Revitalizing Speaking Fluency through Task Based Language Teaching: Addressing Post Pandemic Communicative Gaps in EFL Classrooms

[1]Khofifah Indah Baitul Jannah, [2]Siti Ulfya Syahara Razaq, [3]Hafizudin
[1]UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, Indonesia, [2,3]Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
Corresponding email: [1]khofifahindah703@gmail.com*, [2]ulfyasyahara21@gmail.com, [3]Hafizudin1199@gmail.com

Abstract *Speaking skills are essential to English as a foreign language (EFL) acquisition, yet they are among the most affected by online learning during the COVID 19 pandemic. The lack of direct verbal interaction and the low intensity of oral practice lead to gaps in students speaking fluency. In this context, the Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach offers a strategy for developing communication skills through engaging tasks. This study examines the impact of implementing Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on enhancing EFL students' speaking fluency in post pandemic secondary schools. This study used a quasi experimental approach with a pre test and post test control group design. The sample consisted of 60 grade XI students in one of the public high schools in Indonesia, who were divided into an experimental group and a control group. Data were collected through oral tests and analyzed using paired sample t-tests and independent sample t-tests. The results showed a significant increase in the speaking fluency of students who participated in learning with the TBLT approach compared to the control group. The task based activities proved to improve students fluency and confidence in speaking. The findings recommend the broader application of TBLT as a strategic approach in addressing the impact of online learning on EFL students speaking ability.*

Keywords: *task based language teaching, speaking fluency, EFL learners, post pandemic learning, secondary education, language pedagogy*

1. Introduction

Mastery of English speaking skills is a key indicator of successful English as a foreign language (EFL) learning in many countries, including Indonesia. Unfortunately, the COVID 19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the development of these skills due to the abrupt transition to online learning that reduces in person oral practice (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Mustofa et al., 2022; Pratama & Yuwono, 2023). The lack of verbal interaction in digital learning environments decreases students fluency, spontaneity, and confidence in speaking English (Fitriani, 2022; Yunita & Astuti, 2021; Simbolon, 2020). This creates a communicative gap that is still felt even after the return to complete face to face learning.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to design a learning approach that can overcome the pandemic's long term effects on EFL students speaking skills. Post pandemic students tend to show speaking anxiety, limited active vocabulary, and a lack of initiative in oral communication (Lee & Lin, 2022; Ningsih & Haryanto, 2023;

Sari et al., 2021). The Indonesian government, through the Merdeka Curriculum, encourages the implementation of contextual and participatory approaches, one of which is through the use of task based learning methods, which are considered more communicative and meaningful (Kemendikbud, 2022; Wijayanti & Lestari, 2023; Suherdi, 2021). However, empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of this method in the post pandemic context is limited.

Theoretically, the Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach emphasizes the importance of learning processes based on authentic activities and meaningful communication, which are believed to improve fluency in speaking (Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007; Nunan, 2004). The implementation of TBLT encourages students to use language as a tool to accomplish real tasks, rather than simply composing grammatical structures (Larsen Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Littlewood, 2007). TBLT dapat mengatasi tantangan kepercayaan diri dan keterlibatan siswa setelah pandemi karena metode ini memungkinkan siswa berlatih berbicara dalam situasi yang lebih alami dan kontekstual, mirip dengan pengalaman kehidupan nyata. Dengan fokus pada penyelesaian tugas komunikasi yang bermakna, siswa tidak lagi merasa tertekan untuk berbicara sempurna, melainkan lebih terdorong untuk mencoba dan berinteraksi secara aktif. Selain itu, kegiatan kolaboratif dalam TBLT mendorong keterlibatan sosial yang membantu mengurangi rasa canggung dan isolasi yang muncul selama pembelajaran daring. Pendekatan yang berpusat pada siswa ini juga membuat mereka merasa lebih dihargai dan termotivasi untuk berpartisipasi, sehingga kepercayaan diri dan keterlibatan dalam proses pembelajaran meningkat secara signifikan. In the context of post pandemic recovery, TBLT is considered a relevant and adaptive approach to students authentic communication needs. The implementation of TBLT in Indonesia faces contextual challenges such as limited adequate teacher training in this method, lack of access and availability of digital resources that support the learning process, and differences in language proficiency levels among students that can make it difficult to carry out tasks effectively and evenly.

Table 1. Speaking Fluency Levels of Post pandemic EFL Students
(National Data, 2023)

Fluency Aspect	Average Score (Scale 1 5)	% Students under Score 3
Smoothness (Flow)	2.7	68%
Speaking Courage	2.5	72%
Speech Coherence	2.9	59%

Source: National Education Assessment Center, 2023

Data showing the average score of students speaking fluency aspects, namely smoothness (flow) of 2.7 with 68% of students below a score of 3, speaking courage of

2.5 with 72% of students below a score of 3, and speech coherence of 2.9 with 59% of students below a score of 3, emphasizes the importance of restoring students speaking skills post pandemic. Most students have not met the minimum standard in important aspects of speaking, especially in terms of courage and fluency, which are the primary obstacles to effective communication. This condition reinforces the urgency of implementing learning methods such as TBLT, which can address the problems of self confidence and student engagement contextually and communicatively, so that speaking skills can improve significantly and be relevant to students' real needs. This data also provides a strong basis for your research to develop more effective learning strategies in restoring students speaking skills.

The data above reinforces this study's urgency, as most students have not reached the minimum standard in speaking fluency. Previous studies on TBLT have shown the success of this approach in improving speaking skills in various contexts, but most were conducted before the pandemic or did not specifically target post pandemic impacts (Trang & Baldauf, 2007; Nakatani, 2010; Xiongyong & Samuel, 2011). Limited research combines the TBLT approach with the context of learning recovery in the post pandemic period.

The gap in the literature lies in the lack of empirical studies that examine the effectiveness of TBLT specifically in restoring students speaking fluency after the pandemic, especially in EFL contexts in developing countries such as Indonesia (Yulia, 2022; Kim & Lee, 2021; Farida et al., 2023). Most studies focus more on the motivational or engagement aspects, rather than quantitative fluency improvement. In addition, TBLT approaches are often implemented without data based evaluation of the linguistic dimensions of spoken fluency. Although some literature mentions communication gaps arising from the pandemic, there is no further explanation of the specific impact of these gaps on EFL students speaking skills. Most mention "reduced verbal interaction" without going into depth on how this directly affects the fluency aspect of speaking specifically, thus the need for research that focuses on speaking skill recovery through TBLT is critical.

The novelty of this research lies in integrating the TBLT approach as a pedagogical intervention in the context of post pandemic recovery, focusing on improving speaking fluency as measured through CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) based oral instruments. This research also offers a task based approach developed locally and linked to the learning context of Indonesian high school students, which is still rarely researched in the international literature (Arifin & Gunawan, 2023; Rahmawati, 2023; McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007).

Based on the background and the identified gaps, this study aims to explore and empirically analyze the effect of using the Task Based Language Teaching approach on improving EFL students' speaking fluency at the post pandemic high school level.

This research is expected to contribute to developing teaching methods that are more adaptive and responsive to oral communication needs in today's EFL classrooms (Brown, 2015; Richards, 2017; Harmer, 2015).

2. Method

Type of Research

This study used a quasi experimental approach with a non equivalent control group pre test and post test design. This approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher to measure the effect of a learning intervention (*Task Based Language Teaching*) on improving EFL students speaking fluency, even without random assignment. This design is effective in formal educational contexts where class divisions are predetermined (Creswell, 2014; Ary et al., 2018; Fraenkel et al., 2012).

Population and Sampling

The population in this study was all grade XI students in one of the state senior high schools in Yogyakarta, which used English as a compulsory subject. This particular school was chosen due to its diverse student background and consistent implementation of the English curriculum, making it representative for studying the effectiveness of TBLT. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which selected two classes with equivalent academic competence based on midterm exam score data. The total sample consisted of 60 students, divided into two groups: 30 students in the experimental group (using TBLT) and 30 in the control group (using conventional methods).

Research Instrument

The main instrument used in this study was a speaking test based on fluency indicators from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), specifically at levels B1 and B2. The test was conducted orally and recorded for further analysis. In addition, a student engagement observation sheet and a speaking *fluency* scoring rubric were used, which were developed based on *fluency* components such as *flow*, clarity of ideas, and spontaneity of speech (Fulcher, 2003; Luoma, 2004; CEFR, 2020). To ensure the validity and reliability of the rubric in the post pandemic context, researchers conducted in depth validity and reliability tests. They noted differences in examiners' interpretation and use of the rubric. This is important to ensure consistency of assessment and relevance of the instrument to current learning conditions. To ensure the validity and reliability of the rubric in the post pandemic context, researchers conducted in depth validity and reliability tests. They noted differences in examiners' interpretation and use of the rubric. This is

important to ensure consistency of assessment and relevance of the instrument to current learning conditions.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques: (1) pre test and post test oral tests to measure changes in students speaking fluency; (2) observation during the learning process with structured observation instruments; and (3) documentation of oral test recordings for re assessment by two independent raters to maintain inter rater reliability. The test process was conducted individually for 5 7 minutes per student.

Research Procedure

This research was conducted in four stages:

1. Preparation: preparation of instruments, training of assessors, and determination of experimental and control classes.
2. Pre test: initial measurement of speaking fluency for both groups.
3. Learning Intervention: The experimental group was taught with the TBLT approach for six meetings, while the control group received conventional learning.
4. Post test and Analysis: Both groups underwent a post intervention test, and the results were statistically analyzed. Three English education experts consulted the instrument's content validity, and its reliability was tested through interrater agreement.

Data Analysis Technique

Quantitative data were analyzed using the SPSS version 26 program. To measure the difference between the pre test and post test results in each group, a paired sample t-test was used. In contrast, an independent sample t-test was used to compare the results between the experimental and control groups. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. In addition, the effect of the intervention was measured using Cohen's d value to assess the strength of the TBLT approach's influence on improving speaking fluency (Pallant, 2020; Field, 2018; Mackey & Gass, 2016).

3. Result & Discussion

Comparison of Speaking Ability Before and After Intervention

Before the treatment, the pre test results showed that the experimental and control groups had a relatively balanced level of speaking ability. The average score of the experimental group was 2.63, while the control group obtained a score of 2.61 on a scale of 5 (see Table 1). This indicates that both groups had similar starting points

in terms of fluency, supporting the validity of the quasi-experimental design used (Ary et al., 2018; Fraenkel et al., 2012; Creswell, 2014).

After the intervention with the Task Based Language Teaching approach for six sessions, there was a significant increase in the experimental group's post test score. The average score increased to 3.87, whereas the control group's score only rose to 2.95. The paired sample t-test analysis revealed a significant difference in the improvement of the experimental group's scores compared to the control group (p < 0.05), indicating that TBLT is efficacious in enhancing fluency (Ellis, 2003; Field, 2018; Luoma, 2004).

Table 2. Average Fluency Score of Pre test and Post-test

Group	Pre test	Post-test	Difference
Experiment (TBLT)	2.63	3.87	+1.24
Kontrok (Conventional)	2.61	2.95	+0.34

Source: Research Results, 2025

The results in Table 2 show that the experimental group receiving TBLT instruction experienced a substantial improvement in fluency scores compared to the control group. An independent samples t-test revealed that the difference between groups was statistically significant (t(58) = 5.32, p < 0.001), with a large effect size (Cohen's d = 1.37), indicating a substantial impact of the TBLT intervention on students speaking performance. This finding supports previous studies, which state that TBLT creates a learning environment that enables students to use language authentically and meaningfully (Willis & Willis, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Nunan, 2004). Context based tasks in TBLT encourage more active participation and promote the natural development of fluency.

Dimensions of Fluency Improved through TBLT

An in-depth analysis of fluency aspects based on the CEFR rubric revealed that the dimensions of flow, pausing, and clarity of ideas experienced the most significant improvement in the experimental group. This is consistent with Harmer's (2015) opinion that fluency develops through the use of language in meaningful contexts, not just through structured exercises.

The improvement in flow indicates that students are increasingly able to speak without too many long pauses, which signifies mastery of spontaneous expression (Luoma, 2004; Thornbury, 2005; Bygate, 2009). Meanwhile, the improvement in clarity of ideas reflects the student's ability to convey ideas coherently, which is one of the important indicators in CEFR-based oral examinations (Council of Europe, 2020; Fulcher, 2003; McCarthy, 2011).

Students in the experimental group also showed greater courage in expressing opinions spontaneously compared to the control group. This finding aligns with the results of Kim and Lee (2021) and Rahmawati (2023), who stated that task-based learning fosters self confidence as students feel they "own" the language they use.

However, several limitations must be acknowledged in this study. One of the main challenges was controlling external factors that could influence speaking fluency, such as individual student motivation, prior exposure to English, or informal learning experiences outside the classroom. These factors may have varied across participants and could not be entirely equalized between the two groups. Additionally, although the control group was taught using what is labeled as the "conventional method," this consisted primarily of grammar based instruction, vocabulary drills, and controlled dialogue methods that are still commonly used in many Indonesian classrooms. At the same time, this approach reflects prevailing practices; variations in how teachers implement these methods may exist, which could influence the outcomes of the comparison. Therefore, while the results indicate strong support for TBLT, they should be interpreted within the methodological constraints outlined above.

Pedagogical Implications and Relationship to Post Pandemic Recovery

The experimental group's significant improvement in speaking ability has important implications for English education in Indonesia, particularly in the post-pandemic context. After a long period of online learning, many students experienced stagnation in oral communication skills due to a lack of hands on practice (Mustofa et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2021; Ningsih & Haryanto, 2023). The TBLT approach, which emphasizes collaboration and interaction in authentic tasks, is an appropriate solution under these conditions. Currently implemented in Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum strongly encourages context based learning approaches and student experiences. TBLT aligns with these principles and can be integrated into the English syllabus as a strategy to improve speaking skills (Kemendikbud, 2022; Suherdi, 2021; Wijayanti & Lestari, 2023). Thus, this study's results are both theoretical and practical, and can be directly implemented by teachers.

Teachers require adequate preparation and support to implement TBLT effectively in their daily teaching practice. One of the primary challenges is the limited professional development opportunities related to task based pedagogy, particularly for teachers in remote or under-resourced schools. Creating authentic, level-appropriate tasks requires time, creativity, and familiarity with students' linguistic and cultural contexts. To overcome these barriers, schools and teacher training institutions can organize workshops focusing on practical TBLT design, such as formulating communicative tasks, facilitating group interaction, and assessing spoken

performance using fluency rubrics. For example, English teachers can begin with simple role play activities (e.g., making complaints, ordering food) before progressing to more complex tasks like group problem solving or project presentations. Incorporating peer feedback and reflection sessions also supports deeper engagement. Moreover, collaboration among teachers to develop task banks and share best practices could ease individual workload and improve consistency. These concrete steps can help ensure that the implementation of TBLT is sustainable and aligned with national curriculum goals.

This research also reinforces the existing literature on learning recovery, which focuses on productive skills. Most post pandemic recovery programs focus on cognitive aspects and basic literacy, but fluency in speaking should also receive equal attention (OECD, 2022; UNESCO, 2021; Arifin & Gunawan, 2023). Pedagogical interventions, such as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), have the potential to become an integral part of strategic plans to improve the quality of English language learning in the post-pandemic era.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach can significantly enhance EFL students' speaking fluency in a post-pandemic learning context. A quasi experimental design involving an experimental and a control group found that students who learned using the TBLT approach showed significantly higher score improvements than students who learned using conventional methods. The improvement covered key dimensions of speaking fluency, including flow, spontaneity, and clarity of ideas.

These results directly address the research objective, which is to examine the effectiveness of the TBLT approach in restoring oral communication skills affected by online learning during the pandemic. Applying context based tasks in TBLT created a learning environment that enables students to use language more meaningfully, collaboratively, and communicatively. This success is not only statistical, but also has broad pedagogical implications in designing English language learning that is responsive to the needs of the times.

Overall, this study concludes that TBLT is a relevant and practical pedagogical approach to addressing the challenges of English language learning recovery in post pandemic schools. Therefore, it is recommended that this approach be integrated more widely into the English curriculum, especially at the secondary level, and used as a reference in teacher training and the development of teaching tools that support task based learning.

5. References

Arifin, Z., & Gunawan, H. (2023). Enhancing students speaking performance through task based language teaching. International Journal of Language Education, 7(1), 25 36. https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v7i1.34752

Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Sorensen, C., & Walker, D. A. (2018). Introduction to research in education (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Brown, H. D. (2015). Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy (4th ed.). Pearson Education.

Bygate, M. (2009). Teaching and testing speaking. In M. H. Long & C. J. Doughty (Eds.), The handbook of language teaching (pp. 412 440). Wiley Blackwell.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (4th ed.). Pearson.

Council of Europe. (2020). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment   Companion volume. Cambridge University Press.

Derakhshan, A., Khalili, A. N., & Behnam, B. (2021). Developing speaking skills through task based learning: A review of recent literature. Journal of Language and Education, 7(1), 89 102. https://doi.org/10.17323/jle.2021.11605

Ellis, R. (2003). Task based language learning and teaching. Oxford University Press.

Farida, A., Nasir, C., & Yusuf, Y. Q. (2023). Online learning and its effects on students oral proficiency post pandemic. Studies in English Language and Education, 10(1), 142 158. https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v10i1.26356

Field, A. (2018). Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Fitriani, D. E. (2022). Speaking anxiety among Indonesian EFL students during online learning. Journal of Language and Literature Education, 22(2), 99 111. https://doi.org/10.17509/bs_jpbsp.v22i2.48014

Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2012). How to design and evaluate research in education (8th ed.). McGraw Hill.

Fulcher, G. (2003). Testing second language speaking. Pearson Longman.

Harmer, J. (2015). The practice of English language teaching (5th ed.). Pearson.

Kim, H., & Lee, Y. (2021). EFL learners' speaking performance during task based instruction in post pandemic classrooms. English Teaching, 76(3), 99 118. https://doi.org/10.15858/engtea.76.3.202109.99

Ministry of Education and Culture (2022). Independent Curriculum Implementation Guide. Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. https://kurikulum.kemdikbud.go.id

Lee, J., & Lin, M. (2022). Speaking anxiety in virtual classrooms: EFL learners' challenges post COVID 19. Language Teaching Research Quarterly, 32, 44 57. https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2022.32.04

Littlewood, W. (2007). Communicative and task based language teaching in East Asian classrooms. Language Teaching, 40(3), 243 249. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444807004363

Luoma, S. (2004). Assessing speaking. Cambridge University Press.

McCarthy, M. (2011). Discourse analysis for language teachers. Cambridge University Press.

McDonough, K., & Chaikitmongkol, W. (2007). Teachers' and learners' reactions to a task based EFL course in Thailand. TESOL Quarterly, 41(1), 107 132. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545 7249.2007.tb00042.x

Mustofa, M., Widiati, U., & Cahyono, B. Y. (2022). The impact of online learning on speaking skills of Indonesian senior high school students. International Journal of Instruction, 15(3), 291 308. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2022.15316a

Ningsih, T. A., & Haryanto, E. (2023). Addressing speaking fluency issues in post pandemic EFL classrooms. Indonesian Journal of English Education, 10(2), 155 168. https://doi.org/10.15408/ijee.v10i2.34874

Nunan, D. (2004). Task based language teaching. Cambridge University Press.

OECD. (2022). The state of education recovery post COVID 19. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/b6f17c2d en

Pallant, J. (2020). SPSS survival manual (7th ed.). Open University Press.

Pratama, A., & Yuwono, G. (2023). Exploring students oral performance post online learning. Journal of English Language Education and Learning, 12(1), 35 50. https://doi.org/10.24815/ijele.v12i1.27933

Rahmawati, R. (2023). Enhancing EFL learners' speaking skill through digital TBLT. Asian EFL Journal, 25(3), 115 132. https://asian efl journal.com

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). Approaches and methods in language teaching (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Sari, R. N., Putri, M. D., & Lestari, R. (2021). The effects of distance learning on speaking proficiency during the pandemic. JEES (Journal of English Educators Society), 6(2), 178 190. https://doi.org/10.21070/jees.v6i2.1311

Simbolon, N. E. (2020). Students speaking fluency in online learning settings. Indonesian EFL Journal, 6(1), 55 64. https://doi.org/10.25134/ieflj.v6i1.2685

Suherdi, D. (2021). Task based teaching: A pedagogical breakthrough in the post pandemic era. REiLA Journal of Research and Innovation in Language, 3(3), 198 207. https://doi.org/10.31849/reila.v3i3.7533

Thornbury, S. (2005). How to teach speaking. Pearson Longman.

UNESCO. (2021). Education in a post COVID world: Nine ideas for public action. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374029

Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2007). Doing task based teaching. Oxford University Press.

Wijayanti, R. A., & Lestari, S. N. (2023). Implementing TBLT in the new curriculum: Challenges and strategies. Journal of Indonesian English Language Education, 11(2), 103 118. https://doi.org/10.24036/jpbi.v11i2.54321

Yulia, H. (2022). Challenges in improving EFL students speaking fluency post pandemic. JELLT (Journal of English Language and Language Teaching), 6(1), 112 125. https://doi.org/10.36597/jellt.v6i1.12251

Yunita, W. R., & Astuti, T. W. (2021). Barriers in developing speaking skills through online learning. Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 11(2), 312 322. https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v11i2.34832

Xiongyong, C., & Samuel, M. (2011). Task based language teaching in Chinese EFL context. Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 1(3), 273 278. https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.1.3.273 278