

# A Task-Based Learning Approach to Improve Students' English-Speaking Skills in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to enhance the speaking abilities of students. Based on the results of the interviews conducted to gather preliminary information on the student's speaking abilities, it was determined that the student's difficulties speaking were caused by their insufficient language proficiency, which in turn made them feel confident to speak. The study included ten second-year students. The information was gathered from pre-test and post-test results, and their satisfaction. The results show that task-based learning improves the students' speaking skills through the three learning phases of pre-task, task cycle, and language focus enabling the students to successfully accomplish the tasks by engaging in a variety of activities. They are successful in boosting their confidence and speaking abilities.

**Keywords:** Task-based learning; Speaking skills

## Introduction

English is widely spoken and frequently referred as the "global language". Even though most nations do not recognize it as their official language but also used for international treaties, in international agreements, and as the official language of the aviation and maritime industries. English is not the official language in Thailand, but there is no denying that English has a significant impact on Thailand's economic and educational systems. Considering that Thailand is now a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Thai people have to be proficient in English in order to communicate with the world's population in order that the Ministry of Education placed a high priority on the English language by mandating that it be taught to all Thai students as the first foreign language in school.

Moreover, Thai students' poor English proficiency is currently caused by the English language teaching in Thai schools (Darasawang, 2007). Many factors contribute to this, including the fact that learners live in an environment where the Thai language is primarily spoken, foreign language learning is only available at educational institutions, teachers emphasize

students learn only grammar, and students are expected to memorize information from a book rather than speaking or listening in order to succeed on the test (Auenthaisong, 2017).

According to the researcher's experiences, teaching basic English courses at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University found that almost all of the students have basic English grammar for speaking, but lack confidence in using vocabulary and pronunciation, fear of making mistakes which is the main cause of why they are unable to speak, some of the learners are continuing ignorance of the value of speaking English and the English instruction cannot motivate the students to be eager to learn.

Therefore, the researcher created "A Task-Based Learning Approach to Improve Students' English-Speaking Skills at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University" in order to resolve English-speaking problems and expand learning, and working opportunities for students of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. To construct lessons which are appropriate for students at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University for academic objectives or for particular purposes to have a chance to use English more accurately and fluently both inside and outside of the classroom to increase the competitive potential with other countries in the world.

### ***Task-based learning***

The core of task-based learning is a learning experiment in which the students experience the language they have learned by completing tasks. The complete task-based implementation follows certain phases: pre-task, during the task, and language focus (D. Willis & Willis, 2007) which are the activities enable learners to achieve their learning objectives based on the information given by the teacher through the thinking process. In which teachers are in charge of and supervise the teaching process also learners are coordinated to understand, use language, produce language and interact with each other by using the target language in context, which prioritizes meaning over language construction (Prabhu, 1987).

The following five task-based characteristics: 1. activity in teaching and learning languages. It must be an activity that enables learners to achieve their learning objectives. 2. the practice also focuses on the meaning or linguistic style. 3. the practice must involve communication; therefore, students have the opportunity to participate in practical language practice. 4. practical tasks require one or more language skills. 5. the task must also enable learners to understand the use of the target language. Further suggestions that a task-based learning approach creates a variety of benefits for learners, one of which is motivation, it is the key for learners to understand lessons or be eager to learn (Ellis & Rod, 2009).

Concluded that task-based learning is an activity that enables students to learn, achieving learning objectives from the information the teacher has assigned. Through the thinking process, able students communicate and describe during the class. To achieve the purpose of the practice is to create language lessons that can be used in the real world and are conducive to the linguistic context.

### *English speaking skills*

The word "skill" often refers to the capacity to perform an action competently after learning and practicing it. Reading, listening, writing, and speaking are the four key abilities that exceptional English language learners must possess and those four abilities are typically the result of receiving adequate training. Thus, speaking talent in English refers to the ability to talk clearly and expertly or to produce words that are simple for listeners to understand (Chamnan). Speaking is together with the act of putting one's thoughts and feelings into words. Alternatively, it might be the way in which the speaker conveys feelings, gestures, and thoughts so that others can understand and respond to a way that is meant for interpersonal communication.

The speaking is the productive aural/oral skill. It consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning and speaking happens when people produce an utterance in order to deliver a message (Nunan, 2004). Also, there are a range of definitions of speaking given by scholars; 1. speaking is the process of producing meaning which starts from creating a message to decoding and finally encoding a message. 2. speaking as verbal and non-verbal signs which had been created to share the meaning (Triwittayayon & Sarobol, 2018). By reason of oral communication predominates when someone writes a sentence, building a sentence while speaking is essential.

The conclusion that speaking is a process of communicating a purpose, expressing our feelings through words, and engaging in dialogues with others in a variety of circumstances. Additionally, the ability to communicate in everyday contexts and to use the pronunciation, stress, intonation, grammatical structures, and vocabulary of a foreign language are all considered components of speaking. Also speaking is considered a challenging competency. It allows the speakers to communicate and express their selves with other people by using this verbal language. Speaking is the second complex competency dealing with daily communication which has relation to the social context.

### *Findings*

#### *Students' Speaking Skills Improvement*

**Part 1:** The results of English-speaking skills before and after using the task-based learning approach to improve students' English-speaking skills of second-year students at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Wang Noi Campus.

Sample	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	t	Sig
Pre-test	10	7.90	3.107	3.628	.006*
Post-test	10	10.70	1.567		

\*Statistical significance level .01

The average score for English-speaking skills before using a task-based learning approach was 7.90, and the average score for English-speaking skills after using the learning approach was 10.70. The difference between before and after using a task-based learning approach was 3.628 tested by t-test, indicating that studying with a task-based learning approach has higher academic achievement than before reviewing with statistical significance at .01.

**Part 2:** The results of data analysis of studying the satisfaction of 10 second-year students at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Wang Noi campus after using a task-based learning approach to improve students' English-speaking skills.

No.	Topic	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Interpretation	Level
	Teaching content				
1	Interesting vocabulary, sentences, and example conversations.	4.80	0.42	Very satisfied	4
2	Vocabulary, sentences, and illustrations are easy to understand.	4.90	0.31	Very satisfied	2
3	Teaching contents challenge the ability of the students.	5.00	0.00	Very satisfied	1
4	Vocabulary, sentences, and grammar, have a variety of language levels.	4.80	0.42	Very satisfied	4
4	The contents suit the needs of the students.	4.90	0.32	Very satisfied	3
	<b>Average</b>	<b>4.88</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Learning management</b>				
6	Learning activities encourage learners to prepare themselves for a task.	5.00	0.00	Very satisfied	1
7	Learning activities encourage students to speak more English in class.	4.80	0.63	Very satisfied	3
8	Pair and group activities allow students to exchange knowledge and teamwork.	4.90	0.32	Very satisfied	2
9	Presentation activities improve students' English-speaking and listening skills.	4.90	0.32	Very satisfied	2
10	The language-focused learning activities allow students to review knowledge from the activities.	4.70	0.48	Very satisfied	4
	<b>Average</b>	<b>4.86</b>	<b>0.35</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Received benefits</b>				

11	Task activities allow students to practice working with others.	4.60	0.52	Very satisfied	4
12	Task activities improve students English-speaking skills.	5.00	0.00	Very satisfied	1
13	Task activities encourage students to gain more knowledge and experience.	4.80	0.42	Very satisfied	2
14	Students apply new knowledge in their daily lives.	4.70	0.67	Very satisfied	3
15	Students have a good feeling about speaking English.	4.80	0.42	Very satisfied	2
	<b>Average</b>	<b>4.78</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>4.84</b>	<b>0.35</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	

From the study, students' satisfaction towards a task-based learning approach in all 8 lessons can be concluded that the average student's satisfaction is between 4.60 – 5.00 indicating that students have a satisfaction towards a task-based learning approach to improve students English-speaking skills at a very satisfied level according to the assumptions set.

## Summary

The summarized results are as follows.

1. Research results on "A Task-Based Learning Approach to Improve Students' English-Speaking Skills at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University" after using the created plans had a higher level than before using the created plans significantly. The average score for English-speaking skills before using a task-based learning approach was 7.90, and the average score for English-speaking skills after using the learning approach was 10.70. The difference between before and after using a task-based learning approach was 3.628 tested by t-test, indicating that studying with a task-based learning approach has higher academic achievement than before reviewing with statistical significance at .01.

2. According to the assumptions established when analyzing each item in the order, the students' satisfaction towards a task-based learning approach to improve their English-speaking skills were at a very high level. considering all 3 aspects, namely, teaching content, learning management, and received benefits have similar averages from the study, students' satisfaction towards a task-based learning approach in all 8 lessons can be concluded that the average student's satisfaction is between 4.60 – 5.00 indicating that students have a satisfaction towards a task-based learning approach to improve students English-speaking skills at a very satisfied level according to the assumptions set.

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