

Erten and Altay (2009) conducted the study 'The Effects of Task-based Group Activities on Students' Collaborative Behaviors in EFL Speaking Classes'. The study was conducted to compare the effects of task-based and topic-based speaking activities on student interaction and collaboration in EFL speaking classes. 25 trainee teachers of English were instructed to carry out either a task-based or topic-based speaking activity. The results of the study revealed that task-based speaking activities may be more conducive as they can create more collaborative learning environment and provide more opportunities for learners as in real life.

To investigate the impacts of 'role play' as a TBLT-centered activity on speaking ability, Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010) carried out the study "The Impact of 'Role Play' on Fostering EFL Learners' Speaking Ability: A Task-Based Approach". The participants were 60 EFL sophomores studying in different universities in the city of Ilam-Iran. The results from speaking tests confirmed that TBLT-oriented role play could make considerable change in the participants' speaking ability in the experimental group.

Having the interest in task-based speaking activities, Awang and Pendidikan (2011) did a research to investigate Electrical Engineering students' opinions about the use of task-based speaking activities in developing their English communication. The study's findings showed that students have positive attitudes toward the implementation of task-based speaking activities in improving their oral skill. Particularly, students agreed that they significantly developed their communication, grammar, vocabulary, and oral performance through task-based speaking activities.

The success of TBLT is again confirmed by the study of Pongsawan (2012) in Thailand. The researcher conducted a six-week experiment with forty participants who were chosen as convenient samples at Klongbanprao Shool, Pathum Thami in the school year 2011-2012. Pre-test, post-tests and observations were employed as main instruments of the study. The findings of the study showed that task-based learning had a positive impact on the students' English-speaking ability. The students were found to have

positive behavior while doing tasks and held positive perceptions towards the use of task-based activities in the classroom.

TBSA has been developed based on TBLT and applied in the setting of teaching and learning speaking to EFL learners. For example, Ghodrati, Ashraf, and Motallebzadeh (2014) examined the effect of TBSA on learners' autonomy. The experiment was conducted with the participation of two Iranian Intermediate classes at Krish Institute of Science and Technology in Bojnourd, Iran. The experimental group was received twenty sessions of task-based speaking activities. Pretest, posttest, interviews were used to collect data. The results showed that TBSA had positive impact on enhancing learners' autonomy.

The effectiveness of task-based activities is examined in the research of Saricoban and Karakurt (2016). The study aimed at improving the EFL learners' listening and speaking skills through the use of task-based activities. The study took place in the academic year of 2014-2015 with the participation of 56 students at a State university in Turkey. The students were divided into two groups which were B1 and B1+ groups. The data were collected with the support of lesson plans, the speaking and listening quiz results and interview. After the implementation, the results from tests of B1+ group were highly significant improved and the students' ideas about task-based learning and teaching activities were positive. The results indicated that task-based activities improve the EFL learners' listening and speaking skills.

In the study of Yegani and Jodaei (2017), the effect of task-based and topic-based speaking activities was examined. A pretest and posttest were used to evaluate the speaking proficiency of the two participant groups before and after the treatment. The results indicated that TBSA enhanced speaking ability of the experimental group which was intervened with TBSA.

Regarding the Vietnamese context, Pham and Nguyen (2014) conducted a study to investigate the impacts of TBSA on the English- majored freshmen's oral performance and to explore the students' attitudes towards the use of TBSA. The study was done in 15 weeks with the participants of 23 students. The instruments used in the study were questionnaire, pretest, posttest and observation. The results indicated that the students could improve in oral performance after the treatment. In addition, the study explored that the students held strong beliefs to the use of the TBSA and wished to use them regularly in learning speaking.

In a similar context, Le and Huynh (2019) made an investigation to find out how the teachers at a university in Vietnam perceived TBLT principles and explore what the teachers and students of EFL think about the types and benefits of TBSA used in EFL classes at tertiary level. 383 students and 10 EFL teachers were involved in the study. To collect the data, the questionnaire and classroom observation were employed as main instruments. The results exposed that the EFL teachers clearly know of TBLT principles and both the teachers and students positively have a good understanding of the types as well as the benefits of TBSA used in EFL classes. More strikingly, the study also indicated that the teachers have frequently implemented TBSA in EFL classes. The study has shed

a light on the implementation of teaching and learning speaking skills in EFL context of Vietnam.

In conclusion, González Humanez & Arias (2009) ; Awang and Pendidikan (2011); Gesorn (2012); Saricoban and Karakurt (2016); Yegani and Jodaei (2017) and Pham and Nguyen (2014) all agree that task-based activities and task-based speaking activities are essential tool for EFL learners to develop their oral performance. Significantly, previous related studies about the effects of TBLT and TBSA on EFL learners' oral performance are fully reviewed. The presented related studies serve as the theoretical knowledge of the present study. The results of the previous studies disclose that task-based activities have a positive impact on EFL learners' speaking ability. Thus, the researchers of the current study wished to explore whether TBSA helped enhance EFL learners' oral performance.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Participants

The participants of the present study are 58 non-English major students who are aged around 18-19 years old. They have to complete four general English courses from level 1 to level 4 as requirement in the curriculum of general English for non-English majors at this university. KET OBJECTIVE is used for teaching level 1 and PET OBJECTIVE is for level 2 to level 4 with four skills integrated. The students are assessed four skills by the end of each level. When being recruited as participants, the EFL learners have completed level 1.

The participants are divided into two groups: one experimental group and one control group. The first group includes thirty students (sixteen females and fourteen males) and the latter is comprised of twenty-eight students (twenty females and eight males).

3.2. Instruments

To answer the research questions, the researchers employed a pretest, a posttest, a questionnaire and lesson plans. The two speaking tests (pretest, posttest) and the questionnaire were used as the main instruments to collect the data for this study. The speaking tests aimed at measuring EFL learners' oral performance while the questionnaire was employed to investigate EFL learners' attitude towards the use of TBSA. 13 lesson plans were designed in the framework of tasks proposed by Willis (1996) and given to the participants in the experimental group as the treatment meanwhile the control group was instructed by some communicative activities in the PPP model.

3.2.1 The speaking tests

Both the pre-test and post-test included three tasks, namely (1) interview, (2) extended turn, and (3) general conversation. For each turn, two candidates were examined at the same time.

In order to measure both tests' scores, the researcher adopted the scale assessment rubric for the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

which includes five bands as it has specific sub-criteria and was appropriate to the syllabus. The 5 bands were transferred into the ten-mark scale for ease. Four criteria were employed which included (1) pronunciation achievement (2) grammar and vocabulary achievement, (3) discourse management, and (4) interactive communication.

To ensure the validity of the scoring, another teacher who also teaches the same course of English at the university was invited to rate the participants' oral performance. The scores of the pre-test and post-test of the two groups were used to explore how TBSA affected the EFL learners' oral performance. The mean scores of these two tests revealed the degree of the EFL's oral improvement after the intervention. To evaluate the significance of this study, a Pair sample t-Test was conducted to compare the scores of the two tests.

3.2.2 The lesson plans

The EFL students in the experimental group were instructed thirteen treatment lessons with the implementation of task-based speaking activities. Each treatment lesson lasted 50 minutes. The treatment lessons are designed carefully based on the framework of TBLT proposed by Willis (1996) with three stages, namely *pre-task*, *task cycle*, and *language focus*.

All six task types *listing*, *sorting*, *comparing*, *problem-solving*, *sharing personal experiences*, and *creative task* are included in the speaking lessons.

3.2.3 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered to 30 EFL learners of the experimental group after the post- test. The questionnaire was designed based on the tasks used in the study including 34 items in total (33 closed-ended questions and an opened-question). The first 33 items which were scaled questions based on the five-point Likert scale including (1) = SD (Strongly Disagree), (2) = D (Disagree), 3 = N (Neutral), (4) = A (Agree), (5) = SA (Strong Agree) asking about the EFL learners' attitudes towards TBSA. In particular, the first part is comprised three clusters with 17 first items aimed to ask about affective attitudes, 9 next items investigated cognitive attitudes and 7 last items asked about the behavioral attitudes. The Descriptive Statistics Test was employed to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire with the hope that the participants' beliefs toward the effects of TBSA on the EFL learners' oral performance could be explored.

3.3. Research design

This study adopted a mixed method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative design to examine the effectiveness of TBSA on EFL students' oral performance. A questionnaire was used to explore EFL learners' attitude towards the implementation of TBSA on oral performance.

Both groups had the same pre-test at the beginning of the course and the same post-test at the end of the course. During thirteen weeks of the study, EFL learners from the experimental group were instructed learning speaking in the Framework of task-based activities while the control group received the instruction of communicative

activities. The EFL learners had a speaking lesson each week and the topics for training were taken from the course book (Objective PET). The progress of EFL learners' oral performance after intervention was examined by comparing the results of the pretest and posttest.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1 Results from the tests

A. The EFL learners' oral performance within the control group and experimental group

The Descriptive Statistics Test and the Paired Sample t-Test were used to compare the mean scores of the EFL learners' oral performance within the control group and the experimental group before and after the study. The data are summarized in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: The EFL students' oral performance within the control group and experimental group

Groups Tests		Mean	N	SD	MD	t	Sig.
Control	Pre-test	4.13	28	0.85	1.91	13.54	.00
	Post-test	6.04	28	0.77			
Experimental	Pre-test	4.16	30	1.36	3.49	18.71	.00
	Post-test	7.65	30	0.65			

Data in Table 4.1 indicate that there is improvement in EFL students' oral performance in both groups of participants before and after the treatment. As can be seen in Table 4.1, the mean scores of the pretest of the control group (M = 4.13, SD = 0.85) and of the experimental group (M = 4.16, SD = 1.36) were observed to be lower than the average in the ten-degree scale but the speaking ability of the two groups could be said to be equivalent.

As presented in Table 4.1, a change in oral performance of EFL learners in the control group after the study was observed. The mean score of EFL learners' oral performance of the control group after the study (M = 6.04, SD = 0.77) was higher than that of the same group before the study (M = 4.13, SD = 0.85). The mean difference (MD = -1.91) was statistical different (t = -13.54, sig. = .00). The results could bring to the conclusion that the oral performance of the participants in the control group was increased after 13 weeks.

Table 4.1 also shows that EFL learners' oral performance in the experimental group also changed after the study. The mean score of EFL learners' oral performance of the experimental group after the study (M = 7.65, SD = 0.65) was higher than that of the same group before the study (M = 4.16, SD = 1.36). This mean difference (MD = -3.49) was significantly different (t = -18.71, sig. = .00). It could be concluded that there was a significant improvement in EFL learners' oral performance in the experimental group

after the study. It could be said that the learners in both groups participating in the study gained remarkable enhancement in speaking after the study. Although the initial ability of the two groups was almost the same, after the study the EFL learners' oral performance in both groups improved. However, more observation on the mean scores of the specific elements within each group needs to be examined.

The Paired Sample t-Test was run to compare the mean scores of the four specific features within the control group and the experimental group before and after the study to investigate whether participants of each group had made progress in their oral performance in terms of the features.

a. For the control group

Table 4.2 below shows the mean scores in EFL learners' oral performance of all of the specific features in the control group. The difference between the mean scores on the four specific features of the two speaking tests were observed. The mean scores on the specific features of the EFL learners in terms of *Vocabulary and grammar achievement* (Pretest: M = 1.08, SD = 0.38 and Posttest: M = 1.61, SD = 0.32; t = 9.08, sig. = .00), *Pronunciation achievement* (Pretest: M = 1.14, SD = 0.39 and Posttest: M = 1.53, SD = 0.32; t = 5.32, sig. = .00), *Discourse management* (Pretest: M = 0.86, SD = 0.43 and Posttest: M = 1.28, SD = 0.36; t = 5.68, sig. = .00) and *Interactive communication* (Pretest: M = 1.05, SD = 0.42 and Posttest: M = 1.63, SD = 0.38; t = 5.44, sig. = .00) were found higher. It can be said that the mean scores on the four specific features of EFL learners' oral performance after the study were statistically different (all values of sig. were found smaller than 0.05). In other words, the EFL learners in the control group made significant progress in the four features although they were not received the treatment like the experimental group.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics of four specific elements in Control Group

Elements	tests	N	Mean	SD	MD	t	Sig.
Vocabulary and grammar achievement	Pre-test	28	1.08	0.38	0.53	9.08	.00
	Post-test	28	1.61	0.32			
Pronunciation achievement	Pre-test	28	1.14	0.36	0.39	5.32	.00
	Post-test	28	1.53	0.32			
Discourse management	Pre-test	28	0.86	0.43	0.42	5.68	.00
	Post-test	28	1.28	0.36			
Interactive communication	Pre-test	28	1.05	0.42	0.58	5.44	.00
	Post-test	28	1.63	0.38			

b. For the experimental group

Table 4.3 below shows the mean scores in EFL learners' oral performance of the four specific features in the experimental group. All the mean scores of the four sub-scales including *Vocabulary and grammar achievement* (pretest: M = 1.09, SD = 0.43 and posttest: M = 2.05, SD = 0.24; t = 11.30, sig. = 0.00), *Pronunciation achievement* (pretest: M = 1.12, SD = 0.35 and posttest M = 1.68, SD = 0.35; t = 9.63, sig. = .00), *Discourse management* (pretest: M = 0.85, SD = .0873 and posttest: M = 0.381, SD = .68; t = 12.84, sig. = .00) and *Interactive communication* (pretest: M = 1.10, SD = 0.42 and posttest: M = 2.13, SD = 0.32; t = 14.42,

sig.=.00) illustrated significant improvement in EFL learners' oral performance. As can be seen from the Table 4.3, the difference between the mean scores of the four specific features of speaking was significant different before and after the research was examined. In other words, the mean scores on the specific features of the EFL learners' oral performance after the treatment were statistically changed. All the four specific features, the EFL learners in the experimental group made extreme growth. To sum up, EFL's oral performance in the experimental group was much improved after the intervention.

Table 4.3: Results from Descriptive Test and Paired Sample Test of four specific elements in the Experimental group

Elements	tests	N	Mean	SD	MD	t	Sig.
Vocabulary and grammar achievement	Pre-test	30	1.09	0.43	0.96	11.30	.00
	Post-test	30	2.05	0.24			
Pronunciation achievement	Pre-test	30	1.12	0.39	0.66	9.63	.00
	Post-test	30	1.78	0.25			
Discourse management	Pre-test	30	0.85	0.35	0.83	12.84	.00
	Post-test	30	1.68	0.28			
Interactive communication	Pre-test	30	1.10	0.42	1.03	14.42	.00
	Post-test	30	2.13	0.32			

c. The EFL students' oral performance between the control group and the experimental group

As discussed above, EFL students in both groups achieved completely higher in the mean scores after the treatment. Thus, an Independence Samples t-Test was conducted to compare the mean scores between the two groups to examine the effectiveness of task-based speaking activities. Table 4.4 below summarizes all the data.

Table 4.4: The EFL learners' oral performance between the control group and the experimental group before and after the treatment

Speaking tests	Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t	sig
Pre	Experimental	30	4.16	1.36	0.03	0.08	0.93
	Control	28	4.13	0.85			
Post	Experimental	30	7.65	0.65	1.61	8.70	0.00
	Control	28	6.04	0.77			

As can be seen in table 4.4, before the treatment, the mean score of the experimental group (M = 4.16; SD = 1.36) and the one of the control group (M = 4.13; SD = 0.85) is found rather equivalent. When being compared, it can be seen that there is no difference in the mean scores between both groups (t = 0.08, sig. = 0.93 > 0.05). In other words, the initial speaking ability of both groups participated in the study was not different before the treatment.

In contrast, the mean score of the experimental group (M = 7.65; SD = 0.65) is noticeably higher than that of the control group (M = 6.04; SD = 0.77) after the treatment with the significant difference (t = 8.70, sig. = 0.00 < 0.05). It highlighted the significant achievement in oral performance of EFL learners in the experimental group compared to EFL learners in the control group after the study.

To compare the mean scores of the four specific features between the two groups before and after the study, a Descriptive Test and was run.

B. The EFL students' oral performance on specific elements between the control group and the experimental group before the study

Data in Figure 4.1 below show that before the treatment, the mean scores of EFL students in both groups in terms of the four subscales of evaluation were the same. It means the ability to perform each element of EFL students in both groups was not completely different.

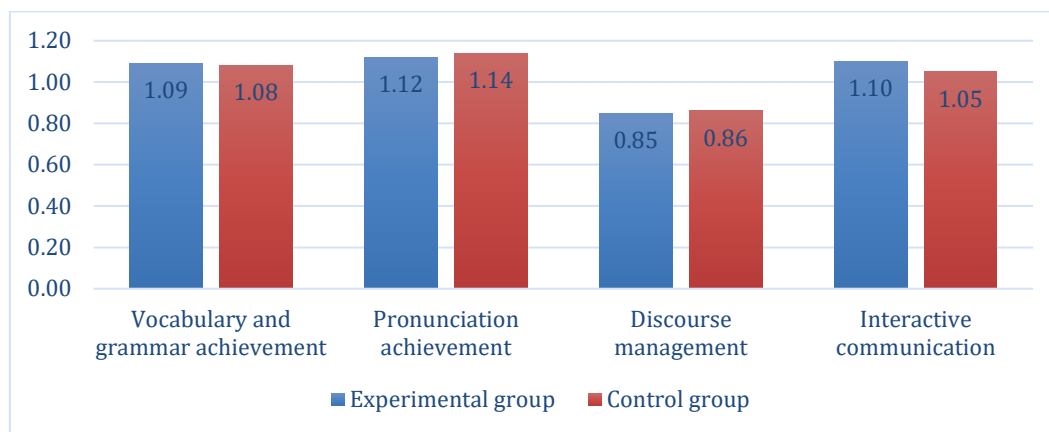


Figure 4.1: Comparison of the mean scores on four subscales between two groups before the treatment

After the treatment, it has been found that there is a slight surge in the mean scores of four elements between the two groups.

As shown in Figure 4.2, the mean scores of all four elements in terms of (1) *Vocabulary and grammar achievement*, (2) *Pronunciation achievement*, (3) *Discourse management*, and (4) *Interactive communication* of the experimental group are seen much improved than that in the control group. The data prove that EFL learners in the experimental group reach a higher level in oral performance after the treatment. Among the four features of both groups, the mean score of *Interactive communication* ($M = 2.13$; $M = 1.63$) found the highest improvement and the mean score of *Vocabulary and grammar achievement* is in the second rank ($M = 2.05$; $M = 1.61$). Therefore, it can be concluded that all the subscales of the EFL learners in the experimental group improved after the treatment.

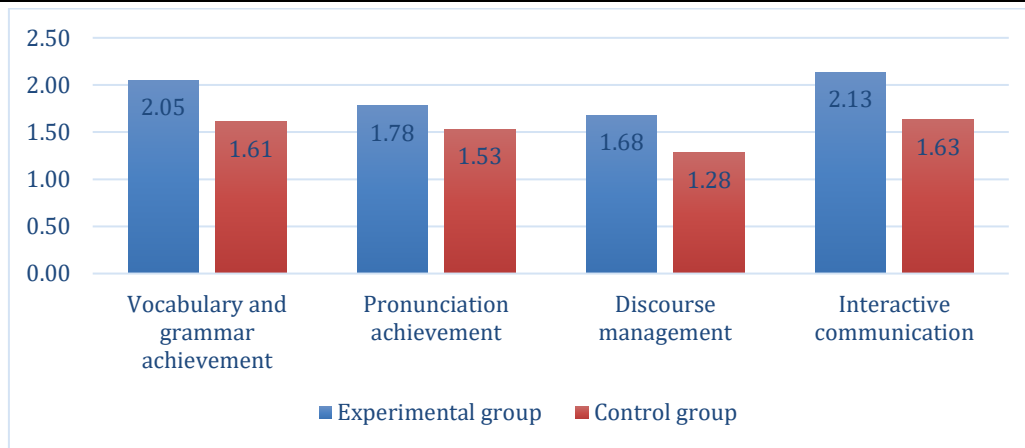


Figure 4.2: Comparison of four specific features' mean scores between two groups after the treatment

In sum, the description of four specific elements' mean scores in the pre-test and post-test asserted a significant improvement of oral performance in both groups. Importantly, EFL students in the experimental group made a high striking progress in oral performance while the advancement gained by EFL students in the control group seemed less remarkable.

Next, to have a comprehensive assessment of the mean scores on the four specific features between the two groups before and after the study, an Independent Samples t-Test was run and analyzed. The results are described in Table 4.5 below. As can be seen in Table 4.5, there was no statistical difference in each specific feature in the pre-test between the two groups with sig. values are higher than 0.05. It can be concluded that the mean scores of the four features between the two groups before the study were found no difference.

Table 4.5: Comparison of the four specific elements between the two groups before the study

Elements	Groups	N	Mean	SD	MD	t	Sig.
Vocabulary and Grammar achievement	Ex	30	1.09	0.43	0.01	0.11	.92
	Con	28	1.08	0.38			
Pronunciation achievement	Ex	30	1.12	0.39	0.02	0.27	.79
	Con	28	1.14	0.36			
Discourse management	Ex	30	0.85	0.35	0.01	0.07	.95
	Con	28	0.86	0.43			
Interactive communication	Ex	30	1.10	0.42	0.05	0.42	.68
	Con	28	1.05	0.42			

However, data in Table 4.6 below proved that the mean scores of all four elements of the experimental group were all significantly different (sig. = 0.00 < 0.05) and considerably higher than those of the control group. As shown in Table 4.6, the EFL learners' oral performance in the experimental group (M = 2.05, SD = 0.24) in terms of *Vocabulary and Grammar achievement* was better than that in the control group (M = 1.61, SD = 0.32); t = 5.99, sig. = .00. Next, in terms of *pronunciation achievement*, the experimental group (M = 1.78, SD = 0.25) was slightly higher than the control group (M = 1.53, SD = 0.32); t = 3.39,

sig. = 0.00. In regard with *discourse management*, the experimental group (M = 1.68, SD = 0.28) outstripped the control group (M = 1.28, SD = 0.36), $t = 4.87$, sig. = 0.00. Finally, when looking at *Interactive communication*, the two groups experienced a considerable difference. While the control reached (M = 1.63, SD = 0.38), the experimental obtained (M = 2.13, SD = 0.32); $t = 5.56$, sig. = .00.

Table 4.6: Comparison of the four specific elements between the experimental group and the control group after the study

Elements	Group	N	Mean	SD	MD	t	Sig.
Vocabulary and Grammar achievement	Ex	30	2.05	0.24	0.44	5.99	.00
	Con	28	1.61	0.32			
Pronunciation achievement	Ex	30	1.78	0.25	0.25	3.39	.00
	Con	28	1.53	0.32			
Discourse management	Ex	30	1.68	0.28	0.40	4.87	.00
	Con	28	1.28	0.36			
Interactive communication	Ex	30	2.13	0.32	0.50	5.56	.00
	Con	28	1.63	0.38			

In summary, EFL students in the experimental group made outstanding progress in all elements than that of EFL students in the control group.

4.1.2. Results from the questionnaire

A. The EFL Learners' Attitude toward the use of TBSA in Learning speaking

The questionnaire aimed at exploring EFL students' attitudes toward the implementation of task-based speaking activities in acquiring speaking. The Cronbach's Alpha of 33 items in the questionnaire is $0.769 > 0.6$, showing strong to use. The researcher delivered the questionnaire to all thirty EFL students in the experimental group then collected and analyzed data of their attitude towards the use of Task-based speaking activities. The EFL learners' attitude towards the effects of TBSA on their oral performance is divided into three main clusters: (1) affective, (2) cognitive, and (3) behavioral aspects. In Table 4.7, the mean score according to each group is calculated.

Table 4.7: Mean scores of three group clusters

Clusters	N	Mean	SD
Affective	30	3.97	.20
Cognitive	30	3.85	.04
Behavioral	30	3.83	.36
Overall		3.88	.35

The results from Table 4.7 show that the overall mean score of the participants' attitudes towards the use of TBSA was 3.88 in the five-point Likert scale. The data indicate that EFL learners are aware of the effectiveness of TBSA which support their oral performance. Importantly, the EFL learners' responses also confirmed that TBSA contributed to the accomplishment of speaking ability.

a. The EFL students' affective aspect of attitude towards the use of TBSA

As shown in Table 4.8, the affective aspect of attitude towards the use of TBSA represents the highest mean score (M = 3.97). The figure indicates the EFL learners have positive emotions or feelings towards the use of TBSA. Specifically, majority of the respondents admitted that they preferred studying speaking with TBSA than any other activities with the highest mean score (M = 4.37). Almost the EFL respondents felt excited when speaking with others during TBSA (M = 4.10). They also felt that TBSA lessons are interesting (M = 4.13) and enjoyed practicing TBSA (M = 4.00). It can be concluded that their feelings or emotions towards TBSA are optimistic.

Table 4.8: Descriptive Statistics of affective aspect of attitude towards TBSA

Items	M	SD
I think TBSA lessons are interesting.	4.13	.97
During TBSA, I feel excited when I speak English with others.	4.10	.61
TBSA help me not get anxious when I have to answer a question in my class.	3.77	.63
I really enjoy practicing TBSA.	4.00	.59
I feel relaxed to communicate in English during TBSA lessons.	3.80	.81
I feel free to speak English when I practice TBSA.	3.90	.80
TBSA make me have good emotions (feelings).	3.97	.56
I prefer studying speaking with TBSA than any other activities.	4.37	.49
I don't feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other students during TBSA.	3.73	.64
Overall	3.97	.20

b. The EFL students' cognitive aspect of attitude towards the use of TBSA

As shown in Table 4.9, the cognitive aspect of attitude towards the use of TBSA represents rather high mean score (M = 3.85; SD = 0.43). The mean score value indicates that the EFL students have positive beliefs or opinions about TBSA. It can be seen that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that TBSA help them be more confident when reporting in front of their class and they confirmed that they understand grammar structures easily through TBSA with the highest mean scores (M = 4.40; SD = 0.56). It can be inferred that they are aware of the usefulness of TBSA. For instance, almost the respondents found that TBSA helped them enrich their vocabulary (M = 4.30; SD = 0.65) or improved their presentation skills (M = 4.27; SD = 0.58).

Table 4.9: Descriptive Statistics of cognitive aspect of attitude towards TBSA

Items	M	SD
I learn new vocabularies effectively through TBSA.	3.80	.55
TBSA lessons help me speak English more fluently.	3.17	.59
TBSA lessons helps my presentation skills better.	4.27	.58
TBSA help me have more ideas to talk when working in groups.	3.90	.71
TBSA help me develop my problem-solving skills.	4.13	.68
TBSA stimulate my critical thoughts.	3.57	.63
When practicing with TBSA, I can have more opportunities to speak English.	4.27	.79
I understand almost all the lessons after doing TBSA.	3.23	.63
I make fewer mistakes of pronunciation after practicing TBSA	3.60	.62
I enrich my vocabulary after practicing TBSA.	4.30	.65

I understand grammar structures easily through TBSA.	4.40	.56
When studying speaking with TBSA, I can improve my listening skills.	3.37	.62
TBSA help me be more confident when reporting in front of my class.	4.40	.56
TBSA help me become more interested in learning English.	4.23	.57
TBSA are practical for my daily life.	3.63	.56
I want to practice TBSA more frequently.	3.77	.62
I can perform more complex sentences when practicing TBSA.	3.37	.62
Overall mean	3.85	.043

c. The EFL students' behavioral aspect of attitude towards the use of TBSA

The results presented in Table 4.10 reveal that the respondents' responses are positive towards TBSA like cognitive and affective aspects ($M = 3.83$; $SD = 0.36$). Majority of them expressed their interest in learning with TBSA as they said that they could speak English more frequently when practicing with TBSA ($M = 4.30$; $SD = 0.47$), they were able to make themselves pay attention during TBSA ($M = 4.13$; $SD = 0.43$). They also admitted that they had more chances to speak English with friends ($M = 4.03$; $SD = .62$).

In general, most of the EFL students have positive attitudes towards TBSA, and they are well aware of the helpfulness of TBSA in learning speaking.

Table 4.10: Descriptive Statistics of behavioral aspect of attitude towards TBSA

Items	M	SD
I am able to make myself pay attention during TBSA.	4.13	.43
TBSA help me have good relationships with friends.	3.63	.67
TBSA help me improve my personality.	3.30	.75
I use more structures to speak English when practicing with TBSA.	3.50	.57
I speak English more frequently when practicing with TBSA.	4.30	.47
I have more chances to speak English with friends when practicing with TBSA.	4.03	.62
I like to give ideas in English when practicing with TBSA.	3.93	.64
Overall	3.83	.36

4.2. Discussion

The results of the first research questions are in line with most of the findings of many previous researches. Humanez & Arias (2009); Awang and Pendidikan (2011); Gesorn (2012); Saricoban and Karakurt (2016); Yegani and Jodaei (2017); Carolina and Astrid (2018); Pongsawang (2012) and Pham and Nguyen (2014) who all found that TBSA or tasks in the framework of TBLT are useful tool for EFL learners to increase oral performance. The present study showed that the two groups gained their oral performance, however, the experimental group had more significant improvement. The mean scores of the two groups in oral performance before and after the treatment were $M = 4.16$, $M = 7.65$ for the experimental group and $M = 4.13$, $M = 6.04$ for the control group. These results revealed that the participants in the experimental group achieved better than the control group. These results suggested that TBSA can be applied in speaking classes to improve EFL learners' oral performance.

The results of the current study also indicated that there was a statistically significant difference of EFL learners' oral performance within and between both groups.

EFL learners' oral performance on four specific features in terms of *Vocabulary & grammar achievement*, *Pronunciation achievement*, *Discourse management* and *Interactive communication* within each group after the treatment was found better than that before the treatment. It was also found that after the intervention, the EFL learners' oral performance in the experimental group made progress in all the four features used in this study than that in the control group. Of the four features, *Interactive communication* and *Vocabulary & grammar achievement* of the experimental group underwent a very great change. It can be determined that the EFL learners' performance in the experimental group increases much after the treatment.

For the second research question "What did the EFL students think about the use of task-based speaking activities?" is confirmed with a rather high mean score $M= 3.88$, showing that the EFL learners have positive attitude towards the use of task-based speaking activities. Most of the learners realize the importance of task-based speaking activities, they agreed that TBSA lessons are interesting, they could speak English more frequently when practicing with TBSA or their presentation skills were improved after the experiment. This result supported other previous findings. The result is quite similar to Pongsawan (2012), Humanez & Arias (2009), Awang and Pendidikan (2011), who found that the students have positive perceptions towards task-based learning used in the experiment. Moreover, the findings of Humane and Arias (2009), Pham and Nguyen (2014) and Le and Huynh (2019) revealed that the EFL students showed quite positive perception towards task based speaking activities used in speaking lessons.

Based on the data analysis of tests, it is concluded that task based speaking activities supported EFL learners improve their oral performance. The questionnaire's results also indicate that most of the EFL learners had a positive attitude towards the use of task based speaking activities on enhancing their speaking ability. They also expressed their satisfaction with using TBSA in learning speaking. After the intervention, the EFL learners understand the importance of task based speaking activities, and they could find themselves be more confident when speaking English in front of the class. They also reported that they became interested in exchanging ideas, sharing duty with others for their task in speaking classes. After being instructed to practice TBSA, they were able to produce more complex structures, learn more vocabulary and make fewer mistakes in pronunciation.

5. Conclusion, Implications, Recommendations

The present study was designed to examine the effects of TBSA on EFL learners' oral performance. Besides, it also explores learners' attitudes towards the effect of TBSA on oral performance. The findings of the study revealed that EFL learners' oral performance of the experimental group gained more development than that of the control group after the treatment. The data also indicated that after the intervention program the EFL learners in the experimental group made more progress in their oral performance on all the four specific features than that of the control group. It is also found that TBSA affected EFL learners' oral performance in the experimental group in terms of *Interactive*

communication and *Vocabulary & grammar achievement* and improved more than the other two features. In addition, EFL learners not only could be more confident and feel free to share ideas in groups or in front of the class but also were able to use more vocabulary as well as more complex grammatical structures. Moreover, they showed more interests to practicing speaking with TBSA. Especially, the EFL learners would like to have more TBSA with the hope that their oral ability could be enhanced. In short, TBSA provided benefits to the EFL learners' oral performance and the EFL learners held strong beliefs towards TBSA. Although the findings of the study are not new, they contribute to the teaching and learning speaking of EFL learners.

Although the current study indicated the effectiveness of TBSA on the students' oral performance, it also disclosed some gaps such as the research was conducted in small sample size of 30 participants, the duration of the study was limited in 13 weeks, the samples were non-English major students.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests for this study.

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