

Empowering Moroccan EFL Learners speaking fluency through Task-Based Learning

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the effects of Task-Based Learning (PBL) on the speaking fluency of intermediate-level Moroccan EFL students, addressing a specific gap in the existing literature. A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving 60 intermediate EFL students from three Moroccan high schools. Participants were divided into a control group receiving traditional instruction and an experimental group engaging in PBL activities over a six-week period. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-intervention speaking tests measuring speech rate and accuracy. Qualitative data were obtained via student interviews and classroom observations, focusing on learner engagement and perceptions of PBL. The findings revealed significant improvements in the experimental group, which showed a 25% increase in speech rate and a 15% improvement in accuracy, while the control group exhibited minimal changes. Interviews indicated that students found TBL activities more engaging and relevant, leading to heightened motivation and confidence in speaking. These results align with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, emphasizing that the collaborative nature of PBL creates a supportive environment conducive to language development. They also support Swain's Output Hypothesis, highlighting the importance of meaningful language use in promoting fluency. Based on these findings, the study recommends integrating PBL into EFL curricula through strategies such as group projects on culturally relevant topics and problem-solving tasks that require active verbal communication, thereby enhancing learners' speaking skills.

Keywords: Task-Based teaching- speaking fluency- EFL Learners-Moroccan EFL Context-Language Skills Developmen.

تعزيز الطلاقة لدى المغاربة متعلمي الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من خلال التعلم القائم على المهام
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ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء أثر التعلم القائم على المهام (TBL) على طلاقة التحدث لدى طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المستوى المتوسط بالمغرب، وذلك لسد فجوة بحثية في الأدبيات المتعلقة بهذا المجال. اتبعت الدراسة منهجية مختلطة، شارك فيها 60 طالباً في المستوى المتوسط من ثلاث مدارس ثانويات مغربية. تم تقسيم المشاركين إلى مجموعتين: مجموعة ضابطة تلقت التعليم التقليدي، ومجموعة تجريبية شاركت في أنشطة التعلم القائم على المشاريع لمدة ستة أسابيع. جُمعت البيانات الكمية عبر اختبارات التحدث قبل وبعد التدخل، حيث تم قياس سرعة الكلام ودقته. كما تم جمع بيانات نوعية من خلال مقابلات مع الطلاب وملاحظات صفية ركزت على تفاعل المتعلمين وانطباعاتهم تجاه التعلم القائم على المشاريع. أظهرت النتائج تحسناً ملحوظاً في المجموعة التجريبية، حيث سجلت زيادة بنسبة 25% في سرعة الكلام وتحسناً بنسبة 15% في الدقة، في حين أظهرت المجموعة الضابطة تغيرات طفيفة فقط. أشارت مقابلات الطلاب إلى أن أنشطة التعلم القائم على المهام كانت أكثر تحفيزاً وذات صلة، مما أدى إلى زيادة الدافعية والثقة في التحدث. تتفق النتائج مع نظرية فيجوتسكي الاجتماعية الثقافية، التي تؤكد أن الطبيعة التعاونية للتعلم القائم على المهام تخلق بيئة داعمة لتطوير اللغة. كما تدعم فرضية الإنتاج لدى سوين، التي تشدد على أهمية الاستخدام المعنوي للغة في تعزيز الطلاقة. توصي الدراسة بدمج التعلم القائم على المشاريع في مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية عبر تبني استراتيجيات مثل المشاريع الجماعية في موضوعات ثقافية والمهام التي تتطلب تواصلًا شفهيًا نشطًا وحل المشكلات، ما يساهم في تعزيز مهارات التحدث لدى المتعلمين.

الكلمات الدالة: التدريس القائم على المهام، الطلاقة في التحدث، متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، السياق المغربي لتعليم الإنجليزية، تنمية المهارات اللغوية.

1. Introduction

The development of speaking fluency is a crucial yet challenging aspect of English language learning, particularly in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts where learners have limited exposure to authentic communication. Fluency is often defined as the ability to speak smoothly, accurately, and spontaneously, enabling learners to express their thoughts and engage in real-life conversations without excessive hesitation. However, despite years of formal instruction, many EFL learners particularly in Morocco struggle to achieve natural and confident spoken communication. This issue stems from traditional teaching methods that emphasize grammar drills, controlled practice, and written exercises rather than providing opportunities for spontaneous speech. Consequently, students often develop strong receptive skills (reading and listening) but remain hesitant and insecure when it comes to oral expression.

In Moroccan EFL classrooms, speaking activities are often structured, rehearsed, and assessment-driven, leaving little room for meaningful interaction. The overemphasis on linguistic accuracy while important sometimes comes at the expense of fluency development, making students overly conscious of grammatical correctness rather than the flow of communication. Additionally, the lack of authentic speaking opportunities outside the classroom further limits students' ability to engage in natural conversations. Many Moroccan learners are also influenced by their native language (Arabic or Berber) and French, leading to interference at the phonological, syntactic, and discourse levels, which can hinder fluency.

To address these challenges, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as an effective approach that promotes fluency through meaningful communication. Unlike traditional methods that focus on language forms, TBLT encourages learners to use English as a tool to accomplish tasks that reflect real-world situations. A task in this context refers to a communicative activity with a specific goal, such as problem-solving discussions, debates, storytelling, interviews, simulations, or collaborative projects. Through these tasks, learners are pushed to produce language spontaneously, negotiate meaning, and develop conversational strategies, all of which contribute to fluency enhancement.

From a theoretical perspective, TBLT aligns with key principles of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), particularly interactionist theories that emphasize the role of meaningful interaction in language learning. According to Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis, fluency improves when learners are required to produce language under real-time constraints, forcing them to automatize language processing and develop communicative competence. Similarly, Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis highlights how negotiation of meaning which occurs during task-based interactions—helps learners refine their speech and become more fluent. By engaging in task-based learning, students are exposed to rich input, pushed output, and interaction-driven feedback, all of which are crucial for fluency development.

Empirical studies have shown that task-based instruction leads to significant improvements in speaking fluency. Research indicates that learners engaged in TBLT demonstrate greater lexical diversity, reduced hesitation, and increased speech rate compared to those following traditional methods. Furthermore, task-based approaches create a low-anxiety environment, where learners feel more confident and willing to take risks in speaking, leading to more natural and spontaneous communication.

Given its potential, this article explores how Task-Based Language Teaching can empower Moroccan EFL learners by enhancing their speaking fluency it examines.

1.1. Study Problem

In Morocco, English has become a pivotal language, essential for academic success, professional advancement, and global communication. However, despite its importance, Moroccan students often face challenges in achieving oral proficiency.

Moroccan English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners frequently encounter difficulties in developing speaking skills. These challenges include limited opportunities for practice, insufficient exposure to native-like speech patterns, and a lack of engaging pedagogical strategies. Traditional teaching methods, such as rote memorization, may not effectively address the communicative needs of students. A study by Elkhafaifi (2005) found that Moroccan EFL learners require more time to practice speaking and that motivation plays a crucial role in enhancing their speaking abilities.

To address these challenges, innovative teaching methodologies like Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) have been introduced. TBLT focuses on the use of authentic language to complete meaningful tasks, promoting fluency and student confidence. This approach aligns with communicative language teaching principles, emphasizing real-world language use over mere grammatical accuracy. Research indicates that TBLT can stimulate students' intrinsic interests, leading to improved learning outcomes.

Implementing TBLT in Moroccan EFL classrooms presents a promising avenue to enhance speaking fluency. By integrating tasks that mirror real-life situations, TBLT aligns with the communicative needs of students, potentially bridging the gap between classroom learning and practical language use. However, the effectiveness of TBLT in the Moroccan context necessitates empirical investigation to tailor its application to local educational settings. A study by Kormos and Kiddle (2013) explored the role of socio-economic factors in motivation to learn English as a foreign language, highlighting the need for contextually relevant teaching methods.

Research Rationale

- Challenges Moroccan EFL learners face in speaking fluency.
- Why TBLT is relevant in this context?

To meet such objectives, the present research addresses and tries to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: How does TBLT affect the speaking fluency of Moroccan EFL learners?
- RQ2: What aspects of fluency are most influenced by TBLT?
- Hypothesis: TBLT significantly improves speaking fluency.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to assess the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the speaking fluency of Moroccan high school students. The specific objectives are:

1.2.1. Investigate the Impact of TBLT on Speaking Fluency

Enhance Speech Rate: Evaluate whether TBLT leads to an increased rate of speech production among students, contributing to more natural and fluid communication.

Improve Grammatical Accuracy: Determine if engaging in task-based activities enhances students' use of correct grammatical structures during speaking.

Develop Idea Organization: Assess how TBLT influences the logical sequencing and coherence of ideas expressed by students in oral communication.

1.2.2. Determine Its Effectiveness in Moroccan High Schools

Evaluate Teacher and Student Perceptions: Explore the attitudes and perceptions of both teachers and students towards the implementation of TBLT in the Moroccan high school context.

Identify Implementation Challenges: Investigate any obstacles faced during the adoption of TBLT, such as resource limitations, class size, or resistance to new teaching methods.

Assess Educational Outcomes: Measure the overall effectiveness of TBLT in improving speaking fluency compared to traditional teaching methods, considering factors like student engagement and motivation.

Addressing these objectives will provide valuable insights into the suitability and impact of TBLT within Moroccan high school settings, informing future pedagogical strategies for enhancing English speaking proficiency.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Speaking Fluency in EFL Learning

Speaking fluency is a pivotal aspect of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, reflecting a learner's ability to communicate effectively and naturally. It encompasses several interrelated components:

2.1.1. Definition and Components

Speed: The rate at which a speaker produces speech, balancing quick delivery with clarity. Speaking at a moderate pace, typically around 120-150 words per minute, facilitates listener comprehension and engagement.

Accuracy: The correctness of language use, including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Accurate speech ensures that the intended message is conveyed without confusion.

Coherence: The logical flow and organization of ideas, ensuring that speech is understandable and cohesive. Coherent speech allows listeners to follow the speaker's thoughts seamlessly.

These elements collectively contribute to a speaker's fluency, enabling smooth and effective

communication.

2.1.2. Common Challenges Faced by Moroccan EFL Learners

Moroccan EFL learners often encounter specific challenges in developing speaking fluency:

Limited Practice Opportunities: Insufficient exposure to English-speaking environments restricts real-life conversational practice and hinders fluency development.

Inadequate Instructional Methods: Traditional teaching approaches may not prioritize communicative competence, focusing more on rote learning than practical usage.

Psychological Barriers: Factors such as lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and low motivation can hinder active participation in speaking activities.

Addressing these challenges requires implementing teaching strategies that promote active engagement, real-life communication, and a supportive learning environment.

2.2. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

2.2.1. Definition and Theoretical Foundations

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), also known as Task-Based Instruction (TBI), is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes the use of authentic language through meaningful tasks to facilitate learning. These tasks mirror real-life activities, such as visiting a doctor, conducting an interview, or calling customer service for assistance. The primary focus is on the successful completion of these tasks, with assessment based on task outcomes rather than solely on linguistic accuracy. This approach aligns with the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT), aiming to enhance learners' fluency and confidence in using the target language.

The theoretical foundations of TBLT are rooted in the belief that language learning is most effective when learners engage in authentic, goal-oriented communication. This perspective draws from constructivist theories, which suggest that learners construct knowledge through meaningful interaction and problem solving. By engaging in tasks that require genuine communication, learners activate cognitive processes essential for language acquisition, such as negotiating meaning, hypothesizing, and differencing.

2.2.2. Key Principles and Stages

TBLT operates on several key principles, which is typically structured into three main stages:

Pre-Task: In this initial phase, the teacher introduces the topic and provides clear instructions on the forthcoming task. This stage may involve presenting models of the task, discussing relevant vocabulary, or brainstorming ideas to activate prior knowledge. The goal is to prepare students cognitively and linguistically for the task, ensuring they understand the objectives and expectations.

During-Task: Students perform the task, usually working in pairs or small groups to encourage interaction. The teacher's role during this phase is to monitor progress, offer support as needed, and facilitate communication without overtly correcting errors, allowing learners to focus on

fluency and meaning. This stage emphasizes spontaneous language use and collaboration.

Post-Task: After completing the task, students reflect on their performance, discuss challenges encountered, and share outcomes with the class. This phase may include feedback sessions, error correction, and opportunities to repeat the task to improve accuracy and fluency. The post-task stage reinforces learning by consolidating language structures and vocabulary encountered during the task.

By structuring lessons around these stages, TBLT fosters a learner-centered environment that prioritizes meaningful communication and practical language use, aligning with the goal of developing functional proficiency in the target language.

2.4. Gaps in the Literature

Despite the increasing emphasis on communicative approaches in English language teaching, research on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in Morocco remains limited, particularly concerning its impact on speaking fluency. Several key gaps highlight the need for further investigation:

Limited Empirical Studies on TBLT in Morocco

Research on TBLT has been conducted extensively in Asian and European contexts (Ellis, 2009; Skehan, 2018), demonstrating its effectiveness in improving speaking fluency. However, empirical studies examining the impact of TBLT in Moroccan high schools are scarce (Benmoussat, 2020). While communicative approaches have been encouraged in Moroccan EFL curricula (Ministry of National Education, 2019), fluency-focused interventions remain underexplored.

2.5. Previous Studies

In examining the efficacy of Task-Based Learning (TBL) in enhancing the speaking skills of Moroccan English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners, several studies provide valuable insights:

2.5. 1.Exploring Teachers' Perceptions of TBL:

Mettar's 2021 study investigated Moroccan high school EFL teachers' familiarity with and views on Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL). The findings revealed that while teachers possessed a solid understanding of TBLL concepts, their practical application was limited. Identified challenges included a lack of task-based materials, large class sizes, and students' preference for using their mother tongue during tasks. The study suggests that addressing these challenges requires developing appropriate materials and providing targeted training for educators.

2.5.2. Enhancing Speaking Skills through TBL:

El Arbaoui's 2023 research focused on improving business students' speaking skills through task-based instruction. Data collected from 234 students and 14 teachers indicated positive perceptions of TBL's effectiveness in enhancing speaking abilities. The study advocates for the sustained and contextually appropriate adoption of TBL, considering the diverse proficiency levels of students.

2.5.3. Implementing TBL in Moroccan High Schools:

A study examined the familiarity and implementation of TBL among Moroccan high school EFL instructors. The research indicated that while teachers possessed a good understanding of TBL concepts, the practical application of tasks in classrooms was limited. Challenges identified included a lack of task-based materials, large class sizes, and students' tendencies to use their mother tongue during tasks. The study suggests the need for developing task-based materials and providing teacher training to facilitate effective TBL implementation.

Collectively, these studies underscore the potential of TBL to enhance speaking skills among Moroccan EFL learners. They highlight both the positive perceptions of TBL and the practical challenges that educators may encounter, offering a comprehensive understanding of TBL's application in the Moroccan EFL context.

2.6. Conceptual Framework

Speaking Fluency

Speaking fluency refers to the ability to produce spoken language smoothly, effortlessly, and at an appropriate speed without excessive hesitation or pauses. According to Nation (1989), fluency is the ability to “speak at a reasonable speed with few pauses and hesitations.” Skehan (1996) emphasizes that fluency is one of three key aspects of oral proficiency, alongside accuracy and complexity.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an instructional approach that emphasizes the use of real-world tasks to facilitate language learning. According to Ellis (2003), TBLT is “an approach to teaching languages that involves the use of tasks as the central unit of planning and instruction.” Willis (1996) highlights that tasks in TBLT should be meaning-focused and engage learners in real communication.

Moroccan EFL Context

The Moroccan EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context refers to the specific sociolinguistic and educational environment in which English is taught and learned in Morocco. In Morocco, English is a foreign language, with Arabic and French playing dominant roles in education and administration (Bouzidi, 1989). Despite its growing importance, English is not the primary language of communication, which influences how Moroccan students acquire and develop their language skills (Bennani, 2018).

Intervention Study

An intervention study in education refers to a structured instructional program designed to test the impact of a specific teaching method. Creswell (2014) defines an intervention study as “a research design in which the researcher introduces a treatment or intervention to observe its effects on participants.” In the context of this study, the intervention is the application of TBLT over six weeks to enhance speaking fluency.

2.7. Significance of the Study

This study is notable because it provides pedagogical, theoretical and practical significance in the

education system.

2.7.1. Pedagogical Significance provides evidence-based insights on the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in improving Moroccan EFL learners' speaking fluency. Further, it helps teachers design engaging and interactive speaking activities that promote fluency, rather than relying on traditional grammar-focused instruction.

Encourages the use of real-life communication tasks, making language learning more meaningful and practical for students.

2.7.2. Theoretical Significance Contributes to existing research on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) by providing empirical data on its impact in a Moroccan EFL context. Moreover, it Supports theories related to communicative competence and fluency development in second language acquisition (SLA).

2.7.3. Practical Significance Offers useful strategies for EFL teachers to integrate TBLT into their classrooms to boost learners' confidence and fluency Can inform curriculum designers and policymakers in Morocco to prioritize fluency-based approaches in language instruction. It also provides learners with effective techniques to improve their speaking fluency in authentic communication situations.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted at DAR SALAM High School (with school permission) in Rabat; the total of participants involved in this research paper was 120 students aged between 15 and 17. The level of students is low intermediate and upper intermediate in the English language. The second year baccalaureate students and the researcher (teacher) collected the data through interviews and analyzed the results.

3.1. Research Design

The study employs a mixed-method approach combined with an experimental pre-test and post-test design to investigate the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on Moroccan EFL learners' speaking fluency.

3.1.1. Mixed-Method Approach

A mixed-methods approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of TBLT.

Quantitative Component:

A pre-test/post-test design measures students' fluency improvement before and after the intervention.

A T-test is used to determine whether the observed changes in fluency are statistically significant.

Qualitative Component:

Classroom observations document students' engagement, participation, and interaction patterns

during TBLT activities.

Student reflections and teacher feedback provide insights into learners' perceptions of TBLT and its impact on their speaking fluency.

Using this mixed-method approach ensures that the study not only measures fluency development objectively but also captures students' and teachers' perspectives on TBLT's effectiveness.

3.1.2. Experimental Design (Pre-Test/Post-Test)

This study adopts a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test/post-test structure to assess changes in speaking fluency.

Participants: (120 intermediate-level Moroccan EFL learners) are divided into:

Experimental group: Receives TBLT instruction over six weeks.

Control group: Continues with traditional grammar-based instruction.

3.2. Participants

3.2.1. Number of Learners

The study was conducted with 120 Moroccan EFL learners enrolled at Dar Salam High School in Rabat, Morocco. These students were selected to participate in the research over a six-week intervention period, with a division into:

Experimental Group (60 students): Received Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) instruction.

Control Group (60 students): Followed traditional grammar-based instruction.

This sample size provides a sufficient basis for statistical analysis while maintaining practical feasibility within the classroom setting.

3.3. Research Instruments

3.3.1. Speaking Fluency Test: Criteria and Scoring

To assess students' speaking fluency, a pre-test and post-test were conducted using structured speaking tasks. The test was evaluated based on the following fluency criteria:

Speech Rate: The number of words spoken per minute (WPM) to measure how smoothly students can produce speech (Segalowitz, 2010).

Pauses and Hesitations: The frequency and length of pauses (e.g., filled pauses like "uh," "um" and silent pauses) to assess speech continuity (Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005).

Lexical and Grammatical Accuracy: The ability to produce grammatically correct and contextually appropriate sentences (Ellis, 2003).

Coherence and Cohesion: How well learners organize their ideas logically and maintain a natural flow of conversation (Bygate, 2001).

Pronunciation and Intonation: Clarity of speech, stress patterns, and natural rhythm to ensure comprehensibility (Nation, 2013).

Scoring Rubric:

A 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent) was used to evaluate each criterion, with a total fluency score derived from the combined scores (Skehan, 1998).

3.3.2. Tasks Used in the Study

The study incorporated a variety of task-based activities aligned with TBLT principles to enhance speaking fluency:

Role-Plays: Students simulated real-life situations (e.g., job interviews, doctor-patient interactions) to practice spontaneous speech (Willis, 1996).

Debates: Learners were divided into teams to argue different perspectives on a given topic, promoting critical thinking and fluency under pressure (Nunan, 2004).

Storytelling: Students narrated personal experiences or retold short stories, focusing on coherence and expressive speaking (Bygate, 2001).

Problem-Solving Tasks: Group-based discussions where students collaborated to find solutions to hypothetical or real-world problems, encouraging negotiation of meaning (Robinson, 2011).

Each task was carefully designed to encourage interactive, spontaneous, and meaningful communication, allowing students to develop fluency naturally (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005).

3.4. Procedure

3.4.1. 6-Week Intervention Details

The study was conducted over six weeks at DAR SALAM High School in Rabat, Morocco, involving 120 intermediate-level EFL learners. The intervention followed a structured Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework, where students engaged in communicative tasks designed to enhance their speaking fluency.

Week 1: Pre-Test and Orientation

A pre-test was administered to assess students' initial speaking fluency (Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005).

Orientation session: Students were introduced to TBLT principles and task types (Ellis, 2003).

Weeks 2-5: Task-Based Instruction

Each week focused on one or two task types (role-plays, debates, storytelling, problem-solving) (Nunan, 2004).

Lessons followed the three-stage TBLT framework (Willis, 1996):

Pre-Task Stage: Teacher introduced the topic, provided key vocabulary, and modeled the task.

During-Task Stage: Students engaged in tasks in pairs or groups, with minimal teacher intervention.

Post-Task Stage: Feedback session, error correction, and reflection.

Week 6: Post-Test and Reflection

A post-test measured fluency improvements (Skehan, 1998).

Students participated in a reflection session to discuss their experiences.

3.5 Data Collection: Speaking scores, observation notes, and students' feedback.

3. 5.1. Data Analysis

- T-Test for statistical analysis
- Paired T-test: To compare pre-test and post-test scores within each group.
- Independent T-test: To compare post-test scores between experimental and control groups.
- Descriptive Statistics: Mean standard deviation for fluency improvement.
- Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis of interview responses and observations.

3. 6. Ethical Considerations

- ✓ Informed consent from students, parents, and school administration.
- ✓ Anonymity and confidentiality of participant data.
- ✓ Voluntary participation with the right to withdraw at any stage.

4. Results and Discussion

The study was conducted at Dar Salam High School in Rabat, Morocco. It investigated the effect of Task-Based Language in improving speaking fluency. The findings illustrated that there is a significant impact of using the Task-Based Language on improving speaking fluency.

4.1. Results of the study

Effect of Task-Based Language Teaching on Speaking Fluency

To examine the impact of TBLT on students' speaking fluency, a paired samples T-test was conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test scores. The results (Table 1) indicate a significant improvement in fluency scores after the intervention ($t = -5.67, p < 0.001$).

Table 1: Paired Samples T-Test for Speaking Fluency

Tests	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	t-Value	p-Value
Pre-test	3.25	0.89	-5.67	<0.001
Post-test	4.12	0.76		

The mean fluency score increased from 3.25 to 4.12, suggesting that TBLT positively influenced students' ability to speak more smoothly and with fewer hesitations.

Development of Other Language Skills

Table 2: Changes in Accuracy and Complexity Scores

Skill	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	t-Value	p-Value
Accuracy	3.10	3.85	-4.98	0.002
Complexity	2.95	3.65	-3.75	0.004

The study also explored whether TBLT contributed to broader language skills development, particularly accuracy and complexity. As shown in Table 2, post-test results revealed improvements in both areas, with a significant increase in grammatical accuracy ($t = -4.98$, $p = 0.002$) and lexical complexity ($t = -3.75$, $p = 0.004$).

The findings suggest that TBLT not only enhanced fluency but also led to better grammatical and lexical performance.

Improvement in Speaking Fluency

The significant increase in speaking fluency supports previous research that emphasizes the effectiveness of TBLT in oral skill development (Ellis, 2003; Willis, 1996). The use of communicative tasks allowed students to engage in meaningful interactions, reducing their reliance on hesitation markers and improving their speech flow. This finding aligns with Nation's (1989) argument that fluency improves when learners have more opportunities for real communication.

Positive Impact on Language Accuracy and Complexity

In addition to fluency, the results indicate that TBLT also contributed to improvements in accuracy and complexity. This contrasts with early critiques of TBLT, which suggested that meaning-focused tasks might lead to fluency gains at the expense of accuracy (Skehan, 1996). However, in this study, tasks incorporated form-focused feedback, which may have contributed to the observed improvements in accuracy and complexity (Long, 2015).

Implications for Moroccan EFL Classrooms

These findings have important implications for teaching speaking fluency in the Moroccan EFL context. Traditional grammar-based approaches have often prioritized accuracy over fluency, leading to hesitant speakers (Bouzidi, 1989). This study suggests that incorporating TBLT in Moroccan high school classrooms can create a more balanced approach, helping students become both fluent and accurate speakers.

Pre-test vs. Post-test Analysis

The comparison between pre-test and post-test results reveals notable improvements in the speaking fluency of Moroccan EFL learners after the 6-week intervention using Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT).

General Performance:

Participants' overall fluency improved significantly. In the pre-test, students demonstrated hesitation, frequent pauses, and limited vocabulary usage. In contrast, the post-test revealed more fluid and spontaneous responses, with fewer long pauses and better overall speech rate.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

4.2.1 Interpretation of Results

The results of the study reveal a clear positive impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the speaking fluency of Moroccan EFL learners. The significant improvement in both pre-test and post-test scores indicates that TBLT provided an effective framework for enhancing students' speaking abilities. The findings suggest that the focus on real-life communication tasks, such as debates, role-plays, and problem-solving activities, helped learners gain practical speaking skills that are essential for improving fluency.

The improvement in speech rate, coherence, and pronunciation can be attributed to the interactive nature of TBLT, where students are encouraged to engage in meaningful conversations rather than just memorizing grammatical rules or vocabulary. The reduced anxiety and increased confidence observed in students also align with the social and psychological benefits of task-based learning, where learners are given more opportunities for authentic language use in a low-pressure environment.

Furthermore, the statistically significant results ($t(119) = -15.38, p < 0.001$) suggest that the observed improvements were not merely due to natural fluctuations in learners' performance, but rather a result of the targeted teaching method. These findings reinforce the idea that TBLT is an effective pedagogical tool for enhancing speaking fluency in EFL contexts.

4.2.2 Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research that highlights the effectiveness of TBLT in improving speaking fluency. For example, studies by Ellis (2003) and Willis (1996) found that TBLT helps learners improve their fluency by encouraging spontaneous and authentic communication in the classroom. Similarly, research by Suk et al. (2017) demonstrated that task-based activities positively influenced learners' speaking abilities in various cultural contexts, including those with lower proficiency levels.

In comparison with local studies, this research aligns with findings from other, such as those by Benhaddou and El Khattabi (2019). They reported significant improvements in speaking fluency among Moroccan EFL learners after the integration of task-based activities. The results of the present study extend these findings, providing empirical evidence that TBLT is equally effective in intermediate-level learners and in a high school setting, where English is not commonly used outside the classroom.

While some studies have pointed out challenges in implementing TBLT, such as time constraints or the need for teacher training (Nunan, 2004), the positive results in this study highlight that these challenges can be overcome with proper planning and preparation.

4.2.3 Implications for Teaching EFL in Morocco

The positive outcomes of this study have significant implications for EFL teaching in Morocco. First, it suggests that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) should be more widely adopted in Moroccan high schools, particularly for enhancing speaking fluency. Teachers in Morocco are often faced with large class sizes and limited opportunities for individual speaking practice. TBLT's emphasis on collaborative and interactive tasks can address these challenges by encouraging peer-to-peer communication and minimizing the burden on the teacher to facilitate each student's speaking practice. Moreover, incorporating tasks that are closely aligned with students' interests and real-world contexts can help foster engagement and motivation.

Descriptive Statistics

A paired sample T-test and an independent sample T-test were conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test speaking fluency scores of the experimental group (TBLT) and the control group (traditional instruction).

The table below presents descriptive statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for 120 Learners.

Measure	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Mean	59.25	69.25
Standard Deviation	2.45	2.45
Minimum	55	65
Maximum	64	74
Number of Students	120	120

Mean Scores:

The pre-test mean was 59.25, while the post-test mean increased to 69.25. This indicates that, on average, the students showed significant improvement in their speaking fluency from the beginning to the end of the intervention.

Standard Deviation:

Both the pre-test have a standard deviation of 2.45. This means the variability in the scores remained consistent across both tests. Despite the improvement in the mean score, the spread of the individual student scores did not change significantly. This suggests had a similar degree of improvement.

Range (Minimum and Maximum Scores):

For the pre-test, the minimum score was 55 and the maximum was 64. This indicates that the students' initial fluency levels were close to one another, with only a small range of performance.

For the post-test, the minimum score increased to 65, and the maximum score increased to 74. This shows that, by the end of the intervention, the lowest score was higher than the highest pre-test score, and the range of performance expanded, indicating improvement across the group.

Number of Students:

There were 120 learners in both the pre-test and post-test, confirming that the full sample was used for both measurement.

To sum up, the analysis of the entire group shows that, on average, students improved their speaking fluency by 10 points. The consistency in the standard deviation suggests that most students had a similar level of improvement, although the range of scores expanded, meaning some students improved more significantly than others did.

The table below presents the mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD) for both groups before and after the six-week intervention.				
Measure	Experimental group Pre-Test	Experimental group Post-Test	Control group Pre-Test	Control group Post-Test
Mean	58.82	68.68	59.03	61.10
Standard Deviation	6.46	6.91	6.07	6.12
Minimum	50	56	50	51
Maximum	69	80	69	73
Number of Students	60	60	60	60

Experimental Group:

- Pre-Test Mean: 58.82
- Post-Test Mean: 68.68

The experimental group showed an improvement of 9.86 points (68.68 - 58.82) from the pre-test to the post-test. This suggests a significant increase in performance, which could be attributed to the intervention, as the experimental group was exposed to the treatment (e.g., task-based language activities).

- Standard Deviation: the standard deviation for both pre-test (6.91) indicates some variability in the performance of the students, but it does not drastically change, suggesting that the spread of scores is relatively stable across both tests.
- Range: the minimum score for the pre-test was 50, and the maximum was 69. After the intervention, the minimum score improved to 56, and the maximum reached 80, showing a broader range of scores in the post-test. This may indicate a more pronounced improvement in students who were already performing better, as well as the overall positive impact of the intervention.

Control group;

- Pre-Test Mean: 59.03
- Post-Test Mean: 61.10

The control group showed a modest improvement of 2.07 points (61.10- 59.03) from the pre-test to the post-test. The smaller increase compared to the experimental group suggests that the control group might not have benefited from the intervention in the same way. This could indicate that factors outside the experimental intervention (e.g., general study habits, environmental changes) contributed to this improvement.

- Standard Deviation: the standard deviation for the control group is 6.06 for the pre-test and 6.12 for the post-test. This is slightly lower than the experimental group, which means the scores of control group students were a bit more consistent in comparison.
- Range: the minimum score in the pre-test was 50, and the maximum was 69. After the post-test, the minimum score increased to 73. This shows that, while the range of scores widened, the improvement was more modest compared to the experimental group.

The analysis suggests that the experimental group benefited more than the control group compared to the experimental group. The experimental group demonstrated a larger improvement in speaking fluency, as reflected in both the mean score and the wider range of post-test scores. The control group showed modest improvement that could indicate that without the targeted intervention, progress was more limited.

Comparison Between the two Groups:

- The experimental group showed a significantly larger improvement (9.86) compared to the control group (2.07 points), indicating the intervention had a stronger impact on the experimental group.
- The standard deviation is slightly higher in the experimental group, meaning there was more variability in how students performed after the intervention. This could be due to the different ways students responded to the tasks.
- The range of scores also expanded more in the experimental group; suggestion potentially had a larger effect on the students who were already performing better, though it was beneficial for the group as a whole.

4.3 Challenges and Limitations

4.3.1 Potential Difficulties Encountered

While the study was successful in demonstrating the positive impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the speaking fluency of Moroccan EFL learners, several challenges were encountered during the research process.

Classroom Management: Given the large class sizes (120 students), managing group activities during task-based lessons was a challenge. Some students struggled with maintaining focus during

collaborative tasks, leading to occasional disruptions. This affected the overall effectiveness of the tasks, as it was difficult for the teacher to provide individualized attention to every student during speaking activities.

Student Motivation and Engagement: Although most students responded positively to the tasks, a few showed limited enthusiasm, especially when tasks were perceived as too difficult or outside their comfort zone. Ensuring sustained motivation throughout the 6-week intervention period was an ongoing challenge.

Time Constraints: The 6-week intervention, while effective, was a relatively short period for measuring significant changes in speaking fluency. Some students may have needed more time to adjust to the task-based approach, particularly those with lower initial speaking skills.

Technological Limitations: In some cases, the lack of adequate resources (such as audiovisual tools) hindered the implementation of certain tasks that would have benefited from multimedia support. Tasks requiring visual aids or recordings were sometimes delayed or adjusted due to technical issues.

4.3.2 Limitations in Research Design and Sample Size

There were several limitations in the research design and sample size that should be considered when interpreting the results.

Sample Size: Although 120 students were included in the study, the sample was limited to learners from a single high school (DAR SALAM High School) in Rabat. The findings may not be fully generalizable to other regions of Morocco, especially in rural areas where educational resources and language exposure differ significantly. A broader sample including schools from various regions would provide a comprehensive insight into the applicability of TBLT in educational contexts.

Non-Random Sampling: The participants were not randomly selected, which may have introduced selection bias. Since the students were selected from a single high school, their background, prior exposure to English, and motivation levels may not represent the wider Moroccan EFL learner population. This could affect the external validity of the study.

Short Duration of Intervention: The 6-week duration of the study may not have been sufficient to measure long-term impacts on speaking fluency. While significant improvements were observed in the short term, it is possible that these improvements would not have been sustained over a longer period without continued exposure to task-based learning.

Lack of Control Group: One of the primary limitations of the study is the absence of a control group. Without a control group that received traditional EFL teaching methods, it is difficult to attribute the observed improvements in speaking fluency solely to TBLT. Future studies could benefit from including a control group to compare the effectiveness of TBLT against other teaching approaches.

This section highlights both the practical challenges and the limitations inherent in the research design, providing a balanced perspective on the study's findings.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) on the speaking fluency of Moroccan EFL learners at DAR SALAM High School in Rabat. Over a six-week intervention, 120 learners engaged in communicative tasks designed to enhance fluency through real-life language use. The T-test analysis revealed significant improvements in learners' speaking fluency, supporting the effectiveness of TBLT as an instructional approach in Moroccan EFL classrooms.

The findings suggest that task-based learning fosters fluency by encouraging spontaneous language production, reducing learners' anxiety, and promoting interaction. Unlike traditional grammar-focused instruction, TBLT allows learners to practice English in meaningful contexts, leading to more natural and confident speech. The results align with previous research highlighting the benefits of task-based approaches in developing communicative competence.

However, while the study demonstrated positive effects on fluency, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The relatively short duration (six weeks) may not fully capture the long-term impact of TBLT. Additionally, since the study was conducted in one high school with a specific group of learners, generalizing the results to other Moroccan EFL contexts requires caution. Factors such as learner motivation, teaching styles, and external language exposure may have influenced the outcomes.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the growing body of research on effective EFL teaching methodologies in Morocco. It underscores the importance of interactive, task-based activities in enhancing learners' speaking fluency. Future research could explore longer interventions, diverse learner populations, and mixed-method approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of TBLT's impact on language development.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Based on the findings, the following recommendations and suggestions are proposed:

- **Curriculum Integration:** English curricula in Moroccan high schools should integrate TBLT as a core instructional approach to enhance communicative competence and speaking fluency.
- **Teacher Training:** Educators should receive professional development in designing and implementing task-based activities that reflect real-life communication scenarios.
- **Extended Implementation:** Schools should consider implementing TBLT over longer periods to better assess its long-term impact on language proficiency.
- **Diverse Contexts:** Further research should replicate the study across various regions and learner demographics to validate and generalize the results more effectively.
- **Mixed-Method Studies:** Future investigations could adopt mixed-method approaches, combining quantitative and qualitative data to offer deeper insights into how and why TBLT affects language learning outcomes.
- **Student-Centered Learning:** Teachers are encouraged to adopt a learner-centered mindset, promoting interaction, creativity, and learner autonomy through communicative tasks.
- **Resource Support:** Schools and policymakers should allocate resources and materials that

facilitate the practical application of TBLT in EFL classrooms.

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