

The Effectiveness of Task-Based Learning for Improving Speaking Fluency Among Adult ESL Learners

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Abstract: *Task-Based Learning (TBL) has become a growing area of interest due to its potential to boost the spoken fluency of adult ESL learners through communicative pedagogy. In contrast to traditional grammar-oriented teaching, TBL focuses on real-life communication, meaningful communication, and problem-solving tasks that reflect authentic language use. The inquiry of this research examines the effectiveness of TBL in enhancing speaking fluency, based on task complexity, learner engagement, cognitive load, performance conditions, and learner feedback. The article provides empirical studies to investigate the effects of task design on fluency performance, the reactions of adult learners to interactive tasks, and the effects of TBL on increasing lexical retrieval, automaticity, and communicative confidence. It further examines issues related to implementing TBL, such as anxiety, classroom management, and assessment reliability, and provides evidence-based methods to ensure the best outcomes in the setting of adult ESL. The reviewed literature has shown that speaking fluency can be greatly improved through task repetition, time planning, reflective feedback on tasks, and communicative tasks relevant to the context. This paper finds that TBL is an exceptionally effective teaching strategy for adult ESL learners when organized scaffolding, task sequencing, and sustained formative assessment are provided. Educator, curriculum, and research recommendations outline the necessity of hybrid models, longitudinal tracking of fluency, and comparative studies of TBL with different learners.*

Keywords: task-based learning, ESL speaking fluency, adult language learners, communicative language teaching, second language acquisition

INTRODUCTION

The need to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) has been ever-increasing across the globe, especially among adults seeking better employment opportunities, access to international mobility, and engagement in transnational communities. Adult learning is one of the rapidly growing areas of ESL learning, driven by migration, professional needs, and globalization. For many of these learners, oral communication remains a priority because speaking proficiency directly affects social integration and success at work (Duff, 2019).

Traditionally, ESL pedagogy was largely based on grammar-translation and structuralist models, with a focus on memorization of rules, manipulation of sentences, and their accuracy rather than communicative competence. Although these approaches enhanced explicit grammatical knowledge, they did not always provide learners with the spontaneous, real-time processing skills needed to produce fluent speech. Since the beginning of communicative language teaching (CLT) in the late twentieth century, the emphasis has shifted toward meaning, authenticity, and fluency. However, even in CLT settings, adult ESL students still have lower speaking fluency than they should, in part owing to a lack of interactional practice and the unnatural quality of classroom conversations (Mahmadun Nuby et al., 2019).

Later models of pedagogy have focused on experiential, communicative, and performance-based learning. Among these, Task-Based Learning (TBL) has gained particular popularity due to its emphasis on real-life tasks, high levels of learner engagement, and problem-solving through communication. TBL lays more emphasis on functional language, fluency, and meaningful output than on isolated linguistic forms. Since the tasks reproduce real communicative scenarios, they prompt learners to mobilize cognitive and language resources in a manner that replicates natural language use. Applied linguistics, educational psychology, and professional training studies have shown that task-based activities lead to quantifiable improvements in communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

This trend of task-based teaching aligns with an accumulating body of research indicating that adults acquire languages optimally when they are exposed to meaningful, authentic input and communicative needs. However, the adult second-language acquisition (SLA) is also subject to special limitations- such as the influence of affective barriers, cognitive maturation, and the insufficient learning time that affects the fluency development (Newport, 2020; Wang and Wu, 2020). As the number of adult ESL populations worldwide continues to increase, establishing pedagogical structures that deliver consistent improvements in speaking fluency is more the order of the day.

Problem Statement

Despite the general tendency toward communicative strategies in ESL teaching, a large proportion of adult students still report consistently failing to achieve the goal of fluency in speaking, despite their high grammatical accuracy and reasonable vocabulary. This is a gap widely noted in the literature on second language acquisition: improvements in formal linguistic competence are not always reflected in proficient, spontaneous oral speech. It has been demonstrated that CLT can enhance the structural level of communicative competence in learners, but as long as classroom activities remain controlled and teacher-centered, learners have little opportunity to learn to produce speech, and speech production remains automatized (Clouidia Ho, 2020; Mohd-Asraf et al., 2019). Consequently, students can be effective in scripted activities but not in real-time communication.

Classroom teaching methods like memorization, memorization using script and memorization drills, which are accuracy-centered, fail to facilitate automaticity and flexibility in fluent speech. The study shows that fluency development is linked to meaning-oriented interaction

and greater time spent using language than with form-based instructions alone (Hashemifardnia et al., 2021; Newton and Nation, 2020). Moreover, the adult students experience particular cognitive, neurological, and affective limitations that may hamper fluency acquisition. According to maturational change studies, the lack of neuroplasticity in adulthood impairs the procedure of linguistic knowledge, making fluent language processing more taxing (Newport, 2020; Kimppa et al., 2019). These obstacles are further complicated by affective elements like anxiety and self-consciousness, which make it essential to consider instructional methods that will decrease the cognitive burden and enable them to produce oral messages with confidence (Wang and Wu, 2020).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to test the efficacy of Task-Based Learning in enhancing the speaking fluency of adult learners of English as a second language. In particular, it examines the roles of task design, implementation, and learner engagement in achieving fluency. Another focus of the study is to determine which task conditions (pre-task planning, task complexity, and task repetition) have the greatest impact on performance outcomes. Doing so helps achieve a more detailed insight into how TBL may be adapted to adult SLA situations.

Research Questions

- What is the contribution of Task-Based Learning to the process of achieving speaking fluency in ESL learners in the adult learning context?
- What is the most important task-related conditions (e.g., planning time, task complexity, repetition) when it comes to gaining fluency?
- What are some of the challenges and opportunities of implementing TBL in adult ESL learning settings?

Significance of the Study

The study is relevant to the current discussions in SLA on the influence of interaction, authenticity, and task performance in the acquisition of a second language in adults. The analysis of the circumstances in which tasks contribute to fluency enriches evidence-based ESL pedagogy and strengthens the theoretical basis of TBL. The results have significant practical implications for the instructors, curriculum developers and EdTech innovators interested in creating fluency-focused learning systems. Furthermore, since the number of adult ESLs is steadily expanding across migratory, professional, and academic contexts worldwide (Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash, 2020), it is high time that effective fluency-driven pedagogies are developed.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW.

Background: Task-Based Learning.

Task-Based Learning (TBL) is the development of a more general model of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that views language as an instrument of real communication rather than a rule system of grammar (Clouidia Ho, 2020). The CLT emerged as a reaction to the weaknesses of previous approaches to language teaching, such as grammar-translation, which

focus on memorising structures rather than their application (Mahmadun Nuby, Ab Rashid, and Hasan, 2019; Sasstos, 2020). A task in the context of TBL is described as a language-teaching unit that aims at meaning and the solution of real-life problems and is commonly input-process-output-based. It is worth noting that Ellis, Willis, and Long (as cited in Chen, 2018) define tasks as activities that involve learners in negotiating meaning, attaining results, and creating language when the circumstances resemble real-life communication.

TBL has the following key principles: focus on meaning, authentic communication context, and outcomes-based interaction. TBL builds fluency and confidence by enabling learners to experiment with language forms in naturalistic contexts, involving them in meaningful language use. It is opposed to more prescriptive methodologies, which place greater emphasis on form than on functionality, since TBL will ask learners to build and manipulate language in ways that reflect real-life communicative needs (Rajendran and Md. Yunus, 2021).

The complexity of tasks and learners' autonomy are also core aspects of TBL, as it allows instructors to delegate tasks step by step and for learners to develop independent knowledge of problem-solving (Phoeun and Sengsri, 2021). These principles enable instructors in adult ESL settings, where learners often have diverse linguistic backgrounds and learning experiences, to create flexible, meaningful tasks that accommodate various levels of proficiency and learning styles (Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Burgess and Rowsell, 2020).

Speaking Fluency in SLA

The multidimensional process of speaking fluency in second language acquisition (SLA) is generally described as the speed, smoothness and coherence. Speed is the rate of speech production; smoothness indicates the presence or absence of hesitations and pauses; and coherence refers to the logical organisation of ideas in the process of spoken communication. Such elements are associated with cognitive and psychological variables, such as automaticity, memory retrieval, and cognitive load, which influence learners' capacity to deliver spontaneous, coherent speech (Wang and Wu, 2020).

In specific cases, adult learners are likely to experience fluency impediments, including slower lexical retrieval, anxiety, and limited exposure to naturalistic conversation contexts (Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash, 2020). Moreover, maturational limitations may affect the facilitation of native-like pronunciation and the acquisition of syntactic fluency, although significant improvements in communicative competence can be achieved through properly designed instruction (Newport, 2020; Kimppa et al., 2019). Psychological elements such as motivation, self-efficacy, and affective conditions also influence fluency, which is why positive and engaging learning environments are important (Duff, 2019; Wang and Wu, 2020).

TBL vs. Traditional Methods of Teaching.

Conventional techniques like grammar-translation and Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) are often associated with emphasising explicit knowledge of language forms rather than communicative function. Although these methods might improve accuracy and grammar awareness, they often fail to encourage spontaneous language use, which means that adult ESL

learners are proficient in formal tasks but reluctant to communicate in real-world environments (Cloudia Ho, 2020).

In turn, TBL offers interactive and substantive assignments that simulate real-life communicative situations, thereby promoting fluency and accuracy. Learners who participate in TBL have been shown to be faster at lexical retrieval, less hesitant, and better at sentence structure than their peers in traditional classrooms (Hashemifardnia, Shafiee, Rahimi Esfahani, and Sepehri, 2021; Phoeun and Sengsri, 2021). Research on the adult ESL setting also shows that TBL increases learners' engagement and motivation, as they see tasks as opportunities to address their individual and professional interests (Burgess and Rowsell, 2020).

Despite these benefits, successful TBL implementation requires that tasks be designed and scaffolded appropriately. The tasks should not be too demanding or too challenging to ensure that students do not become discouraged (especially adults who may have developed certain learning habits in the traditional methodology) (Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash, 2020).

Table 1: Comparison of Task-Based Learning and Traditional Teaching Methods

Dimension	Traditional Methods (Grammar-Translation, PPP)	Task-Based Learning (TBL)
Instructional Focus	Emphasizes explicit grammar rules and accuracy; limited focus on communicative use of language.	Prioritizes meaningful communication, real-world tasks, and fluency development.
Learner Output	Structured, form-focused responses; limited spontaneous speaking.	Spontaneous, functional language use with improved lexical retrieval and reduced hesitation.
Classroom Engagement	Teacher-led, highly controlled, often passive for learners.	Learner-centered, interactive, and encourages problem-solving and collaboration.
Motivation & Relevance	Lower relevance to real-life contexts; may lead to reluctance in actual communication.	High relevance to personal and professional needs; increases learner motivation and confidence.
Learning Outcomes	Strengthens grammatical accuracy but weak in real-world fluency.	Enhances fluency, accuracy through use, and communicative competence.
Pedagogical Requirements	Easier to implement and plan; less flexible.	Requires well-designed tasks, appropriate scaffolding, and careful consideration of task difficulty.

The Cognitive and Sociocultural theories in favor of TBL.

Some cognitive and sociocultural theories supporting the effectiveness of TBL are presented. The Interaction Hypothesis assumes that language is learned through meaningful interaction,

which presupposes that learners negotiate meaning and solve communicative problems (Duff, 2019). The idea of collaborative tasks promoted by TBL can be directly correlated with this hypothesis, as learners must understand, respond to, and adapt the language produced by peers in real-life situations.

The same is stated about the Output Hypothesis, which holds that language production, especially when required by communicative pressure, helps learners become more aware of syntactic structures and the selection of lexical forms. Repetitive practices help adult learners create language in TBL because practising a task repeatedly strengthens memory retrieval routes, leading to greater automaticity and fluency (Hashemifardnia et al., 2021).

The Sociocultural Theory also gives additional reasons behind TBL, as it involves the use of scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in language learning (Burgess and Rowsell, 2020). With well-prepared activities, the instructors are able to help learners work at higher levels in their language than they would have done individually, reducing support as learners become more confident and competent. TBL activities, in turn, serve as both methods of learning and assessment, providing real-life feedback on learners' communicative performance.

Empirical Research on TBL and Speaking Fluency.

An emerging amount of literature demonstrates the efficacy of TBL in enhancing the speaking fluency of adult ESL learners. For example, Chen found that applying TBL during extensive reading programs significantly improved learners' lexical retrieval and sentence cohesion. In a similar vein, Hashemifardnia et al. (2021) found improvements in the complexity, accuracy, and fluency of Iranian adult EFL learners following a series of repeated and communicative tasks

Task repetition has proved to be a key issue in the development of fluency. Phoeun and Sengsri (2021) noted that learners' speech became less clumsy and faster when tasks were repeated, suggesting that language processes could be automatized through repeated exposure. Fluency is also increased by pre-task planning: students who had time to plan their speech in terms of thoughts and vocabulary before the task generated more fluent, lexically diverse speech (Rajendran and Md. Yunus, 2021).

The motivation and engagement of adult learners are major factors in determining TBL outcomes. Research shows that activities that seem genuine, significant, and socially important encourage increased participation and readiness to assume communicative risks (Burgess and Rowsell, 2020). On the other hand, overly complex or unrelated tasks can evoke anxiety, which decreases performance in terms of fluency (Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash, 2020).

Lastly, controlled classroom studies support the claim that TBL can not only enhance spoken fluency but also promote the integration of form and meaning. Students who are placed under TBL achieve better outcomes in speed, smoothness, and coherence than those under the traditional grammar-oriented teaching approach (Phoeun and Sengsri, 2021). The results

confirm TBL as a powerful approach to teaching ESL adult learners, but only when tasks are designed and properly supported and align with learners' goals and interests.

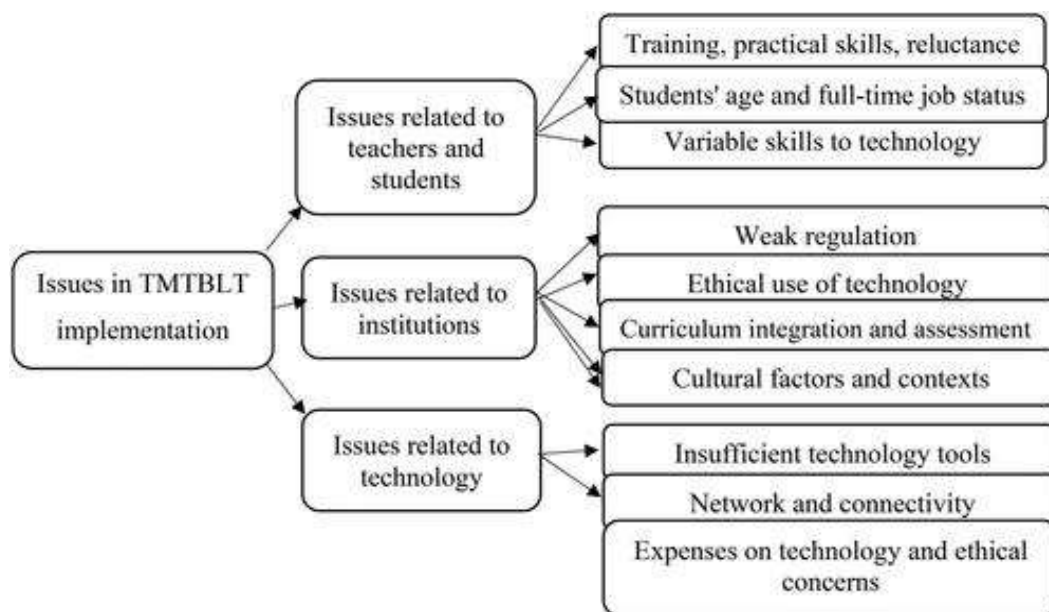


Figure 1: Technology-mediated task-based language teaching

METHODOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

This section describes the methodological approach for the study to determine the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning (TBL) in helping adult ESL students develop speaking fluency. It focuses on the learner's characteristics, the types of tasks, the major implementation variables, and the measurement approaches, offering a systematic method for conducting a serious investigation.

Instructional context for Adult ESL students who needs a structured context for their instruction.

Human Instructional Context: Adult ESL Learners require a framework to support their instructional learning. Adult ESL learners have distinctive features that have a considerable impact on second-language acquisition (SLA). In comparison to younger learners, adults usually have greater metacognitive awareness and life experience, are more likely to be motivated, but are also more self-conscious and anxious when speaking a second language (Burgess and Rowsell, 2020). Adult learners are highly motivated in a superficial way, often focused on professional development, social adjustment, or academic success, which influences their involvement in communicative activities and persistence (Duff, 2019).

One more serious consideration is anxiety, adults can be more afraid of making a mistake because of self-consciousness, past negative experiences with language (Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash, 2020; Wang and Wu, 2020). As a result, affective factors should be taken into

consideration in the development of TBL interventions for adults to ensure the creation of supportive, low-stress settings where risk-taking and active engagement can be encouraged.

Adults also differ in cognitive processing from young learners. Learners in adult education may need more direct instruction on more complex language activities because of slower acquisition of lexical and syntactic variation (Kimppa et al., 2019). Moreover, adults usually possess a broader base in the first language that can serve as both a scaffold and an interference in SLA. The features mentioned above highlight the need for task constructions that are neither too difficult nor too easy to perform to achieve fluency and accuracy in speaking.

Types of tasks that are involved in developing fluency

Task design is the focus of TBL that facilitates speaking fluency. The tasks ought to be significant, communicative, and imitate the real-world communication contexts. The most relevant types of tasks are those that follow:

- **Information-Gap Tasks:** In information-gap tasks, the learners share missing information to accomplish a task, which stimulates spontaneous language production and discussion of meaning.
- **Opinion-Gap Tasks:** Students share and justify their opinions, which promote critical thinking and fluency (Phoeun and Sengsri, 2021).
- **Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Activities:** The students solve problems collaboratively, which encourages them to take turns, engage in lexical retrieval, and exhibit syntactic flexibility.
- **Role-Plays and Simulations as well as Real-World Communication Tasks:** This type of activity simulates real language use and helps learners feel more confident when speaking, as it makes the interaction or customer service session feel more realistic (Cloudia Ho, 2020; Rajendran and Md. Yunus, 2021).

The complexity of the tasks must be adjusted to the level and cognitive load of the learners to make the tasks challenging and not too difficult to maximize the effect on fluency.

Table 2: Key Task Types for Developing Speaking Fluency in Adult ESL Learners

Task Type	Description	Fluency Contribution
Information-Gap Tasks	Learners exchange missing information to complete an activity	Promotes spontaneous language production, negotiation of meaning, and real-time lexical retrieval.
Opinion-Gap Tasks	Learners express, justify, and compare viewpoints (Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021).	Encourages extended speech, critical thinking, and smoother idea articulation.
Problem-Solving & Decision-Making Tasks	Learners collaboratively solve a problem or select the best solution	Supports turn-taking, syntactic flexibility, and interactive fluency development.
Role-Plays, Simulations & Real-World Tasks	Learners engage in authentic scenarios such as customer service or workplace interactions (Clodia Ho, 2020; Rajendran & Md. Yunus, 2021).	Builds confidence, pragmatically appropriate speech, and real-world communicative competence.

TBL Implementation Major Variables.

There are various variables that mediate the effectiveness of TBL when used with adult ESL learners:

- **Task Complexity, Cognitive Demand:** Multifaceted tasks or new language constructions can stimulate higher-order processing, leading to the development of fluency with sufficient support for learners (Hashemifardnia et al., 2021; Kimppa et al., 2019).
- **Pre-Task Planning Time:** It is beneficial to give learners time to plan in advance before carrying out tasks, thereby enriching the lexicon and variety of syntax and contributing to smoother speech production (Phoeun and Sengsri, 2021).
- **Task Repetition:** Autonomization, reduced hesitatin, and greater fluency during repair are associated with repeated use of the same or similar tasks.
- **Type of Teacher Feedback (Implicit/Explicit):** Feedback strategies are known to affect fluency. Implicit feedback stimulates self-correction and autonomy, whilst explicit feedback can help simplify complex forms and diminish the fossilization of mistakes. The ideal solution is usually a combination of both, with a modification to task requirements and student characteristics.

There are multidimensional methods of evaluating fluency based on quantitative and qualitative measures:

- **Speed Metrics:** Words per minute (WPM) and syllables per minute are objective measures of speech rate associated with ease of production (Hashemifardnia et al., 2021).
- **Breakdown Fluency:** Pauses, hesitations, and fillers are measured to identify the issues in the speech flow.

- Repair Fluency: The frequency and type of self-correction indicate learners' monitoring and adaptive abilities during speaking.
- Analytic Rubrics and Real-Time Assessment Tools: Analysis rubrics assess accuracy, lexical diversity, coherence, and interactional competence, supplementing automated tools to assess spoken performance in real time (Rajendran and Md. Yunus, 2021).

A sufficient assessment of speaking fluency brings these measures together, so that quantitative speech measures are evaluated alongside qualitative communicative success (Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash, 2020).

RESULTS

Thematic Synthesis of Findings on Task-Based Learning and Speaking Fluency.

This section presents a thematic synthesis of empirical evidence from the reviewed studies investigating the effects of Task-Based Learning (TBL) on speaking fluency in adult ESL learners. Instead of providing results from a single dataset, the results show repetitive trends, convergent data, and consistent patterns identified across the chosen literature. The synthesis is structured in five analytical themes: overall fluency development, automaticity, affective and confidence-related outcomes, meaning-focused interaction, and task design variables, that is, repetition and planning.

General implications of task-based learning on speaking fluency.

In the analyzed literature, Task-Based Learning is associated with quantifiable gains in speaking fluency, specifically increases in speech rate, smoothness, and coherence. Comparative research on task-based teaching and form-based or grammar-oriented teaching has indicated that adult learners who receive instruction in TBL show greater improvements in spontaneous oral production, reduced hesitation, and enhanced discourse-level mapping.

There is evidence that fluency development is likely to be supported when learners engage in goal-oriented and meaning-oriented communication rather than controlled-language exercises. TBL offers repeated opportunities to use language in real time, allowing the learner to devote cognitive resources to constructing messages rather than remembering the rules. This is particularly acute among adult learners, who tend to feel more anxious, have lower neuroplasticity, and have less exposure to naturalistic input (Newport, 2020). Despite these limitations, TBL can be viewed as a pedagogically sound method that helps develop fluency through organized communicative interaction.

Automaticity Development-Task-Based Learning.

A key theme is how TBL helps develop speech automaticity. Automaticity is fast, mostly unconscious recall of words and grammar during communication. Research shows that task-based instruction boosts automaticity by repeatedly having students use language for real-time tasks. The evidence reviewed demonstrates that repeated task participation reduces learners'

reliance on explicit grammatical monitoring, thereby shifting speech production to more automatic processes. It is especially helpful for adult learners, whose fluency is often limited by slower lexical retrieval and greater cognitive load. Empirical evidence also indicates that activities that demand information sharing, problem solving, and decision-making involve recycling lexical items and syntactic structures and help reinforce the association between form and meaning through use.

The empirical findings on morphological acquisition in adults support this explanation and indicate that repeated, meaningful exposure over time facilitates the internalization of linguistic patterns, even in adulthood (Kimppa et al., 2019). The findings suggest that TBL leads to fluency development by creating habitual, automatic speaking patterns that rely on the need to communicate rather than on rule-based processing.

Outcomes of Task-Based Learning on Communicative Confidence.

Another important affective aspect in the acquisition of a second language as an adult, emphasized in the synthesis, is that TBL has a strong correlation with communicative confidence. Adult learners often report greater anxiety about performance, accuracy, and social evaluation, which may be a significant obstacle to oral production (Wang and Wu, 2020). In the studies reviewed, task-based environments have been shown to alleviate these affective barriers by prioritizing communicative success over error-free output.

Low-stakes communicative activities, including role-plays, opinion-gap tasks, collaborative problem-solving activities, provide an environment where learners can engage in developing meaning without fear of immediate correction. Research findings on adult migrants and refugee learners indicate that participation is more likely to grow when communication is understood in pragmatic and functional terms rather than in terms of formal linguistic accuracy (Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash, 2020).

The more confident learners are, the readier they are to start a conversation, maintain it, and take communicative risks. In turn, this augmented production strengthens fluency by increasing practice and feedback opportunities. The literature reviewed thus shows that affective gains do not constitute peripheral products of TBL but rather components of processes by which fluency gains occur.

The Relationship Between Meaning-Focused Interaction and Fluency Development.

The other key finding concerns the contribution that meaning-oriented interaction makes to improving fluency. The studies analyzed all point to the fact that TBL classrooms encourage processes such as negotiation of meaning, clarification, reformulation, and collaborative discourse, all of which are essential in adult SLA (Duff, 2019).

The tasks that meet communicative needs in real-world settings, such as organizing activities and providing recommendations or shared solutions to a problem, involve learners' instrumental use of language to achieve tangible results. This functional orientation stimulates speech production and adaptive language use. The process of negotiating meaning often comes

into play when learners struggle to clarify misunderstandings or to sharpen a shared understanding, and fluency is reinforced by the pressure of interaction.

A number of studies also observe that technology-mediated tasks and multimedia inputs also enhance the interactive process by offering veritable linguistic models and situational support. These inputs enrich language exposure and help apply newly acquired forms in the moment. All in all, the above evidence confirms that meaning-based interaction is a grounded process through which TBL facilitates the acquisition of spontaneous and long-term fluency.

Repetition of the Task and Reduction of Cognitive Load.

Task repetition has been shown to be a strong predictor of fluency enhancement across various studies. The repetition of identical or slightly altered tasks will reduce the cognitive load of managing them, allowing learners to focus more on the quality of their speech. The existing empirical data show that repeated practice of the task results in increased speech rate, decreased pauses, and increased language use (Hashemifardnia et al., 2021).

Repeating also gives learners the opportunity to test other lexical and syntactic options, which helps fine-tune and stabilize the output. This can be linked to dynamism perspectives of learning a second language that focus on variability, practice, and consolidation. Task cycles that entail planning, performance, reflection, and re-performance are thus always related to improved fluency outcomes.

Pre-Task Planning and On-Task Planning Effects.

The studies reviewed also highlight the importance of time planning as an intermediary in fluency acquisition. Pre-task planning enables learners to brainstorm ideas, trigger the corresponding vocabulary, and mentally rehearse linguistic patterns. Such a preparation minimizes demands on on-the-spot processing and is associated with high lexical diversity, coherence, and smoother delivery (Phoeun and Sengsri, 2021).

On-task planning, in turn, enables real-time monitoring and adjustment of speech. There is evidence that when learners' task performance is permitted to pause momentarily, this helps them select lexical items correctly and ensure greater correspondence between the communicative intention and the output. Pre-task and on-task planning when combined, offer a form of scaffolding that is complementary and leads to the production of organized, spontaneous and fluent speech.

Table 3: Effects of Pre-Task and On-Task Planning on Speaking Fluency

Planning Type	Key Functions	Fluency Outcomes
Pre-Task Planning	Activates relevant vocabulary, allows idea generation, supports mental rehearsal of structures	Enhances lexical range, coherence, and overall fluency by reducing cognitive load during task performance (Phoeun & Sengsri, 2021)
On-Task Planning	Enables real-time monitoring, adjustment, and refinement of linguistic output	Reduces error rates, supports accurate vocabulary use, and improves alignment between intention and spoken output
Combined Planning	Provides both preparatory and real-time scaffolding	Facilitates organized, spontaneous, and more fluent speech through continuous cognitive and linguistic support

The significance of Task sequencing.

Effective TBL teaching needs sequencing of tasks in a logical way, moving from simple to complex. Progressive complexity helps develop fluency by avoiding cognitive overload while encouraging linguistic development. Sequencing is usually initiated with strictly controlled, highly supported tasks and moves to open-ended communicative tasks that demand greater independence. This design follows the scaffolding principles and progressive learning strategies that facilitate fluency by incremental challenge. Studies of both language and other fields, such as medical education, indicate that the progressive complexity of tasks improves performance, increases engagement, and enhances problem-solving skills. In the case of ESL adult learners, whose linguistic backgrounds and proficiency can be quite diverse, a proper sequence helps provide easy points of entry while advancing learners toward fluency and free-flow communication.

Technology Incorporation in Task-Based Fluency Instruction.

Emerging technologies substantially expand the possibilities of TBL for acquiring fluency. The use of AI-based speech devices, VR systems, and mobile applications creates low-stakes learning opportunities to practice, get instant feedback, and repeat. These technologies align with the TBL principles by offering meaning-based, interactive tasks that simulate real contexts.

As an adult learner, tools like pronunciation or speaking apps, which offer the advantage of improving fluency even for young or inexperienced learners (Rajendran and Yunus, 2021), can be tailored for adult learners to allow them to practice outside of classroom hours. Naturalistic language input is also provided to the learners through audiovisual technologies that enhance the understanding and the quality of the output. Fluency is further supported by automated feedback systems for speaking tasks, enabling learners to pinpoint differences in pacing, clarity, and intonation, which are areas of weakness. Since adult learners tend to have time constraints and limited opportunities to interact, technology helps fill these gaps by making practice more communicative and extending it in beyond the classroom framework.

DISCUSSION

Difficulties in TBL Adult ESL Implementation

As much as Task-Based Learning (TBL) has great potential to promote the speaking fluency of adult learners in the ESL setting, limited learner resources, teacher readiness, institutional constraints, and ineffective task design often limit its implementation. These challenges should be understood to make sure that TBL-based instruction is effective and sustainable.

Learner-Related Challenges

Adult learners are often anxious and fear making mistakes, which may undermine their willingness to engage communication activities. According to research on affective barriers in second language learning, emotional variables have a major impact on the learning process, especially for adult learners, who may feel embarrassed or stressed about getting the answers right (Wang and Wu, 2020). Anxiety may decrease verbal production, preclude risk-taking, in a nettling way upon the fluency gains which TBL is meant to yield. The second significant hurdle is a limited vocabulary, which prevents learners from engaging meaningfully with the difficult tasks. Students with no lexical resources can use short, repetitive statements to avoid building discourse-level fluency, which is the goal of the TBL tasks. The adult L2 acquisition research proves that the vocabulary gap is a long-standing barrier, particularly among migrants and students with interrupted learning backgrounds (Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash, 2020). When learners are unable to retrieve words effectively, cognitive load increases and fluency decreases.

Also, asymmetric patterns of participation tend to arise in pair- or group-based work. Better students can take over the discussions, and underconfident learners will contribute little. This imbalance prevents all learners from engaging in meaningful interaction and dilutes the collaborative nature of TBL. According to sociocultural studies on multilingual socialization, interactional inequity is widespread in heterogeneous adult classrooms and should be addressed through facilitative organization (Duff, 2019).

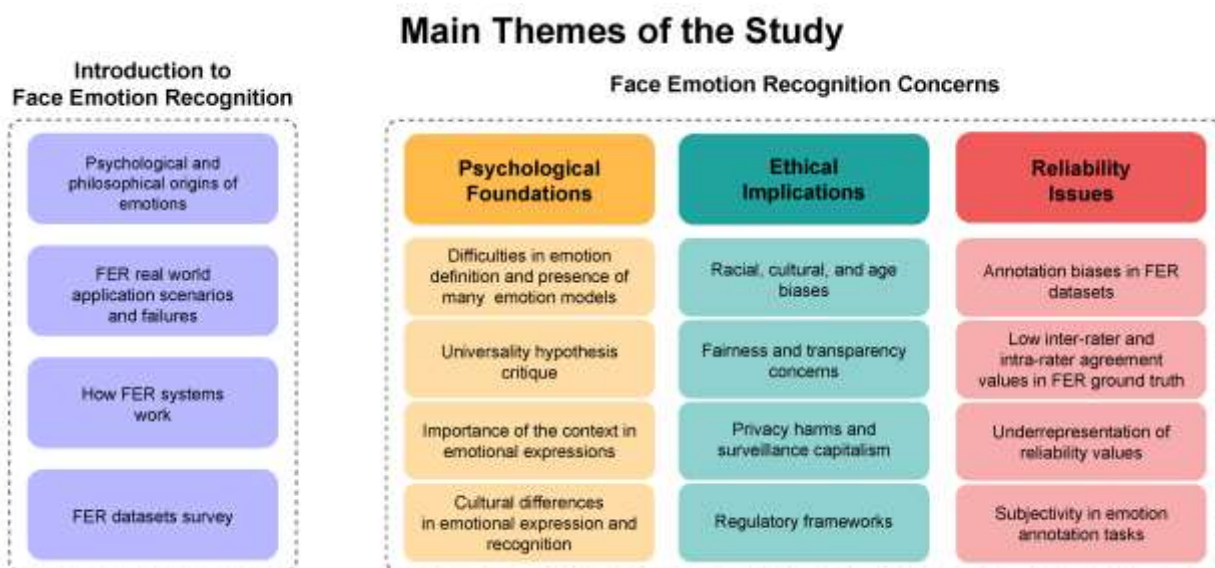


Figure 2: Challenges and Ethical Considerations in Automatic Face Emotion Recognition Technology

Teacher-Related Challenges

Implementing TBL will require excellent teachers who can design, modify, and construct authentic communicative activities. Nevertheless, not all educators, particularly in traditional EFL environments, are adequately trained in the task-based pedagogy. Studies reveal that educators tend to revert to grammar-centered teaching to feel more at ease with an accuracy-based approach than with open communicative exercises. In the absence of special training, teachers might fail to develop activities that are cognitively and linguistically challenging and relevant to the real world.

The other problem is that it is difficult to balance fluency and accuracy during instruction. TBL is also about meaning-oriented communication, but educators might need to correct mistakes more often, particularly in an environment where standardized testing emphasizes grammatical accuracy. The conflict between task progress and the need to address learners' linguistic issues may interfere with communication and slow the development of fluency. This difficulty reflects the old controversies in the SLA between form-based and fluency-based approaches.

There is also the problem of time, as teachers have limited time to provide specific, meaningful feedback. Quality feedback is critical for the cultivation of fluency, and individualized instruction during or after TBL activities may prove challenging, especially in very large classes. The literature on adult education indicates that teachers struggle to provide sustained, reflective feedback when the time available to teach is constrained. Consequently, students can end up doing the activities without the corrective feedback required for long-term fluency development.

Constraints of Institution and Classroom.

TBL is a successful approach that is influenced greatly by institutional factors. The large number of students in a classroom makes it difficult for teachers to track communicative activities, ensure everyone is involved, and assist students individually. TBL is interaction-intensive and therefore requires structured facilitation, which is difficult to implement when class populations are larger than manageable.

Another concern is the lack of sufficient time to teach. Many adult ESL programs have compressed timelines which minimize the chances of repetitive performance of tasks which is a major motivator of fluency. The full benefits of TBL cannot be achieved without pre-task planning, task performance, reflection, and repetition. The literature on adult education highlights that a time constraint often compels an instructor to emphasize content coverage rather than communicative practice (Burgess and Rowsell, 2020).

Moreover, conventional assessment models might not align with task-based models. The standardized tests usually focus on grammar, reading, and controlled production, rather than on spontaneous communication. This distortion is a deterrent to institutional investment in TBL, as it can manifest in high-stakes assessments. According to Claudia Ho (2020), fluency-oriented approaches should not be considered important when accuracy in assessments is valued over interactional competence.

Task-Related Limitations

Task design can be a challenge even in TBL implementation. Among the pitfalls is an unsuitable match between tasks and learners' real-life needs. The language needs of adult learners can be adult-related and professional, social, or survival-related. Tasks that are not contextually relevant can reduce engagement and hinder fluency gains. The relevance of adult SLA research is always grounded in the need to teach using learners' lived experiences.

The other issue is that overly complex tasks should be avoided; they will overwhelm learners and make fluency impossible to achieve. The cognitive load is high, affecting processing efficiency and leading to more hesitations and speech breaks. Research indicates that gradually escalating complex tasks are useful for adult learners and enable them to develop fluency through scaffolding.

Lastly, TBL risks being too task-oriented rather than language-oriented. When learners are mainly focused on the task outcome, i.e., solving a problem or making a decision, the quality of the linguistic output can be negatively affected. The problem has been observed in various other task-based learning studies, which indicate the necessity of a clear linguistic goal and systematic post-task reflection.

IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Designing Effective Tasks Implications

In a task-based learning (TBL) model, the central issue with enhancing speaking fluency is effective task design. Tasks should be realistic, goal-focused, and communicative, reflecting the real-world situations that adult learners encounter in workplaces, communities, and social life. Authenticity enhances engagement and reduces the alienation many adult ESL learners experience when dealing with artificial materials (Burgess and Rowsell, 2020). Adults have a purpose-oriented style of learning and making activities that reflect their professional lives (e.g., negotiation, customer interactions, or problem-solving in the workplace) increases the relevance and motivation of the learning process. This correspondence enhances independence and promotes more open language generation since students reference significant personal experiences (Duff, 2019).

Planning and Support Optimization.

Pre-task support has always been associated with positive fluency outcomes. Pre-task modelling involves the teacher exemplifying the type or form of communication (e.g., strategies, structure) that the teacher wants students to use; in this case, the teacher reduces cognitive load and performs more confidently. Guided brainstorming is also an effective way to offer learners a conceptual map of the task, mobilize relevant schemas, and reduce anxiety, which has been identified as a performance barrier in L2 (Wang and Wu, 2020). Moreover, vocabulary scaffolds, also known as specific lexical sets and functional expressions, also provide learners with the means to react impulsively when performing the task. Structured lexical preparation that builds automaticity is significant for adult learners who, in many cases, have problems with rapid lexical retrieval.

Implications of Interaction in the Classroom.

The fundamental interaction process that promotes speaking fluency in TBL is through interaction. Pair and group rotation are strategies that expand learners' exposure to a wide range of speech patterns and communication styles, creating flexibility and making them less dependent on the familiarity of the interlocutor. Timed exchanges or role-based discussions are structured turn-taking systems that ensure even participation, especially since, in adult classes, a subject may have unequal dominance, which may impede the development of fluency. By supporting the negotiation of meaning through clarification requests, reformulation, and confirmation checks, fluency can be facilitated by encouraging learners to continue communicating even during breaks. These interaction strategies reflect life communication and provide chances of repeated production of fluent output.

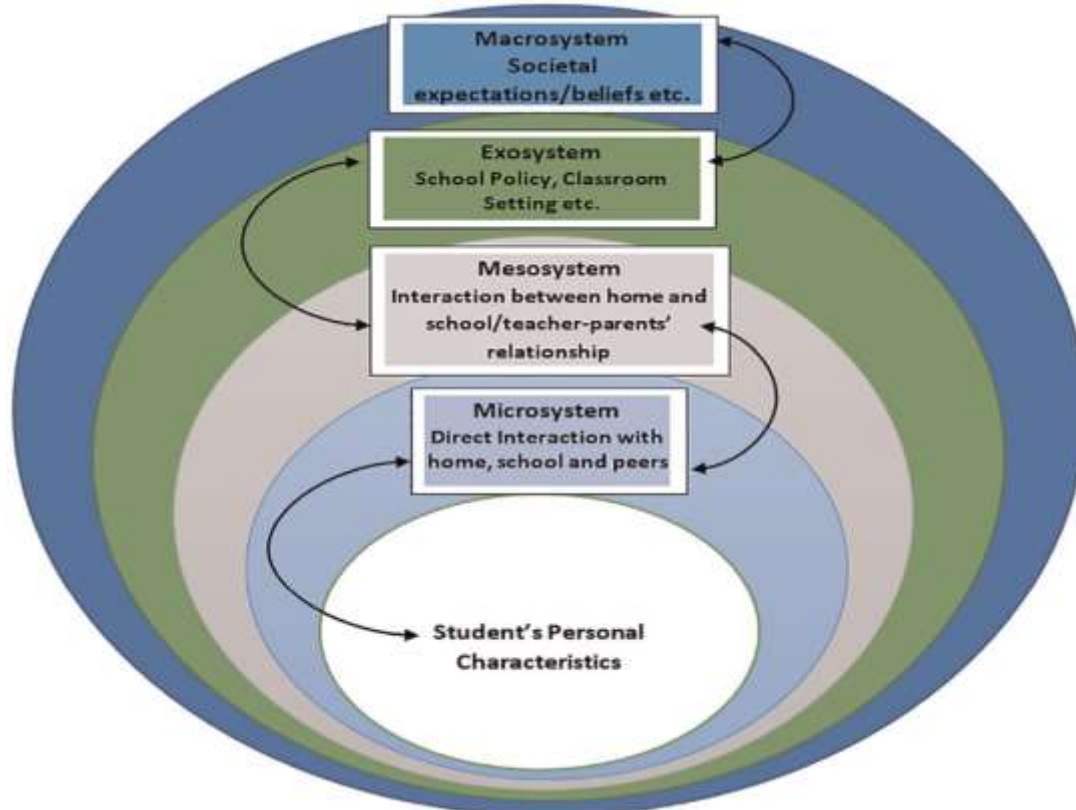


Figure 3: Teachers' Perspectives on Disruptive Student Behaviors

Feedback Fluency Promotional Practices.

The responses should be managed strategically to help learners enhance fluency without disrupting the flow of communication. In fluency-based tasks, delayed feedback is usually more effective because of its continuity in interaction, but immediate feedback may be more suitable when specific accuracy episodes are required. Non-interruptive supportive feedback, including recasts, prompts, or summarizing a learner's ideas, can also help maintain confidence, which is a strong determinant of the performance of adult learners (Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash, 2020). The use of reflective journals and self-assessment promotes learner behaviors such as tracking their fluency development and recognizing gaps in communication, which stimulate metacognition and have a long-term effect.

Task-Based Learning with Technology Enhancement.

Technology widens the possibilities of TBL and offers abundant opportunities for repetition, practice, and independent learning. AI speaking partners provide learners with low-pressure and immediate interaction that creates conversational conditions without causing performance anxiety (Rajendran and Yunus, 2021). Automated fluency analytics-based instruments, such as speech-rate monitors or pause detectors, provide students with objective feedback that reinforces self-monitoring, a priority of data-driven TBL research. Online collaborative task systems allow learners to discuss problems, group projects, and role-plays outside the

classroom, maintain practice over time, and qualify exposure to multimodal input (Cloudia Ho, 2020). Technology, when paired with working together, can help develop fluency by providing repeated, meaningful, and interactive language practice.

CONCLUSION

ESL Teacher Usefulness.

The results highlight the importance of ESL teachers also paying attention to the design of communicative tasks that foster meaningful interaction rather than teaching by form. The available studies on communicative language teaching are consistent in showing that real-life, interactive tasks contribute to fluency growth by enhancing learner interest and reducing performance anxiety (Cloudia Ho, 2020). The task of teachers is then to balance fluency and accuracy in order to sequence tasks that progressively increase cognitive load without eliminating the possibility of spontaneous speech. Since adult learners may experience specific linguistic and psychological difficulties, professional development programs must prepare educators with skills in scaffolding, task planning, and feedback, consistent with TBL principles (Wang and Wu, 2020).

Research on Curriculum Designers.

The TBL-based syllabi should be integrated into the curriculum, designed by curriculum designers, anticipating real-life communicative tasks in accordance with the social and professional requirements of adult learners. It has been demonstrated that genuine input and real-life activities contribute positively to oral fluency and to further language processing (Burgess and Rowsell, 2020). It is necessary to shift the nature of assessment frameworks from grammar-based to performance-based evaluations to reflect learners' communicative competence. Rubrics that focus on speed, coherence, and interactional strategies rather than grammatical accuracy alone are more aligned with the fluency gains advocated by TBL.

An Implication on EdTech Developers.

For EdTech developers, the emergence of AI-mediated learning is an opportunity to create tools to practice fluency in TBL. The simulated communicative situations created by AI-driven speaking platforms can offer adult learners the repeated, interactive, and low-stakes learning opportunity (Hashemifardnia et al., 2021; Rajendran and Yunus, 2021). Built-in real-time fluency analytics such as pause detection, the rate of the speech, and repair patterns would enable the learners to monitor their improvements and promptly get feedback. Also, task recommendation engines based on the performance data of a learner can be used to enhance the sequencing of task complexity and promote the acquisition of fluency over a long period.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this research support the efficacy of Task-Based Learning (TBL) as a potent teaching approach for helping adult ESL learners improve their oratory fluency. Interactions

that are centered around meaning, task repetition, and natural communication exchanges allow learners to talk with smoother pronunciations, vocabulary retrieval becomes more efficient, and learners become more confident. It is also indicated that adults react well to task-based settings and are more motivated and willing to communicate, which are critical elements of effectual second language learning (Hashemifardnia et al., 2021; Wang and Wu, 2020). From a research and pedagogical perspective, the study area contributes to the growing literature highlighting the significance of task complexity, timing of strategy planning, and technology-facilitated learning. Previous research emphasizes that effective sequencing and scaffolding practices have a profound influence on fluency achievement in adult language learning contexts (Phoeun and Sengsri, 2021). The lessons learned are useful in guiding practitioners (instructors and curriculum developers) in enhancing fluency-oriented teaching in ESL programs.

Future studies must include longitudinal designs to examine long-term fluency retention, consider hybrid TBL models (AI-driven tools with teacher-led facilitation), and compare the study outcomes across different linguistic and cultural groups to better understand the variability in TBL effectiveness.

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