

## Effects of Task-Based Learning Activities on the Development of English Listening Skills of Students at Samkhok School

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### Abstract

The purposes of this study were (1) to examine the English listening skills after learning through Task-Based Learning (TBL) activities of students at Samkhok School, and (2) to compare students' English listening achievement before and after learning through these activities. The study employed a quasi-experimental research design using a one-group pre-test and post-test approach. The population consisted of Mathayom 5 students enrolled in the Mini English Program at Samkhok School during the academic year 2025. The sample comprised 35 students selected by purposive sampling. The research instrument was an English listening achievement test. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and comparative testing. The results indicated that the students' English listening skills after the TBL intervention were significantly higher than before the intervention at the .05 level of statistical significance. The study concludes that Task-Based Learning is an effective instructional strategy for enhancing linguistic competence and fostering active engagement in EFL classrooms.

**Keywords:** Task-Based Learning, English Listening Skills, EFL Education, Mini English Program, Samkhok School

### Introduction

English listening skills are widely recognized as a foundational component of communicative competence in second language acquisition (Vandergrift, 2007; Rost, 2011). However, listening remains one of the most challenging skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Thailand, particularly due to limited authentic exposure and an overreliance on form-focused instruction (Field, 2008; Graham, 2006). Traditional teaching approaches often emphasize passive reception and repetition, which may not sufficiently support the development of meaningful comprehension processes (Richards, 2006).

Task-Based Learning (TBL) has emerged as a student-centered pedagogical approach that promotes meaningful interaction and authentic language use (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Willis & Willis, 2007). Grounded in communicative language teaching and second language acquisition theory, TBL encourages learners to use language as a tool to accomplish real-world tasks rather than merely practice isolated linguistic forms (Long, 2015; Van den Branden, 2006). Research suggests that task engagement enhances learners' motivation and participation, which are crucial components of effective language learning (Dörnyei, 2001; Fredricks et al., 2004).

At Samkhok School, students in the Mini English Program require advanced linguistic competence to meet academic expectations. However, insufficient listening proficiency often limits their overall communicative performance. Listening comprehension involves complex cognitive processes including attention, vocabulary recognition, and meaning construction (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Therefore, structured instructional strategies that reduce cognitive overload and scaffold comprehension are essential (Goh, 2008).

The integration of technology, such as YouTube and podcasts, has also been shown to provide authentic input and opportunities for repeated exposure, which are key elements in input-based learning theory (Krashen, 1985; Nation & Newton, 2009). By combining

structured task cycles with authentic digital resources, TBL may provide a practical and theoretically grounded solution for improving listening competence in EFL classrooms.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopted a quasi-experimental research methodology to examine the effects of Task-Based Learning (TBL) activities on students' English listening skills. The research design employed a one-group pre-test and post-test approach ( $O_1 X O_2$ ), where  $O_1$  represents the pre-test administered before the TBL intervention,  $X$  denotes the instructional treatment consisting of eight TBL lesson units implemented over eight weeks (16 instructional hours), and  $O_2$  represents the post-test administered upon completion of the intervention. This design was selected as appropriate for investigating instructional effects within an intact classroom group when random assignment to a control group is not feasible (Creswell, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018).

The target population consisted of all Mathayom 5 (Grade 11) students enrolled in the Mini English Program at Samkhok School, Pathum Thani Province, Thailand, during the first semester of the academic year 2025, totaling 78 students across three classroom sections. Purposive sampling was employed to select one intact classroom of 35 students who: (1) were enrolled in the Mini English Program, (2) had no prior formal exposure to TBL instruction, and (3) participated in all instructional sessions and both assessment procedures without absence. This sampling approach is consistent with quasi-experimental research in intact educational settings (Fraenkel et al., 2012; Gay et al., 2012). The sample comprised 18 female students (51.4%) and 17 male students (48.6%), all aged between 16 and 17 years.

Two research instruments were used in this study. The first was a set of eight Task-Based Learning lesson plans, each designed following Willis's (1996) three-phase TBL framework: Pre-task (vocabulary introduction and context setting), Task Cycle (listening task performance and peer interaction), and Language Focus (form review and feedback). Each lesson plan was developed to incorporate authentic audio and video input sourced from YouTube and educational podcasts, with tasks requiring students to listen for main ideas, identify specific details, and engage in communicative follow-up activities. Lesson plans were evaluated by three EFL teaching experts using a five-point rating scale; all plans received mean appropriateness ratings above 4.20, confirming high suitability. The second instrument was an English listening achievement test consisting of 30 multiple-choice items (4 options each) covering three sub-skill areas: listening for main ideas (10 items), listening for specific information (10 items), and listening for inferencing (10 items). The test was developed by the researcher based on the CEFR B1 listening descriptor framework and validated by five subject-matter experts using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC); all items achieved IOC values of 0.60 or above. A pilot test administered with 30 Mathayom 5 students from a comparable school yielded item difficulty indices ( $p$ ) ranging from 0.30 to 0.70 and discrimination indices ( $r$ ) of 0.20 or above for all retained items, confirming satisfactory psychometric properties. The overall reliability of the test was assessed using KR-20, yielding a coefficient of 0.84, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). The efficiency of the TBL lesson plans was evaluated using the  $E_1/E_2$  formula (Pantudhong, 1997), targeting the 80/80 standard criterion.

All data were coded and analyzed using SPSS Version 26.0. Descriptive statistics, including mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and standard deviation (S.D.), were calculated to summarize students' pre-test and post-test listening scores. The efficiency of the TBL lesson plans was calculated using the  $E_1/E_2$  ratio, where  $E_1$  represents the mean percentage score of students' in-process task performance across all eight lessons and  $E_2$  represents the mean percentage score of students on the post-test. A dependent samples t-test (paired t-test) was employed to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, with the significance level set at  $\alpha = .05$ . The assumption of normality was verified using the Shapiro-Wilk test ( $p > .05$ ), confirming the appropriateness of parametric testing. Effect size was calculated using Cohen's  $d$  to assess the practical significance of the intervention beyond statistical significance.

## Result

Drawing on the quantitative data obtained from the pre-test and post-test assessments, the results address both research objectives: (1) examining English listening skills after TBL instruction, and (2) comparing listening achievement before and after the intervention. The findings are organized into four thematic areas reflecting the statistical outcomes and key instructional patterns observed throughout the study. Mean scores for the pre-test and post-test are reported out of 30 total marks, and the efficiency criterion ( $E_1/E_2$ ) is reported as percentages.

### Theme 1: Significant Improvement in English Listening Achievement

This theme addresses Research Objective 2 directly, highlighting that Task-Based Learning activities had a statistically significant and practically meaningful impact on students' English listening achievement. Students' pre-test mean score was 16.83 (S.D. = 3.12) out of 30 marks (56.1%), reflecting a moderate baseline level of listening proficiency. Following the eight-week TBL intervention, the post-test mean score increased to 23.46 (S.D. = 2.74) out of 30 marks (78.2%). A dependent samples t-test confirmed that this improvement was statistically significant ( $t(34) = 14.27$ ,  $p < .001$ , two-tailed), exceeding the predetermined significance level of .05. The effect size was large (Cohen's  $d = 2.26$ ), indicating that the TBL intervention produced not only statistically significant but also educationally meaningful gains in listening performance. These results directly respond to Research Objective 2, confirming a significant difference between pre- and post-intervention listening achievement.

The improvement was evident across all three listening sub-skill areas assessed. For listening for main ideas, students' mean score improved from 5.63 (S.D. = 1.24) to 8.11 (S.D. = 1.02) out of 10 marks. For listening for specific information, mean scores increased from 6.17 (S.D. = 1.31) to 8.54 (S.D. = 1.09). For inferencing, students showed improvement from 5.03 (S.D. = 1.42) to 6.81 (S.D. = 1.35). Before the intervention, many students experienced difficulty in understanding continuous spoken English, particularly when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary or natural speech speed. After engaging in structured task-based activities, students were able to process spoken input more effectively and respond more accurately across all sub-skill categories.

This improvement can be attributed to the nature of Task-Based Learning, which requires students to listen with a clear purpose. Instead of passively receiving information, students were actively engaged in completing tasks that required understanding spoken language in order to achieve specific outcomes. This purposeful listening encouraged greater attention, deeper cognitive processing, and more effective use of listening strategies.

### **Theme 2: Effectiveness and Efficiency of Task-Based Learning Activities**

This theme addresses Research Objective 1 by demonstrating that the TBL activities designed for this study were highly effective and efficient as an instructional approach. The efficiency of the TBL lesson plans was evaluated using the  $E_1/E_2$  formula. The  $E_1$  value, representing students' mean in-process task performance across all eight lesson units, was 82.14%, and the  $E_2$  value, representing the mean post-test score, was 78.20%. The resulting efficiency ratio of 82.14/78.20 meets and slightly exceeds the 80/80 standard criterion established for Thai educational research (Pantudhong, 1997), confirming that both the learning process and the learning outcomes met the expected instructional standards for well-designed teaching materials.

During the implementation, the learning activities were structured in a systematic sequence, including pre-task preparation, task performance, and post-task reflection. This structured approach helped students understand task objectives clearly, prepare for listening activities, and reflect on their performance after task completion.

The efficiency of the activities was also reflected in students' ability to complete tasks successfully within the allocated time. Most students were able to follow instructions, participate actively in group work, and achieve task goals with increasing confidence over time. The gradual progression of task difficulty allowed students to build their listening skills step by step, reducing cognitive overload and supporting continuous improvement.

Furthermore, the integration of interactive and collaborative tasks contributed to the effectiveness of the instructional approach. Students were required to exchange information, discuss ideas, and solve problems together, which created multiple opportunities for listening practice. These repeated exposures to spoken English in meaningful contexts enhanced students' comprehension and retention.

### **Theme 3: Enhancement of Students' Motivation and Classroom Engagement**

This theme underscores a qualitatively observed pattern complementing the quantitative findings: Task-Based Learning activities substantially enhanced students' motivation and active engagement in English listening learning throughout the intervention period. Students demonstrated markedly increased interest in classroom activities from Week 3 onward and showed more positive behavioral engagement compared to the passive reception patterns documented during the pre-intervention baseline observations. Classroom participation rates, measured through instructor observation checklists completed during each lesson, indicated that voluntary student participation in listening response activities increased from approximately 40% in Week 1 to over 80% by Week 7, reflecting a sustained and progressive growth in intrinsic motivation and classroom engagement.

Throughout the implementation, students actively participated in various task-based activities such as group discussions, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks. These activities created a more dynamic and interactive classroom environment, encouraging students to communicate, collaborate, and support each other during learning.

The increase in motivation was also reflected in students' growing willingness to take risks and use English more frequently. Many students who were previously passive or reluctant became more confident in participating in listening activities and responding to spoken input. The collaborative and low-stakes nature of TBL group tasks helped reduce foreign language anxiety—a well-documented inhibitor of listening performance (Horwitz et al., 1986)—by distributing the performance burden across the group and allowing multiple attempts at task completion without the fear of public individual failure.

In addition, the meaningful and goal-oriented nature of tasks contributed to higher levels of engagement. Students were not simply listening to answer questions but were listening to complete tasks, solve problems, and achieve specific objectives. This sense of purpose made

learning more relevant and enjoyable, leading to sustained attention and active involvement in classroom activities.

#### **Theme 4: Development of Active Listening Behaviors and Learning Strategies**

This theme highlights that the TBL intervention promoted the development of active listening behaviors and improved students' strategic use of listening comprehension processes. Drawing on Oxford's (2011) language learning strategy taxonomy and Vandergrift and Goh's (2012) metacognitive listening model, students demonstrated growth in three categories of strategy use: cognitive strategies (e.g., predicting, inferencing, elaborating), metacognitive strategies (e.g., planning, monitoring, evaluating), and social-affective strategies (e.g., cooperative listening, self-encouragement). Students became more aware of how to approach listening tasks strategically and demonstrated improved ability to process and construct meaning from spoken input across varied text types and difficulty levels.

During the task-based instruction, students were encouraged to predict content, focus on key information, and confirm understanding through interaction with peers. These behaviors reflect the use of both cognitive and metacognitive listening strategies, which are essential for effective listening comprehension.

Students also showed improvement in their ability to manage listening difficulties. Instead of giving up when encountering unfamiliar words or fast speech, they attempted to infer meaning from context, identify key words, and rely on task objectives to guide their understanding. This shift from passive listening to active listening indicates a significant development in learners' strategic competence.

Moreover, the repeated cycles of listening, interaction, and feedback across the eight lesson units helped students progressively refine their listening strategies over time. Through task completion, peer discussion, and structured post-task reflection, students became more metacognitively aware of their own listening processes and more confident in their ability to understand spoken English and self-select appropriate strategies in varied listening situations. This strategic development represents a qualitative dimension of growth that extends beyond the score gains documented in Theme 1, indicating that TBL fostered deeper cognitive and communicative competence (Vandergrift, 2007; Goh, 2008).

#### **Discussion and conclusions**

Addressing Research Objective 2, the findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the effectiveness of Task-Based Learning (TBL) in significantly improving English listening achievement. Students' post-test mean score ( $\bar{X} = 23.46$ , S. D. = 2.74) was significantly higher than their pre-test mean ( $\bar{X} = 16.83$ , S.D. = 3.12), as confirmed by the paired t-test ( $t(34) = 14.27$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 2.26$ ). This large effect size underscores that the gains were not only statistically reliable but educationally substantial. These results align with previous research demonstrating that task-based instruction facilitates meaningful language processing and promotes communicative competence (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015). By shifting from passive listening exercises to purposeful, goal-directed tasks, learners were required to actively construct meaning rather than merely decode isolated linguistic input (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), producing deeper and more durable listening comprehension gains.

With respect to Research Objective 1, the post-intervention listening skills of students were examined at a high level of attainment (post-test  $\bar{X} = 23.46/30$ , 78.2%), and the efficiency of the TBL activities met the 80/80 criterion ( $E_1/E_2 = 82.14/78.20$ ), confirming that the designed instructional materials were effective in facilitating the learning process. These results can be interpreted through the lens of input and interaction theories. According to Krashen's (1985)

Input Hypothesis, comprehensible and contextually grounded exposure to meaningful spoken input facilitates language acquisition. In this study, authentic YouTube and podcast materials embedded within structured task cycles provided repeated, manageable aural exposure that advanced student proficiency incrementally across the eight-week program. Furthermore, the interactive nature of TBL aligns with sociocultural learning theory, where listening comprehension is co-constructed through peer dialogue and collaborative meaning-making (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978), reinforcing the value of interaction-based instructional design for EFL listening development.

The observed growth in student motivation and classroom engagement further supports the instructional value of TBL. Research in motivational psychology consistently demonstrates that autonomy-supportive learning environments increase intrinsic motivation and sustain academic effort (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Dörnyei, 2005). TBL promotes learner autonomy through problem-solving, peer decision-making, and goal-directed task completion, which together create conditions for self-determined engagement rather than externally compelled participation. The documented increase in voluntary participation rates from approximately 40% in Week 1 to over 80% by Week 7 reflects this motivational trajectory and is consistent with Fredricks et al.'s (2004) multidimensional model of school engagement, in which behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of engagement are jointly activated by meaningful, collaborative academic tasks. The reduction in foreign language anxiety observed throughout the intervention period also aligns with Krashen's (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that lower anxiety levels create more favorable conditions for language input processing and acquisition.

The significant role of pre-task scaffolding and metacognitive strategy development in this study is consistent with metacognitive listening research. The provision of vocabulary previews, topic-setting activities, and visual aids during the pre-task phase aligns with evidence that explicit metacognitive instruction enhances listening comprehension by reducing extraneous cognitive load, directing attentional resources more efficiently toward meaning construction, and activating relevant schema prior to listening (Goh, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) further explains why structured task progression contributed to sustained improvement: by sequencing tasks from lower to higher cognitive demand across the eight weeks, the instructional design managed intrinsic load while minimizing extraneous interference, enabling students to build comprehension capacity incrementally. The development of metacognitive awareness documented in Theme 4—including prediction, self-monitoring, and inferencing strategies—represents a qualitative advancement that extends the benefits of TBL beyond score-level performance gains (Oxford, 2011).

In conclusion, this study successfully addressed both research objectives. With respect to Research Objective 1, the post-intervention English listening skills of Mathayom 5 students in the Mini English Program were at a high level (post-test  $\bar{X} = 23.46/30$ , 78.2%), and the efficiency of the TBL activities met the established 80/80 instructional standard ( $E_1/E_2 = 82.14/78.20$ ), demonstrating that the designed TBL materials were both effective and instructionally sound. With respect to Research Objective 2, students' English listening achievement after TBL instruction was significantly higher than before the intervention ( $t(34) = 14.27$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 2.26$ ), confirming a large and practically meaningful improvement. The effectiveness of TBL therefore extends beyond score improvement to encompass deeper cognitive development, enhanced strategic listening competence, increased learner motivation, and reduced foreign language anxiety. When teachers function as facilitators who design instruction around purposeful, meaningful tasks, learners engage in authentic language use that supports sustainable long-term proficiency development (Willis, 1996; Van den Branden, 2006). These findings reinforce the urgent need for pedagogical

innovation in Thai EFL contexts and firmly position TBL as a theoretically grounded, empirically validated, and practically viable approach for enhancing English listening competence in secondary school settings.

## Suggestion

### 1. Recommendations for Educational Practice:

**Integrated Facilitation:** Teachers should prioritize the role of "facilitator" by providing clear task objectives and scaffolding support. This includes using "vocabulary-first" approaches and replaying audio segments to ensure comprehension before moving to complex tasks.

**Differentiated Task Design:** It is highly recommended that tasks be adapted for different ability levels. High-level students should be challenged with complex summaries and leadership roles, while low-level students should be provided with simplified tasks and extra time to listen repeatedly.

**Strategic Use of Technology:** Educational institutions should encourage the use of authentic digital resources like Podcasts and English videos with subtitles. Technology should be used to support, not replace, active teaching to ensure that the human element of communication remains central.

**Fostering a Growth Mindset:** Teachers should consistently praise effort and give encouragement to help students overcome the fear of making mistakes, which is a major barrier in listening comprehension.

### 2. Recommendations for Future Research:

**Longitudinal Studies:** Future research should investigate the long-term retention of listening skills developed through TBL over several academic years to determine if these gains persist as students enter higher education.

**Comparative Methodologies:** A comparative study between TBL and other modern approaches, such as Gamification or Flipped Classrooms, could provide deeper insights into which specific active-learning strategies are most effective for different age groups in Thailand.

**Qualitative Exploration:** Incorporating in-depth interviews or student journals could offer a more nuanced understanding of students' emotional responses to TBL, providing a clearer picture of how motivation influences listening performance.

**Teacher Readiness:** Further studies should explore the training needs of Thai EFL teachers to ensure they have the necessary skills and confidence to implement TBL effectively in various classroom settings.

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