



Improving Vocational Students' Speaking Skills Through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT): A Classroom Action Research in a Retail Business Context

Agatha Christiyanti Manullang¹, Sukarno²

^{1,2}Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta

Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-07-27 Revised: 2026-08-16 Accepted: 2026-09-03 Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching; speaking skills; vocational education; classroom action research; retail business; English for Specific Purposes DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.12020 Corresponding Author: Agatha Christiyanti Manullang <a href="mailto:agathamannullang80@guru.smk.b
elajar.id">agathamannullang80@guru.smk.b elajar.id Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta	<i>This classroom action research examined the implementation of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) to develop workplace-oriented English speaking skills among 36 Grade XI Retail Business students, aged approximately 16–17 years, at SMK Negeri 1 Bantul. The study followed the Kemmis and McTaggart cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection. A pre-cycle assessment was followed by two action cycles, each comprising three 90-minute meetings. Data were collected through classroom observation, CEFR-informed speaking assessments, a student questionnaire, semi-structured interviews with five students, and reflective journals. The mean total speaking score increased from 33.75 in the pre-cycle to 40.89 in Cycle I and 41.50 in Cycle II. The largest gain occurred in task achievement (7.11 → 10.94 → 11.22), followed by pronunciation (6.78 → 8.64 → 8.69), while fluency and vocabulary improved gradually. Accuracy increased in Cycle I but declined slightly in Cycle II (6.19 → 6.64 → 6.36), indicating that communicative performance developed faster than grammatical control. The proportion of students at CEFR B1 increased from 22.22% to 58.33% and then 61.11%. Questionnaire results showed that 75% of students agreed or strongly agreed that TBLT improved their fluency, and 66.67% agreed or strongly agreed that it provided opportunities to improve pronunciation and grammar. The findings indicate that occupationally authentic tasks supported students' participation, confidence, and ability to complete retail-related speaking tasks, although accuracy, note dependence, unequal participation, and time management remained concerns. Because the study involved one class, no comparison group, and single-rater speaking assessment, the findings should be interpreted as context-specific classroom evidence rather than definitive causal proof.</i>

1. Introduction

Speaking competence is central to vocational English because students must be prepared not only to complete academic tasks but also to communicate appropriately in professional settings. In retail workplaces, communication is embedded in recurring service encounters: greeting customers, identifying needs, describing products, responding to inquiries, recommending alternatives, handling complaints, and coordinating with colleagues. These situations require more than grammatical knowledge. They demand fluency, intelligible pronunciation, context-appropriate vocabulary, interactional responsiveness, and sufficient confidence to sustain communication under time pressure.

Preliminary classroom observation at SMK Negeri 1 Bantul indicated a mismatch between these occupational communication demands and students' classroom speaking performance. During the pre-cycle lesson on making offers and requests, students frequently remained silent, relied on memorized dialogue, hesitated for extended periods, and shifted to Indonesian when they could not retrieve English expressions. Observation ratings were lowest for fluency and confidence (Scale 1 on a five-point scale), while language accuracy and interaction were rated at Scale 2. The pre-cycle mean speaking score was 33.75 out of 100; 28 of the 36 students (77.78%) were classified at CEFR A2 and eight (22.22%) at B1. These results provided empirical evidence that the class required structured support for spontaneous, workplace-oriented communication.

This problem is pedagogically important within English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which emphasizes alignment between language instruction and the communicative practices of a particular academic or occupational domain (Basturkmen, 2020). Retail-business English is distinctive because students must combine service politeness, product knowledge, clarification strategies, persuasive language, and complaint management in rapidly changing interpersonal encounters. Speaking instruction that relies mainly on controlled dialogue practice may therefore be insufficient for developing the flexible language use required in authentic service interactions.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) offers a relevant response because it organizes instruction around meaningful outcomes rather than isolated language forms. Through role-play, simulation, problem-solving, and information-gap activities, learners use language to complete purposeful tasks and negotiate meaning with others (Ellis, 2019; Long, 2015; Willis & Willis, 2021). In a vocational context, TBLT can be designed around occupational tasks so that language practice simultaneously develops communicative competence and workplace readiness.

Although TBLT has been widely associated with communicative development, the contribution of this study lies in its occupation-specific application. Rather than examining generic speaking activities, the intervention situated TBLT within retail service encounters and used classroom action research to document how task design was adjusted across cycles in response to students' difficulties. The study therefore addresses the practical question of how occupationally authentic TBLT can be implemented and refined in one vocational speaking classroom.

Accordingly, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. How was TBLT implemented to improve vocational students' workplace-oriented speaking skills?
2. How did students' fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary use, task achievement, and confidence develop across the TBLT cycles?
3. What challenges emerged during the implementation of TBLT in vocational speaking classes?

Literature Review

Speaking Competence in Vocational and ESP Contexts

Speaking is a multidimensional productive skill that requires learners to coordinate linguistic knowledge, discourse organization, pronunciation, vocabulary, interactional competence, and communication strategies in real time (Brown & Lee, 2015; Goh & Burns, 2021). Effective speaking is therefore not limited to accuracy. It also involves maintaining fluency, producing intelligible speech, responding contingently to an interlocutor, and adapting language to the social purpose of an exchange.

In vocational education, these dimensions are shaped by occupational goals. ESP-oriented instruction begins with the language practices that learners are likely to encounter in their future field and then develops tasks, materials, and assessment around those practices (Basturkmen, 2020). For retail students, relevant speaking competence includes initiating service encounters, explaining product features and benefits, checking understanding, making suggestions, responding politely to dissatisfaction, and closing interactions professionally. Occupational authenticity can make classroom communication more meaningful because students can recognize a direct relationship between the speaking task and their anticipated workplace responsibilities.

Task-Based Language Teaching and Speaking Development

TBLT treats the task as the central unit of planning and instruction. A pedagogic task requires learners to use language primarily to convey meaning and achieve an identifiable outcome (Ellis, 2019; Long, 2015). A common instructional sequence includes a pre-task phase, a task cycle, and a post-task phase. During the pre-task phase, the teacher introduces the topic, clarifies the outcome, and provides strategic linguistic support. During the task cycle, learners complete the communicative task individually, in pairs, or in groups. During the post-task phase, performance is reviewed, feedback is provided, and learners may repeat or refine the task.

Task repetition and repeated exposure to related communicative situations can support fluency by reducing processing demands and increasing familiarity with relevant vocabulary and interactional patterns (Bygate, 2021; Sun & Zhang, 2023). Pair and group tasks can also create opportunities for negotiation of meaning, clarification, and collaborative problem solving. However, successful implementation depends on appropriate scaffolding, clear role distribution, monitoring, and sufficient time; otherwise, learners may rely on scripts, stronger students may dominate, and attention to form may remain limited (Carless, 2022; Zhao & Yu, 2020).

Confidence, Anxiety, and Participation in Task-Based Speaking

Speaking performance is influenced by affective as well as linguistic factors. Anxiety can limit willingness to communicate, increase hesitation, and encourage avoidance of unfamiliar expressions. Conversely, supportive peer interaction and repeated practice can reduce the perceived risk of speaking and help learners participate more confidently (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2020; Ockey & Bui, 2021). Within TBLT, confidence may develop when learners focus on completing a meaningful outcome rather than avoiding every linguistic error. Nevertheless, collaborative tasks do not automatically produce equitable participation. Teachers must structure roles, sequence task difficulty, and monitor interaction so that less confident learners receive genuine opportunities to speak.

2. Method

Research Design

The study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) to address a specific instructional problem and improve classroom practice. It followed the Kemmis and McTaggart process of planning, action, observation, and reflection. A pre-cycle assessment was conducted before two action cycles. The combination of quantitative speaking scores and qualitative classroom evidence was used to examine both performance development and the instructional adjustments made across cycles.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Bantul during the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants were 36 Grade XI students from one Retail Business class, Class XI BR 1, selected purposively because preliminary observation showed low-to-moderate speaking proficiency, limited confidence, and difficulty sustaining spontaneous English communication. The students were approximately 16–17 years old. At baseline, 28 students were classified at CEFR A2 and eight at B1.

Action-Research Procedures

The pre-cycle speaking assessment was conducted on 14 October 2025. Cycle I consisted of three meetings on 4, 6, and 7 November 2025, and Cycle II consisted of three meetings on 18, 20, and 21 November 2025. Each cycle was allocated 6 × 45 minutes across three meetings, equivalent to approximately 90 minutes per meeting. In each cycle, instruction followed a pre-task, task-cycle, and post-task sequence within the broader CAR stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection.

Cycle I focused on making suggestions and expressing obligations in retail situations. During the pre-task meeting, students analyzed pictures and model dialogues and identified expressions such as “You should...,” “You must...,” and “I suggest....” During the task cycle, students worked in groups to design and record retail role-play videos. The post-task meeting reviewed the target expressions, pronunciation, modal auxiliaries, and common errors, followed by student reflection.

Reflection on Cycle I identified several problems. Some groups emphasized product promotion and acting rather than the intended suggestion and obligation structures; several students contributed very little spoken language; accuracy and vocabulary developed slowly; pronunciation problems remained; and students continued to rely on rehearsal, scripts, and more confident peers. The post-task work also contained more controlled written practice than extended speaking. These findings directly informed the redesign of Cycle II.

Cycle II introduced procedure texts and concentrated on the more specific occupational role of a cashier. Pre-task support was expanded through videos, pictures, imperative verbs, sequence markers, vocabulary clarification, pronunciation modelling, and guided examples. Students were reorganized into eight groups of four or five and assigned explicit roles, including narrator, cashier, customer, shop assistant, or customer-service employee, to increase individual speaking responsibility. The task cycle included cashier simulations, repeated role-play, procedural explanations, and peer feedback. The post-task stage used sequencing, imperative-verb, vocabulary, and procedure-writing activities, together with focused reflection on recurring language problems.

Data Sources and Instruments

Five complementary data sources were used. First, a 21-indicator classroom-observation checklist rated participation and engagement, speaking fluency and clarity, language accuracy and appropriateness, interaction and responsiveness, and confidence and emotional factors on a five-point scale. Second, speaking performances were assessed in fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, and task achievement. Third, five students participated in semi-structured interviews after Cycle II. Fourth, the student feedback questionnaire contained 21 closed-ended statements rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) and four open-ended questions. Its indicators addressed engagement and motivation, occupational relevance and task completion, perceived speaking development and confidence, implementation challenges, and overall TBLT effectiveness. Fifth, students completed reflective journals or reflection sheets during the intervention.

The speaking rubric allocated up to 20 points to each of five components—fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, and task achievement—for a maximum total score of 100. The resulting total was interpreted through CEFR-informed bands from A1 to C2. The teacher-researcher scored the speaking performances. No inter-rater reliability coefficient was reported, and possible rater subjectivity is therefore acknowledged as a methodological limitation rather than treated as controlled.

The questionnaire's closed-ended responses were summarized through frequencies and percentages. Interview and open-ended questionnaire responses were used to clarify students' perceptions of fluency, confidence, pronunciation, vocabulary growth, task relevance, and workplace preparation. Student quotations are reported using anonymized numeric labels.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis was descriptive. For the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II, the study reported component means, minimum and maximum scores, total speaking means, and CEFR-level distributions. Changes were compared across stages, but the article does not claim statistical significance because no inferential test results were reported in the thesis.

Qualitative evidence from observation notes, interviews, open-ended questionnaire responses, and reflective journals was examined through familiarization, coding, categorization, comparison across cycles, and thematic interpretation. Evidence was triangulated across the instruments to identify convergent patterns concerning engagement, confidence, spontaneity, occupational relevance, language limitations, and implementation problems. The reflection results were then used to revise the subsequent action cycle.

Criteria of Success

The study defined success through quantitative and qualitative indicators. Quantitatively, at least 75% of students were expected to reach the functional A2–B1 CEFR range and the class mean was expected to improve from the pre-cycle. Qualitatively, success was indicated by greater willingness to speak, reduced hesitation, increased participation, improved confidence, more effective completion of retail role-plays, and positive questionnaire and interview responses. By Cycle II, all 36 students were classified within A2 or B1, although only 61.11% had reached B1; this distinction is considered when interpreting the outcome.

Ethical Considerations

The thesis documents institutional permission to conduct the research at SMK Negeri 1 Bantul, and participant comments are reported with anonymized labels. However, the source thesis does not provide sufficient documentation of separate written student assent or parent/guardian consent procedures. The article therefore reports only the ethical procedures that can be verified from the source and identifies the missing consent documentation as an issue to address before journal submission.

3. Result*Implementation of TBLT across the Action-Research Cycles*

TBLT was implemented through a recurring pre-task, task-cycle, and post-task sequence. In Cycle I, the pre-task phase activated students' knowledge of retail interactions and introduced suggestion and obligation expressions. Students then created group role-play videos based on retail situations before reviewing language forms and reflecting on their performance. In Cycle II, the occupational context was narrowed to cashier procedures. Videos, pictures, imperative verbs, sequence markers, and model procedures prepared students to explain and perform cashier routines.

During the task cycles, students completed communicative activities that required an identifiable workplace outcome. Cycle I groups designed product- or service-related role-plays using suggestion and obligation expressions. Cycle II groups wrote and performed cashier procedures, with members assigned roles such as narrator, cashier, customer, shop assistant, and customer-service employee. The specific role allocation was intended to reduce domination by stronger speakers and increase each learner's speaking responsibility.

During the post-task phases, the teacher reviewed communicative effectiveness and recurring language problems. Cycle I feedback addressed modal auxiliaries, sentence formation, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Cycle II added sequencing activities, imperative-verb practice, vocabulary clarification, peer comments, and individual reflection. Feedback was delayed until after task performance where possible so that students could first attempt to sustain meaning-focused communication.

The principal Cycle I-to-Cycle II modifications were therefore explicit and data-driven: the occupational focus was narrowed to the familiar role of cashier; pre-task modelling and vocabulary support were expanded; groups were reorganized with assigned speaking roles; procedural language and sequence markers replaced the more weakly realized suggestion-and-obligation target; repeated and staged speaking practice was increased; and post-task feedback was made more focused. These changes responded directly to script dependence, unequal participation, limited vocabulary, pronunciation problems, moderate fluency gains, and incomplete use of the Cycle I target language.

Across the two cycles, classroom interaction became more student-centered and communicative. Pre-cycle observation ratings ranged from Scale 1 to Scale 2. In Cycle I, participation was rated between Scale 3 and Scale 4, while fluency, accuracy, interaction, and confidence reached Scale 3. In Cycle II, all five observation categories were rated at Scale 3. The results indicate a clear shift from avoidance and highly supported speech toward adequate, more consistent participation, although the ratings did not progress beyond a moderate-to-good level.

Development of Speaking Performance

Table 1 presents the descriptive speaking results. The mean total score increased by 7.14 points from the pre-cycle to Cycle I and by a further 0.61 points in Cycle II. The pattern shows that the largest change occurred after the first introduction of structured task-based work, while Cycle II mainly consolidated and slightly extended the gains. The component data also show that development was uneven rather than uniformly positive.

Table 1. Speaking Performance across the Pre-Cycle and Two TBLT Cycles

Speaking component	Pre-cycle	Cycle I	Cycle II
Fluency	7.22	7.89	8.06
Accuracy	6.19	6.64	6.36
Pronunciation	6.78	8.64	8.69
Vocabulary use	6.44	6.78	7.17
Task achievement	7.11	10.94	11.22
Total score	33.75	40.89	41.50

Note. Each component was scored from 1 to 20; the maximum total score was 100. The pre-cycle pronunciation mean is reported as 6.78, consistent with the thesis narrative and cross-cycle comparison. No inferential significance test is claimed.

Fluency increased from 7.22 in the pre-cycle to 7.89 in Cycle I and 8.06 in Cycle II. The increase was gradual, consistent with observation notes showing fewer long pauses and greater willingness to maintain speaking turns. However, the limited size of the Cycle II gain indicates that spontaneity and automaticity still required continued practice.

Accuracy increased from 6.19 to 6.64 in Cycle I but declined to 6.36 in Cycle II. This pattern is important because it prevents an overly positive interpretation of the intervention. The Cycle II tasks required students to manage longer procedural sequences and workplace interaction, which may have increased processing demands and encouraged attention to task completion over grammatical control.

Pronunciation increased from 6.78 to 8.64 and then 8.69, while vocabulary increased from 6.44 to 6.78 and 7.17. Repeated exposure to retail expressions, teacher modelling, role-play rehearsal, and post-task correction appeared to support clearer speech and broader lexical use. Pronunciation showed a large initial gain but almost no additional increase in Cycle II, suggesting a need for more targeted and sustained pronunciation instruction.

Task achievement showed the largest improvement, rising from 7.11 in the pre-cycle to 10.94 in Cycle I and 11.22 in Cycle II. Students became more able to complete the communicative purpose of role-plays, organize workplace procedures, and sustain the basic sequence of customer-service exchanges. This component drove much of the increase in the total score.

The CEFR distribution provides a complementary view of development. Students classified at B1 increased from eight of 36 (22.22%) in the pre-cycle to 21 (58.33%) in Cycle I and 22 (61.11%) in Cycle II. Correspondingly, the number at A2 decreased from 28 to 15 and then 14. The shift was substantial in Cycle I and modest in Cycle II, again suggesting early improvement followed by consolidation.

Table 2. Distribution of Students across CEFR Speaking Levels

CEFR level	Pre-cycle, n (%)	Cycle I, n (%)	Cycle II, n (%)
A2	28 (77.78%)	15 (41.67%)	14 (38.89%)
B1	8 (22.22%)	21 (58.33%)	22 (61.11%)
Total	36 (100%)	36 (100%)	36 (100%)

Note. Percentages are based on 36 students. No student was classified outside A2 or B1 in the reported assessment tables.

Questionnaire data supported the performance findings. For the statement that TBLT improved speaking fluency, 19 students selected Agree and eight selected Strongly Agree, representing 27 of 36 students (75%). Seven selected the midpoint and two selected Disagree; none selected Strongly Disagree. For the statement that TBLT provided sufficient opportunities to improve pronunciation and grammar, 17 selected Agree and seven Strongly Agree (24 of 36; 66.67%), eight selected the midpoint, one Disagree, and one Strongly Disagree.

Interview and open-ended questionnaire responses clarified how students experienced the changes. Student 3 stated, "I feel more ready because I know what to say when I enter that professional situation." Student 5 linked collaboration to both confidence and fluency: "We worked in groups, friends could give suggestions, and we felt more confident when we performed; it also went more smoothly." An open-ended questionnaire response similarly emphasized occupational relevance: "I learned how to use English in real-life situations, especially when working in retail." These comments support the interpretation that structured preparation and recognizable workplace purposes made speaking more manageable and meaningful.

Challenges during TBLT Implementation

Despite the improvements, the classroom evidence identified persistent linguistic, affective, interactional, and organizational challenges. The pre-cycle was characterized by low confidence, frequent hesitation, limited interaction, and dependence on memorized expressions. Cycle I reduced these barriers, but observation ratings remained at Scale 3 rather than reaching consistently high performance. Cycle II stabilized participation and confidence at the same level without eliminating the underlying problems.

Dependence on notes, scripts, and rehearsal continued to constrain spontaneity. Cycle I video tasks allowed extensive preparation at home, which helped confidence and pronunciation but also permitted memorized delivery. In Cycle II, several students still paused to recall lines or relied on notes during cashier role-plays. The intervention therefore improved participation more clearly than fully independent spontaneous speaking.

Limited vocabulary, pronunciation problems, and grammatical inaccuracy also disrupted performance. Students frequently asked for translations or clarification of retail terms, and some role-plays contained mispronounced words and incomplete sentence structures. Vocabulary and pronunciation improved descriptively, but accuracy declined slightly in Cycle II, showing that form-focused support remained necessary alongside meaning-focused tasks.

Unequal participation was visible in Cycle I, when some groups produced extended interaction while others relied on acting and allowed only a few members to speak. Cycle II addressed this by assigning specific roles and organizing groups of four or five, yet differences in contribution remained. Peer feedback was also limited: students often produced brief comments such as “good,” “clear,” or “not bad” rather than specific evaluative feedback.

Time management remained an implementation constraint. Students repeatedly requested additional preparation time, and role-play planning, rehearsal, performance, peer response, and teacher feedback required substantially more classroom time than controlled exercises. The six 90-minute meetings provided meaningful practice but were insufficient for strong development in all components, particularly accuracy and fully spontaneous speech.

4. Discussion

Development of Speaking Performance through Repeated Meaningful Use

The descriptive results show a substantial initial increase in total speaking performance followed by a much smaller Cycle II gain. Task achievement improved most strongly, while fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary developed at different rates and accuracy did not improve consistently. This pattern is compatible with the processing demands of meaning-focused tasks: when students concentrate on achieving a communicative outcome, they may increase participation and functional adequacy before they gain stable grammatical control.

Task repetition and the recurrence of related retail situations may explain the gradual fluency development. Students repeatedly encountered customer-service language, rehearsed role-plays, performed occupational procedures, and reviewed their difficulties after the task. Repetition reduced the need to generate every expression from the beginning, allowing more attention to message delivery. At the same time, the modest Cycle II gain indicates that six instructional meetings were not enough to produce extensive automaticity.

Occupational Authenticity and the ESP Contribution

The study's principal contribution is not simply that TBLT was associated with improved speaking scores. Its more specific contribution lies in showing how task-based instruction can be organized around the communicative practices of a retail workplace. Students did not merely discuss general topics; they advised customers, explained obligations, promoted products, performed cashier routines, described procedural steps, and responded within simulated service encounters.

Occupational authenticity appears to have strengthened engagement because students could recognize the future use of the language. Questionnaire and interview responses repeatedly described the tasks as preparation for serving foreign customers and communicating in retail employment. Authenticity in this study was therefore functional and occupational: classroom tasks approximated the purposes, roles, vocabulary, and sequential actions of retail service rather than attempting to reproduce an entire workplace.

Confidence, Anxiety, and Peer Collaboration

Confidence was not part of the scored speaking rubric, but the observation, questionnaire, interview, and reflection data consistently indicated affective development. Confidence and emotional factors increased from Scale 1 in the pre-cycle to Scale 3 in Cycles I and II. Pair and group preparation gave students a lower-risk space in which to test expressions, receive peer suggestions, and rehearse before public performance. This support helped students participate despite continuing anxiety.

Nevertheless, collaboration should not be treated as uniformly beneficial. Unequal participation showed that confident students could dominate while quieter learners remained peripheral. The pedagogical value of group work therefore depended on task structure. Assigned roles, minimum-turn requirements, rotating responsibilities, differentiated prompts, and systematic teacher monitoring are necessary to convert physical group membership into equitable communicative participation.

Persistent Implementation Challenges

Several persistent issues qualify the positive interpretation. Pronunciation improved markedly in Cycle I but changed very little in Cycle II, indicating that communicative repetition alone was insufficient for continued phonological development. Accuracy declined from 6.64 to 6.36 in Cycle II, suggesting that longer and more complex procedural tasks increased linguistic demands. These components require explicit modelling, focused practice, intelligibility-oriented feedback, and opportunities to reperform corrected language.

Time and participation also remained important classroom constraints. TBLT required preparation, group organization, task performance, observation, feedback, and reflection. Some learners dominated group interaction, while quieter students relied on peers. Assigned roles improved accountability but did not fully equalize contribution. More tightly timed task stages, smaller groups, individual follow-up turns, rotating roles, and structured peer-feedback prompts would improve implementation.

The action-research process was valuable precisely because the intervention was revised rather than treated as a fixed package. Cycle II responded to Cycle I by narrowing the occupational role, strengthening language scaffolding, assigning speaking responsibilities, and increasing procedural and repeated practice. Nevertheless, the relatively small additional total-score gain shows that instructional refinement does not guarantee immediate linear improvement in every speaking dimension.

Limitations and Study Contribution

The findings must be interpreted within several limitations. The study involved one purposively selected class in one vocational school and used only six intervention meetings, with no comparison group or delayed post-test. The teacher-researcher implemented the intervention, collected data, and scored the speaking performances; no inter-rater reliability statistic was available. Questionnaire and interview evidence was self-reported, and group preparation may have obscured individual competence. The simulated tasks were classroom approximations of retail work, so transfer to an actual workplace was not directly measured. In addition, the source thesis does not document separate written assent or parent/guardian consent procedures.

Within these limits, the study provides context-sensitive evidence that occupationally authentic TBLT can support vocational learners' functional speaking performance, participation, and confidence. The strongest outcome was improved task achievement rather than uniformly improved linguistic accuracy. This distinction is theoretically and pedagogically important: vocational speaking instruction should evaluate whether learners can accomplish workplace communication goals while continuing to provide targeted support for grammar, pronunciation, and independent language production.

5. Conclusion

This classroom action research documented the implementation of TBLT in a Grade XI Retail Business class across a pre-cycle and two action cycles. The mean total speaking score increased from 33.75 to 40.89 and 41.50, and the proportion of students at CEFR B1 rose from 22.22% to 61.11%. Task achievement showed the largest component gain, while fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary improved more gradually. Accuracy increased in Cycle I but declined slightly in Cycle II. Observation and perception data indicated greater participation, confidence, occupational relevance, and willingness to speak, although note dependence, language limitations, unequal group participation, and time demands persisted.

The findings indicate that TBLT is particularly relevant to vocational English when tasks are aligned with recognizable occupational purposes. Teachers should provide explicit pre-task language support, assign individual speaking roles, sequence low-risk rehearsal toward public performance, preserve time for post-task feedback, and assess both linguistic quality and task achievement. The results should not be generalized beyond the studied class without further research using longer interventions, multiple raters, comparison conditions, delayed assessment, and direct evidence of workplace transfer.

6. References

- Basturkmen, H. (2020). *Developing courses in English for specific purposes*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE.
- Brown, H. D., & Lee, H. (2015). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (4th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Burns, A. (2020). *Action research in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bygate, M. (2021). *Learning language through tasks*. Cambridge University Press.
- Carless, D. (2022). Task-based language teaching: Teacher challenges and classroom realities. *RELC Journal*, 53(2), 255–270.
- Council of Europe. (2018). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment: Companion volume with new descriptors*. Council of Europe.
- Dewaele, J.-M., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2020). The interplay of emotion and language in second language acquisition. *Language Learning*, 70(3), 666–690. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12364>
- Ellis, R. (2019). *Task-based language teaching: Theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Goh, C., & Burns, A. (2021). *Teaching speaking: A holistic approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Long, M. H. (2015). *Second language acquisition and task-based language teaching*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mertler, C. A. (2021). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

- Ockey, G., & Bui, G. (2021). Task-based speaking and learner confidence development. *Language Testing*, 38(4), 567–589.
- Sun, Y., & Zhang, L. (2023). Task repetition and oral fluency improvement in EFL learners. *System*, 109, 102879.
- Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2021). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Zhao, S., & Yu, S. (2020). Overcoming barriers in implementing task-based language teaching in vocational education. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 18(4), 95–110.
- Ziegler, N. (2022). Interaction-driven task-based speaking development. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 42, 115–132.