

Task-Based Language Teaching and EFL Oral Skills: A Pre-Post Study at Djelfa University

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Abstract

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) necessitates effective communication in English; unlike in the global context, most learners struggle with fluency, accuracy, and confidence in addressing English speakers. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a practical approach to improving oral proficiency, with potential outcomes depending on the strategies employed. This paper explores how TBLT affects the process of the acquisition of oral communication in first-year EFL students enrolled in Djelfa University. Employing a one-group experimental design, 33 students were tested using pre- and post-tests, during which their scores were measured in relation to six criteria of oral communication: fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, interaction, and comprehension. The integration of qualitative classroom observation methodology with quantitative data provided a comprehensive understanding of student engagement and language use during the intervention period. Despite a limited sample size and the absence of a control group, the study demonstrates significant improvement across all examined dimensions, with the most pronounced advancements shown in fluency and interactive competence. The findings indicate that the application of communicative, meaningful activities enhances the facilitation of linguistic correctness and fluency, in addition to allowing learners confidence and autonomy in spoken English. The study paper contributes to the growing interest in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, advising curriculum architects to integrate the task-based technique directly into the oral communication course to promote the acquisition of practical and functional language skills.

Keyword: Oral communication skills, Task-based language teaching, Communicative competence, EFL learners

Introduction

Oral proficiency is widely recognized as a core component of communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and remains a major challenge for learners in diverse educational contexts worldwide. Numerous studies have reported that EFL learners at the tertiary level often experience difficulties related to speaking fluency, accuracy, and confidence, which negatively affect their ability to communicate effectively (Canale & Swain, 1980; Richards, 2008; Nation & Newton, 2009). Within the Algerian EFL

context, similar challenges have been observed among first-year university students, particularly in institutions such as Djelfa University, where learners frequently demonstrate limited oral fluency and a lack of confidence during spoken interactions. However, Effective oral communication extends beyond merely constructing grammatically correct sentences; it requires real-time engagement, the strategic selection of vocabulary, effective pronunciation and tone management, and the ability to adapt to diverse contexts

(Hymes, 1972; Levelt, 1989; Thornbury, 2005; Celce-Murcia, 2007). According to Brown (1994), speaking is both a linguistic and cognitive task, where the speaker creates meaning through negotiation with the listener. Moreover, a significant proficiency gap exists among beginner EFL learners, particularly as they transition from secondary education to university-level language use. Traditional language teaching methods, which have primarily emphasized grammatical accuracy and written production, have offered limited support for the development of oral communication skills. Approaches such as the Grammar-Translation Method and form-focused instruction typically rely on rule explanation, sentence translation, and written exercises, while providing few opportunities for spontaneous speaking or interactive communication. Consequently, learners may demonstrate formal knowledge of grammatical structures yet remain insufficiently prepared to meet the demands of real-time spoken interaction in academic and everyday contexts. In this regard, the Algerian EFL context, in line with recent observations in other North African countries, highlights several challenges that complicate the development of oral communication skills. These challenges include limited exposure to English outside the classroom, large class sizes that restrict meaningful speaking practice, persistent reliance on form-focused instruction, and learners' anxiety when engaging in oral interaction. Such conditions reduce opportunities for authentic communication and contribute to learners' low levels of speaking fluency and confidence. Yahia (2024) noted that many first-year Algerian students exhibit insufficient grammar and fluency, even in written communication, which fails to accommodate Arabic influences. Similarly, Hamzaoui (2022) noted that performance anxiety negatively affects oral production, particularly in teacher-centered classrooms where students have limited opportunities to interact with their peers.

Furthermore, these observations emphasize the importance of task-based, learner-centered training, which fosters interaction and student engagement. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), as theorized by Nunan (2004), is a practical pedagogical approach that positions learners as initiators of real-world projects. By adopting TBLT, educators promote meaning-making, integrating task-based practices to reinforce both receptive and productive skills in speaking.

Furthermore, TBLT combines both form and meaning within communicative situations, thereby facilitating naturalistic language acquisition (Zou, 2025). Nevertheless, a substantial body of empirical research consistently demonstrates a strong interrelationship between listening and speaking skills in effective verbal communication, indicating that learners' oral production is closely influenced by listening comprehension, input processing, and exposure to authentic spoken language (Rost, 2011; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; Nation & Newton, 2009; Field, 2008). According to Zuhri et al. (2023), adequate listening comprehension is vital for achieving optimal speech performance. TBLT environments create conditions where learners interpret input, engage in meaning negotiations, and produce spoken responses, ultimately enhancing their overall oral proficiency. Despite a growing body of international research supporting the benefits of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), relatively few empirical studies have examined its effects on beginner-level university students in EFL programs, particularly in North African contexts such as Algeria. Despite the international evidence supporting Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), few studies have explored how TBLT can address these specific difficulties in foundational speaking development, leaving a critical gap in understanding its practical impact during this transitional stage of learning. Despite the international evidence supporting Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), few studies have explored how TBLT can address these specific difficulties in foundational speaking development, leaving a critical gap in understanding its practical impact during this transitional stage of learning. Following research questions addresses are showing:

1. RQ1: To what extent does Task-Based Language Teaching improve oral communication skills among first-year EFL university students?

2. RQ2: How can teacher observations complement quantitative data to identify students' communicative difficulties and inform effective TBLT interventions?

Through a pre-post-test design and teacher-led classroom observation, the goal is to assess measurable improvement and document classroom interactions that support or hinder learners' oral progress. By investigating the impact of TBLT in the context of 33

first-year Licence–Master–Doctorat (LMD) students at Djelfa University, this research contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting communicative and task-based approaches in EFL education.

Literature review

Oral communication skills

Practical oral communication skills are vital for successful interactions in academic, professional, and social settings. Beyond grammatical accuracy, effective communication requires fluency, clarity, appropriateness, and the ability to convey and interpret meaning in specific contexts. In EFL settings, learners often face challenges such as limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, insufficient grammatical control, and difficulties in engaging in spontaneous interactions. These challenges are influenced by factors including limited exposure to authentic language, anxiety about making errors, and cultural differences in communicative norms (Kayi, 2006; Thornbury, 2005). Understanding these difficulties is essential for designing effective instructional interventions.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001) categorizes oral communication into two main dimensions: spoken interaction and spoken production. These dimensions encompass both the coherent and accurate delivery of speech and the ability to participate in meaningful, context-appropriate dialogue. Empirical research highlights that task-based language teaching can significantly enhance these skills. For instance, Mackey and Goo (2007) found that corrective feedback in task-based activities improves learners' fluency and accuracy, while Goh and Burns (2012) demonstrated that scaffolded speaking tasks enhance vocabulary development and interactive competence. Research also identifies specific task types that promote oral performance, including jigsaw, information-gap, problem-solving, decision-making, opinion-exchange, brainstorming, ordering and sorting, comparing and matching, and sharing personal experiences (Rog, 2025). Tasks that simulate real-world contexts, as opposed to purely pedagogic exercises, yield superior speaking outcomes (Albarqi, 2024), and effective activities are meaning-centered, goal-oriented, outcome-based, and relevant to real-life communication (Kim & Namkung, 2024).

Oral communication ability consists of multiple converging and diverging elements. Fluency and pronunciation are interrelated, as accurate articulation supports smooth speech. Grammar and vocabulary converge to enable coherent and meaningful utterances, while listening comprehension, turn-taking, clarification, and repair strategies diverge from purely linguistic skills but are equally critical for effective communication. Recognizing these interconnections is crucial for designing assessment frameworks that capture both linguistic and interactive competencies. In this study, oral communication is assessed through a comprehensive framework that evaluates not only linguistic accuracy—including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation but also interactive competence, such as fluency, turn-taking, and the ability to engage effectively in context-appropriate spoken exchanges. Grounding the assessment in both theoretical models and empirical evidence ensures a nuanced and reliable evaluation of students' oral communication skills in the EFL classroom.

Overview of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a contemporary approach in second and foreign language instruction that emphasizes the use of authentic, real-life communicative tasks to foster natural language use and learner autonomy (Kim & Namkung, 2024; Róg, 2025). Unlike traditional form-focused methods, TBLT prioritizes meaningful communication, promoting learners' ability to negotiate meaning, solve problems, and achieve practical objectives in interaction. A defining feature of TBLT is its task cycle, which typically consists of three stages: pre-task, during-task (task performance), and post-task (Willis, 1996). In the pre-task stage, learners are introduced to the task and provided with necessary input, scaffolding, or examples to prepare for performance. The task performance stage involves learners actively completing the task in pairs or groups, promoting authentic interaction and negotiation of meaning. Finally, the post-task stage focuses on reflection, feedback, and language focus, allowing learners to consolidate accuracy, complexity, and fluency. Empirical studies demonstrate the effectiveness of TBLT across diverse contexts. Rima (2025) and El Arbaoui (2025) showed that EFL

university students improved both speaking performance and confidence through task-based activities, while Chaouchi (2023) documented measurable gains in oral proficiency using pre- and post-tests. In primary education, Chen and Laohasthit (2025) reported that TBLT significantly enhanced learners' speaking ability and engagement. Technology-mediated TBLT has also been shown to improve oral performance, with longitudinal studies measuring complexity, accuracy, and fluency (Xie & Lan, 2025).

Assessment of oral skills within TBLT similarly reflects its multidimensional nature. Researchers have used pre- and post-tests, CAF measures (complexity, accuracy, fluency), performance rubrics, classroom observation, and audio recordings to evaluate both linguistic accuracy and interactive competence (Akhmedovna & Sugdiyona, 2025; Chaouchi, 2023; Mapiro & Permata, 2024; Xie & Lan, 2025). Questionnaires and interviews also capture learners' attitudes, motivation, and self-perceived gains, highlighting the affective dimension of speaking development (Rima, 2025; El Arbaoui, 2025). Empirical studies further suggest that immediate and unambiguous corrective feedback should be integrated with meaning-oriented tasks to prevent repeated errors and support accuracy. For instance, Mackey and Goo (2007) found that focused corrective feedback during task-based interaction improved learners' grammatical accuracy without compromising fluency. Chaouchi (2023) demonstrated that audio-recorded task performances followed by targeted feedback sessions allowed EFL learners to notice and self-correct errors, leading to measurable gains in pronunciation and grammar. Even in technology-mediated TBLT, Xie and Lan (2025) showed that online collaborative tasks with instant corrective prompts resulted in significant improvements in learners' spoken accuracy. Notably, the task performance stage is most beneficial for promoting spontaneous speaking and negotiation of meaning, while the post-task stage consolidates accuracy and supports reflective learning. Designing TBLT activities that are meaning-centered, outcome-based, and contextually relevant is essential for the balanced development of EFL learners' oral skills

Prior studies on TBLT and oral communication skills

Research consistently demonstrates the beneficial impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on speaking proficiency in a non-native language. According to research, TBLT is considerably more beneficial than learning tasks that do not involve oral practice, as it promotes natural and conversational application of language, learner autonomy and strategic use of language (Albarqi, 2024). TBLT was determined to be successful in improving vocabulary and significantly influencing oral competence, leading to the development of accuracy and fluency among secondary school students in Ethiopia (Mussa et al., 2020). According to Rinantanti et al. (2024), there was a significant positive TBLT effect on fluency, understandability, and motivation in ESP students in Indonesia; this is explained by the fact that the students received less emphasis on grammar instruction and more on communicative practice. The results are supported by Abd Rahman (2024), who employed a quasi-experimental design study on Malaysian pre-university students and showed that engagement was increased, and the percentage of speech fillers decreased, in addition to the enhanced fluency in the TBLT participants. Recent research has successfully integrated technology-mediated tasks within the framework of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Albarqi (2024) reported significant improvements in speech rates, accuracy, and a balanced enhancement in complexity, fluency, and precision among Saudi university students utilizing digital task-based learning. Mussa et al. (2020) emphasize that task design tailored to the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students is crucial for enhancing vocabulary, pronunciation, and oral comprehension. Ait Hattani's (2020) article explored the attitudes of Moroccan learners and instructors of TBLT towards TBLT based on interviews and questionnaires conducted on a regional level. Both groups responded positively toward TBLT regarding its advantages with respect to critical thinking, autonomy, motivation, and interaction.

Nevertheless, a high number of students in the classroom, lack of time, and limited resources were barriers that tend to impede the successful implementation, as additional institutional reinforcement and teacher awareness are required.

Although there is growing evidence of its efficacy, there still exists a significant gap in research on the topics of implementing TBLT on first-year university students of general EFL programs in Algeria. Being the group that leaves secondary education and joins the university, this is the most vulnerable group academically. It lacks knowledge of how TBLT could be utilized to develop lower-order speaking skills (i.e., basic pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and simple conversational turns) during this very critical period because most studies on Algerians research advanced learners or English-as-a-second-language conditions (e.g., Ait Hattani, 2020). The proposed paper aims to address this gap by studying the relationship between TBLT and speaking proficiency in the first-year students of Djelfa University, thus offering a pedagogically applicable and context-sensitive insight into task-based learning in higher education in Algeria.

Methodology

Research design

The current study evaluates the impact of TBLT on the verbal abilities of the first-year learners at the Djelfa University. The study employs a convergent mixed-methods design that is pre-experimental, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The quantitative phase follows a one-group pre-test and post-test design, while the qualitative phase involves systematic classroom observation, transcription of students' oral performances, and reflective teacher notes, aimed at complementing and supporting the quantitative findings. Observations were conducted over 12 classroom sessions, focusing on first-year EFL learners engaged in task-based speaking activities. An intervention is conducted with a pre- and post-test at the end of the program to measure the level of improvement. The gains will be outlined by comparing the before and after results using the mean score, standard deviation and significance difference values. The qualitative aspect is reinforced with the help of teacher observation, where the mistakes committed by learners while speaking activities are documented. The methodology pays attention to the areas of pronunciation, grammar, lexicon, and fluency, which allows for identifying and recording the abuses. The qualitative data will add to the quantitative results to have a more profound insight into the difficulties

students experience and how TBLT can overcome them. The study is a pre-experimental design in which there is no control group since the study has only one cohort of first-year college students receiving the intervention of TBLT. This design enables the evaluation of pre- and post-intervention performance in terms of speaking and qualitative observations of the instructors to shed light on the factors involved. The choice of a mixed-method pre-experimental design should be explained by its ability to study both measurable improvement and the ability to have qualitative information about pre- and post-test speaking level, which is consistent with the suggestions of Riazi and Amini Farsani (2023) on the research in the language education field. While the absence of a control group restricts causal inference, the pre-post design, effect-size estimation, and triangulated qualitative evidence offer a comprehensive initial assessment of instructional impacts.

Participants

The population of this study consisted of 33 first-year EFL students enrolled in the LMD (Licence-Master-Doctorate) Program at Djelfa University. Their ages span from 18 to 22 years. They are required to complete four years of middle school and three years of secondary school before university admission; during secondary education, they acquire foundational knowledge in English encompassing grammar, vocabulary, and communication skills. Based on this standard educational background, their proficiency can confidently be situated within the beginner to intermediate range (A2–B1, CEFR) at the outset of the study. This background will give them a strong base upon which to investigate the effect of TBLT on their speaking performance in their first year of college. All students in the cohort were invited to participate, and those who voluntarily agreed formed the study group. The final sample comprised 33 students, including 15 males (45.45%) and 18 females (54.55%) (Table 1).

Instruments and procedures

The study employed oral pre-tests and post-tests to evaluate students' speaking performance across six established dimensions: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, comprehension, and interaction. These dimensions are widely recognized in the literature as core components of communicative competence and

oral proficiency in EFL contexts (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980; Brown, 2004; Luoma, 2004). Their inclusion allowed for a comprehensive assessment of both linguistic accuracy and communicative effectiveness within a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework. To ensure assessment validity and minimize potential testing effects, the pre-test and post-test were identical in content and structure, administered under the same conditions, and scored using the same rubric and rating scale. Both tests consisted of individual speaking tasks designed to elicit spontaneous oral production, such as expressing opinions, describing situations, or responding to task prompts related to familiar topics. Each speaking performance lasted approximately two to three minutes per student and was audio-recorded to support accurate scoring and further qualitative analysis. The speaking rubric was adapted from established performance-based assessment frameworks rather than being newly developed, ensuring theoretical grounding and consistency with prior research. Minor contextual adaptations were made to align the descriptors with the students' proficiency level and the task-based nature of the intervention. A five-point rating scale (1–5) was employed for each subskill, where 1 represented severely restricted performance and 5 indicated proficient oral ability. The five-point scale (1-5) was selected because it provides sufficient sensitivity to capture developmental changes while remaining practical and reliable for classroom-based speaking assessment, allowing clearer differentiation of learner performance than a four-point scale. The performance descriptors for each subskill are presented in Table 2.

The speaking performances of students were evaluated independently by the second qualified rater in conjunction with the teacher-researcher, thereby guaranteeing inter-rater reliability. The performance-

based language test criteria established by Wiboolyasarin et al. (2023) were also met, as evidenced by the inter-rater consistency. The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC, two-way random effects, absolute agreement) was employed to determine inter-rater reliability. The results revealed a high level of agreement between raters (ICC = 0.87), which suggests exceptional scoring consistency. Audio recordings were employed to supplement the use of instructor observation notes and to capture instances that were not detectable during live observation. These notes were obtained through a structured checklist that was used to document the errors made by students. To enhance comprehension of the TBLT intervention's structure and implementation, a comprehensive design framework has been established, grounded in the task-based learning cycle (Le & Ziegler, 2025) comprising three stages: pre-task, task cycle, and post-task/language focus. The intervention was a total of twelve weeks gained in a straight series with sessions lasting about ninety minutes held in the second semester. The methodological decisions made in this work directly pertain to the main aim of this work: to identify the fact of whether the execution of TBLT bestows benefits to students in their oral communicative skills in the fluency, accuracy, and interactional aspects. Combining quantitative and qualitative indicators will make sure that linguistic gains can be empirically checked, as well as the sharing of the subtle processes in the development of student communicative skills. Similar to Table 3 below presents the weekly progression of the intervention, illustrating the sequence of communicative tasks, targeted learning goals, and pedagogical focus.

As illustrated in Table 3, each task type was built progressively on previous communicative experiences, increasing linguistic complexity and learner autonomy across the twelve sessions.

Table 1 Distribution of participants

Gender	Count	Percentage
Male	15	45.45%
Female	18	54.55%

Table 2 Analytic rating scale for assessing oral communication subskills

Sub skill	1 (Severely Restricted)	2	3	4	5 (Proficient)
Fluency	Frequent pauses, difficulty maintaining speech	Occasional pauses, some difficulty maintaining flow	Reasonable fluency with occasional breaks	Fluent with minimal pauses, appropriate pace	Smooth, continuous speech with minimal hesitation
Pronunciation	Strong accent, frequent mispronunciations affecting understanding	Noticeable accent, occasional mispronunciations	Clear pronunciation with some minor mispronunciations	Pronunciation is generally clear with few errors	Native-like pronunciation with clear articulation
Vocabulary	Very limited vocabulary, frequent repetition	Limited range, some inappropriate word choices	Adequate vocabulary, some awkward usage	Good range, mostly appropriate word choices	Wide range of vocabulary, precise word choices
Grammar	Frequent errors that obscure meaning	Errors present but meaning is clear	Occasional errors, doesn't affect meaning	Few errors, mostly accurate	No noticeable errors, sophisticated usage
Comprehension	Unable to understand basic input	Struggles to understand basic sentences	Understands most input with occasional difficulty	Fully understands typical input	Completely comprehends even complex input
Interaction	Difficulty initiating or sustaining conversations	Can initiate but struggles with responses	Maintains basic conversation with prompts	Smooth conversation with minimal prompts	Fluent, spontaneous interaction, appropriate responses

Table 3 Weekly sequence of TBLT tasks, communicative goals, and pedagogical focus

Week	Task type	Communicative goal	Pedagogical focus	Key strategy	Task cycle
1–2	Information-gap and Role-play tasks	Introduce self and exchange personal information	Fluency, interaction routines	Pre-task modeling and guided dialogues	Pre-task: Introduce phrases and model dialogues During-task: Students perform role-play in pairs Post-task: Class discussion and feedback
3–4	Storytelling and Picture Description	Narrating events and describing sequences	Grammar (past tense), coherence	Use of visual prompts and	Pre-task: Teacher explains story sequence and vocabulary

Week	Task type	Communicative goal	Pedagogical focus	Key strategy	Task cycle
				scaffolding vocabulary	During-task: Students describe pictures individually/pairs Post-task: Peer feedback and error correction
5–6	Problem-solving and Decision-making tasks	Negotiating and reaching group consensus	Vocabulary expansion, turn-taking	Collaborative work with teacher-facilitated negotiation	Pre-task: Introduce problem scenario and relevant vocabulary During-task: Groups discuss and reach consensus Post-task: Teacher-led reflection and strategy discussion
7–8	Debates and Opinion-sharing	Expressing agreement/disagreement politely	Argumentation, modal verbs	Feedback on politeness and lexical precision	Pre-task: Introduce debate topic and useful phrases During-task: Students debate in pairs/groups Post-task: Teacher and peer feedback on language use
9–10	Video-based tasks (e.g., short TED-Ed clips)	Summarizing spoken input	Listening comprehension, pronunciation	Note-taking and pronunciation drills	Pre-task: Pre-teach key vocabulary and listening strategies During-task: Watch video and take notes Post-task: Summarize orally and correct pronunciation
11–12	Project Presentation (Mini Speaking Project)	Delivering structured oral presentation	Fluency, coherence, pronunciation	Peer evaluation and reflective discussion	Pre-task: Plan and rehearse presentations During-task: Deliver presentations to class Post-task: Peer evaluation and reflective discussion

Description of instruments

The interventions were conducted as three-phase pedagogical plans based on the framework provided by Michaud and Ammar (2022) and comprised the pre-task stage, task cycle, and post-task stage. At the pre-task stage, short modeling tasks, guided questions, or brainstorming discussions were used to introduce students to the topic of the day, the related vocabulary, and the outcome expected out of communication. This step in the process was supposed to mobilise the prior knowledge of the learners and to equip them

linguistically and cognitively for the subsequent communicative engagement. During the task cycle, the learners participated in authentic communication, such as role-plays, information gap tasks, or collaborative problem solving, in the form of pairs or small groups. The teacher played a facilitative role; she made minimal intervention to avoid interference with the natural interaction and to stimulate the use of languages spontaneously. The post-task phase entailed the reflective analysis of the performance and corrective feedback. In this case, the instructor highlighted

repetitive pronunciation and grammatical problems found throughout the task, encouraging the awareness and accuracy of the use of brief form-centered exercises, recasts, and clarification requests. The pedagogical strategies that were applied to guide the implementation of the TBLT session to maintain consistency, motivation, and learner engagement were tightly linked. One of these concepts was scaffolding, which was practiced using visual materials, question prompts, and structured support that faded away as the learner became confident. The noticing-based method facilitated feedback by prompting learners to recognize and rectify their own errors following recasts or teacher prompts. Peer contact was deliberately incorporated, as pair and group activities facilitated meaning negotiation, collaborative problem-solving, and the development of interpersonal communication skills. Authentic and multimodal input (such as short video clips, dialogues, and songs) was also purposely used in the sessions to introduce the students to naturalistic patterns of speech and some real-life situations related to the cultural background. All these measures brought about the interactive and supportive learning environment, which is in line with the communicative language teaching principles.

These two factors, employed to support the design of the pre- and post-tests, were closely simulated with the communicative tasks exercised during the instructional time to have construct validity as well as coherence of instruction and assessment. Both tests were made to produce free speech production in a similar way as the classroom assignments, and the scoring rubric was aimed at assessing six major oral subskills: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, and interaction, which were rated based on a five-point scale (1-5). Prior to scoring, both raters participated in rubric calibration sessions to ensure consistent interpretation of performance descriptors. All the performances were rated by an extra-qualified rater, together with the teacher-researcher, to increase scoring reliability. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (two-way random effects, absolute agreement), yielding a high level of agreement ($ICC = 0.87$), indicating excellent scoring reliability. Audio recordings were used together with teacher observation checklists to act as a critical part of the qualitative data collection process. These tools

enabled the systematic recording of language and communicative performances of learners, especially the presence of mistakes in morphological, syntactic, lexical, and pragmatic levels. The audio data were transcribed, and they were thematically coded to determine patterns of errors that occur frequently and analyze patterns of development during the entire period of intervention in twelve weeks.

Data analysis

This study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the analyses. The quantitative study examined the means and standard deviations of pre- and post-test data for students' speaking proficiency. The paired t-test was employed to ascertain statistical significance by evaluating the difference between the means of two related samples, particularly when comparing the same group at two different time points (Yan et al., 2024). To control for Type I error due to multiple comparisons across six paired tests, a Bonferroni-adjusted significance level was applied ($\alpha = 0.05 / 6 = 0.008$). In addition to statistical significance testing, effect sizes were calculated to assess the practical magnitude of the intervention. For paired-sample comparisons, Cohen's d for dependent samples (d_x) was computed using the formula $d_x = t / \sqrt{N}$ (Lakens, 2013). Ninety-five percent confidence intervals (95% CIs) were calculated for mean difference scores. Assumptions of normality were assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test on difference scores for each subskill. All difference distributions did not significantly deviate from normality ($p > 0.05$), supporting the use of paired-sample t-tests. The codification of instructor observations, which was employed as part of the qualitative analysis. Repeating patterns of linguistic errors and performance were analyzed through a thematic approach to extract themes and describe the progress and the challenges that persisted at the end of the twelve sessions (DeJonckheere et al., 2024). This interdisciplinary triangulation was very rich in meaning and offered an excellent context for assessing the overall pedagogical effectiveness of TBLT.

Ethical considerations

This study corresponded to the requirements of the research in ethics, education, and applied linguistics. Before the experiment, ethical permission was obtained

from the Department of English at Djelfa University. The procedures taken were in line with the information provided by the guidance of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017) and the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018), which emphasizes the need to have informed consent, to respect people in their ability to make their own choice, to respect and safeguard confidentiality and to reduce risks. All the participants received an elaborate explanation of the study aims, and they provided voluntary informed consent, acknowledging their participation and understanding without compromising their academic positions.

In the process of transcription and subsequent analysis, the identification information of the parties

was eliminated to protect the confidentiality and preservation of data information. All records were done using pseudonyms, and all participants were given an ID number. The recording was done strictly to conduct the thematic analysis and scholarly assessment, and after transcription and verification were done, those recordings were destroyed permanently. The ending place can be a password-secured device where the results of testing, observations, and data are stored. These data were only accessed by the researcher and a highly knowledgeable co-rater to ensure the best possible inter-rater reliability in the scoring manner. Such processes therefore comprehensively meet the institutional and disciplinary data-protection needs.

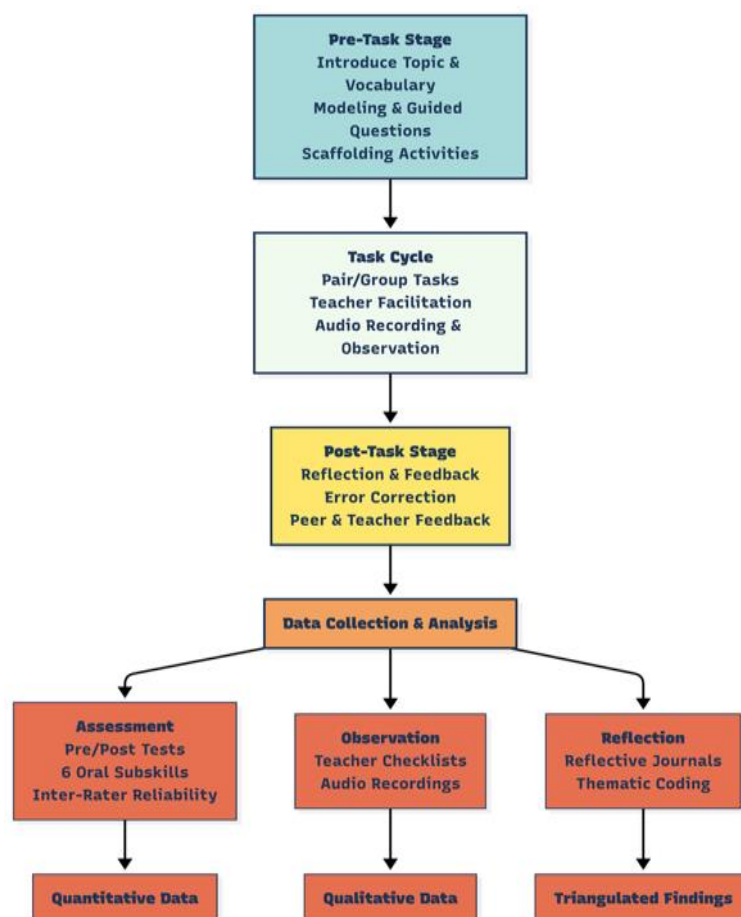


Figure 1 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) intervention framework and data collection flow

Results

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for paired assessments of six key English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking skills: fluency, vocabulary,

pronunciation, grammar, comprehension, and interaction. Each skill was assessed before and after an intervention (e.g., instructional treatment). This study adopts a pre-post research design. For reporting

purposes, difference scores were calculated as Post-test minus Pre-test (Post–Pre), such that positive values indicate improvement following the intervention. All analyses were conducted with a consistent sample size

($N = 33$), yielding $df = 32$ for all paired-sample t-tests. All reported p-values remained statistically significant after Bonferroni correction ($p < 0.001$).

Table 4 Descriptive statistics of post–pre difference scores for EFL speaking skills

Skill	M	SD	SEM
Fluency	0.73	0.74	0.14
Vocabulary	0.90	0.66	0.12
Pronunciation	0.50	0.57	0.10
Grammar	0.73	0.78	0.14
Comprehension	0.63	0.76	0.14
Interaction	0.63	0.76	0.14

Table 4 indicates that all six skills showed improvement, with vocabulary ($M = 0.90$) demonstrating the most significant average gain. This was followed by fluency and grammar, with a mean (M) of 0.73; comprehension and interaction, at 0.63; and pronunciation, which recorded the least improvement, at $M = 0.50$. The standard deviation (SD) values reveal the extent of variability in learners' improvements. Vocabulary achieved the highest gain and exhibited one of the lowest SD (0.66), indicating a consistently practical instructional impact across the cohort. In comparison, the differences in grammatical improvement were substantial ($SD = 0.78$), indicating that while most learners demonstrated progress, some did not. A smaller portion of the participants showed more limited gains in grammatical accuracy. A similar trend was observed in fluency ($SD = 0.74$), exhibiting substantial improvement with varying individualized responses. The means and standard deviations of comprehension and interaction were similar ($M = 0.63$, $SD = 0.76$), and these competencies were assessed using parallel analytic criteria emphasizing real-time responsiveness and meaning negotiation, which may account for their closely aligned mean scores. An instance of this interaction is that in interactive speaking activities, comprehension and interaction frequently interrelate, making it challenging to discern the independent impact of each skill. Although the pronunciation exhibited a slight enhancement ($M = 0.50$), it recorded the lowest mean and some of the smallest standard deviations (0.57), indicating that the

improvement was moderate and uniformly distributed among participants. This suggests a plateau effect; pronunciation remains resistant to significant advancements without targeted phonetic training. Table 4 illustrates the extent and standard deviation of the improvement of the six speaking skills, but Table 5 presents paired-sample t-test results together with effect sizes (d_x) and 95% confidence intervals for Post–Pre differences across the six speaking sub skills. None of the confidence intervals crossed zero.

Differences were computed as Post-test minus Pre-test (Post–Pre). None of the 95% confidence intervals crossed zero, confirming the robustness and educational relevance of the observed improvements. Cohen's d_x was calculated for dependent samples ($d_x = t / \sqrt{N}$). These paired-sample t-tests were conducted to evaluate the differences between the pre-intervention and post-intervention scores across the six dimensions of oral language proficiency. Table 5 shows that statistically significant changes were identified in each of the measured components: fluency ($t(32) = 5.43$, $p < 0.001$), vocabulary ($t(32) = 7.45$, $p < 0.001$), pronunciation ($t(32) = 4.78$, $p < 0.001$), grammar ($t(32) = 5.11$, $p < 0.001$), and comprehension ($t(32) = 4.53$, $p < 0.001$). Vocabulary showed the strongest mean gain ($M = 0.90$), which supports the efficiency of the instructional tasks in accelerating lexical development. The comparatively small standard deviation ($SD = 0.66$) also indicates a high level of consistency in vocabulary gains across participants, supporting the effectiveness of contextualized lexical exposure.

The average enhancement in fluency and grammar was 0.73 points; however, variability in fluency improvement was slightly less pronounced. Gains in fluency may be attributed to time-constrained, meaning-oriented activities such as information-gap tasks and timed interviews, which prioritize message delivery over formal accuracy and foster automaticity. Likewise, grammatical development appears to have resulted from incidental focus on form during communicative interaction. Grammar exhibited a slightly higher standard deviation ($SD = 0.78$), indicating individual

differences in metalinguistic awareness and form sensitivity. Mean gains in comprehension and interaction were identical ($M = 0.63$), with equivalent variability ($SD = 0.76$), suggesting a high degree of interdependence between these skills. Given their reliance on real-time processing and responsive communication, this parallel development is unsurprising and reflects the collaborative nature of task-based interaction. The smallest mean difference was observed in pronunciation ($M = 0.50$).

Table 5 Paired-sample t-test results, effect sizes, and confidence intervals for post-preferences, $N = 33$

Skill	t	df	p	d_x	95% CI of Mean Difference (Post–Pre)
Fluency	5.43	32	<0.001	0.95	[0.46, 1.00]
Vocabulary	7.45	32	<0.001	1.30	[0.66, 1.14]
Pronunciation	4.78	32	<0.001	0.83	[0.29, 0.71]
Grammar	5.11	32	<0.001	0.89	[0.43, 1.03]
Comprehension	4.53	32	<0.001	0.79	[0.24, 1.02]
Interaction	4.53	32	<0.001	0.79	[0.24, 1.02]

Teacher observations and reflections

The qualitative data collected during the intervention complement and help explain the quantitative results observed in students' oral performance. For instance, improvements in fluency, coherence, and reduced pauses during the final project presentations correspond to significant gains in pre- and post-test scores, particularly in longer speaking tasks. Table 6 presents a detailed taxonomy of communicative errors observed across 12 classroom sessions among first-year EFL students. These errors included morphological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, and pragmatic issues, as well as disordering, omission, and superfluous element addition. For each error type, a corrected version is included to illustrate the pedagogical focus.

Crucially, the timing and type of feedback were systematically recorded. Most feedback occurred immediately during the task cycle—for example, through recasts, clarification requests, or echoing allowing students to notice and self-correct errors in real time. Additional post-task feedback was provided

during reflective discussion sessions, particularly targeting recurrent errors identified from audio recordings and observation checklists. By explicitly connecting when and how feedback was given to the types of errors addressed, the qualitative data provide a meaningful explanation of the quantitative gains. For example, reductions in grammatical and vocabulary errors in the post-test align with the frequent use of immediate corrective feedback and guided peer discussion throughout the intervention. This triangulation confirms that the TBLT approach not only facilitated fluency and interaction but also systematically improved accuracy in targeted language areas.

Table 6 categorizes the most common communicative errors observed among first-year EFL students during 12 classroom sessions. The frequent occurrence of morphological errors, such as incorrect verb forms (“didn’t wanted” instead of “didn’t want”) and subject-verb agreement errors (“I will teaches you” instead of “I will teach you”), reflects learners’ ongoing struggles with tense usage and grammatical consistency.

Moreover, the data presented in the present studies indicate that the students also develop syntactic errors, which are manifested by lack of sentence completion (“The rose was very proud, so...”) and their incorrect word order (“Be your best be”) together with lexical errors, with the replacement of semantically irrelevant

words (“arrogant” instead of “proud”) and occurrence of non-collocations (“pretends human behavior” instead of “mimics human behavior”). These results reveal the deficiencies in sentence syntax, construction of clauses, words, diction, and precision.

Table 6 Taxonomy of communicative errors in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners

Type	Example	Corrected Version
Morphological Error: “verb form error related to tense agreement”	“The rose was proud of its color, but it didn’t wanted to share.”	“The rose was proud of its color, but it didn’t want to share.”
Syntactic Error	“The rose which was very proud, because it was the most beautiful in the garden.”	“The rose was very proud because it was the most beautiful in the garden.”
Lexical Error	“The rose was so boastful that it thought it was the queen of all flowers.”	“The rose was so proud that it thought it was the queen of all flowers.”
Addition of Unnecessary Elements	“The rose, it was proud.”	“The rose was proud.”
Wrong Word Choice	“The rose was arrogant of its beauty.”	“The rose was proud of its beauty.”
Faulty Overgeneralization	“The rose was the gooder”	“The rose was the best.”
Morphological Error	“You can be the best of you want to be.”	“You can be the best you want to be.”
Syntactic Error	“It’s your time to shine, you will prove them that you are great.”	“It’s your time to shine; you will prove to them that you are great.”
Semantic Error	“The song is about achieving fame by being very famous.”	“The song is about achieving fame through perseverance and hard work.”
Omission of Required Elements	“You’ll be star if you work hard.”	“You’ll be a star if you work hard.”
Misordering of Elements	“Be best the you can be.”	“Be the best that you can be.”
Addition of Unnecessary Elements	“You can reach your all of your very dreams if you work very, very hard because if you really, really try and try, you will definitely, definitely succeed in all the ways possible.”	“You can reach your dreams if you work hard and persist.”
Wrong Word Choice	“The song talks about success and reaching your unreachable aims and benefits”	“The song talks about success and reaching your goals.”
Syntactic Error	“He is always green with jealousy.”	“He is always green with envy.”
Literal Translation of Expressions	“In the pink”: “في الوردي”	“In the pink”: In good health or high spirits
	“Caught red-handed”: “أمسك ويديه حمراء”	Caught in the act of doing something wrong
	“Blue blood”: “الدم الأزرق”	“Blue blood”: Of noble or aristocratic lineage

Type	Example	Corrected Version
Misordering of Elements	“Teaching English in schools primary is beneficial.”	“Teaching English in primary schools is beneficial.”
Omission of Required Elements	“Integrating English into primary education helps	“Integrating English into primary education helps students by improving their language skills and future opportunities.”
Avoidance Error	“I don’t want to say anything about that topic,”	Instead of addressing the complexities of “Integrating English in Algerian Primary Education.”
Simplifying Language Errors	“English is important,”	Instead of elaborating on its significance for global communication and opportunities.
Borrowing Errors	“We need more <i>livres</i> for learning,”	Borrowing the French term for “books.”
Addition of Unnecessary Elements	“Cyberbullying it is bullying online.”	“Cyberbullying is bullying online.”
Misordering of Elements	“Bullying online is cyberbullying, it happens through communication electronic.”	“Cyberbullying is bullying that happens through electronic communication.”
Omission of Required Elements	“Cyberbullying is common and affects”	“Cyberbullying is common and affects many people”
Avoidance Error	Avoid using specific examples, saying, “I don’t know how to explain it,”	Rather than describing a situation involving cyberbullying.
Borrowing Errors	“It’s easy to <i>télécharger</i> ,”	“It’s easy to <i>download</i> ,”
Addition of Unnecessary Elements	“Artificial Intelligence, which it is a technology....”	“Artificial Intelligence, which is a technology....”
Wrong Word Choice	“AI pretends human behavior.”	“AI mimics human behavior.”
Simplifying Language Errors	“AI is changing jobs,” which lacks detail.	“AI technologies have transformed industries.”
Omission of Required Elements	“I am the doctor. You sick.”	“I am the doctor. You are sick.”
Addition of Unnecessary Elements	“I am the teacher and I will teaches you....”	“I am the teacher and I will teach you....”
Wrong Word Choice	“You need to take this little button every day until you feel better.”	“You need to take this pill every day until you feel better.”
Omission of Required Elements	“Beauty standards in movies can affect people see themselves.”	“Beauty standards in movies can affect how people see themselves.”
Addition of Unnecessary Elements	“Plastic surgery has a very, very, very strong impact on beauty standards.”	“Plastic surgery has a strong impact on beauty standards.”
Avoidance Error	“I don’t know what else to say,”	Instead of discussing how it impacts.
Subject redundancy	“The book it was about a young girl who.”	“The book was about a young girl who...”

Instances of omission (e.g., “You’ll be star...”) and addition of unnecessary elements (e.g., “Cyberbullying it is bullying online”) indicate inconsistencies in learners’ grammatical accuracy and fluency. The fact

that there is considerable cross-linguistic interference is supported by further analysis of transcribed oral data, where literal translations in Arabic (“في الوردى”) were present, as well as the borrowing of the French language

word to be used over the English one (books to livres). The interference has negative implications for the clarity and precision of the student's output in communicative activities. Those who learned to avoid discussing certain subjects, such as the topic at hand. When they attempt to be more sophisticated, they often simplify their grammatical structures in more challenging environments, for example, by stating that AI is transforming jobs. These trends suggest that corrective feedback, through encouragement of risk-taking behavior in the process of overall encouragement of the development of the interlanguage, should be used within a meaningful, contextual communicative environment. These observations directly address the second research question by illustrating how teacher-recorded feedback practices and observed error patterns help explain the statistically significant gains reported in the results section (see Table 4).

Discussion

The present study examined the effect of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the oral communicative proficiency of first-year EFL students at Djelfa University, employing a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative pre- and post-tests with qualitative classroom observations. The findings indicate that TBLT significantly enhanced learners' oral performance across multiple dimensions, including fluency, vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, interaction, and to a lesser extent, pronunciation. Quantitative results reveal that vocabulary development exhibited the highest gain ($M = 0.90$, $SD = 0.66$), followed by fluency and grammar ($M = 0.73$), comprehension and interaction ($M = 0.63$), and pronunciation ($M = 0.50$). Paired-sample *t*-tests confirmed that these gains were statistically significant across all six dimensions ($p < 0.001$), demonstrating that the TBLT intervention effectively improved learners' oral communication skills.

Both the largest mean difference and the highest effect size in the present study indicate that vocabulary exhibited the most significant quantitative gains. Nevertheless, these improvements should be regarded as incidental lexical development that is the result of repeated task engagement, rather than explicit vocabulary instruction. As a result, vocabulary expansion was substantial; however, it was a

consequence of communicative practice rather than a deliberate instructional objective. These results align with prior research emphasizing the efficacy of communicative, meaning-centered tasks in promoting language acquisition (Rinantanti et al., 2024; Abd Rahman, 2024). In particular, the consistent gains in vocabulary and fluency corroborate the notion that repeated exposure to authentic language input through interactive tasks—such as role-plays, problem-solving activities, and opinion-sharing exercises—supports lexical retention and automaticity in speech production, as suggested by Webb, Uchihara, and Laufer (2023) and Hasnain and Halder (2024). While fluency and grammar showed substantial improvement, their higher standard deviations ($SD = 0.74$ and 0.78 , respectively) suggest variability among learners, reflecting individual differences in metalinguistic awareness, engagement, and prior knowledge. Comprehension and interaction exhibited moderate gains with parallel standard deviations ($M = 0.63$, $SD = 0.76$), indicating that these skills are closely intertwined in real-time communication. Such interdependence is unsurprising, as collaborative tasks necessitate simultaneous processing of spoken input and formulation of appropriate responses, thereby promoting interactive competence. Pronunciation showed the smallest improvement ($M = 0.50$, $SD = 0.57$), suggesting that meaning-oriented TBLT tasks, while effective for fluency and interaction, are insufficient for substantial phonological development without explicit form-focused instruction (Saito & Plonsky, 2019; Mora et al., 2024). Qualitative classroom observations provide further insight into these quantitative trends. Table 6 illustrates the types and frequencies of communicative errors, including morphological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, pragmatic, and misordering errors, as well as omission and unnecessary element addition. Importantly, the timing of corrective feedback was systematically recorded: most errors were addressed immediately during the task cycle using recasts, clarification requests, echoing, and peer-mediated guidance. Post-task reflective discussions further targeted persistent errors identified from audio recordings and observation checklists.

The alignment between the timing of feedback and observed gains underscores the effectiveness of real-time corrective strategies in fostering both accuracy and

fluency. For instance, reductions in grammatical and vocabulary errors correspond to frequent on-the-spot feedback and scaffolded peer interactions, confirming the critical role of immediate error correction within TBLT in promoting interlanguage development (Mackey & Goo, 2007; Goh & Burns, 2012). The qualitative data also highlight the challenges that remain. Persistent pronunciation errors, cross-linguistic interference (e.g., literal translations from Arabic and borrowing from French), and simplification of complex structures suggest that learners require additional phonological and form-focused training to achieve higher accuracy. These findings corroborate the literature indicating that meaning-focused instruction alone may not sufficiently address phonetic and lexical precision (Saito & Plonsky, 2019; Webb et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the observed decrease in speech hesitations, reduction in fillers, and increased confidence during extended speaking tasks suggest that TBLT effectively facilitates the development of fluency, interactive competence, and metacognitive engagement (Abd Rahman, 2024; Ren et al., 2025). Novelty lies at the core of this study, as it contributes fresh empirical evidence to both local and global discussions regarding Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) by demonstrating substantial improvements in oral proficiency among novice Algerian university students. Within an educational landscape traditionally dominated by form-focused and examination-driven instruction, these findings align with broader literature advocating for task-based approaches to enhance interactional skills (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Zou, 2025). While the results confirm significant gains in fluency and vocabulary, they also identify a need for supplementary phonetic training to address gaps in pronunciation and accuracy. Globally, this research extends the TBLT field by providing effect-size-based evidence from an underrepresented context, reinforcing the cross-contextual robustness of task-based pedagogy as a data-driven model for transitioning learners toward active linguistic competence.

Limitations and future directions

This research has a number of limitations that should be considered. The one-group pre-test/post-test design without a control group restricts the ability to make strong causal conclusions regarding the observed

improvements. Additionally, the small sample ($n = 33$) drawn from a single Algerian university limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations of EFL learners. The relatively short duration of the intervention may also not capture the potential long-term effects of TBLT on oral language development. To address these limitations, future studies could employ a comparative research design to evaluate the relative effectiveness of TBLT against other established instructional approaches, such as the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) model. The PPP model is widely used in EFL classrooms and emphasizes a more structured, form-focused approach to language teaching, which contrasts with the meaning-oriented, task-based approach of TBLT (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Comparing these approaches could clarify which aspects of oral proficiency are best supported by TBLT versus PPP, particularly in contexts where learners are transitioning from traditional grammar-focused instruction. Future research should also consider longer intervention periods (e.g., six months to a year) to better examine the sustainability of learning gains and language retention. Expanding the sample size and including multiple institutions would enhance the external validity of the findings and provide insights into the applicability of TBLT across diverse EFL settings.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the spoken language proficiency of first-year EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students at Djelfa University. Based on the known ideas of communicative competence and major principles of task-based pedagogy, the research aimed to explore the efficiency of TBLT in the development of speaking skills of learners in terms of multiple parameters, including mainly fluency, accuracy, lexical richness, pronunciation, and interactional strategies. The literature review clearly demonstrates this. Past researchers have taken into consideration the idea of oral communication as a multifaceted, socially constructed cognitive practice; practical research has always overwhelmingly confirmed the findings of TBLT to promote genuine language use and maintain the involvement of learners. The findings of this study indicate that the integration of TBLT practices into the initial stages of EFL learning at

a university level has several positive effects: first-year students who underwent a task-based learning process demonstrated a measurable increase in their confidence and competence in communicating in English in authentic situations. Furthermore, the current results correlate with recent empirical literature in various EFL contexts where similar gains in oral proficiency were described as the result of TBLT (Rinantanti et al., 2024; Abd Rahman, 2024).

Due to the above limitations, one should use these results as a tool with caution. This study does not use a control group; the sample size is relatively small ($n=33$), and the intervention time is rather limited, which prevents making any strong causal inferences and broad conclusions. More variables could have contributed to the results. In order to reduce this anxiety, future studies ought to use comparative and longitudinal studies in heterogeneous institutional settings to investigate the influence of TBLT in the long run and its flexibility. The results in this regard have interesting pedagogical consequences: the curriculum developers and language teachers are invited to systematically incorporate TBLT into the oral expression courses, especially at the initial phases of a university training, where a good communicative base should be provided. The interactive, collaborative problem-solving and use of real language aspects presented in TBLT are a useful alternative to traditional teaching and learning, particularly in a setting like Algeria, where speaking issues are widespread among inexperienced EFL students. To sum up, the present study adds a context-specific point of view to the growing body of literature that promotes the inclusion of TBLT into the EFL curricula, specifically, the context of Algerian higher education. It is a reasonable but strongly speaking plea to continue working tirelessly to balance the classroom activities with communicative and student-oriented principles of learning, thus making learners more prepared to face authentic, real-life communication.

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CRedit author statement

Jihad Abbas: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software. **Md Mirajur Rhaman Shaoan:** Data curation, Writing- Original draft preparation, Writing- Reviewing and Editing. **Shihong Du:** Visualization, Investigation. **Rehmat Ullah Khan:** Supervision. **Sohaib Ullah:** Software, Validation.

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