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Abduhalilova Mohinur Abrorbek qizi (Student of NAMSU; Abduxalilovamoxinur59@gmail.com)

TASK-BASED LEARNING FOR ADULT LEARNERS: A SMALL-SCALE STUDY ON IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS IN AN ESL CLASSROOM

Annotation. *This paper explores how task-based learning (TBL) works with adult English learners. As a student teacher, I tried TBL in my currently working educational center with 12 adult general English learners. I used pre- and post-speaking tests plus a simple survey. The results showed better fluency and more confidence after four weeks of tasks like role-plays and information gaps. This matches what other studies say about TBL helping adults because it feels real and practical. Limitations include the small group and no control class. Implications for teachers and ideas for future work are discussed.*

Keywords: *Task-Based Learning, TBL, adult learners, general English, speaking fluency, confidence, role-plays, information gaps, educational center, ESL/EFL.*

Abduxalilova Moxinur Abrorbek qizi (NamDU talabasi; Abduxalilovamoxinur59@gmail.com)

KATTA YOSHDAGI O‘QUVCHILAR UCHUN VAZIFAGA ASOSLANGAN TA’LIM: ESL SINFXONASIDA OG‘ZAKI NUTQ KO‘NIKMALARINI RIVOJLANTIRISH BO‘YICHA KICHIK KO‘LAMLI TADQIQOT

Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqolada vazifalarga asoslangan o‘qitish (Task-Based Learning, TBL) Yoshi katta ingliz tilini o‘rganuvchilar bilan qanday ishlayotgani o‘rganiladi. Talaba-o‘qituvchi sifatida men hozirgi ishlayotgan ta’lim markazimda 12 nafar katta umumiy ingliz tili o‘quvchilari bilan TBLni sinab ko‘rdim. Oldindan va keyingi og‘zaki sinov testlari hamda oddiy so‘rovnoma ishlatildi. Natijalar to‘rt hafta davomida rol o‘ynash va ma’lumot bo‘shliqlari kabi vazifalardan so‘ng ravonlik va ishonchning yaxshilanganini ko‘rsatdi. Bu boshqa tadqiqotlarning kattalarga TBL yordam berishi haqidagi xulosalariga mos keladi, chunki u real va amaliy tuyuladi. Cheklovlar kichik guruh va nazorat sinfining yo‘qligini o‘z ichiga oladi. O‘qituvchilar uchun oqibatlar va kelajakdagi ishlar uchun g‘oyalar muhokama qilinadi.*

Kalit so‘zlar: *vazifalarga asoslangan o‘rganish tizimi, TBL, ta’lim markazi, og‘zaki sinov testlari, so‘rovnoma, rol o‘ynash metodi.*

Абдухалилова Мохинур Аброрбек қизи (студентка Наманганского государственного университета; Abduxalilovamoxinur59@gmail.com)

ОБУЧЕНИЕ НА ОСНОВЕ ЗАДАНИЙ ДЛЯ ВЗРОСЛЫХ УЧАЩИХСЯ: НЕБОЛЬШОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ПО УЛУЧШЕНИЮ НАВЫКОВ УСТНОЙ РЕЧИ В КЛАССЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА КАК ИНОСТРАННОГО

Аннотация. *В данной статье исследуется, как работает обучение на основе заданий (Task-Based Learning, TBL) со взрослыми, изучающими английский язык. Как студент-практикант, я применил TBL в образовательном центре, где сейчас работаю, с группой из 12 взрослых учащихся общего английского. Были проведены пред- и пост-тесты говорения, а также простой опрос. Результаты показали заметное улучшение беглости речи и уверенности в себе после четырёх недель занятий с заданиями, такими как ролевые игры и информационные пробелы. Эти выводы соответствуют результатам других исследований, которые отмечают, что TBL помогает взрослым, потому что задания кажутся реальными и практически полезными. Среди ограничений - небольшая выборка и отсутствие контрольной группы. В статье обсуждаются практические выводы для преподавателей и предложения для дальнейших исследований.*

Ключевые слова: *обучение на основе заданий, TBL, взрослые обучающиеся, общий английский, беглость речи, уверенность, ролевые игры, информационные пробелы, образовательный центр, ESL/EFL.*

Introduction. Adult learners are different from kids in language classes. They bring life experience, want practical skills for jobs or daily life, and learn best when things connect to their needs (Knowles, 1975). Traditional grammar lessons sometimes feel boring or too hard for them because they already know what they want to say but struggle with speaking fluently.

Task-Based Learning (TBL) is an approach where students do real tasks using the language instead of just studying rules. Jane Willis (1996) explains a framework with three stages: pre-task (get ready), task cycle (do the activity), and post-task (talk about language). In TBL, the focus is on meaning and completing

something useful, like planning a trip or doing a job interview. This creates an "information gap" so learners must talk to each other.

Research shows TBL helps adult ESL students a lot. Huang (2022) says tasks make learning relevant to real life outside class, value learners' experiences, and build motivation because adults feel they are doing something practical. Hambardzumyan (2025) found TBL improves speaking fluency through repetition and scaffolding, helping adults feel more confident and automatic with words. However, most big studies happen in universities or big programs. I wanted to test TBL in a small local evening class for adult beginners and immigrants. My research question was: Does TBL improve speaking fluency and confidence for these adult learners over four weeks?

Methods. I did this as an action research project for my general English class. The participants were 12 adult ESL learners (ages 18–25, 7 women and 5 men) at educational language center in my city. Most were students or unemployed people, working in low-skill jobs or looking for better ones. Their English level was beginner to low-intermediate. Everyone gave consent, realizing it would be better for their usage of language.

I used a simple pre-test/post-test design with a survey. No control group because it was just one small class.

Pre-test: On day 1, each student did a 2-minute speaking task alone (describe your daily routine) recorded on my phone. I scored fluency on a simple 10-point rubric (speed, pauses, clarity, completeness) based on ideas from Willis (1996).

TBL lessons: I followed Willis' framework for four 90-minute evening classes (one per week).

Pre-task: Warm-up and vocabulary help (5–10 min).

Task cycle: Pairs or groups did meaningful tasks (main part). Examples:

1. Information gap – "Describe your dream job and ask your partner about theirs" (adapted from Huang, 2022).
2. Role-play – Job interview practice (one student is boss, other is applicant).
3. Problem-solving – Plan a weekend trip on a budget using pictures and a map.
4. Opinion gap – Discuss "What makes a good employee?" and agree on three tips.

Post-task: Report to class, then focus on form (correct common mistakes together). I gave simple scaffolding like word banks and planning time (2 minutes before speaking), as recommended by Hambardzumyan (2025).

Post-test and survey: After four weeks, same speaking task as pre-test plus a 10-question Likert survey (1–5 scale) on confidence, motivation, and usefulness. I also wrote field notes on participation.

Analysis was basic: average scores before/after, percentage of survey answers, and a few quotes from students. Everything was anonymous.

Results. Speaking scores improved in everyone. Average pre-test score was 5.2/10 (lots of pauses, short answers). Post-test average rose to 7.8/10. Everyone spoke longer (average 45 seconds more) and had fewer hesitations.

Here is a simple table of average scores:

Measure	Pre-test (avg)	Post-test (avg)	Improvement
Fluency (speed/pauses)	4.8	7.5	+2.7
Clarity & vocabulary	5.1	7.9	+2.8
Completeness	5.7	8.0	+2.3
Overall	**5.2**	**7.8**	**+2.6**

Survey results (12 students):

- 76% said they felt "more confident speaking" (4 or 5 on scale).
- 100% agreed tasks felt "useful for real life."
- 83% liked working in pairs better than teacher lectures.
- One student wrote: "Now I practice job interviews at home with my wife – it helps!"

In class, I saw more laughter and volunteering after week 2. Shy students opened up during role-plays.

Discussion. The results match what other researchers found. Adult learners improved fluency because tasks were practical and repeated, just like Hambardzumyan (2025) said. They got motivated when tasks used their own experiences, like talking about jobs instead of textbook grammar. This fits adult learning theory – they are self-directed and problem-centered (Knowles, 1975).

The biggest gains were in confidence and length of speaking, not perfect grammar. That makes sense in TBL: focus on meaning first, accuracy later. Students told me the tasks felt less stressful than tests.

Limitations: Small sample (only 12 people), no control group, and I was both teacher and researcher so maybe bias. Classes were only four weeks – longer might show more. Also, some students missed sessions because of work.

Still, for a student project this was useful. Teachers in community programs can easily adapt textbook pages into tasks (Huang, 2022 gives good examples). Future research could compare TBL with regular lessons in bigger groups or test writing too.

Conclusion. Task-based learning seems great for adult ESL learners. It makes classes active and relevant, which helps them speak better and feel confident. I will use TBL in my future teaching. This small study shows even beginners can benefit when tasks are simple and supported.

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