



## Empowering EFL Learners' Communicative Competence through Role-Play in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

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### Abstract

This study investigates the role of role-play activities in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and communicative competence among language learners, within the framework of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The research involved 16 EFL students who participated in role-play scenarios designed to simulate real-life interactions. Data were collected through role-play scripts, classroom observations, and reflective surveys to assess improvements in vocabulary use, pronunciation, fluency, and confidence. The findings reveal that role-play significantly enriches learners' vocabulary, enabling them to effectively use functional language in everyday contexts, such as asking for directions. Learners encountered at least 71 new vocabulary items and utilized 20 expressions for practical communication. Role-play also improved pronunciation and fluency by encouraging spontaneous dialogue and prioritizing communication over grammatical precision. This approach helped reduce anxiety and build learners' confidence in using English, as 90% of participants reported increased confidence in their language skills. The study underscores the pedagogical benefits of role-play in language education, highlighting its alignment with TBLT principles and its effectiveness in preparing learners for real-world communication. Future research should explore the long-term impact of role-play on language proficiency and its applicability across diverse learner demographics. This study contributes valuable insights into the use of role-play as a tool for language acquisition and communicative competence development.

### Abstrak

#### Keywords:

*EFL Learners', Role-Play, Communicative Competence*

#### Kata Kunci:

*Kompetensi Komunikasi, Pembelajaran Bahasa Asing (EFL), Bermain Peran*

Penelitian ini menyelidiki peran kegiatan bermain peran (role-play) dalam meningkatkan perolehan kosakata dan kompetensi komunikatif di kalangan pembelajar bahasa, dalam kerangka Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Penelitian ini melibatkan 16 mahasiswa EFL yang berpartisipasi dalam skenario bermain peran yang dirancang untuk mensimulasikan interaksi kehidupan nyata. Data dikumpulkan melalui naskah bermain peran, observasi kelas, dan survei reflektif untuk menilai peningkatan dalam penggunaan kosakata, pelafalan, kefasihan, dan kepercayaan diri. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa bermain peran secara signifikan memperkaya kosakata pembelajar, memungkinkan mereka untuk menggunakan bahasa fungsional secara efektif dalam konteks sehari-hari, seperti bertanya arah jalan. Para pembelajar menemukan setidaknya 71 kosakata baru dan menggunakan 20 ungkapan untuk komunikasi praktis. Bermain peran juga meningkatkan pelafalan dan kefasihan dengan mendorong dialog spontan dan memprioritaskan komunikasi daripada ketepatan tata bahasa. Pendekatan ini membantu mengurangi kecemasan dan membangun kepercayaan diri pembelajar dalam menggunakan bahasa Inggris, dengan 90% partisipan melaporkan peningkatan rasa percaya diri dalam keterampilan berbahasa.

mereka. Studi ini menekankan manfaat pedagogis dari bermain peran dalam pendidikan bahasa, menunjukkan kesesuaiannya dengan prinsip-prinsip TBLT serta efektivitasnya dalam mempersiapkan pembelajar untuk komunikasi di dunia nyata. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk mengeksplorasi dampak jangka panjang bermain peran terhadap kemahiran berbahasa serta penerapannya pada berbagai latar belakang pembelajar. Studi ini memberikan wawasan berharga tentang penggunaan bermain peran sebagai alat untuk perolehan bahasa dan pengembangan kompetensi komunikatif.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has undergone extensive exploration over the past thirty years, resulting in a significant body of research (Skehan & Luo, 2020). This investigation began with influential publications by Ellis (2003), Nunan (2004), and Willis (1996), which highlighted the application of TBLT in foreign language classroom settings. Consequently, there has been a marked increase in research focusing on various forms of task implementation in language pedagogy, occurring simultaneously with a remarkable interest in pragmatics instruction (Róg & Urbaniak, 2024). TBLT has evolved over several decades as a learner-centered and experiential pedagogical method based on communicative language teaching (CLT) (East 2017).

Although TBLT challenges some of CLT's more established approaches, in particular the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) that focuses on the grammar-translation methods and primarily teacher-led grammatical instruction and grammatical practice exercises (East, 2017), TBLT is an essential component of communicative language teaching (CLT) and is regarded as the most effective type of CLT because it emphasizes developing learners' communicative competence, especially for those EFL learners. As many researchers have pointed out, TBLT first surfaced in the 1980s as two distinct areas of research. One component examined how language might be learned through interaction, heavily drawing from research on first language acquisition (FLA) and second language acquisition (SLA) (Bygate, 2016). Regarding to second language acquisition (SLA), TBLT has gained a substantial position in contemporary language teaching approaches due to its pedagogical theories and underpinnings, as well as the wealth of empirical evidence supporting it (Bryfonski, 2024).

Since TBLT emphasizes the development of learners' communicative competence, task-based approach is an essential component of CLT and is regarded as its strongest version because communicative competence is the main objective of language instruction (Waluyo, 2019). It addresses how learners may achieve objectives and how they navigate the route themselves in speaking (Allwright, 1984), that is to say, reinterpreting the teacher's 'scaffolding' of the learning task making it possible for the learners to internalize external knowledge and convert it into actual language use for communicative purposes (Foley, 1990). For instance, it was believed that language could be acquired (whether L1 and L2) through the various adjustments (such as repetitions, fragmentations, expansions, substitutions, rephrasing, etc) by which communication was negotiated moment by moment to achieve joint understanding (Bygate, 2016b). Therefore, the use of 'tasks' in classrooms is needed (East, 2017). A task-based approach can offer a systematic and useful framework for designing pragmatic tasks for teaching and assessment (Youn, 2020). With experiential learning as a theoretical basis for task-based learning for Nunan (2004), a task is learning by doing. Tasks can be used to elicit language production, interaction, negotiation of meaning, processing of input, and focus on form, all of them are believed to foster second language acquisition (Rajeswaran, 2019). Since it incorporates various communicative approaches, enhances

language proficiency, and promotes a versatile learning activity that allows for diversity and creativity in the classroom, role-play fits its purpose to enhance learners' speaking competence (Soori et al., 2023).

TBLT is ideal to be conducted in an EFL context because its task features enable the students to have an interactive group learning with more exposure to English as the target language in a real context so that learners can develop their communicative and interactive skills better (Gilbert, 2023). In addition, learners in countries where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) such as Indonesia usually do not have much contact with native speakers, therefore, they need frequent use of the target language in active group learning to acquire language and finally develop their communicative competence (Wen et al., 2021). In that sense, participating in a role play benefits learners cognitively because role-play tends to be more effective at embedding concepts and understanding in the long-term memory of the students than monotonous teacher-delivered lectures. Furthermore, the understood concepts can be applied for problem-solving or any other academic purpose when a future occasion demands (Rajeswaran, 2019). (Hyeon Choi & Sinwongsuwat, 2024) provided an excellent illustration of a series of real-world tasks being implemented outside the classroom with the teacher accompanying the students around the town. But even for specific purposes courses, such tasks that occur in the outside world still need to be selected carefully to generate valuable instances of language use, to link to preceding and following tasks, to avoid overloading learners, and to provide rich opportunities for language exploitation and elaboration in class. In other words, for TBLT — that is, for teaching and its use as a pedagogical tool — we need to know a lot more about the nature of the task and how to use it, before understanding its value for the real-world classroom (Bygate, 2016b).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a communicative approach to language instruction that centers on the use of meaningful tasks as the primary unit of planning and instruction. According Block (2004) and (Nunan, 2004), there are three key components that define the TBLT framework. The first is the type of task, which may include real-world tasks that mirror everyday language use (e.g., making appointments or asking for directions), pedagogical tasks that are designed for classroom practice but not necessarily reflective of real-world contexts, and problem-solving tasks that challenge learners to use language creatively and collaboratively to overcome communicative obstacles. The second component is task structure, which typically follows a three-phase model: pre-task, where learners are introduced to the topic and language needed; during-task, where learners perform the communicative task; and post-task, where reflection, feedback, and language focus occur (Wen et al., 2021). The third component concerns the characteristics of effective tasks, which should be authentic in nature, relevant to the learners' real-life communication needs, and sufficiently complex to stimulate cognitive engagement while remaining accessible based on learners' proficiency levels (Bygate, 2016a; Samuda & Bygate, 2008). Together, these components ensure that TBLT promotes meaningful interaction, fosters communicative competence, and aligns classroom instruction with real-world language use.

However, although role-play fits to the framework of TBLT, the success of using role-play as a communicative task can be influenced by the connection of the role-play topic to learners' learning goals, teacher's elaboration on the appropriate language used in the role-play, schemes of error corrections, and teacher's role in the role-play (Wen et al., 2021). It is also important to realize that despite its popularity in the 1980s, interest in role-play has drastically dropped, as critics consider role-play as an artificial activity that does not necessarily reflect real world language needs (Mora & Mora-Plaza, 2023).

Furthermore, the teachers implementing a TBLT approach must employ more creativity and decision-making in order to tailor input and corrective feedback to individual learners (Baranovskaya & Shaforostova, 2018). Teachers are known to modify lesson plans and tasks moment-to-moment while teaching, making constant pedagogical decisions to adapt to classroom and learner needs (Bryfonski, 2024). Task-design implementation procedure involves three stages, called, pre-task, task cycle, and post-task.

Recent studies have explored the efficacy of TBLT in various educational contexts. A study by Waluyo (2019) implemented TBLT using theme-based role-play to enhance learners' communicative competence revealing significant improvements in their speaking test among EFL learners in Thailand. Similarly, a case study conducted by Moosa et al., (2025) in Maldives examined how much role-play is incorporated into teaching ESL learners and demonstrated notable enhancements in their fluency and confidence. Despite these positive outcomes, several gaps remain exist. First, there is very limited research on the implementation of a task-based approach in the form of role-play (Moosa et al., 2025). Therefore, there are fewer resources related to this topic which can restrict the effectiveness of TBLT across diverse educational settings. Another gap is that most studies have focused on its implementation in formal classroom settings overlooking its potential applications in formal learning environments primarily in traditionally enhancing language skills, leaving out the role of affective point of view. Thus, this research offers a deeper study on how role-play in speaking is analyzed deeper through reflective review of the students from their affective sides.

Based on the brief review above, we can assume that the interest in the application of TBLT is still favored by EFL learners although not many teachers are willing to implement and set that task-based instruction. Thus, this study intends to offer insights regarding the use of role-play in task-based teaching and the effects on enhancing learners' speaking competence. Using a qualitative research design, this study explores how role-play facilitates EFL learners to enhance their speaking competence. The detailed implementation is elaborated as follows.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The present study essentially utilizes classroom-based research with qualitative research design to gain in-depth information on how a task-based approach in the form of role-play enhances EFL learners' speaking competence.

### **Participants**

This study involves 16 first-year students consisting of 11 female students and 5 male students who took the English education program at Nahdlatul Ulama University of Indonesia in the 2024/2025 academic year. In terms of English proficiency, using a matrix of CEFR, 50% of these students are at the early intermediate level, then followed by the Elementary beginner and upper intermediate (See Table 1). The proficiency level of some others remain unidentified.

**Table 1. The participants' English proficiency levels**

Score range	Level (Based on CEFR)	Number of students (%)
0-20	A0 Novice	0%
21-30	A1 Beginner	12,5%
31-40	A2 Elementary	18,75%
41-50	B1 Intermediate	50%
51-60	B2 Upper Intermediate	6,25%
61-70	C1 Advanced	0%
71-100	C2 Proficient	0%

### **Instruments**

Three types of data were collected for the study. The data were collected through role-play scripts, classroom observations during role-play performances, and reflective surveys after performance. The participants were observed in three settings: (1) during the planning phase when students were preparing to conduct the role-play by planning their roles to perform and making scripts, (2) during the presentation phase when participants were performing the role-play. Participants' behavioral aspects were observed, and (3) reflective surveys were made after performance.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Based on the framework of TBLT, there are three phases that involved in role-play instructions. The first phase is called 'pre-task'. In this phase, the teacher defines the topic of the role-play. To limit the wide range of vocabularies, teacher sets a task limitation 'asking and giving directions'. Then, the teacher gives some specific vocabularies related to directions, indeed some supporting materials that facilitate learners' understandings of the discussed theme. Learners were gathered in 4 groups and expected to discuss and explore any real-life settings such as at the market, public places, etc to be used to make a role-play script. Teacher provides consultation just in case each group has problems regarding to their scripts making. The second phase is the learners' role-play performance. Among those 16 students, they are divided into 4 groups that consist of 4 students. Each of the groups has to submit prior to their performance in the class.

Each of the role-play group has different theme based on the role-play instructions and they have 7 to 10 minutes to enact their scripts. They are allowed to bring any properties to support their acting in the role-play. After each performance of the groups, teacher provides valuable feedbacks to each of the group related to their performance. The feedback focus on their choice of words, pronunciation, grammar, tenses, and so forth. The last phase is 'post-task', which the teacher conducts a reflective survey after their performance. This phase is conducted to ask the students to reflect on what they have been through and what they can do better to improve their speaking competence. The theme of the role-play for each groups is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Theme-based role-play**

Groups	Theme-based role-play
Group 1	At the library
Group 2	Homecoming journey
Group 3	At the coffee shop
Group 4	At the classroom

To get better understanding on how the task is executed, what are the teacher's roles during the whole process of role-play, details of each is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Phase of role-play**

<b>Phases</b>	<b>Teacher's roles</b>	<b>Details</b>
"Pre-task"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provides a topic "<i>Asking and giving direction</i>"</li> <li>- Gives some vocabularies related to "<i>asking and giving directions</i>"</li> <li>- Opens consultation during role-play script-making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vocabulary such as go straight, turn left, turn right, roundabout, junction, first left, second right, etc.</li> <li>- Grammar such as preposition, yes/no questions, WH questions.</li> </ul>
"During Performance"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitates students' role-play</li> <li>- Makes sure the availability of properties to support the role-play.</li> <li>- Provides feedback after role-play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Any properties can be brought the scene to support their performance. Such as; cups of coffee, glasses, books, bike, etc.</li> </ul>
"Post-task"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gives feedback to each of the group after their performance.</li> <li>- feedback can be regarding to the target language used by the students during their role-play; the feedback can focus on pronunciation, choice of words, grammar, etc.</li> </ul>	

## RESULTS

Thematic analysis of script coding, classroom observations, and post-role-play reflective feedback revealed five interconnected themes elucidating how task-based role-play (TBRP) enhances communicative competence among EFL learners. Grounded in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles (Ellis, 2017), these findings demonstrate TBRP's efficacy in creating authentic contexts for vocabulary application, fluency development, confidence building, collaborative interaction, and creative problem-solving. Data triangulation confirmed the robustness of these themes, collectively addressing the research question regarding TBRP's role in advancing communicative competence. The following sections systematically present and discuss these themes, supported by empirical evidence and aligned with theoretical frameworks.

### Contextualized Vocabulary Acquisition and Functional Language

TBRP immersed learners in scenario-specific linguistic contexts, facilitating the acquisition of 71+ contextually relevant vocabulary items (e.g., verbs: *present, offer*; nouns: *restroom, assignment*) during script preparation. Learners deployed these lexemes in authentic simulations, such as library dialogues, while utilizing 20+ functional expressions (e.g., "*Where is the toilet?*"). This contextual embedding operated as a semantic ecosystem, where vocabulary was acquired through necessity and reinforced through practical application (Nunan, 2004), aligning with TBLT's emphasis on authentic language use (Ellis, 2009). Consequently, learners developed richer linguistic repertoires, reducing communication breakdowns and enhancing grammatical precision—a finding corroborated by classroom observations of improved sentence formation during unscripted interactions.

Thematic analysis further indicated that pre-task script preparation required learners to research vocabulary aligned with scenarios (e.g., directions in a library setting). This process, involving dictionaries and online resources, spanned multiple lexical categories (adjectives: *anxious, worse*; adverbs: *eventually, attentively*). By applying new vocabulary in context, learners retained lexemes more effectively, demonstrating TBLT's focus on real-life objectives. Additionally, functional expressions like directional inquiries bridged pedagogical exercises with real-world needs, equipping learners to navigate everyday communicative tasks—an outcome often neglected in traditional grammar-centric instruction.

### **From Memorization to Paraphrasing: Scaffolding Fluency Development**

While 80% of learners reported script memorization as challenging, this difficulty catalyzed a critical transition: 76% resorted to paraphrasing to prioritize communicative intent over grammatical accuracy. Pedagogically, memorization functioned as scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978), while paraphrasing signified progression toward spontaneous speech (S. M., 1995). Repetitive practice in conversational role-plays enhanced fluency and pronunciation, with observational data revealing reduced hesitations and smoother speech flow across three performance cycles. This evolution fostered linguistic autonomy—a core TBLT objective (DeKeyser, 2020).

The shift from rote memorization to adaptive language use underscored TBLT's prioritization of communication. Learners engaged in real-time dialogue generation, refining fluency through active participation in meaningful conversations. Pronunciation improved through emulation of native-speaker intonation and rhythm, supported by teacher or audio models. The iterative nature of TBRP allowed learners to internalize linguistic patterns, transforming passive knowledge into dynamic communicative competence.

### **Building Confidence for Real-World Communication**

TBRP provided a low-stakes environment for experimentation, resulting in 90% of learners reporting heightened confidence. Psychological safety was amplified by theme-based scenarios (e.g., asking directions) mirroring learners' lived experiences, reducing anxiety and encouraging risk-taking. Repeated simulations of real-world tasks (e.g., resolving service issues) built procedural familiarity (Anderson, 2013), preparing learners for actual communicative contexts. This aligns with TBLT's focus on psychological readiness (Skehan & Luo, 2020), transforming rehearsal into actionable competence.

Reflective feedback indicated that familiarity with everyday scenarios (e.g., making appointments) diminished fear of judgment. Learners internalized language for common interactions, transferring classroom confidence to real-world settings. For instance, practicing direction-seeking role-plays improved actual travel-related communication. This transition exemplifies TBLT's goal-oriented framework, wherein task rehearsal cultivates pragmatic readiness and self-assurance.

### **Collaborative Dialogue: Turn-Taking and Interactional Competence**

Structured turn-taking in TBRP required learners to interpret peers' accents, speech rhythms, and pragmatic cues. When encountering unexpected dialogue shifts, learners dynamically adapted responses, developing interactional resilience. Collaborative tasks (e.g., group decision-making) necessitated co-constructed dialogue, refining negotiation strategies and joint meaning-making—key facets of interactional competence (Hall, 2018). This empirically supports TBLT's sociocultural dimension (Walsh, 2011), wherein language learning emerges through social negotiation.

Classroom observations highlighted TBRP's role in honing active listening and turn-taking. Learners processed information rapidly to maintain conversational flow, adapting to peers' linguistic variations (e.g., accents, speech speed). Group problem-solving tasks further demanded co-construction of dialogue, enhancing learners' ability to integrate diverse perspectives—a skill transferable to real-world interpersonal communication.

### **Problem-Solving and Creative Language Application**

Unscripted challenges (e.g., conflicts or misunderstandings) compelled learners to employ improvisation, persuasion, or negotiation. For instance, resolving customer complaints required persuasive strategies and rapid linguistic adaptation, transforming language into a tool for creative problem-solving (Bygate, 2015). Collaborative problem-solving tasks (e.g., event planning) demonstrated TBRP's alignment with TBLT's goal-oriented framework, fostering strategic competence (C. M. & M., 1980) and cognitive flexibility.

Thematic analysis revealed that unexpected scenario twists (e.g., interpersonal conflicts) pushed learners beyond scripted dialogue, necessitating inventive language use. Persuasive techniques and adaptive negotiations in tasks like business simulations cultivated strategic thinking. Collaborative creativity during group tasks enabled learners to co-develop solutions, enhancing transferable skills for real-world challenges—from conflict resolution to event coordination.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Synthesis of Key Findings and Research Question Alignment**

This discussion synthesizes and interprets the thematic findings above, elucidating their collective significance in addressing the central research question: *How does task-based role-play (TBRP) enhance communicative competence among EFL learners?* The analysis, derived from triangulated data sources (script coding, observations, reflective feedback), revealed five interconnected themes: contextualized vocabulary acquisition, fluency development through paraphrasing, confidence building, collaborative interactional competence, and creative problem-solving. Collectively, these themes provide robust empirical evidence demonstrating TBRP's efficacy as a pedagogical tool grounded in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) principles (Ellis, 2017). The following sections systematically discuss these themes, exploring their theoretical underpinnings, interrelationships, and implications for EFL pedagogy, while maintaining a formal and neutral academic tone.

### **Contextualized Vocabulary: Bridging the Gap between Knowledge and Use**

The findings powerfully demonstrate TBRP's effectiveness in facilitating contextualized vocabulary acquisition and functional language use, a core tenet of TBLT (Ellis, 2009; Nunan, 2004). The acquisition of over 71 scenario-specific lexical items and 20+ functional expressions was not incidental but driven by the *necessity* imposed by authentic task demands (e.g., navigating a library simulation). This process aligns with Nunan's concept of vocabulary learning within a "semantic ecosystem," where meaning is derived and reinforced through practical application within meaningful contexts, moving beyond decontextualized word lists. The requirement for learners to actively research vocabulary during script preparation, spanning diverse lexical categories (verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs), further embedded this learning within real-life objectives, a fundamental aspect of TBLT. Consequently, observations of improved sentence formation and reduced communication breakdowns in unscripted interactions provide compelling evidence that TBRP fosters richer linguistic repertoires and enhances grammatical precision by linking form directly to function. This theme underscores how TBRP directly addresses a critical weakness of traditional grammar-centric instruction by equipping learners with the practical language needed for everyday communicative tasks.

### **Fluency Evolution: From Scaffolded Memorization to Autonomous Paraphrasing**

Memorization theme highlights a critical developmental trajectory within TBRP: the transition from challenging script memorization towards autonomous paraphrasing and spontaneous speech. While memorization initially posed difficulty for 80% of learners, it served a crucial pedagogical function as (Vygotsky (1978) scaffolding. This scaffold provided a secure foundation, enabling 76% of learners to subsequently prioritize communicative intent over rigid grammatical accuracy through paraphrasing – a significant milestone in fluency development (S. M., 1995). The repetitive practice inherent in cyclical role-plays was instrumental in this evolution, as observational data clearly documented reduced hesitations and smoother speech flow across performance iterations. This progression embodies TBLT's objective of fostering linguistic autonomy (DeKeyser, 2020). The shift signifies learners moving beyond rote reproduction to adaptive language generation, actively constructing meaning in real-time dialogue. Furthermore, the emphasis on emulating native-speaker intonation and rhythm during these practices, supported by models, contributed directly to improved pronunciation. The iterative nature of TBRP thus facilitates the internalization of linguistic patterns, effectively transforming passive vocabulary and structural knowledge into dynamic, readily accessible communicative competence.

### **Cultivating Confidence: Psychological Safety and Procedural Familiarity**

The significant boost in learner confidence (reported by 90%) identified in real-world communication theme is a pivotal finding, directly linked to TBLT's emphasis on psychological readiness for communication (Skehan, 2018). TBRP creates a low-stakes, psychologically safe environment where experimentation and risk-taking are encouraged. This safety is amplified by utilizing theme-based scenarios (e.g., asking directions, making appointments) that mirror learners' actual or anticipated real-world experiences, reducing anxiety associated with unfamiliar contexts. Crucially, the *repeated simulation* of these real-world tasks builds procedural familiarity (Anderson, 2013). Learners rehearse not just the language, but the cognitive and interactional sequences required for tasks like resolving service issues. This rehearsal transforms into "actionable competence," preparing learners pragmatically and psychologically for actual communication outside the classroom. Reflective feedback confirmed that this familiarity diminished fear of judgment and enabled learners to internalize language for common interactions, facilitating a tangible transfer of classroom confidence to real-world settings, such as improved travel-related communication. This theme powerfully illustrates TBRP's goal-oriented framework in building the self-assurance necessary for effective real-world language use.

### **Fostering Interactional Competence through Collaborative Dialogue**

Collaboration theme provides strong empirical support for TBRP's role in developing complex interactional competence, a sociocultural dimension central to TBLT (Walsh, 2011). The structured yet dynamic nature of TBRP dialogues necessitates active engagement with core interactional skills. Learners must navigate turn-taking, interpret peers' accents and speech rhythms, and decipher pragmatic cues. Classroom observations specifically highlighted the development of active listening skills as learners processed information rapidly to maintain conversational flow, adapting to linguistic variations among peers. Crucially, encountering unexpected dialogue shifts pushed learners beyond rehearsed lines, demanding dynamic response adaptation and fostering interactional resilience. Collaborative tasks, such as group decision-making simulations, further required learners to co-construct dialogue, engaging in negotiation

strategies and joint meaning-making. This process of collaboratively building understanding and refining language through social negotiation is a hallmark of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) applied to language learning (Hall, 2018). TBRP, therefore, provides a fertile ground for learners to practice and hone the skills essential for managing the unpredictable, co-constructed nature of real interpersonal communication.

### **Strategic Competence: Language as a Tool for Creative Problem-Solving**

Problem-solving theme illuminates how TBRP cultivates strategic competence (C. M. & M., 1980) and cognitive flexibility by positioning language as a tool for creative problem-solving. Unscripted challenges and unexpected scenario twists (e.g., interpersonal conflicts, service misunderstandings) are inherent strengths, not weaknesses, of the method. These elements compel learners to move beyond pre-planned utterances and engage in higher-order thinking. Learners must improvise, persuade, negotiate, and adapt their language rapidly to achieve task goals, as seen in tasks like resolving customer complaints or collaboratively planning an event under constraints (Bygate, 2015). This necessitates the application of persuasive techniques, adaptive negotiation strategies, and inventive language use. The collaborative aspect of many problem-solving tasks further enhances this by requiring learners to integrate diverse perspectives and co-develop solutions creatively. This theme underscores TBRP's deep alignment with TBLT's goal-oriented framework, demonstrating its effectiveness in developing transferable skills crucial for navigating real-world challenges, from conflict resolution to logistical coordination, where language serves a strategic, problem-solving purpose.

### **Pedagogical Implications: Integrating TBRP into EFL Curricula**

The compelling convergence of the five key themes underscores the necessity for the systematic integration of Task-Based Role-Play (TBRP) into EFL curricula. To maximize its empirically demonstrated potential across all facets of communicative competence, effective TBRP implementation requires several strategic considerations. First, it must prioritize authenticity by designing scenarios that closely mirror learners' real-world communicative needs and contexts, ensuring tasks possess clear, meaningful outcomes. Second, embracing iteration is essential; this involves incorporating multiple cycles of performance, reflection, and refinement to scaffold fluency development and build procedural familiarity. Third, collaboration needs to be intentionally structured by designing tasks that necessitate genuine interaction, negotiation, and the co-construction of meaning among learners. Fourth, incorporating cognitive challenge is vital, achieved by building in unscripted elements or problem-solving requirements that push learners beyond rote memorization to foster strategic competence and improvisation. Fifth, explicitly cultivating a supportive environment to ensure psychological safety is crucial for encouraging the risk-taking and experimentation fundamental to confidence building. Finally, integrating structured reflection, particularly through post-task reflective feedback as utilized in this study, is necessary to consolidate learning, raise metacognitive awareness, and reinforce confidence. Collectively, these implications move beyond merely advocating for role-play; they provide a concrete blueprint for designing TBRP sequences that holistically enhance communicative competence.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

While this study provides robust evidence for TBRP's efficacy, certain limitations warrant acknowledgment and guide future research. Firstly, the study was conducted within a specific

institutional and cultural context; further research across diverse EFL settings (e.g., different age groups, proficiency levels, cultural backgrounds) would enhance generalizability. Secondly, the study primarily utilized qualitative methods and self-reported confidence data; incorporating longitudinal quantitative measures of vocabulary retention, fluency gains (e.g., speech rate, pause frequency), or confidence levels in real-world settings could provide additional objective validation. Thirdly, exploring the specific impact of different types of scenarios (complexity, familiarity, cognitive demand) or variations in the TBRP cycle structure (e.g., duration of preparation, number of iterations, nature of teacher feedback) could yield valuable insights for optimizing task design. Finally, investigating the long-term retention and transfer of skills developed through TBRP to real-world communication contexts remains an important area for future inquiry.

## CONCLUSION

This study conclusively demonstrates that task-based role-play (TBRP) is a highly effective pedagogical approach for developing comprehensive communicative competence in EFL learners. The five core findings—contextualized vocabulary acquisition through authentic scenario-based practice, fluency development facilitated by the critical shift from script memorization to autonomous paraphrasing, significant gains in learner confidence enabled by psychologically safe rehearsal environments, enhanced interactional competence via collaborative dialogue and adaptive turn-taking, and the cultivation of strategic problem-solving skills through creative language application in unscripted challenges—collectively validate TBRP's efficacy.

These interconnected outcomes illustrate how TBRP successfully bridges theoretical language knowledge with practical communicative ability, moving beyond traditional instruction methods. The study's primary contribution lies in providing robust empirical evidence for integrating TBRP into EFL curricula to systematically foster linguistic accuracy, fluency, confidence, collaborative skill-building, and cognitive flexibility. Its significance is underscored by the practical framework it offers educators for designing tasks centered on authenticity, iteration, collaboration, and problem-solving. Future research should investigate TBRP's longitudinal impact across diverse cultural and institutional settings, its effectiveness with learners at varying proficiency levels, and the quantifiable transfer of acquired skills to real-world communication contexts.

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