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INTEGRATING TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AND FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE EFL SPEAKING SKILLS: AN EVIDENCE-INFORMED FRAMEWORK FOR UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: Speaking competence in English as a foreign language (EFL) requires sustained interaction, appropriate linguistic resources and feedback that learners can use in subsequent communication. This article critically synthesizes research published between 2018 and 2026 to examine how task-based language teaching and formative assessment can be combined for speaking instruction in Uzbekistan. A purposive, qualitative review of twelve scholarly publications, including international research syntheses and studies by Uzbek researchers, was organized around task authenticity, interaction, feedback uptake, assessment criteria and implementation conditions. The analysis suggests that purposeful communicative tasks generate opportunities for spoken production, while formative assessment can turn those opportunities into identifiable learning targets through transparent criteria, peer dialogue, self-assessment and task repetition. An integrated classroom cycle is proposed in which learners prepare, perform, review evidence, revise their language choices and repeat a related task. The contribution is a context-sensitive pedagogical framework rather than a claim of experimentally demonstrated effectiveness. The article identifies conditions for implementation and priorities for future classroom evaluation.

Keywords: task-based language teaching; formative assessment; EFL speaking; feedback literacy; peer assessment; communicative competence; Uzbekistan.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate spontaneously and appropriately is a central objective of English as a foreign language education, yet successful speaking instruction cannot be reduced to memorizing vocabulary or reproducing grammatical patterns. Learners must organize ideas under time pressure, negotiate meaning, respond to unfamiliar turns, manage pronunciation and select language appropriate to the situation. Communicative competence develops through opportunities to use English for meaningful purposes, supported by attention to the quality of the language produced. In this article, speaking competence is understood as the coordinated use of fluency, intelligibility, linguistic accuracy, discourse organization and interactional responsiveness rather than performance on one isolated pronunciation or grammar exercise.

Two methodological approaches provide complementary resources for this problem. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) structures lessons around the achievement of communicative outcomes, such as choosing a solution, resolving a disagreement or preparing a recommendation for a specific audience. Formative assessment collects and interprets evidence during learning and supports decisions about what should be improved next. TBLT can create rich occasions for language

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production, but an engaging activity alone does not guarantee learning; formative assessment can identify the gap between a learner's current performance and the demands of a communicative goal. Conversely, assessment that is not followed by another opportunity to speak risks becoming a record of weaknesses rather than a mechanism of improvement. The educational significance lies in designing tasks and feedback as a connected instructional process.

The Uzbek context makes this integration especially relevant because classes differ in learner proficiency, access to instructional technology and available opportunities for English use beyond the classroom. Work by Iriskulov emphasizes the relationship between curriculum, teaching approaches and assessment, while classroom-oriented studies by Xajiyeva, Abdurasulova, Turdaliyev and Amirkulova illuminate particular dimensions of task design and feedback practice in national educational settings. The present article addresses the following question: how can task-based speaking instruction and formative assessment be systematically integrated into a feasible classroom cycle for Uzbek EFL learners? It does not present new student test scores or assert that the proposed model has already been experimentally validated.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

International evidence for task-based speaking instruction indicates a generally favorable relationship between meaningful tasks and oral performance, although the strength of the evidence differs across designs and contexts. Medina Fernández synthesized research on task-based interventions and reported an overall positive effect for the subset of studies included in the meta-analysis; the review also identified pre-task planning and repetition as potentially productive conditions for complexity, accuracy and fluency. Yu, Mofreh and Salem examined a broader set of EFL studies and highlighted the importance of authentic tasks, collaboration and digitally mediated speaking opportunities. In a more recent systematic review, Guo, Hashim and Ismail drew attention to the role of confidence, motivation and supportive interaction as mediating conditions. These reviews establish a plausible rationale for TBLT, but they do not warrant treating all tasks, age groups or institutional environments as interchangeable.

The assessment literature clarifies what must happen after a learner has produced an initial performance. Carless and Boud describe feedback literacy as the capacity to recognize the purpose of feedback, make evaluative judgments, manage emotional responses and take action. This account rejects the assumption that supplying a correction is sufficient: learners need criteria they understand, occasions to compare performances and time to act on suggestions. Zhang, Ge and Saad, reviewing formative assessment in school-level EFL education, identify teacher and student beliefs, assessment practices and contextual constraints as interrelated factors. Gorham, Majumdar and Ogata additionally show how organized peer-feedback activities can support communicative learning in a university EFL setting, indicating the value of feedback as a structured interaction rather than merely an end-of-lesson judgment.

Recent research from Uzbekistan gives local specificity to these general principles. Xajiyeva investigates task-based instruction with philology students and reports encouraging patterns in language use and engagement. Abdurasulova's qualitative work on speaking instruction in a Bukhara school identifies positive learner responses alongside constraints related to proficiency differences,

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teacher preparation and time. Turdaliyev studies a staged system of oral-speech exercises with university students, linking motivational, assessment-related and critical-thinking activities. Amirkulova reports an experimental investigation of formative assessment in upper-secondary English education involving several regional schools and describes improved outcomes across language skills in the assessed groups. These publications differ in student population, assessment design and reported methodological detail; accordingly, they are more defensible as complementary contextual evidence than as directly comparable estimates of an intervention effect.

The central gap is not the absence of support for communicative tasks or for feedback considered separately. It is the limited specification of how teachers should connect a task outcome, explicit speaking criteria, feedback interpretation and an observable second attempt within a single instructional sequence. A number of studies describe benefits to fluency, confidence or engagement, but descriptions of how feedback is used during subsequent oral performance are less consistent. An integrated framework therefore needs to differentiate between activity completion and learning evidence. It should also separate claims that are supported by published empirical studies from classroom design propositions that remain to be tested locally. This distinction provides the rationale for the analytical approach adopted in the present paper.

The article employs a qualitative, integrative literature-review method rather than a new classroom experiment or a formal systematic meta-analysis. Twelve scholarly works published from 2018 to 2026 were purposively selected for their direct relevance to EFL speaking, TBLT, formative assessment, feedback processes or teaching conditions in Uzbekistan. The international set includes conceptual work on feedback literacy, syntheses of task-based speaking instruction and empirical research on peer feedback. The Uzbek set includes studies of speaking tasks, language-teaching methodology and formative assessment in secondary or tertiary education. Selection privileged traceable scholarly publications and contextual relevance; it was not designed to yield an exhaustive corpus of all papers published during the period.

The analysis proceeded in three interpretive stages. First, each publication was read for the pedagogical process under investigation, learner population, data source and conclusions supported by its design. Second, findings were compared across five analytic dimensions: authenticity of the communicative goal, provision of interactional opportunities, transparency of performance criteria, learner uptake of feedback and feasibility under classroom constraints. Third, these dimensions were translated into a coherent instructional cycle and a set of observable indicators that teachers might use in practice. Conceptual articles informed the interpretation of feedback; systematic reviews informed the broader pattern of evidence; and national studies informed contextual adaptation. Because the sources employ heterogeneous measures and samples, no numerical pooling or causal estimate was attempted.

The review is limited by purposive selection and uneven reporting in the original studies. Inferences about the proposed cycle are therefore analytical and pedagogical, not results of an intervention conducted for this article. Particular caution is required when transferring evidence from secondary-school samples to university courses. A future evaluation would require a stated sampling frame, a documented treatment and comparison condition, reliable speaking-performance ratings and

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an appropriate statistical analysis. By keeping these distinctions explicit, the review provides a transparent basis for a classroom model without misrepresenting proposed procedures as observed experimental results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first finding of the synthesis is that task design and assessment design should be planned together, rather than added sequentially as unrelated activities. A useful speaking task has a recognizable audience, a need to exchange information and an outcome that cannot be achieved by repeating a prepared text alone. Examples for Uzbek higher education include negotiating a realistic internship schedule, comparing two public-policy proposals, resolving a customer-service problem or giving evidence-based advice to an international visitor. Learners should know both what communicative problem they must solve and which features of spoken performance matter. The second requirement is a limited set of observable criteria, such as intelligibility, relevance of contributions, interactional responsiveness and effective use of target expressions. Excessive assessment criteria can redirect attention away from communication; selecting a small number makes feedback more actionable.

The second finding concerns the location of feedback within the task cycle. In an initial performance, the teacher should prioritize evidence of meaning-making while recording a few recurrent linguistic or interactional difficulties. Feedback can then be delivered through a short teacher conference, paired peer observation or a self-review of an audio recording. However, an isolated remark such as “improve fluency” has little instructional value unless the learner understands what change is required. A stronger comment identifies a specific behavior, explains its communicative consequence and proposes an attainable next action. For example, a learner who repeatedly abandons a turn may practice using clarification or hesitation expressions before performing a related task. The formative process is completed only when the student attempts that adjustment and receives an opportunity to evaluate whether it worked.

Table 1. Proposed integrated cycle for task-based speaking and formative assessment

Instructional phase	Communicative purpose and evidence	Formative feedback and learner response
Orientation and planning	Introduce the problem, audience and criteria.	Analyze a model; learners set a speaking target.
First task performance	Pairs negotiate a task outcome; teacher notes evidence.	Use a checklist; avoid interrupting fluency.
Evidence and feedback	Learners compare performance with criteria.	Identify one strength and one revision target.
Revision and task repetition	Learners complete a parallel task with revisions.	Check progress and set the next goal.

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Table 1 is a design proposition derived from the reviewed literature, not a record of a completed experiment. Its distinctive feature is the required passage from evidence to another communicative attempt. In the initial task, the teacher can collect information without converting the whole interaction into a test. In the review phase, students interpret the information against publicly understood criteria. In the subsequent task, improvement becomes visible as a change in observable performance, such as more effective turn-taking, clearer organization or fewer breakdowns in meaning. This sequence connects Carless and Boud's emphasis on acting on feedback with the planning and repetition conditions highlighted in the task-based literature. The model can be adapted to pair work, small-group discussion, oral presentation or professional English scenarios, provided the communicative purpose remains authentic.

The third finding is that learner participation in assessment is essential but requires preparation. Peer comments are not automatically valid or helpful, especially when classmates are unsure how to judge speaking quality or reluctant to offer criticism. Teachers should model feedback using brief examples of stronger and weaker interactional behavior, explain the language of constructive comments and distinguish observations from personal preferences. Self-assessment can start with a simple question about whether the communicative goal was reached, followed by focused reflection on one speaking criterion. Audio recordings may support review when permission, accessibility and data-protection arrangements are adequate; they are not a prerequisite for effective formative practice. Gorham and colleagues' investigation of peer feedback supports the educational potential of structured peer interaction, while the feedback-literacy framework explains why explicit preparation and opportunities for response are necessary.

The fourth finding concerns implementation in Uzbekistan. Local studies by Abdurasulova and Amirkulova suggest that task-oriented learning and assessment can support EFL instruction while drawing attention to the organizational conditions on which practice depends. Iriskulov's work further suggests that assessment choices should be aligned with curriculum objectives rather than treated as independent innovations. Larger groups can rotate observation roles, while mixed-proficiency groups can use differentiated information cards. Teachers with limited class time can concentrate on one feedback target across several lessons rather than marking every aspect of every spoken utterance. These are proposed adaptations, not established treatment effects. Their value should be assessed against the resources, proficiency profiles and assessment regulations of the institution in which they are introduced.

Finally, the synthesis points to a problem of evaluation. General impressions of greater confidence or engagement are educationally important but cannot, by themselves, establish improvement in speaking proficiency. An evaluation of the integrated cycle should collect comparable performances before and after instruction, use an explicit analytic rubric, and employ more than one trained rater where possible. Measures should address both functional task achievement and language quality; student reflections and observation notes can help explain how feedback was understood and acted upon. A credible design might compare the integrated cycle with a task-only approach over several instructional units, while documenting attendance, task difficulty and learner starting levels.

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The model's effects on fluency, accuracy, intelligibility and interactional performance would then become empirical questions rather than assumed benefits.

CONCLUSION

The reviewed literature provides a substantive rationale for connecting task-based language teaching with formative assessment in EFL speaking instruction. Authentic communicative tasks create situations in which learners must use language for a purpose; feedback processes make aspects of that performance visible; and task repetition creates an opportunity to apply what has been learned. The proposed contribution is an instructional cycle that aligns communicative outcomes, a small set of assessment criteria, evidence collection, learner interpretation and a subsequent speaking attempt. Its value lies in making the pedagogical relationship between activity, evaluation and improvement explicit. International research supports these components, and studies conducted in Uzbekistan supply relevant contextual indications, although the evidence varies by institution, age group and methodological design.

The framework should therefore be understood as an evidence-informed recommendation that requires local testing, not as a proven intervention developed from original data. For teachers, the immediate implication is to assess speaking selectively and ensure that feedback leads to another meaningful opportunity for communication. For researchers, the priority is to investigate whether learners who receive structured feedback and repeat comparable tasks improve more consistently than those who perform tasks without a planned feedback-uptake stage. Carefully designed classroom research, transparent rubrics and longitudinal observation would establish the conditions under which this integrated approach is most effective in Uzbekistan.

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