

## Task-Based Language Teaching as a New Trend

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### Abstract

*Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is a communicative approach to language learning that emphasizes the use of language in real-life situations. It involves learners working on meaningful and purposeful tasks, which can help increase motivation and engagement. Soran Scientific Co-educational Preparatory School is one of the schools in Soran City that implemented this approach. This quantitative study examines EFL students' perceptions of Task-Based Language Teaching. A questionnaire was used as a research tool to collect the data and was administered to 36 students who took part in this program for a semester in 2022-2023. The results indicated that students had positive perceptions of TBLT overall. Most EFL students perceived tasks as engaging, student-centred, and filled with real-world tasks. Additionally, they believed that speaking in TBLT classrooms is energetic and confident, and they generally thought that the amount of time students spend talking is too much. There was an increase in all five language proficiency measures (fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and grammar pronunciation).*

**Keywords:** EFL students, perceptions, Task-Based Language Teaching, Kurdistan.

## Task-Based Language Teaching as a New Trend

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### 1. Introduction

The communicative language teaching (CLT) movement, which gained prominence in the 1970s and 1980s, brought forth a paradigm shift emphasizing the integration of tasks within language curricula. This movement, alongside early research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), prompted a critical reevaluation of the conventional "structural approach" to language instruction. The structural approach separated language into manageable components and presented them to learners linearly (Seyyedi et al., 2023). It was within this context that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emerged.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is now exerting a significant influence on foreign and second language curricula (Ahmadian & Long, 2021; Belda-Medina, 2021; Butarbutar, 2021), requiring many educators to adopt CLT and TBLT methodologies in their classrooms (Birrina & Emaliana, 2022; Dao & Newton, 2021; Guan, 2022; Seyyedi et al., 2014).

Task-based language teaching aims to enhance students' language proficiency by engaging them in authentic tasks, with instructors actively facilitating and supporting the learning process. Learning a new language is an interconnected, collaborative, and learner-centred endeavour where second-

language (L2) learners leverage and build upon their existing linguistic knowledge (Van den Branden et al., 2009).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Task

Scholars have approached and defined the term "task" in various ways. Long (2015) characterizes a task as a work undertaken by an individual or a group. Skehan (1998) presents a more comprehensive perspective, proposing that a task must fulfil several key criteria: prioritize meaning, involve a communication challenge, reflect real-world activities, emphasize task completion, and allow for outcome assessment. Bygate (2001), however, critiques Skehan's definition for its perceived incompleteness. Beyond emphasizing meaning, establishing objectives, and enabling assessment, tasks are also subject to instructional intervention and can be influenced by learner choices, potentially allowing for learner reinterpretation.

Over time, multiple definitions of "task" have emerged, each highlighting different dimensions of this concept. Consequently, a definition is proposed based on criteria that can be used to determine whether a given work plan qualifies as a task or merely an "exercise." It is acknowledged, however, that certain work plans may meet some criteria but not all, resulting in varying degrees of "task-likeness." Table 1 outlines the specific requirements that a work plan must satisfy to be considered a task.

*Table 1, Task as work criteria (Shintani & Ellis, 2014)*

Criteria	Description
The main concentration is on meaning	The strategy is meant to direct students' efforts toward their ultimate goal of communicating with one another, either by understanding or creating communications (there is a primary focus on meaning-making).

There is some gap	The work is set up in a manner that requires communication, analysis, or the presentation of an opinion during a lull in the action.
Students depend heavily on their own acquired linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge.	In order to understand and produce in a second language, students must rely on their prior knowledge of both languages (L1 and L2) and their non-linguistic resources (facial and gesture expressions). This means that language is not presented overtly.
An intended result of the conversation might be stated.	The work plan lays out the expected results in terms of communication. Therefore, students should be evaluated not on how well they utilize language but on how well they fulfil the task's communicative goal.

## 2.2. Task Types

Within these first concepts, we discover various ideas for categorizing tasks. Based on Candlin (1987, p. 14), "offer anything other than implicit suggestions that tasks might be catalogued under several distinct types." Because of this, "a typology is bound to be fuzzy-edged and at most a managerial convenience" (p. 15). There has been a long-standing distinction between task types (i.e., generic tasks like selling an item), goal tasks (i.e., practical activities like selling an airline ticket), and pedagogical tasks (i.e., the real tasks that teachers and learners work with). Various task classifications, most notably Prabhu's, were proposed by Nunan (2004), (Table 2).

*Table 2. Classification of task types (Prabhu, 1987, pp. 46–7)*

<b>Task Type</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Gap in information	Information is "transferred from one person to another, from one form to another, or from one location to another" when of this kind.
Gap in reasoning	To "derive some new information from given information via the processes of inference, deduction, practical reasoning, or

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	a perception of relationships or patterns," as the definition puts it, is to engage in this style of reasoning.
Gap in opinion	According to the definition, you must "articulate a preference, feeling, or attitude in response to a given situation."

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### 2.3. Task Evaluation

Long (1985) argued that success in a job should be measured by how well the activity is completed rather than by an external factor such as the number of words written. He advocated for experts to evaluate students' mastery of a "target task" to determine whether they were ready for the next level. Candlin (1987) suggested that, while assessing a task's usefulness, teachers should consider the task's diagnostic value, its classroom viability, and how much it complements and leads to other activities. The most thorough suggestion came from Nunan (1989), who provided a checklist of questions to be answered before beginning any given activity (pp. 135–7). In this list, you will find inquiries about the task's conceptualization (for example: "Is there an information gap?"), its execution (example: "What kind of language is stimulated by the task?"), Moreover, the students' emotional reaction to the task (example: "Does the task engage the learners' interests?"). Like the rest of TBLT, these ideas were well-thought-out yet unmistakably prescriptive.

### 3. Methodology

This research involved 36 male and female students in the 10th grade at Soran Co-educational Secondary School in Soran, Iraq, aged between 15 and 17 years. The students participated in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) sessions over three months during the first semester of the 2022-2023 academic year at the time of data collection. They engaged in English language classes for three hours each week across two sessions. Before commencing the TBLT sessions, the students received English instruction using conventional teaching

methods. The primary objective was to investigate the students' perceptions regarding TBLT. A 12-item questionnaire was developed and validated by three experts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching to assess this. This questionnaire aimed to evaluate students' perspectives on the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing fluency, accuracy, motivation, and engagement. The questionnaire was translated into Kurdish, the student's first language, to ensure clarity and comprehension. The questionnaire was administered after the course completion. Data from the completed questionnaires underwent quantitative analysis, including descriptive statistics, to discern any notable discrepancies in language learning outcomes based on students' perceptions of TBLT efficacy.

#### **4. Results**

Language is regarded as a medium of communication rather than a subject to be studied according to TBL (Azizifard, 2024). Moreover, Hamad and Seyyedi (2020) assert that TBL enhances learners' communication. The following table shows students' perceptions of TBLT.

Questionnaire items	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
1. I enjoy learning in TBLT classes.	72.22	16.67	5.56	5.56	0.00
2. I feel confident speaking in TBLT classes.	44.44	27.78	25.00	2.78	0.00
3. The classes are student-centred in TBLT.	55.56	30.56	11.11	0.00	2.78
4. I am active in TBLT classes.	41.67	33.33	16.67	5.56	2.78
5. The student talking time is too much in TBLT.	63.89	25.00	5.56	2.78	2.78
6. The tasks in TBLT are more real-world.	58.33	25.00	11.11	5.56	0.00
7. Fluency is improved through TBLT.	55.56	22.22	16.67	2.78	2.78
8. TBLT primarily focuses on meaning.	83.33	11.11	2.78	0.00	2.78
9. Sometimes, I focus on form in TBLT.	52.78	44.44	0.00	0.00	2.78
10. TBLT develops my accuracy (grammar).	25.00	41.67	27.78	0.00	5.56
11. I employ clear pronunciation.	36.11	36.11	25.00	2.78	0.00
12. I use a wide range of vocabulary and phrases.	50.00	25.00	19.44	2.78	2.78

The data delineated in the table presents a spectrum of perspectives on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) among learners. In the inaugural item, a notable 72.22% of respondents expressed strong concurrence with their enjoyment of TBLT classes, complemented by an additional 16.67% in agreement. Conversely, a marginal 5.56% adopted a neutral stance, while an equivalent percentage of 5.56% dissented, suggesting an overarching positive sentiment towards TBLT pedagogy.

Transitioning to the subsequent item, 44.44% of participants evinced a profound sense of confidence in verbal expression within TBLT contexts, with a further 27.78% concurring. A quarter of respondents maintained a neutral standpoint, with a mere 2.78% registering disagreement. This observation underscores a substantial degree of self-assurance among learners in communicative tasks.

Regarding the third item, 55.56% of respondents staunchly affirmed the prioritization of student-centeredness in TBLT instruction, augmented by 30.56% in concurrence. Nevertheless, 11.11% remained impartial, while 2.78% dissented, indicative of a generally favourable perception regarding the student-centric paradigm.

Conversely, concerning active participation in TBLT classrooms (fourth item), 41.67% exhibited strong affirmation, alongside 33.33% in agreement, while 16.67% maintained neutrality and 5.56% dissented. A trifling 2.78% expressed strong dissent, suggesting an overarching engagement in instructional activities.

Concerning the perceived prevalence of student talking time (STT) (fifth item), 63.89% adamantly acknowledged its prominence, complemented by 25.00% in agreement. Conversely, a mere 5.56% espoused neutrality, while 2.78% dissented, reflecting a generally embraced perspective on elevated STT.

With respect to the sixth item, 58.33% of respondents strongly endorsed the authenticity of TBLT tasks, with an additional 25.00% in agreement. However, 11.11% remained noncommittal, with a meagre 5.56% dissenting, implying a widespread acknowledgement of the pragmatic utility inherent in TBLT activities.

Regarding fluency enhancement (seventh item), 55.56% unequivocally affirmed its occurrence, accompanied by 22.22% in agreement, while 16.67% assumed a neutral stance. A negligible 2.78% voiced disagreement, alongside an

equivalent percentage dissenting vehemently, attesting to a collective recognition of fluency development facilitated by TBLT.

In consideration of the eighth item, a commanding 83.33% espoused a strong conviction in TBLT's emphasis on semantic significance, with 11.11% concurring. Merely 2.78% adopted a neutral stance, mirrored by an equivalent proportion registering strong dissent.

Moving to the ninth item, 52.78% adamantly endorsed the occasional attention accorded to form in TBLT, accompanied by 44.44% in agreement, whereas only 2.78% expressed vehement disagreement.

Conversely, in the tenth item, a lesser proportion, 25.00%, concurred with the notion of TBLT promoting clear pronunciation, with 41.67% in agreement, 27.78% assuming neutrality, and 5.56% dissenting fervently.

Transitioning to the eleventh item, 36.11% echoed a resounding endorsement of clear pronunciation enforcement, mirrored by an equivalent percentage in agreement, while a quarter maintained neutrality, and a paltry 2.78% expressed dissent.

Finally, in the twelfth and final item, 50.00% exhibited unwavering support for the utilization of a diverse lexicon and phrases, with 25.00% in agreement, 19.44% remaining neutral, and 2.78% dissenting, mirroring the preceding patterns of response variability across the spectrum.

In conclusion, most EFL learners perceive TBLT classes positively, finding them enjoyable, student-centred, and providing real-world tasks. They also perceive themselves to be active and confident in speaking in TBLT classes, and they mostly perceive the student talking time to be too much. The results of the questionnaire indicate that the learners' CAF has improved dramatically.

## 5. Discussion

According to the findings of this study, the majority of the learners had a positive perception of Task-Based Language Teaching, most of the learners agreed that they enjoyed TBLT classes, and they felt more confident speaking in TBLT classes, they also found TBLT classes student-centred. They confirmed that they were active participants and found the tasks engaging and more real-world. Additionally, they responded that the students talking time (STT) was too much. Regarding the aspects of speaking, the majority of learners responded that to a great extent, their CAF has improved. Most of the learners noted that there was a noticeable change in their pronunciation.

These results are similar to several studies (Albino, 2017; Masuram & Sripada, 2020; Omar et al., 2021; Winarto & Aprianti, 2022; Xuyen & Trang, 2021). For example, Masuram and Sripada (2020) and Winarto and Aprianti (2022) showed that participants generally developed fluency from attending a TBLT program. In another study on 52 students in Singapore, Omar et al. (2021) revealed a substantial distinction between the fluency and vocabulary of the students in the experimental group and control group, while like the results of the current study's questionnaire, fluency had the highest score. Moreover, the results of the present work are compatible with the research of Xuyen and Trang (2021) about the effects of TBLT on the speaking performance of 58 Vietnamese students. They found that students' vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation improved. Additionally, the results of this section partially agree with Somawati et al.'s (2018) results, in which grammar and complexity had the most significant improvement among 28 Indonesian students. Finally, this study complements Albino's (2017) research, in which he showed that participants, who were 40 ninth-grade students from Angola, improved their fluency, vocabulary, and grammar skills due to TBLT.

These outcomes also partially align with previous studies (Hadi, 2013; Prianty et al., 2022; Yulianti, 2020). These studies showed that participating students had positive perceptions towards TBLT and considered it a motivator, making them more active and collaborative in speaking activities.

## 6. Conclusion

The results indicate that learners feel that TBLT can improve their fluency, accuracy, complexity, and pronunciation. This is likely due to the focus on using language in meaningful contexts, which can help learners develop their communication skills more effectively. Additionally, the use of tasks that are relevant to learners' lives and interests can help to increase motivation and engagement, which can lead to more effective learning outcomes.

Finally, future studies on teachers' perceptions regarding TBLT are recommended since, in this work, only students' perceptions were investigated, and in some studies (Hasnain & Halder, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023; Sang & Van Loi, 2023), teachers had some challenges and concerns regarding TBLT. Therefore, further evaluation of this topic might enlighten this area of research.

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## فیرکردنی زمان لهسەر بنه‌مای ئه‌رک وه‌ک ره‌وتیکی نوئ

### پوخته

فیرکردنی زمان لهسەر بنه‌مای ئه‌رک (TBLT) رێبازیکی په‌یوه‌ندییه‌ بو فیربوونی زمان که جهخت لهسەر به‌کاره‌ینانی زمان ده‌کاته‌وه له دۆخه راسته‌قینه‌کانی ژبانییدا. بریتیه له کارکردنی فیرخووان لهسەر ئه‌و ئه‌رکانه‌ی که مانادار و نامانجدارن، که ده‌توانیت یارمه‌تیده‌ر بێت بو زیادکردنی پالنه‌ر و به‌شدار یکردن. قوتابخانه‌ی ئاماده‌کاری هاوبه‌شی په‌روه‌ده‌یی زانستی سووران په‌کیکه له‌و قوتابخانه‌ی شاری سووران که ئه‌م رێبازمیان جیه‌جی کردوه. ئه‌م توێژینه‌وه‌یه چه‌نده‌یه‌تیه ئامانجی پشکنینی تیروانینه‌کانی ئاخوورانی زمانی ئینگلیزی وه‌کو زمانی بیانی یه سه‌بارت به فیرکردنی زمان لهسەر بنه‌مای ئه‌رک. بو مه‌به‌ستی کوکرده‌وه‌ی زانیارییه‌کان، پرسیار نامه‌یه‌ک وه‌ک ئامراز یکی توێژینه‌وه به‌کاره‌ینرا و بو 36 خویندکار به‌ریومه‌چوو که بو ماوه‌ی وه‌رزیک له‌ سالی 2022-2023 به‌شدار بیانی له‌م پرۆگرامه‌دا کردوه. ئه‌نجامه‌کان ئامازمیان به‌وه کرد که خویندکاران به‌ گشتی تیروانینیکی ئه‌رنیانیان به‌رامبه‌ر به TBLT هه‌بووه. زۆربه‌ی ئاخوورانی زمانی ئینگلیزی وه‌کو زمانی بیانی ئه‌رکه‌کانیان وه‌ک سه‌رنجراکیش، خویندکار سه‌نته‌ر و پر له ئه‌رکه‌کانی جیهانی راسته‌قینه هه‌ست پیده‌کرد. سه‌رمرای ئه‌وه‌ش، ئه‌وان پنیانوابوو که قسه‌کردن له پۆله‌کانی TBLT وزبه‌خش و متمانه به‌خۆبوونه، و به‌گشتی پنیانوابوو که بری ئه‌و کاته‌ی خویندکاران به قسه‌کردن به‌سه‌ری ده‌به‌ن زۆره و زیادبوون له هه‌ر پینج پیومه‌که‌ی توانستی زمان (ره‌وانی، وشه‌سازی، ریزمان، بیژمه‌کردن، و... ریزمان-بیژمه‌کردن). وشه‌ی سه‌رکه‌ی: زمانی ئینگلیزی وه‌کو زمانی بیانی، تیروانینه‌کان، فیرکردنی زمان لهسەر بنه‌مای ئه‌رک، کوردستان

## تدریس اللغة على أساس المهام كاتجاه جديد

### ملخص

تدریس اللغة على أساس المهام (TBLT) هو أسلوب تواصلی لتعلم اللغة يركز على استخدام اللغة في مواقف الحياة الواقعية. فهو يتضمن عمل المتعلمين على مهام ذات معنى وهادفة، والتي يمكن أن تساعد في زيادة الدافع والمشاركة. وتعد مدرسة سوران العلمية الإعدادية المختلطة إحدى مدارس مدينة سوران التي طبقت هذا النهج. تهدف هذه الدراسة الكمية إلى فحص تصورات طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حول تدریس اللغة على أساس المهام. ولغرض جمع البيانات، تم استخدام استبانة كأداة بحث وتم تطبيقها على 36 طالباً وطالبة شاركوا في هذا البرنامج لمدة فصل دراسي في 2022-2023. أشارت النتائج إلى أن الطلاب بشكل عام لديهم تصورات إيجابية تجاه TBLT. ينظر معظم طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية إلى المهام على أنها جذابة وتتمحور حول الطالب ومليئة بالمهام الواقعية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، اعتقدوا أن التحدث في فصول TBLT هو نشاط وثقة، واعتقدوا عمومًا أن مقدار الوقت الذي يقضيه الطلاب في التحدث أكثر من اللازم وكانت هناك زيادة في جميع مقاييس إتقان اللغة الخمسة (الطلاقة، والمفردات، والقواعد، والنطق، قواعد النطق).

الكلمات المفتاحية: طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، التصورات، تدریس اللغة على أساس المهام، كردستان