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## Effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in English Speaking Instruction: A Systematic Review

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**Abstract.** This systematic review synthesized empirical evidence on the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in English speaking instruction and the mediating role of socio-affective and environmental factors. It assessed the impact of TBLT on learners' English-speaking abilities by examining evidence from diverse educational contexts. A systematic review was conducted following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, resulting in the selection of 16 empirical studies published between 2015 and 2025. The findings indicated that TBLT is highly effective in enhancing overall speaking proficiency and specific linguistic competencies. More critically, the synthesis revealed that these linguistic gains are not merely direct outcomes but are fundamentally mediated by TBLT's unique capacity to foster supportive, interactive learning environments, which in turn significantly boost learners' confidence, motivation, and engagement. Furthermore, the analysis identified a synergistic cycle wherein the emphasis on authentic, collaborative tasks reduces speaking anxiety and increases learners' willingness to communicate. This enhanced psycho-social disposition acts as a critical factor, driving the active experimentation with language and refinement of skills through meaningful practice. Thus, the evidence positioned TBLT as a powerful method not only for developing measurable speaking skills but also for transforming the learning environment and the learner's emotional relationship with speaking English, thereby integrating skill development with the cultivation of essential psycho-social dispositions. To fully investigate TBLT's long-term effect on English speaking instruction, future research should employ larger samples and longer time periods, as well as mixed methods designs.

**Keywords:** Task-Based Language Teaching; English Speaking Instruction; Speaking Proficiency; Speaking Skills; Systematic Review

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## 1. Introduction

English speaking proficiency is an important component of language learning, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) settings. However, speaking skills are widely acknowledged as being as challenging as they are crucial in foreign language classrooms (Tayyab et al., 2023). In contrast to receptive skills, which allow learners to process language input at their own pace, speaking happens in real time. It requires quick word choice, correct grammar use, and active management of interaction (Thanh & Tâm, 2022). Therefore, mastery of speaking proficiency is important for academic success, professional opportunities, and daily communication.

Nevertheless, in many EFL contexts, learners often face two common problems. One is limited exposure to authentic communication. The other is high levels of language anxiety (Wulandari et al., 2022). These problems stem from a test-oriented curriculum and teacher-centered classrooms (Bai & Wang, 2023). Together, these factors constrain opportunities for meaningful interaction, a process empirically established as essential for developing speaking fluency (Ambawani et al., 2025; Zaker & Azizpour, 2025). This lack of practice consequently impedes the development of the fluency and confidence required for real-world communication. In response to these challenges, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as a pedagogical approach that shifts the focus to communication-driven tasks. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that TBLT effectively creates interactive opportunities and leads to measurable gains in oral proficiency (e.g. Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025; Dilini & Prahalathan, 2021).

As a teaching approach, TBLT emphasizes attention to and respect for learners' personality development (Yasmin et al., 2024) and promotes learner autonomy by requiring learners to make their own decisions about how to approach, plan and execute communicative tasks (Xiang 2025; Mulyadi et al., 2023). Such empowerment enables them to strategically select and employ language resources to meet communicative goals, in accordance with their individual styles. This shift reconfigures classroom dynamics from teacher-centered to learner-centered practice, with teachers transitioning from gatekeepers to facilitators who promote independent and reflective learning (Lynch & Wang, 2022). Additionally, the interactive nature of TBLT encourages collaboration and peer support, resulting in a more holistic language-learning experience (Maftuna, 2024). Consequently, TBLT's learner-centered model grants students' greater ownership and encourages students' exploration of language forms in collaborative settings (Bakhronova, 2024).

By emphasizing meaning-focused tasks rooted in real-world communication, TBLT spurs active learner participation and fosters authentic language use. When tasks demand genuine information exchange, they prompt purposeful language engagement, affording learners timely and targeted feedback (Baharun et al., 2023). Empirical studies indicate that such tasks effectively nurture natural language production and the negotiation of meaning (Dilini & Prahalathan, 2021), while also enabling learners to apply newly acquired vocabulary and structures

in a context-rich manner, leading to measurable gains in lexical resources (Yu, 2022). This approach is particularly advantageous for developing speaking proficiency, as research has demonstrated its direct effectiveness in improving specific speaking skills such as fluency and accuracy (Panduwangi, 2021). By systematically embedding such tasks, teachers can provide meaningful input in authentic contexts and deliver real-time, communicative feedback. This, in turn, stimulates greater learner autonomy and confidence (Yasmin et al., 2024), as students take ownership of the language required to complete tasks.

Over the last decade, TBLT has gained significant attention in empirical research aimed at improving learners' spoken English, particularly in EFL contexts (Milon et al., 2023). However, the growing body of research exhibits considerable heterogeneity in methodological designs (e.g. experimental vs. qualitative approaches), participant demographics (e.g. different age groups, proficiency levels, and cultural backgrounds), and educational settings (e.g. secondary schools vs. universities). This variability complicates the synthesis of findings and challenges efforts to draw overarching conclusions regarding TBLT's impact on speaking proficiency. Some prior reviews have summarized TBLT research on other skills, such as reading (Zhao, 2024), writing (Dinata et al., 2024), and listening (Sun, 2022).

For speaking, many primary studies exist, but the evidence is still dispersed. More importantly, few systematic studies have brought these findings together while also examining both language gains and socio-affective factors (e.g. confidence, motivation, collaborative engagement). To fill this gap, the present review systematically examines empirical studies published from 2015 to 2025. It focuses on how TBLT influences English speaking proficiency, with a specific focus on two dimensions: its effectiveness across diverse contexts; and the mediating role of socio-affective and environmental factors.

Based on this aim, this systematic review addresses the following research question: What does recent empirical research report about the effectiveness of TBLT in improving English-speaking proficiency across diverse educational contexts, and how do socio-affective and environmental factors mediate this process?

## **2. Literature Review**

This chapter presents a systematic review of research on TBLT in English-speaking instruction. It aims to build the theoretical and empirical background for the present review. First, the chapter introduces the foundations of TBLT and explains how TBLT links to current theories of language learning. Next, it explains speaking proficiency as a complex construct. It also summarizes common ways to measure speaking in empirical studies. The chapter then synthesizes primary studies on TBLT for speaking. Finally, the chapter reviews socio-effective and environmental factors often reported in this literature.

### **2.1 The Theoretical Basis of TBLT**

TBLT is a pedagogical approach founded on the principle that language learning is most effective when anchored in meaning-focused communication (Chunliu &

Guangsheng, 2025). By prioritizing the completion of communicative tasks over the mastery of discrete linguistic forms in isolation, it distinguishes itself from traditional methods such as Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) (Zhang, 2024). Central to this approach is the “task”, defined as an activity in which learners must use the target language to achieve a primary, non-linguistic outcome, with meaning negotiation as its core process. This pedagogical framework aligns with the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1980), which posits that language acquisition is facilitated through conversational interactions that require participants to negotiate meaning. By creating structured opportunities for such interaction, TBLT provides a coherent basis for developing speaking skills, principle evidenced in studies emphasizing peer interaction (e.g. Dilini & Prahalthan, 2021; Milon et al., 2023).

## **2.2 Defining and Measuring Speaking Proficiency in TBLT Research**

Speaking proficiency is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing fluency, accuracy, complexity, and pragmatic competence (Leonard & Shea, 2017). This conceptual complexity necessitates diverse measurement approaches in empirical TBLT research. Assessments range from holistic, performance-based ratings to discrete, analytical measures of specific speech features (Noroozi & Taheri, 2022). Consequently, the studies synthesized in this review employed a variety of instruments to operationalize speaking proficiency gains. This methodological diversity in defining the dependent variable contributes to heterogeneity in findings, which systematic reviews seek to synthesize and interpret.

## **2.3 Empirical Research on TBLT for Speaking**

A growing number of primary research studies have examined TBLT in EFL/ESL speaking instruction (e.g. Sharmin, 2023). Commonly, these studies have reported positive outcomes, including improvements in oral fluency, vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy in communicative contexts, and enhanced peer interaction. For instance, studies have documented gains in fluency and interaction (e.g. Albino, 2017; Dilini & Prahalthan, 2021), vocabulary use and discourse completeness (e.g. Yu, 2022), and collaborative participation (e.g. Milon et al., 2023).

However, this research is marked by considerable inconsistency across findings. Reported effects often vary, depending on contextual variables such as educational setting, learner proficiency level, and task implementation. For example, interventions may emphasize fluency gains in one context (e.g. Nurhadi et al., 2024, with secondary students) while detailing gains in linguistic complexity in another (e.g. Yu, 2022, with university students). This variability in outcomes, coupled with the methodological diversity in assessment noted above, underscores the need for a systematic review to integrate and compare evidence across different contexts.

## **2.4 Socio-Affective and Environmental Factors as Potential Mediators**

A recurrent theme across primary empirical studies is the concurrent reporting of linguistic improvements and positive shifts in learners’ psychological states and classroom dynamics under TBLT. Studies frequently document reductions in

language anxiety, increases in motivation and self-confidence, and the cultivation of more collaborative learning environments (e.g. Díaz et al., 2023; Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025; Nurhadi et al., 2024). Theoretically, these socio-affective and environmental factors are not merely correlates but potential mediators that could help explain how TBLT influences learning outcomes. Concepts such as Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis and MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) Willingness to Communicate provide a framework for understanding how a low-anxiety, supportive environment may increase learner engagement and facilitate language acquisition.

However, although these factors are common in individual studies, the overall literature has not examined them in a systematic way. It remains unclear how these factors may function as mediators in the relationship between TBLT implementation and gains in speaking proficiency. This is an important gap. A systematic synthesis is therefore needed to compare evidence across contexts and to build a clearer explanation of how TBLT supports speaking development.

### **3. Methodology**

This chapter details the methodology used to identify, select, and appraise relevant studies on TBLT in English speaking instruction. A systematic review was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework. The following subsections describe the key components of this methodological approach.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

In this research, a systematic review was conducted, guided by the PRISMA guidelines. This framework provides a transparent and replicable structure suitable for analyzing studies on TBLT in English speaking instruction. While the Cochrane approach is another established method that is commonly utilized in medical intervention research, the PRISMA framework was selected for its broader applicability across social science disciplines, including educational research, and its specific focus on enhancing the reporting quality of systematic reviews (Burgard et al., 2025). Shahrol et al. (2020) defines a systematic review as a structured approach for locating, assessing, interpreting, and synthesizing research findings relevant to predefined research questions, topic areas, or phenomena. They emphasize that the primary purpose of undertaking such a review is to establish a comprehensive overview of the field, aggregate evidence addressing specific queries, and offer a concise synthesis of the existing literature.

#### **3.2 Procedure**

The literature search for this systematic review involved searching articles from three major academic databases: Google Scholar, The Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and JSTOR. This combination was selected to construct a robust search strategy capable of identifying the relevant empirical literature on TBLT and English-speaking proficiency. Google Scholar was used for its wide coverage. It supported a broad first research and helped with citation tracking to locate key studies. ERIC was used as the main specialist database for research in language teaching and learning. JSTOR offered a stable archive of

peer-reviewed journals in several fields, including applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and language education. Together, these databases provided enough access to the peer-reviewed empirical studies needed to answer the research questions across different contexts. The selection also matched the review's focus on education and social science. Scopus and Web of Science are large multidisciplinary databases. However, pilot searches showed that the chosen three databases captured the targeted classroom-based empirical research more efficiently for this review.

At the beginning of this research synthesis, keywords related to TBLT and speaking instruction were established as: "Task-Based Language Teaching," "speaking skills," "oral English," "speaking proficiency," "effectiveness." To conduct a thorough search, the following combinations were used to retrieve reports about the intended research questions: ["Task-Based Language Teaching"] + ["speaking skills"] + ["oral English"] + ["speaking proficiency"] + ["effectiveness"]. Articles published within the last 10 years (2015–2025) were prioritized to ensure that the reviewed studies were relevant to modern language education contexts. Searches were conducted within articles' abstracts, titles, and keywords. To maintain research quality, the research included only peer-reviewed journal articles. As a result, 187 articles initially met the inclusion criteria.

### *3.2.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

The retrieved studies were scrutinized based on a set of pre-established inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 1). Next, the remaining studies were appraised in light of the research questions. Only those that satisfied the following eligibility criteria were ultimately selected.

The criteria were formulated to ensure the review directly addressed its research question while adhering to established methodological standards for systematic reviews. Limiting the literature review to studies published between 2015 and 2025 ensured both recency and a manageable scope of evidence (Lame, 2019). Limiting the search to English-language publications was a practical necessity for accurate appraisal by the researchers. Focusing on ESL/EFL learners precisely defines the population relevant to L2 English speaking proficiency.

Including only empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) ensures the synthesis is based on direct evidence of TBLT's impact, a fundamental principle in applied linguistics research synthesis (Pandey, 2024). The core requirement that studies must investigate L2 oral production within a TBLT framework is the direct translation of the research question into a screening criterion. Including peer-reviewed journal articles and academic theses helped to focus on studies with stronger methods. It also helped reduce publication bias. Full-text availability was essential for rigorous quality assessment and data extraction.

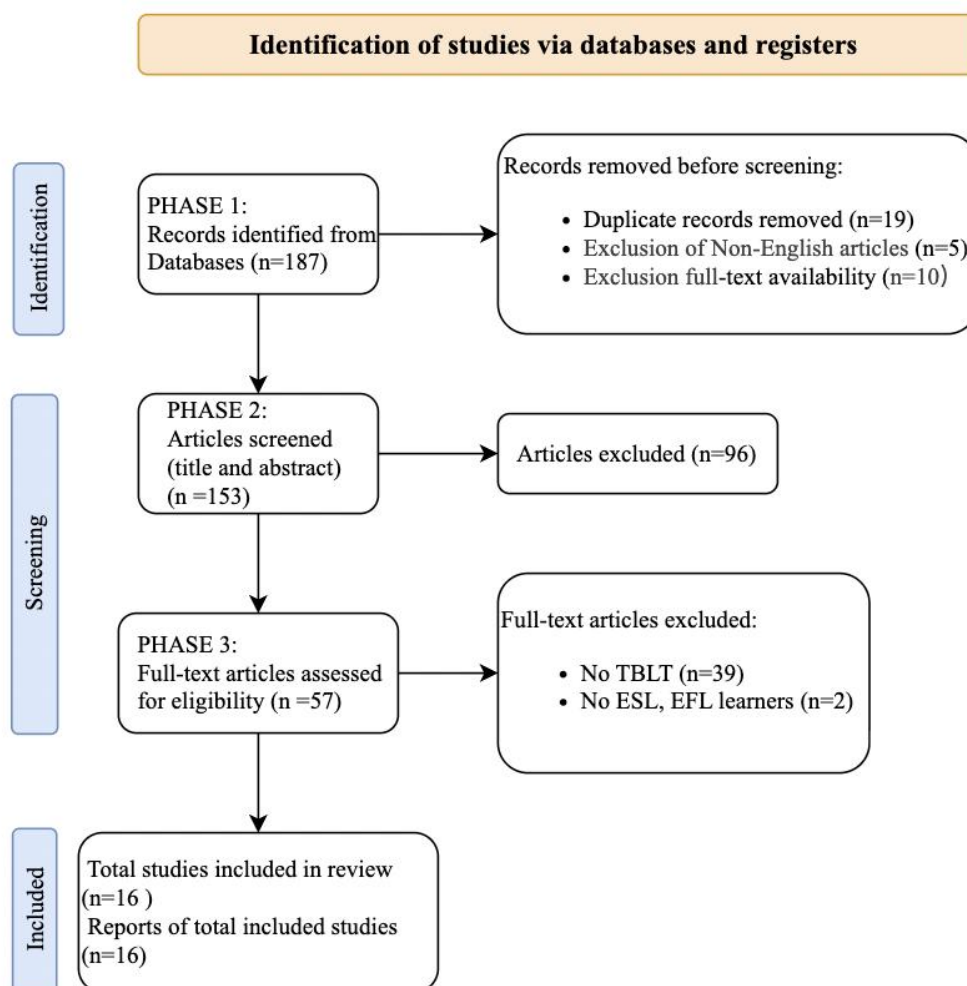
**Table 1: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Details</b>
Year limit	2015–2025
Language	English
Participant population	The study participants must be ESL (English as a Second Language) or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners.
Empirical research	Only empirical (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) studies that present primary data (e.g. experimental results, observational data, survey outcomes) will be included.
Content	The included studies examine the development of L2 oral production (speaking skills) within TBLT frameworks.
Publication type	Papers published in journals, articles, peer-reviewed papers and theses submitted for the fulfilment of any degree were included.
Full-text availability	Full-text versions must be accessible to allow for a thorough evaluation of study design, analysis, and findings.

### 3.2.2 Data Extraction Process

The screening process followed three sequential phases, guided by the pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 1). In the initial screening phase, duplicates, non-English publications, studies outside of the year limit (2015–2025) and items without full-text availability were removed. Next, titles and abstracts were reviewed, with any articles deemed irrelevant to the participant population (ESL/EFL learners), research focus (TBLT and L2 oral production), or empirical study design were excluded.

Finally, the full text of the remaining articles was retrieved and rigorously reviewed. This final stage applied all criteria, confirming eligibility regarding year limit, language participant population, empirical design, detailed content focus, publication type, and full-text accessibility for quality assessment. The entire process of searching, screening, and assessing the eligibility of articles is visualized in the PRISMA flowchart (see Figure 1), offering a transparent representation of the inclusion and exclusion process.



**Figure 1: Article selection process according to the PRISMA approach**

### 3.2.3 Quality Assessment

A rigorous quality assessment process was conducted to ensure that only studies satisfying high academic standards were included. For quantitative research, PRISMA guidelines were followed to examine sample sizes, statistical analyses, and the transparency of reporting. In addition, each study's relevance to TBLT in English speaking instruction was carefully evaluated. As a result, lower-quality studies were excluded from the final review, yielding a final sample size of 16, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2 provides a synthesized overview of the 16 empirical studies included in this systematic review. It presents the following four key aspects of each study: reference (authors and year); research purpose; sample description; and main findings. This structured summary allows readers to quickly grasp the scope of the evidence base. Furthermore, it also shows that the studies cover a wide range of settings and learner groups. For example, some studies focus on university English majors in China (e.g. Yu, 2022). Others examine vocational college

students in Indonesia (e.g. Somawati et al., 2017). Additionally, it helps to identify recurrent findings across research, such as improvements in fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and learner confidence. Thus, the table serves as a foundational reference for the thematic analysis and conclusions that follow in the review.

**Table 2: Studies Included in the Review**

No	References	Purpose	Sample	Findings
1	(Yu, 2022)	To examine how teachers use TBLT in oral English classes.	31 Senior English majors at Guangxi University of Foreign Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TBLT has effectively improved students' speaking skills, particularly in vocabulary use, idiomatic expressions, fluency, and discourse completeness.</li> <li>•Students have become more confident.</li> <li>•With practice, students can improve intonation and pronunciation.</li> </ul>
2	(Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025)	To explore how TBLT influences students' active participation, motivation, and oral language development.	63 second-semester students from the English for Professional Communication course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TBLT can increase student participation, motivation, and willingness to communicate.</li> <li>•TBLT helps students to be more confident and spontaneous, especially when engaged in tasks that mirror real-life communicative contexts.</li> <li>•TBLT can create a classroom environment that fosters linguistic competence. It can also promote learner autonomy and communicative confidence.</li> </ul>
3	(Ng et al., 2025)	To analyze obstacles to the successful implementation of TBLT in adult EFL environments.	58 participants from an adult EFL class in Dhaka, Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TBLT can foster fluency, increase engagement, and create a more interactive learning environment.</li> </ul>
4	(Milon et al., 2023)	To delve into the perceptions and practices of TBLT at the tertiary level of education in Bangladesh, focusing on the teaching of speaking skills.	10 students and 2 English teachers from a private university in Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TBLT is effective in promoting collaborative learning environments and fostering increased student participation in spoken language instruction.</li> </ul>
5	(Quynh, 2024)	To investigate the effectiveness of TBLT in	15 B1-level students, aged 11-14 (seven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TBLT significantly improves EFL learners' capacity for fluent communication, together with their grammatical accuracy,</li> </ul>

		enhancing students' oral fluency and general speaking performance.	males, eight females)	variety of vocabulary, information-rich conversation, and rate of speech.
6	(Panduwangi, 2021)	To examine the effectiveness of TBLT on non-English major college students, including its effectiveness on students' perceptions of task-based instructions in speaking class.	60 1st-semester students in the non-English department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TBLT can increase students' speaking skills.</li> <li>•TBLT can improve students' self-confidence.</li> <li>•TBLT can improve students' fluency and accuracy.</li> </ul>
7	(Dilini & Prahalathan, 2021)	To investigate the effectiveness of the TBLT approach in improving students' speaking skills and students' perception towards integrating TBLT to improve speaking skills.	60 students, grade 10, at the Katharina Shirani Frauenfeld College in Moragoda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TBLT improves students' oral social interaction.</li> <li>•TBLT helps students to communicate accurately and fluently with other speakers of English.</li> </ul>
8	(Afifah & Devana, 2020)	To determine the effectiveness of task-based learning in EFL.	36 fourth-semester students of the English education study program at Baturaja University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TBLT improves students' speaking skills.</li> <li>•TBLT helps students enjoy learning English.</li> <li>•Task-based activities are a good way to improve English vocabulary.</li> </ul>
9	(Nget et al., 2020)	To assess learner satisfaction with the task-based instruction based intervention.	78 students from Grade 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•It helps improve students' speaking skills in general as well as subskills (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, interaction, and fluency).</li> <li>•It fulfills their needs and interests and offers an appropriate condition for language learning, despite the class size.</li> <li>•It is effective in dealing with common problems encountered in teaching and learning English</li> </ul>

				speaking skills in Cambodian classrooms.
10	(Díaz et al., 2023)	To investigate the impact of TBLT on EFL learners' speaking proficiency and motivation, in comparison to traditional instructional methods.	60 university students aged 17-21, with an A2 level of English proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TBLT improves students' motivation, confidence, vocabulary improvement, and communicative skills.</li> </ul>
11	(Kebede et al., 2019)	To investigate the effectiveness of task-based instruction in improving learners' speaking skills.	84 students from Grade 11 at Micha Preparatory School; five English language teachers at Micha Preparatory School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Enhances students' speaking performance in the specified speaking features.</li> <li>•Enhances students' interaction in speaking, thereby building their interest and confidence.</li> <li>•Gives learners the opportunity to speak and interact when producing a final fluent speech for the audience.</li> <li>•Improves fluency, grammar and discourse management (cohesion and coherence).</li> </ul>
12	(Albino, 2017)	To investigate how EFL learners at PUNIV-Cazenga can improve their speaking fluency, based on a TBLT approach.	40 learners in ninth grade at PUNIV-Cazenga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Improves learners' speaking fluency by maximizing the speed of speech production, improving grammatical accuracy, elaborating on their utterances, and developing interactional language.</li> </ul>
13	(Shashikala, 2018)	To investigate the effectiveness of TBLT in teaching oral communication skills to ESL students in an academic setting.	60 2nd-year undergraduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Helps students acquire oral communication skills by practicing them in life-like situations.</li> <li>•Provides a relaxed environment, group interaction, authentic material, learner-centeredness, and spontaneous learning to increase students' voluntary involvement in task-based lessons.</li> </ul>
14	(Somawati et al., 2017)	To investigate the effectiveness of TBLT for vocational college students.	52 students from a vocational college in Denpasar Bali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TBLT is effective in improving students' communicative competence.</li> <li>•Students could show better strategic, sociolinguistic, discourse (semantic) and linguistic competence.</li> </ul>

15	(Nurhadi et al., 2024)	To explore teachers' and students' perceptions, experiences, and outcomes when engaging in speaking activities within the TBLT framework.	Five students in 10th grade and one English teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TBLT enhances students' speaking abilities by providing a practical and interactive learning environment.</li> <li>•TBLT can reduce anxiety and increase confidence, particularly when shifting from whole-class presentations to small group activities such as gallery walks.</li> <li>•TBLT encourages students to interact with various peers, fostering collaboration and communication.</li> </ul>
16	(Lume & Hisbullah, 2022)	To find out the effectiveness of task-based language teaching to enhance speaking skills.	127 students from ten-grade SMK NW Darul Abror Kuta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•TBLT enhances speaking willingness and achievement.</li> <li>•TBLT engages learners through authentic tasks.</li> <li>•TBLT increases student activeness</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis process was designed to systematically synthesize the findings extracted from the included studies in order to address the review's research question. Following the data extraction presented in Table 2, a qualitative thematic synthesis approach was employed. This involved several sequential steps. First, the "Findings" column of Table 2 was iteratively reviewed to identify recurring outcomes and concepts related to TBLT's effectiveness and the reported role of learner affect and the learning environment. Second, these initial codes were grouped into broader, descriptive thematic categories based on conceptual similarity. Third, the relationships between these categories were analyzed to develop analytical themes that directly addressed the research question.

This process specifically sought to distinguish between reports of direct linguistic outcomes and those concerning socio-effective and environmental factors, while also examining their interrelationships as presented in the primary studies. The emerging thematic framework was continuously cross-checked against the original study findings to ensure interpretive validity. Thus, the final synthesis, presented in the Findings chapter, moves beyond a descriptive summary of individual results to provide an integrated analysis of the way in which TBLT facilitates speaking proficiency and the critical mediating processes involved.

## 4. Findings

Task-Based Language Teaching has garnered significant scholarly attention in English speaking instruction due to its learner-centered orientation, emphasis on real-life communicative tasks, and potential to foster meaningful interaction among students. In contrast to traditional lecture-based models, TBLT shifts the focus to authentic tasks. These tasks encourage learners to negotiate meaning, speak more spontaneously, and work with peers. This was evidenced by several

studies included in this review, which reported more peer interaction, higher student participation, and a more collaborative learning environment (e.g. Dilini & Prahalathan, 2021; Milon et al., 2023; Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025). The qualitative thematic synthesis of the 16 included studies identified four main themes on TBLT's impact (see Table 3). The analysis did not only list outcomes. It also examined how the themes connect with each other. In particular, it shows how socio-affective and environmental factors (Theme 3 and 4) mediate the improvement in speaking proficiency and other linguistic competences (Theme 1 and 2). The following subsections present these findings in detail.

**Table 3: Thematic Synthesis of Findings**

Theme	Sub-Themes	Description	Supporting Papers	Representative Proportion (%) (n = 16)
1. Enhanced speaking proficiency	Improved fluency	TBLT links to faster speaking speed and smoother delivery. It can also support more appropriate use of idiomatic expressions.	(Yu, 2022) (Panduwangi, 2021) (Dilini & Prahalathan, 2021) (Ng et al., 2025)	43.75%
	Enhanced accuracy	Learners show better grammatical correctness and appropriate language use in speech.	(Panduwangi, 2021) (Dilini & Prahalathan, 2021) (Albino, 2017)	
	Broadened expression range	Students expand their vocabulary and variety of spoken expressions.	(Yu, 2022) (Panduwangi, 2021)	
	Improved pronunciation and intonation	TBLT improves the clarity and correctness of speech sounds while promoting more natural and meaningful pitch variation.	(Yu, 2022) (Nget et al., 2020)	
	Strengthened interaction skills	Students show improvement in interactive sub-skills such as turn-taking and responding appropriately.	(Dilini & Prahalathan, 2021) (Nget et al., 2020) (Kebede et al., 2019)	
2. Gains in specific linguistic competences	Grammatical structures	TBLT contributes to improved grammatical accuracy and structural competence in spoken English.	(Quynh, 2024) (Kebede et al., 2019) (Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025)	50.00%
	Communicative competence	TBLT enhances learners' overall ability to communicate	(Díaz et al., 2023) (Kebede et al., 2019) (Somawati et al., 2017)	

	Vocabulary usage	effectively in real-life contexts. TBLT leads to notable improvements in vocabulary range and appropriate word choice.	(Yu, 2022) (Quynh, 2024) (Afifah & Devana, 2020) (Diaz et al., 2023) (Albino, 2017) (Somawati et al., 2017)	
	Discourse completeness	TBLT helps learners produce more coherent and complete spoken discourse.	(Yu, 2022) (Somawati et al., 2017)	
	Speech production speed	TBLT is linked to faster speech production and more fluent expression.	(Kebede et al., 2019) (Albino, 2017)	
	Expression clarity	TBLT can improve clarity and precision in oral communication.	(Kebede et al., 2019) (Albino, 2017)	
3. Mediating role of socio-affective factors (Increased confidence, motivation, and engagement)	Increased confidence	TBLT reduces anxiety by involving small-group tasks and simulations of real-life communication scenarios.	(Milon et al., 2023) (Panduwangi, 2021) (Diaz et al., 2023)	43.75%
	Enhanced motivation	TBLT increases willingness to communicate and fosters a positive, communicative classroom environment.	(Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025) (Diaz et al., 2023)	
	Improved engagement	TBLT encourages interaction among peers, increases participation, and creates a more interactive learning environment.	(Nurhadi et al., 2024) (Ng et al., 2025) (Lume & Hisbullah, 2022)	
4. Mediating role of the learning environment (Creation of collaborative and interactive learning environments )	Collaborative learning atmosphere	TBLT cultivates a classroom environment that emphasizes cooperation and mutual support among learners.	(Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025) (Milon et al., 2023)	
	Authentic communicative tasks	TBLT utilizes real-life scenarios and meaningful tasks that promote practical language use.	(Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025) (Milon et al., 2023) (Shashikala, 2018)	31.25%

Peer interaction	TBLT promotes communication and collaboration among diverse student groups.	(Nurhadi et al., 2024) (Lume & Hisbullah, 2022)
Learner autonomy	TBLT supports students to take ownership of their learning through self-directed task completion.	(Milon et al., 2023) (Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025) (Lume & Hisbullah, 2022)
Interactive learning environment	TBLT creates dynamic classroom settings that facilitate active student interaction and engagement.	(Nurhadi et al., 2024) (Shashikala, 2018)

### **Theme 1: Enhanced Speaking Proficiency**

The positive impact of TBLT on learners' overall speaking proficiency emerged as a consistent theme across the studies, accounting for 43.75% (7 of 16) of the selected articles. Numerous studies have highlighted that TBLT significantly enhances learners' fluency and accuracy. For example, Yu (2022) found that EFL college students significantly improved their speaking proficiency in fluency and idiomatic expressions when taught through TBLT. Similarly, Dilini and Prahalathan (2021) demonstrated that TBLT effectively improved students' speaking fluency and accuracy.

Evidence from a study with younger learners also corroborates these gains in fluency and linguistic accuracy (Quynh, 2024). Learners exposed to task-based instruction broadened their repertoires of spoken expressions and improved their intonation (Nget et al., 2020); additionally, they demonstrated enhanced pronunciation through practice (Albino, 2017). Furthermore, research in secondary school settings (Kebede et al., 2019) explored TBLT's impact on English speaking skills, revealing that students performed better in speaking subskills, such as pronunciation, interaction, and fluency.

### **Theme 2: Gains in Specific Linguistic Competences**

Another key area of research has focused on the gains in specific linguistic competences from TBLT, which were addressed in half (8 out of 16) of the selected articles. Specifically, the reviewed findings highlighted TBLT's potential to sharpen learners' linguistic subskills. Kebede et al. (2019) investigated the effectiveness of TBLT in improving learners' speaking skills, reporting that TBLT can improve learners' grammatical structures and develop their communicative competence.

Similarly, Yu (2022) found that among EFL college students, the implementation of TBLT yielded notable improvements in linguistic competence, specifically enhancing vocabulary usage and discourse completeness. Moreover, a substantial uplift in vocabulary range and grammatical accuracy was observed by Albino (2017), who noted that TBLT's meaning-focused tasks allowed learners to practice language in interactive, authentic contexts. Additional findings link TBLT to faster

speech production and greater clarity of expression (Albino, 2017; Kebede et al., 2019). Taken together, these results underscore TBLT's holistic capacity to refine multiple facets of English-speaking skills, especially in terms of linguistic competences.

### **Theme 3: Mediating Role of Socio-Affective Factors**

A third prominent aspect, noted in 7 out of 16 articles (43.75%), was the critical role of increased confidence, motivation, and engagement as mediating variables. TBLT's effectiveness in boosting these socio-affective factors was emphasized by many of the reviewed studies. For example, Milon et al. (2023) found that TBLT activities often involve small-group tasks, simulations of real-life communication scenarios, and opportunities for collaborative learning, which reduce students' anxiety and heighten their willingness to speak English more spontaneously.

Not only are reduced anxiety and heightened willingness beneficial outcomes for learners, but they also establish a prerequisite psychological state that enables greater linguistic risk-taking and practice. Soongpankhao and Zhou (2025) further noted that TBLT promoted university students' willingness to communicate in English, highlighting its capacity to foster an interactive, communicative classroom environment. Overall, this theme underscores that TBLT can create key psycho-social conditions that support later language learning and language use.

### **Theme 4: Mediating Role of the Learning Environment**

The final recurring pattern was TBLT's role in cultivating collaborative classroom atmospheres during English speaking instruction; this was a focus in 5 of the 16 selected articles (31.25%). As TBLT emphasizes authentic communicative tasks, students frequently co-construct meaning in small groups or pairs, thereby promoting learner autonomy and collaborative problem-solving (Milon et al., 2023; Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025). Nurhadi et al. (2024) further noted that TBLT enhances students' speaking abilities by providing a practical and interactive learning environment.

Moreover, Shashikala (2018) further indicates that when tasks mirror real-life scenarios and the task environment is collaborative and interactive, students gain both practical speaking skills and confidence in authentic communication. This positive affective environment fosters enthusiasm and learner-centeredness, ultimately increasing students' willingness to engage in meaningful communication exercises. Thus, TBLT encourages students to interact with various peers, fostering collaboration and communication, and cultivating a more interactive learning environment.

The synthesis indicates that this collaborative environment (Theme 4) functions as the foundational factor. It directly promotes the positive socio-affective shifts described under Theme 3, which in turn are reported across studies to enable and amplify the gains in speaking proficiency and linguistic competences (Themes 1 and 2). This observed interconnection forms the empirical basis for the synergistic cycle proposed in the conclusion.

## 5. Discussion

This discussion addresses the review's research question by arguing that the effectiveness of TBLT in developing English-speaking proficiency is fundamentally mediated by its capacity to foster a supportive, interactive learning environment that concurrently boosts learners' confidence and motivation. This socio-affective advancement appears to be a critical prerequisite for the significant gains observed in linguistic competences. The findings that TBLT's task-oriented framework not only facilitates linguistic development but also systematically nurtures the psychological and social conditions necessary for oral communication.

Rather than operating in isolation, these themes form a synergistic, self-reinforcing cycle. TBLT's emphasis on authentic, collaborative tasks (Milon et al., 2023; Nurhadi et al., 2024; Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025) directly reduces the anxiety associated with spontaneous speech by shifting the focus from perfect accuracy to meaningful communication, a transition clearly reflected in the creation of collaborative atmospheres and authentic communicative tasks. This reduction in anxiety, combined with the repeated experience of successful peer interaction, cultivates a marked increase in learners' self-confidence and willingness to communicate (Nurhadi et al., 2024; Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025).

This psycho-social disposition includes higher motivation and less inhibition. It then supports further language growth. As learners become more willing to engage in communication, they actively experiment with a broader range of vocabulary (Albino, 2017; Yu, 2022), refine grammatical structures through negotiation of meaning (Kebede et al., 2019), and achieve greater fluency, pronunciation clarity, and pragmatic competence through repeated, purposeful practice (Panduwangi, 2021; Yu, 2022). Therefore, the gains in specific linguistic competences were not only a direct result of task design but were strongly supported by the positive learning environments that TBLT helps to build.

This cyclical relationship indicates that cognitive gains in speaking are inseparable from the learner's emotional state and social interactions. As evidenced by studies reporting decreased speaking anxiety and increased confidence in collaborative tasks, the supportive setting fostered by TBLT reduces anxiety and promotes autonomy (e.g. Panduwangi, 2021; Díaz et al., 2023; Nurhadi et al., 2024; Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025). This affective shift, in turn, encourages linguistic experimentation necessary for growth, as learners demonstrate greater willingness to experiment with vocabulary and grammatical structures (Kebede et al., 2019; Yu, 2022; Quynh, 2024). Thus, the documented improvements in overall speaking proficiency are a tangible result of this holistic process. TBLT succeeds by merging communicative practice with affective support, thereby resolving a critical limitation of traditional instruction whereby anxiety often blocks learners from accessing and applying their knowledge during spontaneous speech.

While TBLT undeniably enhances tangible speaking proficiencies, this review suggests that its most profound impact may lie in its ability to transform the

learning environment and the learner's emotional relationship with speaking English. The evidence from the reviewed studies (e.g. Nurhadi et al., 2024; Shashikala, 2018) indicates that by prioritizing meaningful interaction, collaboration, and learner autonomy, TBLT effectively breaks the cycle of anxiety and inhibition that often hampers language acquisition. For instance, the creation of relaxed, interactive environments (Shashikala, 2018) and increased enjoyment in learning (Afifah & Devana, 2020) further illustrate the way in which TBLT fosters conditions that are conducive to oral communication. This transformation unlocks the learner's potential for holistic communicative development, positioning TBLT as a pedagogical approach that not only builds language skills but also cultivates the confidence and willingness to use them meaningfully in the real world.

## **6. Implications, Limitations, and Future Directions**

The synthesis presented in this review reveals a set of implications, which are explored in two key areas: immediate applications for classroom practice; and an agenda for future research, derived from the review's own limitations.

### **6.1 Implications for Practice**

The main theoretical contribution of this review is the identification of a synergistic cycle in which psycho-social factors help drive language development. This insight also leads to clear implications for pedagogical practice. To apply this cyclical relationship in practice, educators should design tasks that explicitly utilize and reinforce its positive feedback loop. A principal implication is that educators should consciously structure their classrooms as interactive learning communities. Establishing group-oriented tasks and collaborative projects, such as group presentations, jigsaw discussions, and problem-solving tasks, is pivotal. These tasks should have a clear main goal that is not about language itself. The goal should require learners to work with peers and negotiate meaning.

In this way, tasks create the conditions shown to support vocabulary growth and clearer understanding through real exchanges. This learner-centered classroom can improve linguistic competence. It can also build group bonding and confidence, which the review identifies as key drivers of speaking development. To reduce anxiety associated with speaking alone, tasks can be sequenced, for example, progressing from low-stakes practice in small groups to a whole-class performance. By doing this, learners are encouraged to take risks and communicate, which in turn activates the positive cycle described in the discussion section.

Furthermore, the importance of authentic, real-life communicative tasks cannot be overstated. The reviewed studies substantiate this, showing that tasks mirroring real-world interactions enhance learner engagement and willingness to communicate (e.g. Soongpankhao & Zhou, 2025; Lume & Hisbullah, 2022). Therefore, practitioners should design or adapt tasks that mirror the specific real-world communicative needs and interests of their learners, whether in social, academic, or professional domains. Lessons should be anchored in scenarios such as role-plays, debates, interviews, and project-based activities. Such tasks bridge

the gap between textbook exercises and actual spoken discourse, creating conditions in which learners feel motivated to collaborate toward meaningful communicative objectives. Crucially, by shifting the focus from perfect accuracy to successful task completion and communicative effectiveness, teachers can further alleviate learner anxiety, fostering an environment that prioritizes meaningful engagement. Therefore, a key practical implication is to strategically employ the TBLT framework to cultivate the supportive environments and positive psycho-social dispositions identified in this review as being foundational mediators of speaking proficiency development.

## **6.2 Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Although this systematic review consolidated evidence on the effectiveness of TBLT in speaking instruction, the synthesis process also revealed tangible limitations that constrain the generalizability of the findings and suggest clear pathways for future inquiry.

First, the integration of findings was challenged by significant methodological heterogeneity across the primary studies, which differed widely in educational contexts, participant profiles, and research designs. Compounding this, the evidence was often drawn from studies with limited scale, typically focusing on single classrooms or institutions with smaller sample sizes. This combination of inconsistent approaches and limited research settings affected the ability to perform robust cross-study comparisons and to draw definitive conclusions concerning the universal applicability of TBLT effects. To directly address these intertwined limitations, future research should prioritize larger-scale, multi-site studies that are explicitly designed for cross-contextual comparison. This kind of research can separate the core mechanisms of TBLT from context-specific factors. It can also show which outcomes, such as gains in proficiency, confidence, or engagement, are generalizable across diverse learning environments.

A second limitation is that some of the evidence is short term. Many of the reviewed studies used brief interventions. Because of this, it is difficult to judge how long TBLT effects on learners' speaking skills last and whether the effective-linguistic synergy remains stable over time. Future research should therefore use longitudinal designs. Studies can follow learners for a longer period, for example a full academic year. Researchers can also track learners across different proficiency levels. Moreover, it is important to measure both speaking development and some key psycho-social variables, such as motivation and anxiety. Using mixed methods in these longitudinal studies would also be helpful. It can show learning trends with numbers and explain how learner experiences and classroom interaction change over time.

## **7. Conclusions**

This systematic review aimed to answer the research question: What does recent empirical research report about the effectiveness of TBLT in improving English-speaking proficiency across diverse educational contexts, and how do socio-affective and environmental factors mediate this process? To answer this question, the review synthesized evidence from 16 empirical studies published

from 2015 to 2025, conducted across diverse educational contexts. The synthesis leads to two principal conclusions. First, it affirms TBLT as a robust pedagogical framework for effectively enhancing English speaking proficiency, including fluency, accuracy, and specific linguistic competencies. The findings demonstrate that TBLT's effectiveness in fostering these skills is profoundly mediated by the learning environment and socio-affective factors it promotes, which reduce anxiety and build confidence.

Second, and more significantly, this review identifies a synergistic cycle as its main theoretical contribution. Within this cycle, TBLT's emphasis on authentic, collaborative tasks transforms the learning environment, reducing anxiety and fostering a positive psycho-social disposition among learners. This enhanced disposition functions as the critical mechanism driving linguistic experimentation and skill development, thereby creating a positive feedback loop between linguistic gains and affective benefits. Therefore, the evidence positions TBLT not merely as a methodological choice but as a powerful approach for holistically reshaping the learner's engagement with speaking English. In conclusion, while affirming TBLT's efficacy in enhancing tangible speaking proficiencies, this review argues that its most significant contribution lies in its capacity to integrate cognitive, social, and affective learning processes.

A key implication is that TBLT can support a more sustainable path to spoken fluency. It develops language skills while also helping learners build a more positive attitude toward speaking. This broader impact supports the use of TBLT in curricula that aim not only to teach English as course content, but also to prepare learners to speak with confidence and communicate effectively in real-life situations.

## 8. Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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