

# EFFECTS OF TASK-BASED ACTIVITIES ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SPEAKING ABILITIES: A CASE STUDY IN DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS

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## ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to accomplish two objectives: 1) to develop task-based activities for the enhancement of academic speaking skills among Mathayomsuksa 2 students, and 2) to assess the impact of these task-based activities. A cluster sampling method was utilized to select 33 Mathayomsuksa 2/1 students from the Demonstration School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University (Secondary) during the second semester of the academic year 2022. Research instruments included lesson plans based on the task-based language teaching approach, pre- and post-tests measuring academic speaking skills, and a speaking skill test for academic purposes. Data analysis was performed using mean, standard deviation statistics, and t-test. The findings of the study indicate that: 1) the utilization of lesson plans based on task-based language teaching approach resulted in an improvement ratio of 86.10/83.67, which met the established benchmark of 80/80, and 2) the average pre- and post-test results for Mathayomsuksa 2 students were 16.07 and 25.10, respectively, indicating that the post-learning academic speaking skill evaluation scores were significantly higher than the pre-learning scores at the .05 level of statistical significance.

**Keywords:** task-bask activities, academic speaking, secondary school student, demonstration school

## INTRODUCTION

The ability to effectively communicate in Thai is increasingly important in modern culture, both in daily life, at work, and in school. As Pienchob and Intrampan (1995) noted, "For people with good language skill, when using the Thai language as a medium to express knowledge and thoughts well, they will be successful in life, having a reputation that is accepted by society, such as speakers, authors, and well-known politicians" (p. 4). Learning and practicing language skills from a young age is crucial in developing a strong foundation in the principles and functions of language, which in turn leads to the effective use of language.

The school environment is crucial for the personal development of individuals (Aphaiparapak, 1998). By providing effective Thai language training to students, schools can play a key role in the production of well-educated, capable citizens who can contribute to the nation's overall development. To support this goal, the Ministry of Education in Thailand has developed the Basic Education Core Curriculum BE 2551. This curriculum includes indicators and core learning content for Thai language learning, with the aim of helping students develop proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. These language skills are essential for students to be able to access further education and training, pursue various occupations, seek knowledge, and navigate Thai society with ease.

Academic speaking is a crucial Thai language skill for today's students. It is imperative that teachers provide instruction and training to help students develop this skill, as it is essential for

further academic study. Students must be able to use language effectively in a variety of contexts to explain, elaborate, summarize, and convey information from a variety of sources. Strong communication skills are a key factor in academic success and will enable students to excel in their studies.

This course is designed to provide instruction and practice in the development of speaking skills. The Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of speaking as one of the five core disciplines of the Thai language. According to the Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education (2018), students should be able to "speak systematically on reports on issues or issues derived from study and research" by the end of the third year of study. Therefore, it is essential that students at the lower secondary level already begin to develop their academic speaking abilities. In line with this, the Demonstration School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University (Secondary) (n.d.) has established the following expected learning outcomes for Matthayomsuksa 2 students in the learning unit: 1) students can introduce themselves; 2) students can engage in discussions; and 3) students can present a report on their studies. This highlights the significant emphasis placed on oral communication as an academic subject, and the need for teachers of Thai to provide opportunities for students to improve these skills through various teaching and learning activities.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an innovative approach to language instruction that emphasizes the exchange of meaning and the use of language in real-life contexts (Van den Branden, 2012). This method involves organizing activities that simulate the use of language in daily life, and learners use language meaningfully in connection with tasks that promote language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). TBLT typically requires the use of at least two to three language skills (e.g. listening, reading, and writing).

Multiple studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of TBLT in enhancing various language skills. For example, research has shown that TBLT can improve listening abilities (e.g., Ruenyuth, 2011; Poltree, 2016), speaking abilities (e.g., Klangthong & Meesri, 2015; Plaengsorn, 2014; Poltree, 2016; Ruenyuth, 2011; Thongpan & Sriphiboon, 2016), reading abilities (e.g., Kanchanda & Sitthisomboon, 2019; Natha, 2016; Thara & Kositchaiwat, 2015) and writing abilities (e.g., Kanchanda & Sitthisomboon, 2019; Soradat, 2018). Furthermore, Natha (2018) found that TBLT can be used to organize learning activities that develop language proficiency and increase participants' confidence in using the language and communicating with others.

The development of speaking abilities plays a vital role in the overall quality of students, as highlighted by the importance and necessity of this skill. As a Thai language teacher at the Demonstration School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University (Secondary), the researcher has set two objectives for this study: 1) to improve the academic speaking skills of Matthayomsuksa 2 students through task-based activities; and 2) to investigate the impact of these activities on students' speaking skills. Through this research, the researcher aims to contribute to the application and expansion of data on speaking skills instruction and provide guidance for other language teachers who are interested in improving their students' speaking abilities in a similar manner.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research aims to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent are the academic speaking skills of Mathayomsuksa 2 students at Demonstration School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, who participate in task-based language teaching activities, effective and consistent with the established benchmark of 80/80?

2. Is there an improvement in the academic speaking skills of Matthayomsuksa 2 students at Demonstration School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, who participate in task-based language teaching activities, as a result of the intervention?

These research questions are designed to evaluate the effectiveness of task-based language teaching activities in improving the academic speaking skills of Matthayomsuksa 2 students at Demonstration School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The first question addresses the extent to which the academic speaking skills of the students are effective and consistent with the established benchmark of 80/80, while the second question assesses whether there is an improvement in the students' academic speaking skills as a result of the intervention.

By answering these research questions, the study aims to provide insight into the effectiveness of TBLT activities in improving academic speaking skills of students. Additionally, it will provide information on the extent to which the students' academic speaking skills meet the established benchmark, which can be used as a reference for other institutions or researchers that are interested in investigating similar topics.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a pre-experimental design, specifically a one-group pre- and post-test design.

### **Sampling**

A cluster sampling method was used to select a sample of 33 students in Matthayomsuksa 2/1 at Demonstration School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University (Secondary), who were enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2022 between November and December 2022.

### **Research Tools**

The research utilized several tools to evaluate the effectiveness of academic speaking activities based on the task-based language teaching (TBLT) concept for Matthayomsuksa 2 students. These tools include:

1. Lesson plans developed specifically to align with TBLT concepts,
2. Pre- and post-tests to measure the academic speaking skills of the participants,
3. An academic speaking proficiency evaluation form, which was used to assess the participants' academic speaking skills before and after the implementation of the TBLT-based activities.

The use of these tools allowed for a thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of the TBLT-based activities in improving the academic speaking skills of the participants. The pre- and post-tests served as a means of measuring the progress made by the students, while the academic speaking proficiency evaluation form provided a more detailed evaluation of the students' abilities. Furthermore, the use of lesson plans specifically aligned with TBLT concepts ensured that the activities were appropriate and relevant to the students' needs, which ultimately contributed to the success of the study.

## Data Collection

The study was conducted according to the research plan, using a one-group, pre-test-post-test design with the sample of 33 students in Matthayomsuksa 2/1 at Demonstration School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University (Secondary) in the second semester of the academic year 2022.

The research plan included:

1. Orienting participants by explaining course descriptions, instructional methods, measurement and evaluation criteria, and experimental conditions. A pre-test was administered to evaluate academic speaking skills.

2. Providing instruction on techniques for developing academic speaking skills and distributing supporting materials using the Microsoft PowerPoint presentation software.

3. Implementing instruction based on the instructional procedures of academic speaking activities established in accordance with TBLT lesson plans.

4. Assessing academic speaking skills for development during the learning activities. Information on individual academic-focused speaking skills was gathered during the second session of each week. Academic speaking activities were also recorded using a digital camera for storage and later evaluation.

5. Administering post-tests after the trial was completed to evaluate academic speaking skills.

6. Two instructors in the Thai language learning area of the Demonstration School of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University (Secondary) evaluated video recordings captured during teaching and learning each week using a rubric to measure academic speaking abilities and to score pre- and post-tests. The mean scores from the two instructors were used to compare the pre- and post-test results. The first instructor determined the pre-test mean (M) to be 16.76 and the standard deviation (SD) to be 2.25, while the second instructor determined  $M = 15.39$  and  $SD = 1.84$ . The differences in mean scores between the two instructors were analyzed using appropriate statistical tests, and it was determined that the first instructor assigned  $M = 24.61$ , with  $SD = 1.56$ , while the second instructor assigned  $M = 25.59$ , with  $SD = 1.64$ . The correlation between the average scores of the two instructors was found to be high.

7. The academic speaking test results were analyzed for a total of ten weeks, in conjunction with the post-test scores, to determine the efficacy of the TBLT activities in achieving the 80/80 standard of proficiency.

## Data analysis

Data analysis for this study will involve several steps to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. First, experts will be consulted to evaluate the effectiveness of the lesson plan based on the TBLT concept and the pre- and post-tests measuring academic speaking skills. Next, the data collected from the evaluation, experiment, and data analysis will be analyzed using preliminary statistics such as mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) to confirm the homogeneity of variance of the language skill scores. Additionally, an independent t-test will be used to test the differences between the pre- and post-test scores of the samples.

Furthermore, the data will be analyzed by determining frequency, percentage, M, and SD, and analyzing the covariance at the .05 level of statistical significance. Additionally, the correlation between test and measure scores will be examined. The key elements will be summarized in tables, along with a statement that explains the findings.

Finally, the efficacy of the lesson plans based on TBLT concepts will be assessed in accordance with the 80/80 standard, which is a benchmark for language proficiency in Thai education. The results of this study will provide insight into the effectiveness of TBLT as a method for improving academic speaking skills in Mathayomsuksa 2 students, and can serve as a guide for other language teachers looking to improve their students' speaking abilities.

## FINDINGS

The results of the experiment were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the task-based language teaching (TBLT) activities in developing the academic speaking skills of Matthayomsuksa 2 students according to the 80/80 criterion. The results, presented in Table 1, indicate the efficacy of the TBLT-based lesson plans in improving the academic speaking abilities of the students. Furthermore, the data analysis includes statistical tests such as mean and standard deviation to confirm the homogeneity of the language skill scores, and an independent t-test to test the differences between the pre- and post-test scores of the sample. This analysis allows for a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the TBLT activities in improving the academic speaking skills of the students. Additionally, the data is also analyzed by determining frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation and correlation between test and measure scores, providing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of TBLT on the academic speaking skills of the students.

**Table 1** Effectiveness of the TBLT-Based Lesson Plans in Developing the Academic Speaking Skills of Matthayomsuksa 2 Students

No	Tasks' score in each week										Proficiency	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	E1	E2
Full score	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	100	30
Ave score	7.14	8.75	7.56	9.17	8.53	8.96	9.57	8.42	8.87	9.13	8.61	25.1
%	71.4	87.5	75.6	91.7	85.3	89.6	95.7	84.2	88.7	91.3	86.1	83.67
	<b>E1 = 86.1</b>										<b>E2 = 83.67</b>	

The results of the evaluation of the effectiveness of the TBLT-based lesson plan in improving the speaking skills of Matthayomsuksa 2 students with an academic focus, as presented in Table 1, were 86.10 and 83.67, which are consistent with the established benchmark of 80/80.

Table 2 presents a comparison of the scores obtained from the assessments of Matthayomsuksa 2 students' academic speaking skills, both prior to and following the implementation of TBLT-based activities.

**Table 2** Comparison of Matthayomsuksa 2 Students' Academic Speaking Assessment Scores Before and After Participating in TBLT-Based Activities.

Test	M	SD	t	p
Pre-test	16.07	2.02	-18.04	.00*
Post-test	25.10	1.60		

\* statistically significance at the .05 level.

As indicated in Table 2, the mean score for the pre-test assessment of Matthayomsuksa 2 students' academic speaking skills was 16.07, while the mean score for the post-test assessment was 25.10. The analysis revealed that the post-test scores were statistically significantly higher than the pre-test scores at a level of .05.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study evaluated the effectiveness of academic speaking activities based on TBLT lesson plans for Matthayomsuksa 2 students. The results showed that the effectiveness of the activities was 86.10/83.67 and met the standard of 80/80. This was achieved through a systematic development process, in which the researcher created and developed the activities and lesson plans and sought feedback from five experts on the suitability of the content, language, learning objectives, and assessment criteria.

The experiment was conducted with a small group of students who were not part of the sample group to evaluate the language clarity, topic complexity, task fit, and practice time. The results showed that the efficacy of the activities was below the standard of 80/80, but this was likely due to difficulties encountered during the experiment, which were then presented for improvement and correction. Subsequently, the activities were tested on a new group of 33 students and the results showed that the academic speaking activities were more effective than the standard criteria of 80/80, consistent with the findings of Sriboonpeng et al. (2022).

Additionally, the study found that the learning activities with efficiency ratings of 81.48/81.43 were more efficient than the criterion provided. This aligns with the findings of Khamjit and Saengchan's (2016) research, which showed that task-based learning models emphasizing homework subjects for Matthayomsuksa 2 students at the Demonstration School of Kasetsart University resulted in students learning from real-world practice and developing the necessary abilities and comprehension to attain the desired outcomes.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the academic speaking activities outlined in the TBLT lesson plans are effective in developing the learners' academic speaking skills, which is consistent with the existing literature.

The study also found that the scores for assessing academic speaking skills learned through task-based language teaching (TBLT) activities of Matthayomsuksa 2 students were statistically significantly higher after studying than before at the .05 level. This was attributed to the learning activities that the researcher synthesized from the TBLT concepts of various educators, including Bunmak (2017), Ellis (2003), Kiatkachatharn & Chopngam (2018), Peemmetasawad & Sudajit-apa (2019), Sinthai & Somchob (2016), Sweeney et al. (2017), and Willis (1986).

To address this, the researcher developed an effective three-step synthesis learning model: Step 1: Introducing the task. The instructors present a weekly assignment statement that includes objectives for each unit, how to accomplish tasks, and how to take advantage of tasks for students to comprehend the value of tasks. Step 2: Performing tasks. Students complete activities individually, in pairs, and in small groups within a given time limit (60-120 minutes) and collaborate after completing a task. Students are required to present their performance and offer their ideas or discussions via synchronous and asynchronous chatrooms or discussion boards. The instructor facilitates and offers assistance only when necessary. Step 3: Reflecting on task. Reflecting on what has been learned from the weekly performance of the task and testing academic knowledge by taking a test is the third step of the task. Teachers give relevant learning resources for students to independently evaluate and expand their knowledge.

By synthesizing these pertinent papers and research, the researcher was able to develop an effective method for teaching academic speaking skills to Matthayomsuksa 2 students. The weekly task-based activities, aligned with the TBLT concepts from numerous educators and

the three-step synthesis learning model, provided students with the opportunity to acquire academic speaking abilities more effectively.

## SUGGESTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The study suggests that teachers should utilize a variety of resources in order to encourage children's cognitive growth and their ability to comprehend and use more language while speaking. This includes utilizing non-verbal forms of communication, such as body language, which can aid in the rapid growth of speech and contribute to the personality development of the speaker. Additionally, it is suggested that teachers and interested parties should construct activities based on task-based language teaching (TBLT) concepts, using a range of learning materials such as multimedia, websites, gamification, and infographics, to ensure that the classroom environment is engaging and students remain interested in learning.

It is important to note that this research is experimental in nature and is a quantitative study. Therefore, those interested in researching related topics may also conduct a qualitative study to gain insight into the influence or other factors that affect the development of activities based on TBLT concepts in order to make them more effective. This can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how TBLT activities can be used to improve academic speaking skills in students.

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