



INTEGRATING TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING TO ENHANCE SPEAKING SKILLS IN B1 UZBEK HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS

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Abstract. Developing communicative competence remains a significant challenge in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts where instruction has traditionally emphasized grammar and reading over spoken interaction. This article presents a task-based lesson designed for B1 (intermediate) Uzbek high school learners, aimed at enhancing listening and speaking skills through structured debate and collaborative discussion. Grounded in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles and informed by sociocultural theory, the lesson integrates authentic input, scaffolded discussion, and structured output tasks centered on digital communication. The instructional sequence moves from listening to a short TED-style talk, to small-group analysis, and finally to a debate and opinion-writing task. Differentiation strategies support learners with varying proficiency levels and speaking confidence. The lesson demonstrates how scaffolded communicative tasks can promote fluency, critical thinking, and learner autonomy while aligning with CEFR B1–B2 progression goals. Implications for EFL teachers in similar grammar-focused educational contexts are discussed.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT); Communicative Language Teaching (CLT); speaking skills; listening comprehension; debate-based learning; scaffolding; Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD); CEFR B1 learners; EFL classroom; secondary education; differentiation strategies; digital communication; learner confidence; output hypothesis; Uzbek EFL context.

Introduction. In many EFL classrooms, particularly in post-Soviet educational



contexts, English instruction has traditionally prioritized grammar accuracy, reading comprehension, and written exercises. While these skills are essential, limited emphasis on communicative practice often results in learners who possess grammatical knowledge but lack confidence and fluency in spoken interaction. Developing speaking competence is especially important for learners preparing for higher education, professional communication, and global engagement. This article presents a listening- and speaking-focused lesson implemented in an 11th-grade Uzbek public high school. The lesson addresses a common instructional gap: transforming passive language knowledge into active communicative competence. Using a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework, the lesson engages students in meaningful discussion and debate on the topic of digital communication. The goal is to scaffold learners from comprehension to analysis and ultimately to structured spoken and written production.

Context and Learner Profile

The lesson was designed for a class of 15 students (9 boys and 6 girls), aged 16–17, studying in a face-to-face public high school setting. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the learners are at the B1 (intermediate) level. At this stage, students can understand familiar topics, express opinions, and participate in straightforward conversations; however, they often struggle with fluency, idiomatic language, and extended argumentation. Students' first language is Uzbek, and English exposure outside the classroom is limited. Previous instruction largely emphasized grammar and reading, resulting in a solid structural foundation but reduced confidence in spontaneous speaking. Many learners demonstrate anxiety when expressing opinions publicly due to fear of making mistakes. The class includes visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. Students are comfortable using technology and frequently engage with digital media. Therefore, incorporating a topic such as digital communication aligns with their interests and real-life experiences, increasing motivation and relevance.



Theoretical Framework

The lesson design is grounded in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which emphasizes meaningful communication through authentic tasks (Ellis, 2003). Rather than focusing solely on language forms, TBLT prioritizes purposeful interaction that mirrors real-world language use. The progression of activities reflects Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), in which learners first engage collaboratively before moving toward independent production. Group discussions and debate preparation provide peer-supported learning opportunities that bridge the gap between comprehension and autonomous expression. Bruner's (1983) concept of scaffolding informs the structured support embedded throughout the lesson. Sentence starters, debate templates, guided questions, and differentiated materials ensure that learners gradually build confidence before performing independently. Additionally, Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis highlights the importance of productive language use in developing linguistic accuracy and complexity. The debate and opinion-writing components require students to articulate, clarify, and reformulate ideas—thereby deepening language acquisition.

Finally, alignment with the CEFR ensures that tasks are appropriate for B1 learners while supporting progression toward B2-level competencies, including sustained argumentation and evaluation of multiple perspectives.

Lesson Design and Implementation

Analyze the effects of technology on communication through discussion.

Evaluate positive and negative aspects of digital communication in debate.

Language Objectives

Identify key arguments from a short listening text and summarize them.

Use comparative structures and opinion expressions in spoken and written tasks.



Stage 1: Listening and Guided Discussion (Pre-Task)

The lesson begins with a short TED-style talk excerpt on digital communication. Students listen for key arguments and take notes. Pre-listening questions activate background knowledge and encourage prediction. In small groups, learners summarize two main points and connect one argument to a real-life example. Sentence starters such as “The speaker argued that...” support structured summarization.

This stage provides comprehensible input and prepares students cognitively and linguistically for deeper analysis.

Stage 2: Small-Group Discussion (Task Cycle)

Students discuss guided prompts, including:

How has technology changed communication?

Is digital communication more effective than face-to-face communication?

What are its benefits and drawbacks?

Comparative and opinion-based language is modeled and displayed on the board (e.g., “more effective than,” “as convenient as,” “In my experience...”).

This stage encourages analytical thinking and collaborative meaning-making while reinforcing target language structures.

Stage 3: Debate and Opinion Writing (Post-Task)

Students are divided into two teams:

Team A: Digital communication is better.

Team B: Face-to-face communication is better.

Teams prepare arguments using structured scaffolds. During the debate, students present claims, respond to counterarguments, and defend their positions.

Pedagogical Implications



This lesson demonstrates several key implications for EFL educators in similar contexts:

1. Grammar knowledge alone does not ensure communicative competence. Structured output tasks are essential.

2. Debate activities promote critical thinking and sustained speech.

3. Scaffolding reduces speaking anxiety and increases participation.

4. Authentic, relevant topics enhance engagement.

5. Gradual progression from collaborative to independent tasks supports learner autonomy.

In grammar-focused educational systems, incorporating TBLT principles can significantly improve students' fluency and confidence.

Conclusion. This article presented a CEFR- aligned, task-based lesson designed to enhance listening and speaking skills among B1 Uzbek high school learners. Through structured scaffolding, authentic input, collaborative discussion, and debate, students moved from comprehension to critical evaluation and independent expression. Grounded in sociocultural theory and communicative pedagogy, the lesson illustrates how meaningful tasks can transform passive grammatical knowledge into active communicative competence. By integrating differentiation and gradual release of responsibility, educators can foster confidence, fluency, and analytical thinking in EFL classrooms. Such approaches are particularly valuable in contexts transitioning from form-focused instruction toward communicative language teaching. Task-based, scaffolded lessons offer a practical pathway toward achieving higher CEFR proficiency levels and preparing learners for real-world communication.



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