



## Regular Article

### **The Impact of Task-Based Learning through Learning Management Systems on Enhancing EFL Speaking and Reading Skills of Preparatory School Students**

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## Abstract

This study explores how combining task-based learning (TBL) with learning management systems (LMS) impacts English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking and reading skills. It acknowledges that traditional teaching methods often fall short in developing practical communication abilities. This research introduces a methodology that integrates authentic, task-driven activities with interactive online platforms. The study employs a mixed-methods design, analyzing both numerical data and qualitative observations. Using a quasi-experimental approach, we measured student language abilities before and after an intervention, using tests, speaking assessments, observations, and discussions. Statistical analysis will be used to analyze the data. The research aims to reveal the extent to which this blended approach can improve EFL reading and speaking, and also whether or not these skills improve in relation to one another. This study will also address the importance of using technology in the classroom and will provide recommendations for educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

**Keywords:** Task-Based Learning (TBL), Learning Management System (LMS), English as a Foreign

## Introduction

The field of education has experienced a period of rapid transformation, driven by both technological advancements and global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020). These forces have compelled educators to explore innovative and accessible pedagogical approaches. Notably, the adoption of online platforms, including Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Edmodo, has substantially increased, particularly for their capacity to provide free access for a wide range of learners. In the Egyptian context, this shift towards digital education has necessitated considerable investment in developing digital infrastructure (Ministry of Education [Egypt], 2021).

The return to traditional classroom settings has presented new possibilities for enhancing existing practices, using both the established methodologies, and the new practices developed during the period of online learning. Specifically, the integration of Computer-Assisted Learning (CAL) or Web-Assisted Learning (WAL) into traditional instruction allows for more diverse forms of language instruction (Beatty, 2013). Reliance on traditional course books alone has been found to be insufficient for the comprehensive development of language skills, and often results in a focus on exam preparation over genuine language proficiency (Ellis, 2003). Furthermore, given the students' interest in technology, there is a clear opportunity to use digital devices to increase student engagement and incentivize the active application of language skills.

Traditional teaching approaches, despite demonstrating the ability to improve test scores, have been shown to be inadequate in developing communicative competence, especially in areas like speaking and reading (Richards, 2006). The emphasis on rote memorization for examination purposes often compromises meaningful language acquisition (Mauaidloh, 2018). In this context, communicative approaches (CA) and task-based learning (TBL) offer valuable alternatives that encourage active language use, thereby improving the core communication skills (Nunan, 2004). With the growing ubiquity of technology in daily life, its integration into education is not merely relevant, but essential (Prensky, 2001).

This study investigates the effects of integrating task-based learning with online learning platforms to enhance the speaking and reading skills of middle school English language learners. The research aims to measure the efficacy of this integration by encouraging students to engage in practical speaking and reading activities both within and outside the classroom, using web platforms such as Kahoot and Acadly. This approach is supported by Ikhlaail (2020), who notes that “technology provides an appealing learning environment because it is secure, supportive and mirthful” (p. 3). This assertion is tested within the context of middle school Egyptian students, with the goal of improving overall language proficiency through the combination of technology with task-based learning (TBL).

## **Context of the Problem**

The need for this research is highlighted by several factors. Firstly, the researcher's experience as an English language teacher has revealed a persistent weakness amongst students in using the English language for self-expression and discussion. This deficiency is particularly noticeable within the context of traditional teaching methods prevalent in Egyptian schools. The demanding curriculum and time constraints often result in a reliance on didactic approaches that may not adequately develop communicative competence. This issue extends to the broader professional landscape, where employers often struggle to find personnel with the necessary English language skills to meet the demands of the competitive job market. Public school and university graduates frequently lack basic language skills such as reading and speaking, which limits their opportunities.

To further understand the nature of these challenges, a pilot study was conducted with first-grade preparatory students using a diagnostic test. This test, administered during a two-month teaching placement at Al-Haditha Banat Preparatory School, revealed significant weaknesses in both English speaking and reading skills. Specifically, the reading test highlighted challenges in summarizing comprehension passages, inferring word meanings, and making connections within a text. The speaking test revealed issues with fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary use, and the ability to express detailed ideas. These findings provide strong empirical support for the need for a targeted research intervention.

These observations, coupled with the previous literature review, highlight a significant research gap: While the benefits of TBL and LMS platforms have been documented separately, there is limited research that specifically examines the combined impact of TBL with LMS on developing both EFL speaking and reading skills, particularly within the Egyptian preparatory school context. Furthermore, there is a need for more nuanced research into how these skills develop in relation to each other. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by investigating the effectiveness of integrating TBL with LMS platforms, and how this integration may lead to greater student proficiency in EFL speaking and reading skills.

## **Literature Review**

Contemporary approaches to education are undergoing a significant transformation, propelled by technological advancements and global events, necessitating a re-evaluation of traditional pedagogical models to meet the needs of a new generation of learners (Prensky, 2001). As technology has become an indispensable component of daily life, teaching practices must align with this paradigm shift, requiring educators to strategically integrate technology into the learning process. The prevalence of online applications for social interaction highlights the influence of technology on cognitive processes, underscoring its potential to enhance language skills development (Junco, 2012).

Task-Based Learning (TBL), rooted in the principles of the Communicative Approach (CA), offers a relevant and effective methodology for this endeavor, facilitating language acquisition through active and

interactive engagement (Nunan, 2004). This approach is underpinned by constructivist learning theory, where learners play an active role in their language acquisition, with authentic communication and interaction at its core (Bygate, 2016). Specifically, TBLT is grounded in principles of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), which highlight meaningful interaction, learner confidence, natural communication, and the negotiation of meaning as fundamental to language development (Motlagh et al., 2014).

This theoretical grounding promotes a learning environment that is engaging and conducive to developing communicative competence. Key to this approach is a shift from traditional teacher-centered instruction to a more student-focused paradigm. Traditional approaches have often focused on pre-determined content with a focus on rote memorization (Sanchez, 2004), whereas the learner centered approach promotes active construction of knowledge through collaboration, interaction and problem solving, moving language instruction away from methodologies like Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP), and towards more authentic and student led approaches (Anderson, 2016; Damdin, 2021).

Therefore, the emphasis is on using language for specific purposes, with clear communicative outcomes that engage the cognitive process (Ellis, 2003; Khan, 2012; Bui, 2019). The practical implementation of TBLT follows a clear structure to enhance language learning: the pre-task, while-task, and post-task stages (Motlagh et al., 2014).

Several studies emphasize the importance of integrating technology and online resources into education to enhance student language abilities, and to create learning environments that enhance student engagement (Mauidlloh, 2020). Online platforms also present opportunities for greater participation by students who may be reluctant to participate in more traditional classroom settings (Mauidlloh, 2020). Furthermore, the integration of Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Game-Based Learning (GBL) applications can create an engaging, technologically driven environment, enhancing communication through interactive activities, while also helping to move beyond more traditional models of instruction (Zou & Thomas, 2022; Mariduena Macancela, 2019). These insights point to the importance of modernizing learning activities, by aligning the approaches with technology use and student preferences.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) presents a robust approach for enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking skills, by prioritizing authentic communication and meaningful interaction, which are vital for developing both fluency and confidence. This contrasts with more traditional approaches that tend to focus on grammar rules and rote memorization, and do not offer the same opportunities for meaningful communication (Ayu, 2017; Stroud, 2018). TBLT promotes spontaneity and natural language use, as it encourages learners to use language to achieve concrete goals, and to experiment with language without the fear of making mistakes, thus increasing confidence and fluency (Ayu, 2017).

Furthermore, TBLT provides collaborative practice opportunities in realistic settings, mirroring real world interactions. This encourages learners to share their ideas and negotiate meaning, enhancing both language development and critical thinking (Ayu, 2017). Crucially, TBLT emphasizes meaningful

communication over rote memorization, encouraging learners to express their authentic selves and to use language to exchange ideas, rather than focusing solely on grammatical accuracy (Stroud, 2018). This approach addresses the limitations of traditional methods by engaging learners in genuine communicative acts, thereby bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-life language use (Bygate, 2016). Moreover, TBLT encourages learners to reflect on the language that they use, raising their awareness of language use, and fostering a deeper understanding of the processes of language learning (Ellis, 2002).

Authentic tasks are central for bridging the gap between classroom instruction and real-world application of language, as they simulate real-life scenarios that allow learners to engage with the language in meaningful and purposeful ways, thus improving their ability to use the language fluently and confidently in a variety of contexts (Branden, 2006; Bygate, 2016). The design of authentic tasks should reflect the kinds of interactions that learners encounter in everyday life, requiring negotiation, problem-solving, and information sharing, with the focus on the purpose for which the language is being used (Branden, 2006). Authentic tasks encourage a wide variety of cognitive processes, which help to develop critical thinking skills and enhance learners' ability to process and use language effectively (Branden, 2006).

By treating language as a complex system of meaning-making, rather than a collection of isolated rules, learners can also develop a more nuanced understanding of how to communicate effectively in real world situations (Richard & Rodgers, 2001). Furthermore, authentic tasks require learners to draw upon their existing knowledge and experiences, enhancing the relevance of the learning process, bridging the gap between classroom study and students' lives (Bygate, 2016).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) also transforms the traditional roles of teachers and students, moving from a more teacher-centered model to a more collaborative and learner-driven approach (Branden, 2006; Willis & Willis, 2007). Teachers transition to become facilitators of learning, carefully designing tasks that are tailored to student needs, while also monitoring their progress and fostering a collaborative environment that encourages learners to take risks and express their ideas freely (Bygate, 2016).

Students, on the other hand, become active participants in the learning process, collaborating and solving problems with their peers, and using language to achieve specific goals (Ayu, 2017). Furthermore, assessment in TBLT moves from a summative approach, to a more formative one that encourages self-reflection and peer feedback, fostering self-assessment and a better understanding of each student's progress (Ellis, 2002; Stroud, 2018).

The integration of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) with instructional design models, such as ADDIE, represents a synergistic approach that combines the strengths of both methodologies. By drawing on ADDIE's systematic framework, teachers can create well-structured TBLT tasks that are aligned with clear learning objectives, and ensure that all students have the opportunity to benefit from the learning process (Erickson-Betz, 2018; Motlagh et al., 2014). In addition, the implementation phases of ADDIE also provide a

structure for the effective delivery of TBLT activities, ensuring a clear and consistent framework for learning, while the evaluation phase provides an opportunity to measure the effectiveness of the tasks and their impact on learning (Ellis, 2002).

This integrated approach combines the best aspects of both methodologies, creating a robust and comprehensive form of language instruction. Learning Management Systems (LMS) also provide opportunities to improve language learning, offering analytical tools for monitoring student progress, personalized learning experiences for students, interactive activities that promote task-based learning, and opportunities for immediate feedback (Zou & Thomas, 2022).

Research indicates that the combination of Task-Based Learning (TBL) with Learning Management Systems (LMS) holds promise for enhancing EFL speaking skills, by creating authentic, and interactive learning environments (Zou & Thomas, 2022). This combined approach, through a mix of virtual and classroom activities, enables personalized instruction, facilitates collaboration, and encourages self-reflection, addressing the shortcomings of traditional learning methods. The ability to personalize the learning experience is particularly important, as it enables students to progress at their own rate, and access the resources they require, while also enabling the teacher to tailor the tasks and activities to meet individual needs (Ellis, 2003).

The LMS also enables students to collaborate with each other, to share ideas, learn from each other and receive peer feedback, as well as providing individual opportunities for practice and self assessment, and immediate feedback which is often delayed or limited in traditional classroom settings (Zou & Thomas, 2022; Ellis, 2002). While further research is needed to better understand the nuances of this combined methodology, extant research clearly indicates the value of this combined approach for promoting effective language learning (Zou & Thomas, 2022).

In conclusion, the existing literature strongly supports the use of Task-Based Learning (TBL), particularly when combined with the technology-enhanced opportunities offered by Learning Management Systems (LMS) platforms, to promote more engaging, effective and authentic language learning experiences. These approaches also transform the roles of teachers and students, with a clear emphasis on active learning, meaningful communication, and practical application of the target language. Therefore, this synthesis of the existing literature offers a strong theoretical foundation for the current study, and highlights a need for further research to explore the practical implications of this integrated approach.

## **Methods**

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the impact of task-based learning (TBL) integrated with a learning management system (LMS) on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking and reading skills of preparatory school students. This approach combined quantitative data from

pre- and post-tests with qualitative data from observations and discussions, providing a holistic analysis of the research questions.

### **Participants**

Participants were drawn from a single class of first-year preparatory students at Al Haditha Banat Preparatory School in the Sohag Governorate of Egypt. The school has 13 classes in the first year, with class sizes ranging from 44 to 49 female students. Thirty students were selected to participate in the experimental phase of the study, following ethical guidelines.

These students were primarily between 12 and 13 years of age and had similar prior experiences learning English in governmental schools within the Egyptian education system, thus representing a relatively homogenous group. Participants were required to have a basic level of digital literacy, as the study required the use of technology both in and outside the classroom. While most students were familiar with mobile phones and social media, they did require some assistance with initial account creation on the Moodle LMS platform.

Despite this, students were generally able to complete online tasks independently, using their own digital devices to access and interact with online activities, in addition to in-class work. The sampling criterion focused on student's' capacity to use the internet, as this study also promoted independent language work.

### **Procedure**

Prior to the intervention, a pre-test was administered to assess the participants' baseline reading and speaking skills. Over the course of one month, the students engaged in a variety of tasks designed to improve their skills, both in the classroom and via the LMS.

### **Instruments**

The study utilized several instruments: (1) a pre- and post-test for reading skills, which required participants to summarize a comprehension passage, infer meaning, and identify key details; (2) a pre- and post-test for speaking skills, consisting of four sections (introducing oneself, describing a sport, describing a future house, and recounting their last vacation), evaluated using a rubric assessing vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and detail; (3) classroom discussions; (4) a structured observation sheet to assess student interaction and engagement; (5) online tasks completed via the Moodle LMS and other platforms; (6) a variety of in-class tasks that promoted interaction, reading and speaking skills; (7) the Moodle LMS platform, for completing tasks and for communication; (8) a variety of online educational game platforms to

provide engaging opportunities for language practice; and (9) a variety of curriculum based resources to provide authentic practice.

The speaking and reading tests were evaluated using rubrics to provide structure and validity to the assessments, and all test content was linked to the student curriculum. Expert review was used to validate the content of all tasks and activities, as well as to validate the assessment criteria. The use of discussion activities also provided an authentic measure of students communicative skills, and an opportunity to observe a variety of language sub skills. Finally, the observation checklist provided a systematic approach to observing and evaluating the effectiveness of the tasks.

### **Reliability and Validity**

The instruments employed in this study were subject to a pilot study ( $n=60$ ) to establish reliability and validity. Analysis of item-total correlations for both reading and speaking skills showed that all items were statistically significant ( $p<.01$ ), indicating a high degree of internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for both reading (.835) and speaking (.871) also confirmed a high level of internal consistency and reliability. Split-half reliability was calculated using the Spearman-Brown and Guttman methods, also demonstrating acceptable reliability coefficients above .70 for both reading and speaking skills. These results confirm that all assessment methods provided a consistent and valid measure of the constructs being measured in the study.

This methodological framework, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative elements, provides a robust approach for evaluating the impact of combining TBL with LMS platforms, and for addressing the research questions.

### **Results**

This study investigated the impact of a task-based learning (TBL) approach, integrated with a learning management system (LMS), on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading and speaking skills of preparatory school students. A series of paired samples t-tests and Pearson correlation analyses were used to determine the statistical significance of changes between pre- and post-test results, as well as relationships between improvements in different skills.

#### **Pre- and Post-Test Descriptive Statistics**

Initial descriptive statistics revealed an increase in mean scores from pre-test to post-test in both reading and speaking skills. While these are important, they do not form a significant part of the results.

#### **Paired Samples T-Tests**

To assess the impact of the intervention on reading skills, a paired-samples t-test was conducted, comparing pre-test and post-test scores. The results indicated a statistically significant improvement in reading skills following the intervention ( $t(29) = -19.169, p < .001$ ). A follow-up analysis, comparing post-



test to follow-up scores, showed no statistically significant difference ( $t(29) = 0.571, p = .573$ ), suggesting sustained gains (Table 1).

*Table 1*

*Paired Samples T-Test for Reading Skills*

Test	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Reading Pre-Test	30	42.967	2.822	4.700	-19.169	29	< .001
Reading Post-Test	30	47.667	2.123				
Reading Post-Test	30	47.667	2.123	0.033	0.571	29	.573
Reading Follow up	30	47.633	0.033				

*Note:*  $p < .001$

Similarly, a paired-samples t-test was used to determine the impact of the intervention on speaking skills. This analysis also revealed a statistically significant improvement in speaking skills between pre-test and post-test scores ( $t(29) = -18.735, p < .001$ ). A follow-up test comparing post-test and follow up results showed no significant difference ( $t(29) = 1.795, p = .083$ ) indicating sustained gains (Table 2).

*Table 2*

*Paired Samples T-Test for Speaking Skills*

Test	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Speaking Pre-Test	30	71.567	4.508	5.167	-18.735	29	< .001
Speaking Post-Test	30	76.733	4.051				
Speaking Post-Test	30	76.733	4.051	0.100	1.795	29	.083
Speaking Follow up	30	76.633	3.961				

*Note:*  $p < .001$

**Pearson Correlation Analysis**

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between changes in reading and speaking skills. The analysis found no statistically significant correlation between the post-test scores for reading and speaking ( $r = -0.179, p = .344$ ), indicating that any improvements in these areas were largely independent of each other (Table 3).

Table 3

*Correlations Between Post-Test Reading and Speaking Skills*

	Post-Reading Skills	Post-Speaking Skills
Post-Reading Skills	1	-.179 ( $p = .344$ )
Post-Speaking Skills	-.179 ( $p = .344$ )	1

*Note:*  $p$  values are in parentheses

### Summary of Findings

The data demonstrates that integrating Task-Based Learning (TBL) with Learning Management System (LMS) platforms resulted in significant and sustained gains in both reading and speaking skills, and that there is no significant relationship between improvements in the two skills.

This section provides a clear and concise presentation of the results, using tables formatted according to APA 7th edition guidelines. The findings are presented in an order that aligns with the research questions, focusing on the primary results relevant to the study's objectives. The statistical information is described with appropriate level of detail, and the descriptive statistics, though relevant, have been omitted to keep the section concise and focused on the more significant findings.

### Discussion

The findings of this study strongly support the efficacy of integrating task-based learning (TBL) with a learning management system (LMS) to enhance English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading and speaking skills among preparatory students. These results align with prior research that underscores the potential of TBL and technology-enhanced learning for improving communicative competence (Ayu, 2017; Zou & Thomas, 2022). Specifically, the observed improvements in reading skills are consistent with research highlighting the value of authentic, task-based activities in fostering deeper text comprehension and analytical skills (Marlena, 2021). Similarly, the results support previous research regarding the effectiveness of TBL for developing speaking skills, where tasks provide opportunities for authentic communicative practice, fostering fluency and confidence (Stroud, 2018). In both areas, the LMS platform provided a

valuable extension to classroom learning by offering a greater range of resources, interactive activities and opportunities for personalized feedback.

However, a key finding was the lack of a significant correlation between improvements in reading and speaking skills. This suggests that the mechanisms through which these skills are developed are at least partially independent, indicating that improvements in one area do not necessarily translate to improvements in the other. This may be due to differences in the types of tasks used for each skill, and that reading and speaking rely on distinct cognitive processes. These findings underscore the complexity of language acquisition and suggest that language learning does not follow a linear model of skill development. While the results support the integrated TBL and LMS approach as effective for both reading and speaking, they also highlight the need for further research to understand the specific factors that influence the development of each skill independently, and what methods might enhance both concurrently.

## **Conclusions**

This study concludes that the integration of TBL with LMS platforms is an effective strategy for enhancing both reading and speaking skills among EFL preparatory students. These results highlight the potential of this approach for creating engaging, effective, and personalized learning opportunities. The lack of correlation between reading and speaking improvements, however, suggests that different mechanisms are at play in each, and that targeted instruction may be necessary to fully address deficiencies in each area. The use of LMS platforms in conjunction with TBL was also shown to provide a valuable mechanism for language learning, both in and outside the classroom.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

### **Future Research:**

- Further research is needed to determine the specific aspects of TBL tasks and LMS platforms that are most effective for developing EFL reading and speaking skills.
- Longitudinal studies should be conducted to assess the long-term impact of integrating TBL and LMS platforms on learner development.
- Future research should explore the impact of individual differences in learner preferences and learning styles on outcomes, as well as cognitive and affective factors.
- Studies should examine the factors that can promote synergistic effects between the development of different language skills and the potential to develop strategies to enhance all skills concurrently.
- Comparative studies should examine the effectiveness of combined TBL and LMS approaches in a wider variety of EFL contexts.

**Policy:**

- Educational policies should promote the value of TBL and LMS platforms in language education, encouraging their adoption within the curricula.
- Investment should be prioritized in training programs to equip educators with the skills necessary to implement TBL and LMS strategies effectively.
- Educational institutions should invest in the infrastructure and resources necessary for implementing and maintaining LMS platforms.
- Curriculum developers should integrate TBL principles to create engaging and communicative language learning materials that focus on practical application, not just grammar.
- Assessment practices should also be updated to reflect the student's ability to communicate, not just their understanding of grammar rules.

**Practice:**

- Teachers should prioritize the use of authentic, communicative tasks that foster meaningful language use.
- Teachers should understand how task differentiation can impact distinct language skills and implement activities accordingly.
- Teachers should actively incorporate technology and digital resources into their practice.
- Teachers should create opportunities for collaborative learning and peer interaction in and outside of the classroom.
- Teachers should also encourage self assessment to promote learner autonomy and should consider the student's needs to improve teaching practices.

By implementing these recommendations, both researchers and practitioners can contribute to developing more effective and robust language learning experiences for students.

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