



A Systematic Thematic Review of Task-Based Language Teaching for Young Learners

Nahian Ahmed Ananna

University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh

Article Info	Abstract
Accepted: 2026-01-27 Revised: 2026-06-22 Accepted: 2026-06-22 Keywords: <i>task-based teaching, motivation, young learners, young learners, student motivation, thematic review.</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.9470 Corresponding authors: Nahian Ahmed Ananna nahianahmedananna@gmail.com Independent Researcher, Dhaka, Bangladesh	<i>Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has become very popular for young learners. However, it is not consistently or effectively used in the classroom. The present study is a systematic thematic review of the literature on TBLT for young learners. This study is designed to explore the ways in which children participate in task-based activities in primary English lessons and, ultimately, which type of tasks is most effective in supporting children's communicative language use, which in turn will lead them towards communicative language teaching. Focusing on 40 peer-reviewed studies that are published between 2015 and 2025, a qualitative thematic review has been carried out. The empirical study was only taken in classroom-based TBLT with young EFL learners that fulfilled strict criteria. Some themes were identified in task design, input-based instruction, interactional patterns, learner motivation, implementation challenges, and finally assessment and technology. Results highlight that engaging, hands-on, meaningful activities, and cooperative communication and interaction stimulate engagement, vocabulary development, and willingness to communicate in young learners. However, tasks that are too early, too production-oriented, and test-oriented can limit participation and cause anxiety, which can increase their affective filter. Emotional safety, peer support that is structured, and opportunities to repeat tasks are also noted as important, as these can enable children to experiment with language without stress, judgement, and fear of failure. The theme of adaptation of tasks to larger, exam-oriented classes is used particularly to address this point, which is often found in many EFL settings. The results also indicate that the design of tasks, organization of the classroom, and assessment</i>

methods of teachers should be in line with TBLT principles in learning. Therefore, providing developmentally appropriate environments with tasks and non-judgmental environments is critical to ensure the long-term success of young learners in English and in their everyday language.

1. Introduction

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has become a vital approach for teaching English to young learners. Teachers nowadays look for communicative, engaging, and meaningful methods, and for this reason, TBLT has become an important solution. Its focus on real-life tasks gives young learners opportunities to use language purposefully and effectively in early learning situations.

Young students gain the advantages of learning through doing in early-grade classrooms, and TBLT assists the students in this developmental process by focusing on meaningful interaction and communicative activities instead of isolating grammar teaching (Long, 2015). Research on young learners further shows that children learn effectively when they engage in hands-on, purposeful activities that reflect real-life communication (Emilia & Sukyadi, 2025; Pinter, 2017; Shintani, 2016).

Research shows that Task-Based Language Teaching enhances learners' communicative competence because they are involved in communication and meaning-oriented activities instead of instruction based only on form (Long, 2015). Young learners also demonstrate in empirical research that task-based activities can develop vocabulary knowledge and oral fluency because they use language purposefully (Shintani, 2016; Pinter, 2017). For example, Shintani (2016) proved how input- and task-based teaching helped vocabulary acquisition in beginner-level children, as it provided them with valuable exposure and practice.

Research on classroom-based instruction in primary classrooms also indicates that task-supported interaction facilitates the development of listening and speaking skills and leads to early literacy skills (Pinter, 2017; Ghazali, 2020). Overall, these findings indicate that TBLT naturally fosters language development by allowing young learners to learn through meaningful communication.

In addition, Task-Based Language Teaching supports learner autonomy and motivation by actively engaging students in meaningful and goal-oriented tasks (Long, 2015; Pinter, 2017). Some recent work also highlights that tasks promote cooperation, scaffolding, and problem-solving among young learners (Pinter, 2017). Children tend to feel more engaged when they can interact, create, solve problems, and collaborate with peers (Pinter, 2015; Lu & Fan, 2021). Tasks also encourage learners to negotiate meaning, ask questions, and support each other, which strengthens both language skills and social development.

Yet, previous research is limited for several reasons: many studies are conducted with adults or older students, a few studies are short-term and fail to account for the changes over the long term, some studies are conducted in non-classroom settings, and only a few studies explain how teachers adapt TBLT to fit the curriculum or classroom demands or to the cognitive and emotional development of young learners.

The study of task-based language teaching has been conducted repeatedly using small groups or short-term teaching periods and with controlled or quasi-experimental designs, which do not necessarily capture the actual conditions of the classroom (Long, 2015; Shintani, 2016). In the classroom, TBLT has been found to have practical problems, such as difficulty in gaining time, curriculum pressure, especially in the context of primary education (Pinter, 2017; Ghazali, 2020). These constraints indicate a clear gap in the literature regarding how TBLT operates in authentic, sustained classroom environments with young learners.

This study is important because many classrooms still depend on teacher-centered, grammar-translation approaches that limit meaningful communication. A few studies have shown that Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has the potential to promote engagement, motivation, and the use of authentic language among young learners, and at the same time facilitate cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Conventional form-based teaching strategies often deny young learners the chance to use English in an expressive and proficient way since they often focus on memorizing, repeating, and drilling instead of communicating in a meaningful way (Long, 2015; Pinter, 2017).

TBLT, on the other hand, promotes active use of language in children as they perform real activities, thus conforming to the natural learning activities of young learners (Pinter, 2017). Current research also adds that task-based teaching helps young EFL learners gain confidence, develop their relationships with peers, and consider English as a communicative tool instead of only an academic subject (Rahman & Hasan, 2025; Lu & Fan, 2021). As a result, studying the introduction of TBLT in actual primary classroom contexts provides useful information, which can be used by teachers to shift towards a more communicative and developmentally adequate teaching approach.

To address the gaps in the past studies, this study shifts towards TBLT in real primary-level English classrooms by focusing on young learners' engagement, interaction, and language use. It also examines how task design and classroom practice affect children's communication. It also discusses the challenges teachers face when using TBLT. Investigating classroom-based TBLT with young learners allows for a clearer understanding of how tasks work under real teaching constraints. It also includes teacher adaptations, learner responses, and practical constraints.

Finally, this research connects with theories, for instance, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), cognitive theory, the Input Hypothesis, and Second Language Acquisition (SLA), by showing how task-based ideas work better with young learners. It also gives helpful guidelines to teachers, and it offers a base for future long-term research on Task-Based Language Teaching.

Therefore, this study aims to review how TBLT supports young learners' English development and how tasks influence their engagement and communication. This study represents a systematic thematic review of research on TBLT, focusing on classroom-based evidence from primary English learning contexts.

2. Method

The purpose of this section is to explain the steps that were taken to identify, select, and evaluate the studies for inclusion in the thematic review. It also explains how the selected studies were analyzed to identify major themes related to Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) for young learners. The writing is clear and concise and uses an academic style.

Research Design

This study followed a systematic thematic review design. A systematic review approach was used to identify and select relevant studies in an organized way. Thematic analysis was then used to examine repeated ideas, common patterns, and major themes across the selected studies. This design was suitable for the present study because it aimed to review research on TBLT for young learners and understand how task-based instruction supports language learning in classroom contexts.

Data Sources

To find and select the articles for this review, searches were completed in well-established academic databases and academic platforms, such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, ERIC, and JSTOR. These sources were selected because they provide access to peer-reviewed journal articles, empirical studies, theoretical discussions, review papers, and classroom-based research related to language teaching, young learners, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

The time frame for study publication limited the articles included in the review to those published from 2015 through 2025. This time frame was selected to include current literature and recent research on TBLT, young learners, classroom interaction, task design, assessment, and technology use.

Search Keywords

A series of key terms was used in each search to locate studies that met the criteria of the review. The main search terms included "Task-Based Language

Teaching,” “TBLT,” “task-based instruction,” “task-supported language teaching,” “young learners,” “primary English classrooms,” “EFL young learners,” “task design,” “learning by doing,” “input-based tasks,” “classroom interaction,” “peer collaboration,” “scaffolding,” “learner motivation,” “task motivation,” “technology-mediated TBLT,” and “task-based assessment.”

These keywords were used separately and in combination to find studies directly connected to TBLT and young learners. This helped the search process stay focused on the topic of the review instead of moving toward general EFL classroom environment or general academic achievement.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies selected for inclusion in the review needed to focus on Task-Based Language Teaching, task-supported language teaching, or classroom-based task use in English language learning. The selected studies also needed to be related to young learners, primary-level learners, EFL classrooms, or relevant classroom-based English learning contexts. The studies needed to report empirical data, theoretical frameworks, review-based findings, or case study information. Studies from journals or academic sources with a formal peer-review or scholarly publication process were prioritized. Only studies written in English were included in the review.

Studies that did not meet these criteria were excluded from the review. These included studies that did not examine TBLT or task-supported English language learning, studies that focused only on adult learners or older learners without relevance to young learners, and studies that were not connected to classroom-based English language learning. Studies were also excluded when they did not provide empirical evidence, theoretical discussion, review-based information, or case-based findings. Opinion pieces, informal online articles, duplicate studies, studies without enough accessible information, and studies written in languages other than English were also excluded.

Screening Process

The screening process was completed in several stages. First, studies were identified through searches in Google Scholar, ResearchGate, ERIC, and JSTOR. After the initial search, duplicate records were removed. Then, the titles and abstracts of the remaining studies were reviewed to check whether they were related to TBLT, young learners, EFL learning, task design, classroom interaction, motivation, implementation challenges, assessment, or technology use.

Studies that were not related to the focus of the review were removed at this stage. After that, full-text articles were examined more carefully based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were selected when they directly supported the purpose of the review and provided useful information about TBLT for young learners. Finally, 40 studies were selected for the thematic review.

Data Analysis

The selected studies were analyzed using thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2019). We used thematic analysis to structure the key themes that emerged from the various studies. The 40 studies were first read several times to gain an overall picture of the concepts presented in each study. The main focus, research context, participants, methods, findings and conclusions of each study was discussed during the first reading.

Some ideas were repeated and patterns were found in the later readings. These were then coded based on their relationship with the purpose of the review. The analysis was directed towards the role TBLT plays in promoting the English development, engagement, interaction and communication of young learners in classroom scenarios.

Thematic Coding Procedure

Following Braun and Clarke's (2019) approach, the thematic coding process was completed step by step. The selected studies were read very carefully to familiarize the reader with them, the first step. Then, important ideas and recurring findings were identified and coded. Once the coding process was completed, the codes were then aggregated into larger themes.

The selected studies were organized around six major themes: interaction, scaffolding and peer collaboration, motivated engagement, implementing in authentic classrooms, task design and learning by doing, input based tasks and language development, and assessment and technology. Themes were formed and then reviewed and adjusted for clarity with the themes being consistent with the ideas in the studies. Finally, the themes were consolidated for a coherent elaboration of the results.

3. Results

This thematic review emphasizes key findings from empirical research on Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) for young learners. It focuses mostly on literature published between 2015 and 2025. TBLT has had a strong position in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) for many years, but its application in primary-level education requires specific pedagogical adjustments because young learners have different cognitive, social, and emotional needs. By aligning with the themes established in the introduction, this review analyzes the literature across six major dimensions.

These include task design and the principle of learning by doing, the role of input-based tasks in early language development, interactional patterns and peer scaffolding, the relationship between tasks and motivation, the systemic challenges of implementation in authentic contexts, and emerging trends in assessment and technology.

Table 1. Summary of the key findings

Variables	Key Findings	Author(s)
Interaction, Scaffolding and Peer Collaboration	Perceptions of task difficulty amongst learners imply that effective application of TBLT, particularly in technology-mediated contexts, will demand proper task instructions and proper scaffolding.	Butarbutar, 2021
	Peer interaction offers some unique pedagogical benefits that are distinct from teacher-student interaction.	Sato and Ballinger, 2016
Motivation and Engagement	The engagement of the learners in tasks is also a major factor that can be used to identify the effectiveness with which students can engage with and learn through task-based instruction.	Hiver and Wu, 2022
	The personal differences in learners such as motivation and self-regulated learning behaviors affect the effectiveness of learners in the engagement of authentic and task-like language learning situations.	Hasan et al., 2025
Implementation of Authentic Classrooms	Even in the controlled or quasi-experimental environment, TBLT proves to be effective, teachers are challenged in real classrooms by the systemic factors.	Bryfonski and Mckay, 2019
	The modification of tasks by teachers usually occurs until it resembles a traditional drill that will allow the teacher to keep control and cover the tests, which is referred to as task drift.	Butler, 2019
	In most EFL settings (including Indonesia and other Asian regions), EFL teachers are reluctant to embrace the concept of TBLT due to what is referred to as assessment anxiety.	Waluyo, 2019
Task design and “Learning by doing”	To children, language is perceived as a means of action and not a system of rules that should be studied and remembered in the long term.	Pinter, 2017
	The practice of emergency remote teaching indicates the significance of meaningful, task-based interaction to keep the learners engaged, which is a principle of TBLT pedagogy.	Akter et al., 2022
Input-Based Tasks and Language Development	that among young EFL learners, input-based tasks are more effective than production-based drills during the first stages of learning vocabulary.	Shintani, 2016

	Communicative tasks influence vocabulary retention, contrasted with task-based learning, as compared to traditional rote learning.	Teng, 2025
Assessment and Technology	The pedagogical objectives of task-based language teaching are in line with the technological and collaborative practices that enable teachers to support the autonomy of learners. The method of task-based assessment (TBA) is necessary among young learners since the paper-and-pencil methods used to evaluate communicative competence overlook the fact that it is a task-based development process. Technology-mediated TBLT (e.g., digital storytelling, video exchange, or collaborative gaming) can produce authentic and recordable outputs which could be repurposed as learning activities as well as assessment instruments.	Haruna et al., 2025 Butler, 2019 Gonzalez-Lloret, 2020

Interaction, Scaffolding, and Peer Collaboration

Interaction-driven learning is one of the central themes of TBLT. Earlier research questioned the ability of young learners to collaborate effectively because their social-cognitive skills are still developing. However, some studies confirm that children can scaffold each other's learning in meaningful ways. Sato and Ballinger (2016) state that peer interaction offers unique pedagogical benefits that are different from teacher-student interaction.

Their review also shows that peer interaction creates a low-anxiety environment where learners can feel more comfortable experimenting with language and testing ideas without the fear of immediate correction. Perceptions of task difficulty among learners also imply that effective application of TBLT, particularly in technology-mediated contexts, requires clear task instructions and proper scaffolding (Butarbutar, 2021).

This perspective is also supported and claimed by granular analyses of classroom talk. Dao (2020) talks about the role of "interactional feedback" in task-based interaction. Dao finds that when young learners encounter communication breakdowns during a task, that time they naturally employ repair strategies such as clarification requests and recasts.

These moments of negotiation push learners to modify their output and make it more comprehensible by themselves. This is a process that drives interlanguage development. Dao also explains that while children's feedback is less explicit than the teacher's, it is often more developmentally accessible to their peers (Haruna et al., 2025).

Azkarai and Kopinska (2020) on the other hand analyzed interaction patterns among young EFL learners and found that they frequently engage in “language-related episodes” (LREs). In these episodes, learners explicitly discuss word choice, spelling, or grammar to complete the task. This research challenges the “English-only” ideology that is often prevalent in EFL classrooms. Azkarai (2023) provides empirical evidence that first language (L1) use during tasks is not “off-task” behavior, but this is a high-level of cognitive strategy.

Young learners can use their L1 to plan the task, organize their roles, and provide meta-cognitive support to their peers. Azkarai further argues that banning L1 can stifle or can create difficulties among these scaffolding mechanisms, whereas allowing strategic L1 use enables lower-proficiency learners and thus it encourages learners’ participation in complex tasks and sustain interaction longer than they could using English alone.

Overall, the studies show that peer interaction is not only a classroom activity but also an important source of scaffolding. When tasks are clearly designed and supported, young learners can help each other negotiate meaning, solve problems, and participate more confidently.

Motivation and Engagement

The relationship between TBLT and motivation has also been confirmed in recent research, where general theories of motivation are connected with the idea of task motivation. Taylor (2025) distinguishes between global motivation toward learning English and immediate emotional involvement in a classroom activity. In a study on task-supported teaching, Taylor found that tasks involving learner agency, choice, and collaboration are effective in supporting short-term task motivation. Children become more willing to communicate when they feel that they are active participants in an activity rather than passive receivers of knowledge. Learner engagement in tasks is also a major factor in identifying how effectively students participate in and learn through task-based instruction (Hiver and Wu, 2022).

This is consistent with a review of TBLT in the Asia-Pacific region by Butler (2017) who states that gamified and interactive activities are always rated as more pleasant by learners than the textbook-based lessons. Butler, however, cautions that motivation is weak and very much influenced by the level of difficulty of tasks. In case a task is cognitively demanding and linguistically overloaded, the learners can get frustrated instead of flowing. Hasan et al. (2024) stated that the commonly faced issues by the learners in the learning of English are confidence, classroom interaction, and oral communication.

The personal differences in learners such as motivation and self-regulated learning behaviors affect the effectiveness of learners in the engagement of authentic and task-like language learning situations (Hasan et al., 2025).

In this case, such a factor as task repetition plays a significant role. The meta-analysis of the effects of task repetition performed by Bui and Huang (2018) showed that repeating a task has no effect of boredom that the majority of teachers are afraid of but instead, the tasks increase confidence and performance. In the case of young learners, the initial stage of an assignment is usually absorbed by the sensemaking and cognition of the process and its meaning.

Once repeated a few more times, learners have a sense of mastery and at the conclusion they can change their focus into accuracy and complexity refinement. Bui and Huang indicate that this competence feeling is a major motivational factor in the main classroom. Therefore, the entertaining aspect of TBLT requires thorough design and sequences according to the competence of learners (Pinter, 2017).

Implementation of Authentic Classrooms

Although the cognitive and affective advantages of TBLT are clear, recent literature gives strong attention to the implementation gap between theory and practice. The meta-synthesis of TBLT implementation in K-12 classrooms by Bryfonski and McKay (2019) shows that even when TBLT is effective in controlled or quasi-experimental environments, teachers face many systemic challenges in real classrooms. These challenges include large class sizes that make pair work difficult to monitor, inflexible and structure-driven curricula that do not always match task-based objectives, and a lack of TBLT-specific teacher training.

TBLT teacher role is also quite different as compared to traditional teaching. The role of the teacher, as explained by Branden (2016), is rather complicated because it is more of a mediator of learning than a carrier of knowledge. The teacher in a TBLT classroom should create tasks, establish the social atmosphere, observe the interaction, and offer timely scaffolding, not to mention the management of the noise and chaos involved in communicative interaction. Van den Branden pointed out that this demands a lot of energy and pedagogical skills, which is overwhelming to beginner teachers or to a teacher who is used to teacher-centered presentation.

These issues are exaggerated in the case of examination-based education systems. According to Waluyo (2019), in most EFL settings (including Indonesia and other Asian regions), EFL teachers are reluctant to embrace the concept of TBLT due to what is referred to as assessment anxiety. They are also afraid that as much as tasks enhance fluency, it does not well equip the students with discrete point grammar tests that ascertain academic progress.

In its turn, it leads to the fact that, according to Butler (2019), the modification of tasks by teachers usually occurs until it resembles a traditional drill that will allow the teacher to keep control and cover the tests, which is referred to as task drift.

This highlights the imminent necessity of research which focuses on the adaptation of TBLT to the limitations of the real-life primary classroom, as opposed to its application.

Task design and “Learning by doing”

The basic assumption in TBLT in young learners is that young learners acquire language best when it forms part of meaningful activity. New literature indicates that TBLT is in line with the cognitive developmental requirements of children since it focuses on their learning by doing. The practice of emergency remote teaching indicates the significance of meaningful, task-based interaction to keep the learners engaged, which is a principle of TBLT pedagogy (Aktar et al., 2022).

According to Pinter (2017), to children, language is perceived as a means of action and not a system of rules that should be studied and remembered in the long term. Effective task design therefore cannot be limited to the separation of linguistic forms to tangible activities that have definite and immediate consequences. Pinter emphasizes that young learners need situated, physical tasks, e.g. making something, playing a game, solving a puzzle etc., to keep mental activity going, unlike the adolescents who might be content with abstract grammar teaching. The authenticity of tasks has been introduced as one of the key issues of the application of the Task-Based language Teaching especially in EFL settings where the usage of language in actual scenarios is underestimated among learners (Kessler, 2021).

Nonetheless, the major advancement in the recent theoretical considerations is the critical difference between the beginners and production/comprehension (Hasan et al., 2025). Ellis (2020) offers an excellent criticism of the production-first in primary education. He makes a clear point that forcing young beginners to produce immediately orally may be developmentally inappropriate, and may cause anxiety, which can subsequently result in a fear of speaking. Rather, Ellis suggests a modular method of task design, including the input-based tasks, including listen-and-do ones, in early stages.

During these activities, children show the level of understanding in physical doings (e.g., pointing, matching or drawing) before they are coaxed to give out the target language. This method facilitates the hands-on learning and does not interfere with the silent period of the initial language acquisition where learners engage in developing an internal linguistic system, which is subjected to testing only after the development is completed.

Input-Based Tasks and Language Development

The role of input-based tasks is an important trend in recent empirical studies. Shintani's (2016) research program provides evidence that input-based tasks are more effective than production-based drills during the early stages of

vocabulary learning among young EFL learners.

Her comparative studies show that when children focus on processing meaning, such as identifying pictures from descriptions or responding to instructions to build an object, they can learn vocabulary and grammatical forms incidentally. Input-based tasks reduce the cognitive load involved in formulation and articulation, which allows learners to focus more strongly on meaning. Although not always directly implemented as TBLT, communicative and task-oriented classroom practices have also been shown to support students' speaking development (Hasan et al., 2024).

In addition, current studies have generalized these results to the analysis of the level of processing. Teng (2025) explores how communicative tasks influence vocabulary retention contrasted with task-based learning as compared to traditional rote learning. The results of the study by Teng also showed that tasks that involve negotiation of meaning have a great impact on the long-term retention of vocabulary.

Another issue the study also pointed out was that children who are thinking deeply in a task, attempting to solve a problem or communicate something, have a deep processing. Task-based engagement develops deeper neural connections to lexical retrieval as opposed to rote learning, which in most cases involves surface rehearsal. This implies that the TBLT meaning-first orientation does not only promote fluency, as earlier believed, but also it is involved in the knowledge of lexicon.

Assessment and Technology

The incompatibility between TBLT pedagogy and traditional assessment is another important theme in the 2015 to 2025 literature. Butler (2019) explains that task-based assessment is necessary for young learners because paper-and-pencil methods often fail to evaluate communicative competence. A child may be able to negotiate meaning during a game but fail to conjugate a verb in a gap-fill exercise. This can create a distorted view of the child's actual language ability. The pedagogical aims of TBLT are also connected with technological and collaborative practices that help teachers support learner autonomy (Haruna et al., 2025).

Technology has also come out as a good bridging factor to this gap. According to Gonzalez-Lloret (2020), technology-mediated TBLT (e.g., digital storytelling, video exchange, or collaborative gaming) can produce authentic and recordable outputs which could be repurposed as learning activities as well as assessment instruments. These online activities resonate with the digital native situation of the contemporary young learner that might provide new means of interaction that did not exist before in the previous TBLT studies.

In addition, Andujar (2020) presents the notion of mobile-mediated dynamic assessment. It has been established that TBLT is a new and powerful method of developing speaking fluency and grammatical competence with the help of learner-

centered and interaction-based tasks (Majeed & Memon, 2022). Mobile devices were also employed in his study to record interactions of the student in a particular task in real-time that enables the teacher to give feedback immediately and evaluate the processes of learning, as opposed to the product. Andujar also discovered that this method gave a more comprehensive view of the capabilities of the learners which could monitor the ability of the learners to negotiate meaning and to use resources. This incorporation of technology is a promising horizon of TBLT that can possibly address the logistical challenge of evaluating oral interaction in large primary classes.

To sum up, the literature presents TBLT as a highly useful but also complex pedagogical model for young learners. Task design, input processing, peer interaction, motivation, assessment, and technology all show how language development can be supported through meaningful classroom activity. However, successful implementation depends on reducing systemic barriers, reshaping the teacher's role, and aligning assessment practices with communicative objectives.

4. Discussion

The thematic review shows that TBLT can strongly support young learners' English development when tasks are designed and used in age-appropriate ways. However, the findings also show that TBLT does not work effectively only because tasks are added to the classroom. It works best when task design, rich input, peer interaction, motivation, teacher support, and assessment are connected with each other. Across the 40 studies, meaning focused and hands on tasks helped children become more engaged, build vocabulary, and become more willing to communicate.

This indicates that TBLT should be understood not only as a teaching technique, but also as a classroom approach that depends on the learning environment, teacher decisions, and institutional support. There is empirical evidence that meaning oriented and interactive tasks can promote learners' speaking proficiency and motivation to a considerable degree in EFL classrooms in general (Gortaire Diaz et al., 2023).

A major insight from the review is that input, interaction, and motivation work together in young learner TBLT. Input based tasks give children language exposure before they are asked to produce language. This is important because young learners may become anxious if they are pushed into speaking before they understand enough language. Interaction then gives learners a reason to use this input in meaningful ways through peer support, clarification, repair, and shared problem solving.

Motivation arises when the learner sees the usefulness of a task, its manageability and its enjoyment. Motivation in TBLT is not just about having fun in lessons. It is also associated with the success of tasks, emotional safety, statement of objective, and the sense that children can participate without risk of failure. This is why doing tasks based on input, peer scaffolding and task repetition

are of value with young learners.

Furthermore, the review indicates that the gap between implementation is due to the incompatibility of TBLT with real classrooms. Theoretically, TBLT allows learners to be free from interaction, problem-solving, and language for meaning. Many teachers are forced to teach in large classes, to be tied to certain curricula, to have short lessons and to be driven by an examination system.

These situations lead teachers to concentrate on control, textbook completion, grammar drill and test preparation. Consequently, teachers might transform tasks into more conventional drills, simply in order to control the class and cater for curriculum requirements, even if they have a positive attitude toward TBLT. This is the reason for task drift. Resistance from teachers is not the sole issue. It is also linked to policy, pressure on curriculum, assessment systems, class size and limited teacher training.

It is particularly relevant in primary EFL classrooms as young learners require more structure and emotional support than older learners. What works for older or more advanced students, may not work for younger or less advanced students due to its abstractness, difficulty, and/or production level. Tasks must be concrete, visual, physical and related to actual classroom activities for young learners.

They also require explicit instructions and adequate scaffolding. This implies that TBLT for young learners cannot just be an imitation of the adult TBLT models. It needs to be tailored for the cognitive, social and emotional growth of children. In this regard, the study reveals that developmentally appropriate task design is crucial for successful TBLT.

The other important point is the L1 in TBL. First language use is usually viewed as a problem in traditional English only beliefs. The reviewed studies indicate, however, that strategic use of the L1 could benefit planning, role organization, peer explanation and self-confidence for lower proficiency learners. This does not imply that the first language be used in the classroom in place of English. Instead, it implies that the amount of first language usage is limited and can be used to keep learners engaged in the task, enabling them to eventually shift to English. This is significant in an inclusive classroom setting as weaker learners or shy learners can engage more with the task if they have multiple resources to support them in understanding it.

It is also seen from the discussion that assessment is one of the most important obstacles in the way of TBLT. Teachers may not feel confident in employing communicative tasks if it is the only means by which learning is judged in school in terms of the grammatical structure of the paper test. This results in a disconnect between the teaching and assessment. A child can get meaning, interact with others and accomplish a communicative task well, and do poorly on a traditional grammar test. If so, the assessment does not provide a complete representation of the child's communicative ability.

Therefore, task-based assessment and technology mediated assessment are important. Digital recordings, short videos, speaking assignments and collaborative products can be used to observe the actual language use more clearly, particularly in large classes.

This review provides contribution to the field as to make TBLT as the most effective method for young learners, it should be viewed as a connected classroom system rather than a single method. The primary contribution is that task design, input, interaction, motivation, teacher support and assessment should not be analyzed in isolation. They work together in real classrooms. In addition, the review indicates that emotional safety is a key principle of young learner TBLT. Children must be provided with opportunities to try, repeat, ask, move, collaborate and fail without fear. This is what allows tasks to become meaningful learning experiences instead of simple classroom activities.

Concurrently, the results cannot be blindly transferred to all schools. The differences in context, project implementation time and the high degree of EFL classrooms focus are the limitations of the reviewed studies. Some teachers also might have restricted time, training, classroom space and access to technology. Regardless, there are definite practical consequences from the review. Primary teachers can start with input based, game like and repeated tasks. They can also include more learners by using pair work, peer support and limited strategic first language use.

The role of the school and policy maker ought to be to assist the teacher in training, flexible curriculum planning, as well as in the assessment so that the communicative act has value. In this way, TBLT can be more concrete with the young learners while maintaining the central theme of meaningful communication.

Recommendations

- i. Start with input-based, game-like tasks and planned repetition: Teachers of young learners should design tasks that are meaning-focused, fun, and not too heavy on speaking at the beginning. Stories, games, and simple problem-solving tasks where children listen, point, move, draw or choose can give them rich input without too much pressure. The same or similar tasks should be repeated over time, so that learners feel more confident and can notice their own progress. This helps them reduce their anxiety, especially for shy or weaker students, and gives a natural step towards more natural and open speaking tasks. This will also lower their affective filter.
- ii. Use of peer support and flexible L1 use to include all learners: Classrooms should make pair and group work a regular part of TBLT, so that learners can help each other by sharing meanings, ideas, and language. Teachers can allow limited, strategic use of the first language during planning or problem-

solving, especially in difficult tasks. This kind of peer scaffolding makes it easier for children with lower proficiency to join in and stay engaged, instead of staying silent or introverted. This will help the introvert students to perform without the continuous fear of judgement. The teacher's role is to guide the interaction and keep the focus on meaning in English.

- iii. Align assessment and support for teachers with TBLT: Schools and policymakers should adjust assessment and teacher support so that TBLT can really work. Instead of relying only on grammar-focused tests, Grammar Translation Methods in the classroom, they should include task-based assessment, such as short speaking or group tasks that are similar to classroom activities. Teachers also need more practical training, materials, and realistic models of TBLT for large classes and exam-oriented systems. Where possible, simple digital tools (recordings, pictures, short videos) can be used to capture learners' performance in tasks which at the end can make those assessments more authentic.

5. Conclusion

This research is intended to summarize the application of task-based language teaching (TBLT) with young learners and the themes that have been found in the latest research.

Task-Based Language Teaching is also a communicative method that is well known to foster meaningful language use and facilitate the growth of communicative competence in learners, specifically in EFL settings (Maulana, 2021). The review further indicates that well designed, purposeful tasks, rich input and opportunities for interaction, scaffolding and peer support can benefit children in terms of their vocabulary, confidence and willingness to speak. It also shows certain problems, such as big classes, pressure for examination, insufficient training for teachers, etc. at the same time. All these results converge to support the thesis that TBLT could be very beneficial for young learners if suitably designed tasks, assessment and classroom conditions are put in place.

However, the results are limited by the small number of studies, the short duration of many projects, and the focus on particular EFL contexts, which makes it hard to generalize to all schools. Despite all of these limitations, the review suggests some important implications for the field that means the entire field of TBLT. Teachers and curriculum designers should work more to give importance on input-based and game-like tasks, peer support, and planned repetition.

Moreover, policy makers need to work in particular ways to bring assessment practices closer to real communicative tasks. For more future research, long-term classroom studies are needed. The studies are needed that look at how TBLT works in regular, exam-driven schools and this includes large classes and mixed-level groups. Studies could also explore simple digital tools to support and encourage

task-based assessments and collect evidence of children's performance for instance their spoken performances over time (Uddin et al., 2024). Thus, in this way, future studies can help to keep the promise of TBLT for young learners into more stable, acceptable and realistic classroom practices.

6. References

- Aktar, T., Maniruzzaman, m., Khan, H. R., & Hasan, M. (2022). Teachers' narratives from initial virtual classrooms and professional development during the COVID-19 pandemic in developing Bangladesh. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 23(3), 230-245. <https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.1137293>
- Alam, S., & Hasan, M. M. (2025). The role of teaching practicum and classroom management training in preparing early-career educators in Bangladesh: A reflective qualitative study. *English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris*, 18(1), 11–28. <https://doi.org/10.24042/btdgdh96>
- Azkarai, A. (2023). First language use in child EFL collaborative writing tasks: A focus on interaction patterns. *System*, 114, 103011. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103011>
- Azkarai, A., & Kopinska, M. (2020). Young EFL learners and collaborative writing: Patterns of interaction, engagement in LREs, and task motivation. *System*, 94, 102338. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102338>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Bryfonski, L., & McKay, T. H. (2019). TBLT implementation in K–12 L2 contexts: A meta-synthesis of qualitative research. *Language Teaching*, 52(4), 453–477. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144481700028X>
- Butarbutar, R. (2021). Learner's perception of task difficulties in technology-mediated task-based language teaching. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, 9(1), 129–144. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v9i1.110079>
- Butler, Y. G. (2017). Teaching vocabulary to young learners. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (Vol. 3, pp. 387–400). Routledge.
- Butler, Y. G. (2019). How young is too young? The assessment of young learners of English. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 16(4-5), 416–429. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2019.1674872>
- Carless, D. (2004). Issues in teachers' reinterpretation of a task-based innovation in primary schools. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(4), 639–662. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588286>
- Carless, D. (2007). The suitability of task-based approaches for secondary schools: Perspectives from Hong Kong. *System*, 35(4), 595–609.

- <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2007.09.003>
- Díaz, D. G., Parra, J. A., Leyva, N. L., Herrera, E. M., & Zambrano, L. D. (2023). The Impact of Task-Based Language Teaching on English as a EFL Learners' Speaking Proficiency and Motivation. *Ciencia Latina Revista Científica Multidisciplinar*, 7(3), 3796-3810. https://doi.org/10.37811/cl_rcm.v7i3.6443
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2020). Task-based language teaching for beginner-level young learners. *Language Teaching for Young Learners*, 2(1), 4–27. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ltyl.19005.ell>
- Emilia, E., & Sukyadi, D. (2025). Revisiting Task-based Language Teaching to TEYL: Evidence from Indonesian Young Learners. *Language Circle: Journal of Language and Literature*, 19(2), 298-309.
- Emilia, E., (2025). Strategies for meaningful communication in primary EFL contexts. *International Journal of Language Education*, 9(1), 45–60.
- Ghazali, M. A. I. (2020). Task-based language teaching and young learners' oral interaction in ESL classrooms. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 16(2), 919–935
- Ghazali, S. N. (2020). *Teachers' practices of task-based language teaching in primary schools*. University of Malaya Press.
- Gonzalez-Lloret, M. (2020). Technology-mediated TBLT. In G. Manni, P. P. Grubb, & K. M. N. Steele (Eds.), *Task-based language teaching: Current concepts, issues, and new directions* (pp. 233–256). Nova Science Publishers.
- Haruna, H. H., Iftikhar, S., Isa, S. M., & Hasan, M. M. (2025). Effect of professional development, collaborative learning, and technology integration on teachers' self-access support competence. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 16(3), 525–565. <https://doi.org/10.37237/160304>
- Hasan, M. M., Mahmud, R., & Haruna, H. H. (2025). Individual Differences and Adaptive Strategies in Language Learning Across Diverse Linguistic and Sociocultural Transitions. *Crossings: A Journal of English Studies*, 16(1), 216–239. <https://doi.org/10.59817/cjes.v16i1.719>
- Hasan, M. M., Yesmin, M. M., & Hossain, M. K. (2024). *Effects of English medium instruction (EMI) on students' academic and speaking performance: Comparison between English major and non-English departments*. *Ilha do Desterro*, 77, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8026.2024.e100248>
- Hiver, P., & Wu, J. (2023). Engagement in TBLT. In *The role of the learner in task-based language teaching* (pp. 74-90). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003227267-7>
- Kessler, M. (2021). Can TBLT be “authentic” in foreign language contexts? Exploring the case of China. *TESOL Journal*, 12(1), e534. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.534>.

- Long, M. H. (2015). *Second language acquisition and Task-Based Language Teaching*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Lu, Y., & Fan, H. (2021). Young learners' engagement in peer interaction during task-based instruction. *Language Teaching Research*, 25(3), 412–435.
- Lume, & Hisbullah, M. (2022). The effectiveness of task-based language teaching to teach speaking skills. *JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 10(1), 85–93. <https://doi.org/10.33394/joltt.v10i1.4399>
- Majeed, A., & Memon, N. (2022). Task-based language teaching: an efficacious and innovative approach to develop speaking skills and fluency of ESL students. *Pakistan Journal of Educational Research*, 5(2), 150-165.
- Maulana, M. I. (2021). Task-based language teaching: Potential benefits and possible criticisms in Indonesian contexts. *Journal of English Teaching and Learning Issues*, 4(2), 69–92. <https://doi.org/10.21043/jetli.v4i2.12183>
- McDonough, K., & Chaikitmongkol, W. (2007). Teachers' and learners' reactions to a task-based EFL course in Thailand. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(1), 107–132. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2007.tb00042.x>
- Pinter, A. (2015). Task-based learning with children. *Teaching English to young learners*, 113-128.
- Pinter, A. (2017). *Teaching young language learners*. Oxford University Press.
- Rahman, A., & Hasan, M. M. (2025). From Crisis to Confidence: How Covid-19 Teaching Experiences Transformed Teachers in Cambridge and Edexcel Schools in Dhaka. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 13(3), 1181-1195. <https://doi.org/10.33394/joltt.v13i3.13906c>
- Shintani, N. (2016). *Input-based tasks in foreign language instruction for young learners*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/tblt.9>
- Taylor, A. (2025). Task-supported and task-based language teaching and their effects on task motivation. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 118(1), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2025.2548577>
- Teng, M. F. (2025). Assessing young learners' vocabulary learning via communicative tasks. *The Language Learning Journal*, 53(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2025.2505891>
- Uddin, M. S., Islam, M. N., Nirjon, M. I. H., Hilaly, M. R., Mazed, M. F. H., & Hasan, M. M. (2024). University EFL Teachers' Perceptions About the Effectiveness of AI-Enhanced E-Assessments in Bangladesh: A Phenomenological Study. *Bulletin of Advanced English Studies*, 9(2), 71-82. <https://doi.org/10.31559/BAES2024.9.2.4>
- Waluyo, B. (2019). The implementation of task-based language teaching in an Indonesian EFL context: Teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(2), 367–377. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v9i2.20235>