



Form-Focused Tasks in Task-Based Language Teaching for Enhancing EFL Learners' Speaking Fluency and Motivation

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Abstract

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), as a prominent pedagogical approach, has emerged as a significant innovation in language education, particularly recognized for its potential to enhance speaking fluency among Iranian EFL learners and aims to enhance accuracy, fluency and complexity of the utterances produced by language learners. The purpose of the present study is to examine the impact of TBLT on learners' motivation and speaking fluency. The research design included both experimental and control groups, each participating in a 12-session course. The experimental group engaged in TBLT with an emphasis on form, while the conventional methods were utilized for the control group. Speaking fluency was evaluated using Rate A and Rate B fluency measures and academic motivation was assessed through a motivation questionnaire based on Dörnyei and Dewaele's (2002) L2 Motivational Self System Questionnaire, which included two main sections. A speaking assessment was administrated as a pretest before the treatment and as a posttest after the treatment. Afterward, the result was analyzed; the findings indicated that the experimental group, which received TBLT, outperformed the control group in both motivation and speaking fluency. The results suggest that TBLT, particularly through real-world tasks, encourages students to practice speaking in meaningful contexts, making the learning process more engaging. As a result, students exhibit increased motivation and readiness for lessons, highlighting the potential of TBLT to enhance both language proficiency and learner motivation. This study offers significant insights for language educators, course designers, and policymakers in the field of EFL, suggesting that task-based activities should be incorporated into language learning curricula to improve not only linguistic proficiency but also student motivation and engagement.

Keywords: speaking fluency, task-based language teaching, motivation, Focus on Form

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Introduction

The ability to speak effectively is essential in language acquisition, enabling students to engage in natural and spontaneous conversations with native speakers. Thoughtfully crafted speaking activities in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting can significantly boost students' motivation and create a vibrant and interactive learning atmosphere (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Nunan, 1999; Ochoa-Cueva et al., 2016). Nevertheless, both EFL educators and students encounter considerable obstacles in enhancing speaking skills (James et al., 2019). Various factors contribute to these difficulties. EFL learners frequently find themselves in environments where English is seldom used, which restricts their chances to practice outside the classroom. Furthermore, many students depend predominantly on coursebooks as their main or only resource (Akbari, 2015), hindering their ability to transfer classroom knowledge to real-world situations. This reliance can result in diminished motivation and the belief that speaking English holds little practical significance (Littlewood, 1984). Additionally, as highlighted by Al-Hosni (2014), speaking skills often do not receive adequate focus in language programs, particularly in educational institutions, resulting in fluency challenges for both educators and students, especially within public education systems. Lastly, teacher-centered classroom dynamics, characterized by excessive Teacher Talk Time (TTT), diminish students' chances for active engagement and speaking practice.

The strategies typically employed to enhance EFL learners' speaking abilities often overlook direct speaking practice, which hampers learners' effective acquisition and application of this skill (Al-Hosni, 2014). This challenge is also prevalent among Iranian EFL learners. Despite the introduction of various contemporary teaching methods in Iran's educational framework—such as discussions, role-plays, simulations, information gap activities, brainstorming, interviews, reporting, and card games (Staab, 1992)—these approaches often fail to cultivate speaking proficiency. Afshar and Asakereh (2016) identify a significant drawback of traditional language learning methods: they focus on memorized phrases rather than genuine language application, which hinders the improvement of communicative competence.

Another crucial element that aids EFL learners in language acquisition and improving the communication abilities is motivation. Keller (1983) characterizes motivation as the decisions individuals make about which experiences or objectives to pursue or avoid, along with the effort they invest in achieving those objectives. Numerous studies have demonstrated that motivation is crucial for successful language acquisition, irrespective of the students' gender, age, or proficiency level (Alrabai & Moskovsky 2016; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998). The domain of language education underscores the importance of learner motivation in both mastering the target language and engaging with its cultural context (Henry & Thorsen, 2018). Lam and Law (2007) assert that students are more motivated when educators assign challenging tasks, integrate real-life activities, stimulate curiosity for new knowledge, provide opportunities for independence, recognize students' efforts, and deliver constructive feedback. Recent studies similarly highlight that motivation is strengthened when students envision themselves as competent future L2 speakers

(Al-Hoorie & Dörnyei, 2017). TBLT is acknowledged as an approach that boosts students' motivation to communicate fluently in English by prioritizing language use within the context of task completion. TBLT encourages authentic communication, thereby enhancing the learning process (Ahmadian & Long, 2020). While completing tasks, students participate in meaning negotiation through discussions. Furthermore, authentic, real-world tasks—an essential aspect of communicative activities—actively engage students and inspire them to utilize the target language (Ellis, 2003). These interactive teaching strategies cultivate a social and engaging classroom atmosphere that promotes meaningful language practice.

Ellis (2003) characterized TBLT as a dynamic extension of the CLT methodology, which prioritizes meaningful, form-focused, and real-world tasks. This approach underscores the active participation of students, connecting their involvement to their personal attitudes and levels of motivation. Ballesteros and van Compernelle (2023) posited that task planning within TBLT framework has important implications for speaking development. Dörnyei (1998) pointed out that both educators and researchers consider motivation to be a vital element affecting the speed and efficacy of second or foreign language (L2) acquisition. As a result, there exists a considerable amount of research investigating the correlation between TBLT and learner motivation in countries like Spain and Singapore. In Iran, TBLT as a practical and effective pedagogical approach, offers learners valuable opportunities to engage in meaningful and real-world tasks that foster communication and enhance motivation (Mahdavi-rad, 2017). Tale and Goodarzi (2015) noted that TBLT enables learners to acquire knowledge through active participation in tasks. The interplay between motivation and speaking fluency has long been recognized as reciprocal and dynamic in second language acquisition.

Motivation not only drives learners to engage more actively in communicative tasks but also sustains their effort in developing fluent speech (Dörnyei, 2005; Ushioda, 2011). Conversely, improvements in speaking fluency can enhance learners' self-confidence and intrinsic motivation, creating a positive feedback loop that accelerates language development (MacIntyre et al., 2011). Within the TBLT framework, where authentic communication and meaningful interaction are central, motivation may directly influence the extent to which learners participate in tasks, while fluent task performance may, in turn, reinforce their motivation. Despite this theoretically grounded relationship, empirical research exploring the correlation between speaking fluency and motivation among Iranian EFL learners within TBLT contexts remains scarce. Therefore, examining this link can offer valuable insights into how affective and linguistic factors interact in language learning.

Over the years, TBLT has gained traction in language education and has drawn considerable scholarly interest (Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1996; Nunan, 2004). In this context, the enhancement of speaking fluency among Iranian EFL learners has recently become a prominent topic of discussion. While numerous studies have established a positive link between motivation and various facets of foreign language learning, the specific impact of TBLT on EFL learners' motivation to enhance their speaking abilities remain underexplored.

In light of the shifting perspective on language learning as both a psychological and technological process, this study seeks to explore the effects of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), particularly with an emphasis on form, on two critical outcomes: motivation and speaking fluency. It will specifically assess whether TBLT, when focusing on form, significantly influences speaking fluency and motivation of Iranian EFL learners. Its significance lies in its focus on the Iranian context, providing valuable insights into the possible benefits of this instructional approach. Additionally, the study intends to fill a gap in the literature and offer practical recommendations for EFL educators in Iran to improve teaching practices and learning outcomes. In light of the aforementioned points, the research questions have been proposed as follows:

1. Does TBLT approach focusing on form affect on Iranian EFL learners' speaking fluency significantly?
2. Does TBLT approach focusing on form affect on Iranian EFL learners' motivation significantly??
3. Is there any correlation between learner' speaking fluency and motivation?

Based on the above questions, the following hypotheses were formed:

1. TBLT approach focusing on form affect on Iranian EFL learners' speaking fluency significantly.
2. TBLT approach focusing on form affect on Iranian EFL learners' motivation significantly.
3. There is a correlation between learners' speaking fluency and motivation.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Focus on Form (FonF), and motivation in second language acquisition. TBLT emphasizes the use of authentic, real-world tasks to promote meaningful communication, enabling learners to produce language in contexts that mirror natural interactions (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). By integrating form-focused attention within communicative tasks, TBLT supports both fluency and linguistic accuracy, ensuring learners develop functional proficiency alongside grammatical competence (Ellis, 2003; Mystkowska, 2011).

Motivation plays a critical role in language learning, as intrinsically motivated learners engage more actively, persist longer, and practice language more effectively (Masrom et al., 2015). TBLT inherently fosters motivation by involving learners in collaborative, meaningful tasks that stimulate creativity, autonomy, and sustained engagement (Nita et al., 2019; Willis & Willis, 2007). Accordingly, this study adopts a task-based, form-focused, and motivation-oriented framework, positing that well-designed tasks enhance both speaking fluency and learner motivation, providing a theoretical rationale for examining the impact of TBLT on Iranian EFL learners.

Motivation

Motivation is essential in language acquisition, and TBLT has been recognized as an effective method for enhancing learners' motivation to study and utilize English. TBLT inherently involves students in meaningful and authentic language activities that foster active engagement and creativity. Research conducted by Masrom et al. (2015) indicated that motivated learners participating in these tasks were able to produce language that was more lexically complex compared to their less motivated counterparts. These activities encourage creativity and interaction, especially through collaborative pair and group work, where learners apply language in genuine, spontaneous contexts. Consequently, TBLT cultivates a learning atmosphere that significantly enhances motivation within EFL classroom.

Recent research underscores the crucial role of meaningful, well-structured tasks in fostering learners' motivation and engagement in language learning. Scholars such as Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) and Ellis (2017) emphasize that tasks designed to promote autonomy, relevance, and interaction can enhance learners' intrinsic motivation, which in turn supports their sustained effort and achievement. This highlights the pedagogical importance of incorporating motivating, communicative tasks into English instruction. Additionally, offering an authentic social context for using English in real-life scenarios is crucial, as it not only boosts motivation but also aids learners in reaching their educational objectives and enhancing their language skills (Kumaravivelu, 2006).

Task- Based Language Teaching

TBLT has emerged as a powerful instructional strategy aimed at improving language learners' communication abilities, particularly in speaking. In contrast to conventional methods that primarily emphasize on grammar, TBLT prioritizes real-life tasks, allowing learners to engage in authentic interactions. This approach encourages students to articulate their thoughts, confirm understanding, seek clarification, and adapt to the language they encounter, which may surpass their current proficiency level. Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2011, p. 48) observe that the discourse generated from tasks is intended to closely resemble the natural communication that occurs in real-life situations.

TBLT was created to overcome the shortcomings of traditional language teaching methods, which frequently emphasize grammar at the expense of communication. This grammar-centric approach can hinder learners from attaining a high degree of proficiency and fluency in the target language. Richards and Rodgers (2001), argue that conventional methods have inadequately prioritized speaking, despite its significance as the most direct and accessible means of communication. Even among motivated and capable students, those instructed through traditional structural methods often find it challenging to achieve optimal proficiency and fluency in a second language, even after years of study (Skehan, 1996). Notably, TBLT does not dismiss the traditional emphasis on form; rather, it combines both communicative and form-focused aspects, providing a well-rounded approach to language acquisition (Ellis, 2003). Shirazifard et al. (2023) argued that TBLT-synthesized collaborative dialogue had significant effect on improvements in language production.

Focus on Form

Speaking fluency is frequently regarded as a crucial measure of success for students learning a foreign language, as the main objective of communication is to ensure that the listener comprehends the speaker's intended message. Ellis (2005) characterizes fluency in task performance as the degree to which the language produced during a task exhibits pausing, hesitation, or reformulation. However, in the past two decades, educators have debated whether the emphasis should be placed on accuracy and grammatical structure or on fluency and meaning in language learning. The issue of how much focus should be given to grammar in communicative classrooms remains contentious (Doughty & Williams, 1998; Lightbown, 2000; Norris & Ortega, 2000). Much of the discussion revolves around the extent to which teachers should concentrate on grammatical forms during instruction. Mystkowska, 2011) delved deeper into the function of incidental Focus on Form (FonF) and explored the relationship between classroom participation structures and the quantity, nature, and effectiveness of FonF. Their research found a clear correlation between the structure of classroom participation and the success of FonF, highlighting the significance of integrating form-focused instruction in communicative contexts.

While FonF is traditionally used to teach grammar, research shows it can also support speaking fluency when integrated into meaningful communicative tasks. In TBLT, form-focused attention helps learners notice gaps in their language production and refine their output without disrupting communication, reducing hesitations and reformulations (Ellis, 2003; Mystkowska, 2011). Research indicates that integrating FonF within meaningful tasks enables learners to improve linguistic accuracy without undermining communicative objectives (Salimi et al., 2015), thereby supporting both fluency and correctness in speaking (Ellis, 2005). Thus, in our study, FonF was applied as a scaffolding tool within tasks to enhance fluent, confident, and continuous language production, aligning with evidence that FonF can simultaneously support accuracy and fluency.

Experimental Studies

Over the last four decades, a wide range of techniques and methodologies have emerged to support learners in enhancing their speaking skills (Derakhshan et al., 2015). The transition to communicative approaches in the 1980s brought about significant changes in attitudes and methods of language teaching, leading to the creation of strategies that prioritize speaking proficiency, such as TBLT.

Speaking Fluency and TBLT

Recent experimental and action-research studies provide strong evidence that TBLT can enhance learners' speaking fluency. For example, in a study of 20 EFL learners at a private university in Colombia, ten fluency-based tasks were implemented and qualitative and quantitative data indicated reductions in pauses, improved speech rate, and smoother pacing. Learners reported positive perceptions of TBLT as a methodology that supported their spoken expression and confidence (Zúñiga et al., 2023). Similarly, in an action-research project involving 25 in-service

teachers of English in Ecuador (A2 level), post-test results showed statistically significant improvements in oral interaction after task-based activities: mean scores rose from 17.72 to 19.12 ($p < .001$). Qualitative data indicated that participants felt their confidence increased and anxiety decreased during speaking (Detken, et al., 2024). Another large-scale study involving 60 intermediate-level ESL learners over six weeks found that the TBLT group showed significantly greater enhancement in speech rate, lexical diversity, and reductions in hesitation compared to a conventional grammar-based group. Qualitative findings noted higher levels of motivation and confidence among the TBLT group (Kholbutayeva, 2025).

Additionally, Nget et al. (2020) investigated the impact of task-based instruction on the speaking skills of 9th-grade students. The data gathered from speaking assessments, both quantitative and qualitative, demonstrated that task-based teaching significantly improved students' speaking skills by creating a more supportive learning environment, enhancing their confidence, and increasing their motivation. In a similar vein, Hashemifardnia et al. (2019) conducted research involving 50 Iranian EFL students, who were split into experimental and control groups. The findings indicated that task-based activities markedly improved the speaking fluency of the experimental group, particularly as the tasks reflected real-life contexts, enabling students to practice and refine their fluency.

These studies collectively indicate that task-based instruction — particularly when tasks simulate real communicative demands — can foster greater fluency in speaking, presumably by increasing meaningful output, reducing planning time, and providing more opportunities for spontaneous interaction.

Motivation and TBLT

Furthermore, motivation, a vital element in language acquisition, has been positively impacted by TBLT. By involving students in meaningful tasks that simulate real-life scenarios, TBLT cultivates an interactive and motivating educational atmosphere. This inherent motivation is further enhanced as students interpret meaning and engage in communication while completing tasks (Willis & Willis, 2007). Supporting these findings, Nita et al. (2019) investigated the effect of TBLT on the speaking abilities of EFL learners who possess intrinsic motivation. The research, carried out at a public senior high school in Padang, compared an experimental group taught through TBLT with a control group instructed using traditional methods. The findings indicated that students in the experimental group, who were intrinsically motivated, exhibited greater speaking proficiency than those in the control group, underscoring the effectiveness of TBLT in improving both speaking skills and motivation.

Further evidence comes from studies that report improved learner engagement, willingness to communicate, and reduced anxiety when tasks are meaningful and communicative rather than purely accuracy-focused. For instance, surveys in recent research indicate that learners perceive TBLT as more enjoyable, challenging in a positive way, and confidence enhancing — all of which point to elevated motivation. (Nugrahaeni, 2022). Thus, the literature suggests that well-designed tasks in TBLT not only promote speaking fluency but also contribute to an

interactive, motivating classroom climate — an outcome especially relevant for your study on the dual focus of fluency and motivation.

Focus Within TBLT: Gap & Justification

While the general effectiveness of TBLT for speaking fluency and motivation is affirmed, fewer studies explicitly focus on form-focused tasks embedded within the TBLT framework (i.e., tasks that integrate attention to form within communicative tasks). Some research mentions form-focus implicitly (e.g., during the language-focus phase of the task cycle) but does not systematically examine its effect on fluency and motivation together. For example, one recent study pointed out that tasks enabled learners to focus on meaning and in doing so reduced hesitations, but did not isolate the effect of form-focused intervention (Zhang, 2025)

Consequently, by explicitly combining form focused instruction within authentic tasks, this research advances understanding of how accuracy-oriented attention (form) and communicative fluency (meaning) interact to influence speaking proficiency and motivation.

In sum, the body of experimental research supports TBLT as an effective pedagogical approach for enhancing speaking fluency and learner motivation.

Method

Participants

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design. The original population consisted of approximately 120 adolescent EFL learners enrolled at the private language institute in Tabriz, East Azerbaijan, Iran. These learners attended general English courses at various proficiency levels, ranging from elementary to upper-intermediate. From this population, 42 students in two intact classes at the intermediate level were selected for the study and were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. The participants included both male and female learners aged 13 to 18 years. To ensure homogeneity in English proficiency, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered, and 34 students whose scores fell within the intermediate range were retained for analysis. Furthermore, a speaking assessment was conducted to confirm that all participants had a comparable level of speaking ability and met the study's criteria. Subsequently, the participants were randomly divided into two groups as control group and experimental group. The experimental group underwent treatment aimed at enhancing speaking fluency. Both groups completed pretest and posttest speaking assessments to measure the effect of the intervention. This treatment utilized TBLT with an emphasis on form.

Materials and Instruments

The initial instrument utilized in this research was the OPT, which facilitated the evaluation of participants' skill levels, allowing for the selection of individuals who met the intermediate proficiency standard while excluding those who did not qualify. This assessment is specifically designed to measure proficiency in a S/F language, focusing on both grammatical and pragmatic knowledge, as well as the capacity of effectively utilize this knowledge in communication. Its validity

and reliability are well-documented, making it a widely accepted tool for categorizing students into different proficiency levels based on their performance (Weiss, 2011). The second tool employed was a speaking assessment developed by the researcher, tailored to the materials the students were studying during that semester. This test functioned as a pretest to identify any significant differences in the learners' speaking abilities before the intervention. It was also administered as a post-test to evaluate any statistically significant enhancements in the oral performance of the experimental group following the treatment. Both pre and posttests had the same topics and there weren't any differences.

The motivation questionnaire comprised items pertaining to the participants' motivation, structured according to the framework proposed by Dörnyei (2002). It was administered in English version and was organized into two primary sections. The first section consists of items measuring the learners' attitudes and motivation concerning English learning, and the second section consists of questions about the learners' background information. The questionnaire included closed-ended items and they were accompanied by six response options for respondents to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with it by marking one of the responses referred as Likert scale. The pretest and posttest of speaking fluency were rated by two raters. Pearson correlations were computed to probe the inter-rater reliability indices of the two raters. The results indicated that the values were higher than .50, it was concluded that the inter-rater reliability indices enjoyed large effect sizes.

The internal consistency or reliability of the questionnaire is measured by the reliability coefficient. The reliability indices for pretest and posttest of motivation were .941, and .953 respectively. Based on the criteria, it can be concluded that the reliability indices for pretest and posttest of motivation were "excellent".

Furthermore, the study included listening files from the students' textbook at the institute, which provided the basis for the speaking practice materials. These resources were utilized to assess and improve the students' speaking fluency.

Procedure

The experimental group underwent a procedure divided into three distinct phases:

- Step 1:* Preview (Pre-Task Phase) – This initial phase concentrated on form, aiming to introduce the subject matter while activating the students' existing knowledge.
- Step 2:* Listening and Speaking (Task Phase) – In this phase, the focus remained on form, with the goal of completing the task and using the target language structures in context. This step is sometimes addressed to as the task cycle phase.
- Step 3:* Acting out or Role-Playing – In this final phase, the focus was again on form, to consolidate and review the target language structures. This phase is often addressed to as the language focus phase. During this stage, students engaged in pair work to practice dialogues, simulating real-life scenarios.

In contrast, the control group adhered to a more conventional method, where the teacher presented the topics, followed by students practicing dialogues as a production activity, akin to rote learning, such as memorizing scripts, emphasizing explicit grammar explanation, and memorization of model dialogues from the textbook. Students practiced predetermined patterns in limited, accuracy-focused exercises, with minimal opportunities for spontaneous or communicative use of the target language. This teacher-centered method contrasted with the task-based, form-focused instruction in the experimental group, which emphasized interaction and meaningful communication through real-life tasks. After a six-week instructional period, both groups participated in a speaking post-test to evaluate the effects of TBI on their speaking fluency. Furthermore, a questionnaire of motivation was re-administered to assess any changes in the students' motivation levels resulting from the TBLT approach.

In this study, the instructional treatment followed the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), not Task-Supported Language Teaching (TSLT). The tasks designed for the experimental group were primarily open-ended authentic, real-life communicative tasks that required learners to use English meaningfully to achieve specific outcomes, such as information exchange, role-play, and problem-solving. Tasks were carefully sequenced from simpler to more complex communicative demands. In the pre-task phase, learners were introduced to the topic and relevant language forms, activating prior knowledge. During the task cycle, students engaged in paired and group activities requiring them to use the target language spontaneously. Finally, in the language focus phase, students consolidated linguistic structures through guided practice and peer interaction, reinforcing fluency while maintaining attention to form. While the tasks were not graded in a conventional sense, progression and complexity were monitored across the six sessions. Criteria for sequencing included linguistic complexity, cognitive demand, and communicative challenge, ensuring learners gradually built confidence and fluency.

While the primary emphasis was on meaning and fluency, a Focus on Form (FonF) was incorporated implicitly and reactively during task performance—drawing learners' attention to relevant linguistic forms that naturally emerged from communication. This integration of form-focused attention within real-world tasks allowed learners to enhance both speaking fluency and motivation while maintaining the communicative purpose of the activity.

Data Analysis

Fluency was analyzed using documented procedures widely employed in second language research (e.g., Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Skehan, 2009; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005;). These metrics encompassed speech rate, pauses, word frequency, vocabulary richness, and grammatical complexity. To assess fluency, two key factors were considered:

- Rate A: The number of syllables produced per minute of speech
- Rate B: The number of meaningful syllables produced per minute of speech

These metrics were selected based on established procedures for measuring L2 oral fluency, ensuring that the analysis followed validated and reliable standards.

For the motivation data, the questionnaire scores were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha in the SPSS software. A value greater than 0.70 was considered acceptable to ensure reliability of the responses. Following this, the hypotheses were tested using One-Way ANCOVA on the post-test scores from both groups to evaluate the treatment's effect. A p-value of less than 0.05 was required to establish a significant difference between the results of the two groups.

Inter-Rater Reliability Indices

To probe the inter-rater reliability related to the two raters for the pretest and posttest of speaking fluency, Pearson correlations were calculated. The findings show a large agreement between the two raters for both the pretest ($r(30) = .662$, representing a significant effect, $p < .05$) and the posttest ($r(30) = .815$, representing a large effect size, $p < .05$) of speaking fluency. These findings suggest that both the pretest and posttest had strong inter-rater reliability.

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Indices: The motivation questionnaire demonstrated high internal consistency for both pretest and posttest administrations. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .941 for the pretest and .953 for the posttest, indicating satisfactory reliability of the instrument.

Results

In this research, ANCOVA was used for analyzing the effects of TBLT on the dependent variable, while controlling for the influence of other variables. To ensure the validity of the analysis, normality was assessed through skewness and kurtosis for the pretest and posttest of speaking fluency and motivation. The skewness and kurtosis values for the tests confirm the normal distribution and reliability of the data.

First, regarding the One-Way ANCOVA, it is important to note that a linear correlation between the pretest and posttest scores of speaking fluency is required. The results of the linearity test ($F(1, 20) = 31.67$, $p < .05$, eta squared = .686, representing a significant effect size), showed a significant linear correlation between the pretest and posttest of speaking fluency, thus rejecting the null hypothesis concerning the correlation between these two tests was non-linear.

Second, the assumption related to homogeneity of regression slopes was tested for One-Way ANCOVA, which requires the consistency of the linear relationship between the pre and post-tests of speaking fluency across the two groups. After examining the assumption, it was shown that the interrelationship between the covariate (pretest) and the independent variable was found to be non-significant ($F(1, 28) = .031$, $p > .05$, Partial eta squared = .001, representing a weak effect). Therefore, the null hypothesis, suggesting a non-linear relationship between

the pretest and posttest of speaking fluency of the two groups was rejected by indication of this result.

Finally, after accounting the pretest effect, One-Way ANCOVA assumes that the variances on the posttest of the two groups' speaking fluency are approximately equal. This assumption is referred as the homogeneity of variances. The non-significant results obtained from Levene's test ($F(1, 30) = 1.28, p > .05$), indicated that this assumption was upheld.

After reviewing the assumptions for One-Way ANCOVA, the key findings include descriptive statistics and the primary outcomes of the analysis. Table 1 presents the mean scores of both groups on the posttest of speaking fluency, controlled for any influence of pretest. The findings indicate that the experimental group ($M = 46.96, SE = 2.95$) outperformed the control group ($M = 37.53, SE = 2.95$) on the posttest of speaking fluency, adjusted for the pretest scores.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Fluency Posttest by Group with Pretest

Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experimental	46.966 ^a	2.955	40.922	53.009
Control	37.534 ^a	2.955	31.491	43.578

a. The values of Covariates in the model are as follows: Pretest = 27.59.

Table 2 presents the results of the One-Way ANCOVA. The findings ($F(1, 29) = 36.89, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .148$, reflecting a strong effect) reveal that the experimental group performed at higher level than the control group on the post-test of speaking fluency after accounting the pre-test scores. Consequently, the null hypothesis supposing that "TBLT focus on forms did not significantly improve fluency in EFL learners' speaking ability" was rejected.

Table 2

Between-Subjects Effects Tests for Posttest of Speaking Fluency by Groups with Pretest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pretest	5095.091	1	5095.091	36.899	.000	.560
Group	695.334	1	695.334	5.036	.033	.148
Error	4004.378	29	138.082			
Total	66469.000	32				

To assess the second null hypothesis, the assumption underlying the One-Way ANCOVA were systematically evaluated. The linearity test yielded a statistically significant results ($F(1, 18) = 77.08, p < .05, \eta^2 = .819$, presented in Table 3) indicated a large effect size, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis, and confirm that there was linear relationship between the pretest and posttest of motivation

Table 3

Linearity Between Pretest and Posttest of Motivation by ANOVA Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PostMotivation* PreMotivation	(Combined)	44.827	13	3.448	6.247	.000
	Between Groups	42.550	1	42.550	77.089	.000
	Deviation from Linearity	2.277	12	.190	.344	.968
	Within Groups	9.935	18	.552		
	Total	54.762	31			
	Eta Squared	.819				

The interaction effect between the covariate (pretest) and the independent variable was not statistically significant ($F(1, 28) = 3.64, p > .05$, the observed Partial eta squared value of .115, indicate an effect of intermediate size, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This outcome confirms that the relationship between the pretest and posttest of motivation was indeed linear across both groups.

Table 4

Testing Homogeneity of Regression Slopes for Motivation Posttest by Groups with Pretest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Group	.294	1	.294	2.889	.100	.094
Pretest	42.550	1	42.550	417.570	.000	.937
Group* Pretest	.371	1	.371	3.645	.067	.115
Error	2.853	28	.102			
Total	307.579	32				

Given the non-significant findings from Levene's test ($F(1, 30) = .371, p > .05$), the assumption of homogeneity of variances across groups was upheld (Table 5).

Table 5

Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances for Motivation Posttest by Groups with Pretest

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.371	1	30	.547

Table 6 presents the means of adjusted posttest motivation for the experimental and control groups, accounting for the effect of the pretest. The findings revealed that the experimental group (M = 3.34, SE = .083) demonstrated a higher adjusted mean on the motivation post-test compared to the control group (M = 2.28, SE = .083), after accounting for the pretest differences.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Posttest of Motivation by Group with Pretest

Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experimental	3.341 ^a	.083	3.170	3.511
Control	2.281 ^a	.083	2.110	2.451

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pretest = 1.62.

And finally, table 7 indicates the main outcomes of One-Way ANCOVA. The findings (F (1, 29) = 80.82, p < .05, partial $\eta^2 = .736$, indicating a higher effect) approve the significant outperformance of experimental group over the control group on the motivation posttest, after adjusting for the pretest, leading to the rejection of the second null hypothesis, which stated that "TBLT focus on forms did not significantly improve fluency in EFL learners' speaking ability."

Table 7

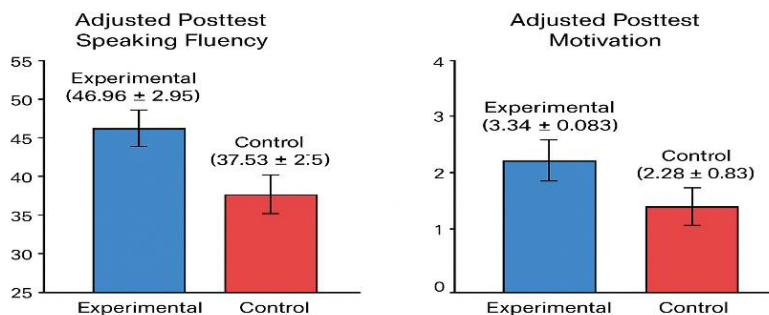
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Motivation Posttest by Groups with Pretest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pretest	42.550	1	42.550	382.670	.000	.930
Group	8.988	1	8.988	80.829	.000	.736
Error	3.225	29	.111			
Total	307.579	32				

Based on the result obtained from the data, adjusted Posttest Means of Speaking Fluency and Motivation by Groups were presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Adjusted Posttest Means by Group



As shown in table 8, the findings of the Pearson Correlation ($r(30) = .878$, representing a large effect size, $p < .05$) revealed a strong correlation between motivation and speaking fluency. Therefore, the third null hypothesis, stating "there is no significant relationship between motivation of EFL learners and their speaking fluency," was rejected.

Table 8

Pearson Correlation between Motivation and Speaking Fluency

		Speaking Fluency
	Pearson Correlation	.878**
Motivation	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	32

** Significance of Correlation is at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the effects of TBLT emphasizing the form on the speaking motivation and fluency of Iranian EFL learners. It specifically investigated whether this teaching method significantly influenced speaking fluency and motivation of learners, as well as the potential correlation between these two factors. By delving into these elements, the research sought to enhance understanding of TBLT's effectiveness in advancing language proficiency, while also taking into account the psychological and motivational aspects that are vital in the process of language learning. The findings revealed a notable improvement in the speaking fluency of the experimental group in the comparison with the control group. The experimental group, which participated in TBLT with a focus on form, exhibited more substantial advancements in their speaking skills. This result supports the initial hypothesis that "The TBLT approach focusing on form has a

significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' speaking fluency." The observed enhancements in speaking fluency, attributed to TBLT's focus on task completion and form-oriented practice, highlight the approach's effectiveness in fostering speaking proficiency among Iranian EFL learners.

In terms of motivation, the results also confirmed the second hypothesis: learners exposed to TBLT showed a noticeable increase in motivation to learn and use English. The dynamic and engaging nature of task-based activities appears to have contributed to this heightened motivation. Through active participation in meaningful, goal-oriented tasks, students developed a sense of ownership over their learning. The interactive group work, peer feedback, and focus on real-life communication likely created a more stimulating environment that made learning English more enjoyable and relevant. These findings highlight TBLT's capacity to enhance intrinsic motivation by fostering autonomy, competence, and relatedness—three key psychological needs identified in motivational theory.

Moreover, a strong positive correlation was found between speaking fluency and motivation, supporting the third hypothesis. This relationship indicates that as students' fluency improves, they become more motivated to continue learning, and conversely, higher motivation encourages more engagement in communicative activities, which in turn enhances fluency (Naseri et al., 2025). This reciprocal effect underscores the importance of addressing both cognitive and affective dimensions in language pedagogy, as proficiency and motivation appear to reinforce one another in a cyclical process of growth.

Overall, the findings suggest that TBLT with a focus on form effectively promotes both speaking proficiency and motivation among Iranian EFL learners. The observed improvement may stem from the interactive, learner-centered, and collaborative nature of TBLT tasks, which foster meaningful communication and peer learning. By prioritizing communicative tasks over isolated grammar drills, learners internalize language more deeply and retain it more effectively. The inclusion of real-life, contextually relevant tasks also helped connect classroom learning to students' everyday experiences, sparking greater interest and engagement. Furthermore, the clear communicative purposes of the tasks, combined with positive reinforcement from teachers and peers, further enhanced learners' confidence and motivation.

The improvements can be attributed to the interactive and authentic nature of TBLT tasks. Role-playing, communicative activities, and tasks reflecting students' daily experiences encouraged meaningful practice, peer collaboration, and active participation. These tasks emphasized fluency over grammatical perfection, allowing students to communicate freely, build confidence, and internalize language structures more effectively. Positive feedback from teachers and peers further enhanced motivation and engagement. These findings are consistent with previous studies highlighting TBLT's effectiveness in enhancing communicative competence, learner engagement, and a supportive learning environment (Nget et al., 2020; Willis & Willis, 2007; Xuyen & Trang, 2021).

The positive outcomes of this study, particularly the increased learner motivation, stem from the authentic and communicative nature of task-based activities. By engaging learners in meaningful, context-relevant communication and reducing the pressure of grammatical accuracy, TBLT fosters a supportive environment that enhances fluency and sustains motivation through greater confidence and participation. These findings corroborate the observations made by Hasibuan (2019), who identified a relationship between students' motivation and their speaking proficiency. However, they contrast with the results of Widayanti et al. (2020), which indicated that despite high speaking proficiency among students in the English Teacher Education Department, their motivation levels were low, leading to the conclusion that no positive correlation existed between speaking motivation and speaking ability. The discrepancies in findings may stem from the diverse teaching methodologies employed, the varying personality traits of the learners, and contextual factors such as the students' experiences, physical environment, and the goals behind speaking practice.

Conclusion

This study has illustrated the substantial positive effects of TBLT, particularly through form-focused tasks, on the speaking fluency and motivation of Iranian EFL students. The findings underscored that TBLT offers an engaging and effective method for enhancing speaking abilities by enabling students to practice language in authentic contexts, thereby increasing both their fluency and confidence in communication. Alongside the improvement in speaking fluency, the study also noted a significant rise in student motivation. TBLT fostered an interactive and dynamic classroom atmosphere where students could meaningfully engage with the language, moving away from conventional grammar-centric instruction. The incorporation of role-playing and communicative tasks not only advanced speaking skills but also cultivated an environment of active participation, enhancing intrinsic motivation.

Moreover, the study suggests that TBLT not only improves speaking fluency but also encourages learner autonomy. Students are motivated to take charge of their learning as they engage in tasks that necessitate real-time communication, fostering a sense of responsibility and enhancing their independent learning capabilities. This approach also promotes greater inclusivity in the classroom, allowing all students, regardless of their proficiency levels, to contribute and participate in a collaborative learning environment.

The findings of this study highlight the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in enhancing both speaking fluency and learner motivation among EFL students. For language educators, incorporating authentic, communicative tasks—such as role-plays and problem-solving activities—can create an engaging, interactive classroom environment that reduces speaking anxiety, fosters learner autonomy, and encourages active participation across proficiency levels. For curriculum designers, integrating meaningful, real-world tasks into course materials ensures that learners develop communicative competence alongside grammatical accuracy, while task sequencing can support gradual skill

development and sustained motivation. Policymakers and institutional administrators are encouraged to support curriculum reforms that embed TBLT principles, provide professional development for teachers, and align assessment practices with communicative outcomes rather than solely grammar-focused measures.

Overall, TBLT offers a learner-centered, motivation-enhancing approach that bridges the gap between language instruction and real-life communication, suggesting that task-based activities should be a core component of effective EFL programs.

This study was limited by its short intervention, a small sample size, unexamined gender differences, and the lack of control over participants' and teachers' attitudes and types of motivation, which may have influenced the outcomes. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples, examine learners of different ages and proficiency levels, and explore the effects of TBLT on other language skills such as listening, reading, and writing. Investigating short- and long-term effects, individual differences and teachers' and students' attitudes could provide deeper insights.

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