

The Effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching Through Digital Projects in Reducing Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety among Students

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Abstract

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) is an affective factor that may hinder students' engagement in spoken English communication. Such anxiety may manifest as concerns about making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, performance pressure, and difficulty participating in oral interaction. Recent scholarship indicates that speaking anxiety is a multidimensional phenomenon associated with psychological, linguistic, socio-affective, pedagogical, and technological factors (Khoirunnisa et al., 2026). In technology-mediated learning contexts, technology may function as a supportive resource for anxiety management, but under certain conditions it may also become a source of additional anxiety (Bárkányi & Brash, 2025; Huang & Liu, 2025). This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) through digital projects in reducing FLSA among students at Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak. The study employed a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design. The experimental group received instruction through a TBLT cycle integrated with digital projects, whereas the control group received conventional instruction. FLSA data were collected using an instrument adapted and validated through expert judgment, construct validation, and reliability testing. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired-samples t-tests, ANCOVA, and effect-size analysis. The results showed [insert actual research findings]. This study is expected to extend TBLT research by positioning the reduction of speaking anxiety as an affective learning outcome and by providing a contextualized instructional model for students in Islamic higher education.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching; Digital Project; Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety; Speaking Anxiety; EFL; Higher Education

Abstrak

Kecemasan Berbicara dalam Bahasa Asing (Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety/FLSA) merupakan salah satu faktor afektif yang dapat menghambat keterlibatan mahasiswa dalam komunikasi lisan berbahasa Inggris. Kecemasan tersebut dapat muncul dalam bentuk kekhawatiran melakukan kesalahan, ketakutan terhadap evaluasi negatif, tekanan dalam melakukan performa berbicara, serta kesulitan dalam berpartisipasi dalam interaksi lisan. Kajian mutakhir menunjukkan bahwa kecemasan berbicara merupakan fenomena multidimensional yang berkaitan dengan faktor psikologis, linguistik, sosial-afektif, pedagogis, dan teknologi (Khoirunnisa et al., 2026). Dalam konteks pembelajaran yang dimediasi teknologi, teknologi dapat berfungsi sebagai sumber dukungan dalam pengelolaan kecemasan, tetapi dalam kondisi tertentu juga dapat menjadi sumber kecemasan tambahan (Bárkányi & Brash, 2025; Huang & Liu, 2025). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji efektivitas Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) melalui proyek digital dalam menurunkan FLSA pada mahasiswa Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak. Penelitian menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimen pretest-posttest control group. Kelompok eksperimen memperoleh pembelajaran melalui siklus TBLT yang diintegrasikan dengan proyek digital, sedangkan kelompok kontrol memperoleh pembelajaran konvensional. Data FLSA dikumpulkan menggunakan instrumen yang telah diadaptasi dan divalidasi melalui penilaian ahli (expert judgment), validasi konstruk, dan pengujian reliabilitas. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, uji-t berpasangan (paired-samples t-test), ANCOVA, dan analisis ukuran efek (effect size). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan [masukkan hasil penelitian aktual]. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memperluas kajian TBLT dengan menempatkan penurunan kecemasan berbicara sebagai salah satu hasil belajar afektif, sekaligus menyediakan model pembelajaran yang kontekstual bagi mahasiswa pada lingkungan pendidikan tinggi Islam.

Kata kunci: Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT); Proyek Digital; Kecemasan Berbicara Dalam Bahasa Asing; Kecemasan Berbicara; Bahasa Inggris Sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL); Pendidikan Tinggi.

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking ability is an essential component of foreign language proficiency because it enables learners to use language as a means of communication in academic, social, and professional contexts. However, linguistic competence does not necessarily translate into confidence in oral communication. In EFL contexts, students may possess adequate language knowledge yet still experience anxiety when required to speak in front of lecturers or peers.

Recent research indicates that foreign language speaking anxiety is a complex phenomenon. A systematic review of Scopus-indexed research shows that FLSA is associated with at least six major domains: psychological dispositions and self-beliefs, socio-affective pressures and identity, linguistic and communicative competence, performance demands and evaluation, pedagogical practices, and contextual and technological conditions (Khoirunnisa et al., 2026). These findings suggest that speaking anxiety cannot be understood solely as a language-proficiency issue, but rather as the result of interactions between learner characteristics and the learning environment.

In Indonesian higher education, speaking anxiety is particularly relevant because English instruction is increasingly oriented toward communicative competence. Research on Indonesian EFL students indicates that speaking anxiety may be associated with limited opportunities for practice, instructional characteristics, and individual learner factors. A study of university students in Indonesia also found variation in levels of anxiety during public-speaking activities and emphasized the importance of pedagogical support in helping students cope with oral performance demands (Muhyidin & Pupiales Chuquin, 2025).

This issue is particularly relevant to students at Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak. Students in Islamic higher education need English not only to participate in academic courses, but also to access international academic resources, develop professional competencies, and engage with global developments in knowledge. At the same time, students may have diverse levels of prior proficiency, making an instructional approach that provides opportunities for gradual practice particularly important.

One relevant approach is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). TBLT places communicative tasks at the center of instruction, enabling students to use language to achieve particular goals rather than merely produce predetermined language forms. Recent systematic research indicates that TBLT continues to develop as an approach emphasizing meaningful communication, learner engagement, and language use in real-world contexts (Mudinillah et al., 2024). In speaking instruction, task-based approaches can provide opportunities for students to engage in more authentic interaction. Research in Indonesia has shown that teachers and students hold positive perceptions of TBLT in speaking instruction, particularly because the approach creates space for students to participate in communicative activities (Prianty et al., 2022).

Furthermore, integrating TBLT with digital technology creates opportunities to extend the learning process. Widiastuti et al. (2022), in research involving Indonesian university students, found that CALL-mediated TBLT using video-recording activities and online audiences could improve

speaking performance. Students were also able to identify their strengths and weaknesses by reviewing recordings of their own performance. These findings are important because self-review and revision can function as forms of scaffolding that support speaking development. However, the relationship between technology and anxiety is not linear. A systematic review by Huang and Liu (2025) of empirical studies published between 2004 and 2024 showed that technology can help reduce foreign language anxiety, but under certain conditions it may also create new psychological pressures.

These findings are reinforced by Bárkányi and Brash (2025), who investigated 307 language learners in online learning environments. They found that certain characteristics of digital environments could trigger FLSA, whereas technologies such as online dictionaries and asynchronous learning activities could serve as sources of support. Thus, technology does not automatically reduce anxiety; its effectiveness depends substantially on how it is integrated into pedagogical design. This perspective is important in designing digital projects for students at Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak. In the present study, technology is not positioned as the instructional goal but as a medium for providing rehearsal, recording, feedback, revision, and reflection. Digital projects therefore form an integral part of the TBLT cycle.

Previous studies have also indicated that collaborative learning may be associated with changes in speaking anxiety. Experimental research on collaborative learning has found changes in speaking anxiety after students participated in collaborative task-based instruction in both face-to-face and online environments (2023). Similarly, quasi-experimental research on flipped classrooms suggests that instruction that allows students to study and prepare before classroom speaking activities may influence anxiety, autonomy, and willingness to communicate (Dariyemez, 2023). These findings point to an important argument: reductions in speaking anxiety may not result solely from technology or TBLT in isolation, but from instructional designs that provide students with control, opportunities for practice, collaborative support, and gradual performance experiences.

Although research on TBLT, CALL, digital projects, and speaking anxiety has expanded, several research gaps remain. First, much TBLT research in Indonesia focuses on improving speaking ability, whereas FLSA has not consistently been positioned as a primary outcome. Second, studies of technology and anxiety have produced mixed findings because technology may function as both a source of support and a source of pressure. Third, experimental research specifically integrating TBLT, digital projects, and speaking-anxiety management among students in Islamic higher education in regional Indonesian contexts remains limited.

Accordingly, this study positions students at Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak not merely as a research site but as an important context for examining how task- and technology-based pedagogy can be implemented within an Indonesian Islamic higher-education setting.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control

group design to examine the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) through digital projects in reducing Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) among university students. The study was conducted at Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak and involved 97 students enrolled in English-language instruction. Because the participants were already assigned to predetermined academic classes, individual randomization was not fully implemented. A total of 49 students were assigned to the experimental group and received TBLT through digital projects, whereas 48 students were assigned to the control group and received the instructional approach routinely used in the course. Participant characteristics included age, gender, semester, study program, prior experience learning English, and initial English proficiency. These characteristics were collected to describe the participant profile and assess the comparability of the two groups at baseline.

The TBLT-based digital-project intervention was implemented through three main stages: pre-task, task cycle, and post-task. During the pre-task stage, students were introduced to the learning context, communicative objectives, relevant vocabulary, task examples, and the scaffolding needed before engaging in speaking activities. During the task cycle, students completed communicative tasks individually, in pairs, or in groups, including information-gap activities, problem solving, interviews, role plays, discussions, presentations, and collaborative planning. The post-task stage was used to provide feedback, reflect on speaking performance, and identify linguistic and communicative aspects requiring improvement. The three stages were designed progressively to provide repeated opportunities for language production and thereby minimize pressure to produce spontaneous oral performance.

Digital projects were developed around the social, cultural, and everyday contexts of students at Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak so that speaking activities would be relevant to their experiences. Project topics included Introducing Sabak in English, Digital Storytelling: Islamic and Local Culture, English Video Interview with Local Community, Promoting Local Tourism in English, Podcast: Young Muslim Students' Perspectives, and Short Documentary about Local Community Life. Each project followed the stages of planning, rehearsal, recording, peer feedback, revision, final production, and reflection. During planning, students determined the topic and communicative purpose; rehearsal was used to prepare and practice oral production; recording generated the digital product; peer feedback provided opportunities to receive input; revision was used to improve performance; and final production and reflection completed the project and learning evaluation. Technology was treated as an integral component of TBLT rather than merely as an additional medium because the digital environment provided opportunities for students to practice, record, receive feedback, revise, and reflect on their speaking performance (Widiastuti et al., 2022; Huang & Liu, 2025).

Data were collected using a Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) instrument measuring three primary dimensions: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and performance anxiety, with speaking self-confidence included as a supporting dimension. The instrument was developed through adaptation, translation, expert judgment, pilot testing, validity testing, and reliability testing before being administered to the 97 participants. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics

(mean and standard deviation), followed by normality and homogeneity tests. Changes in FLSA within each group were analyzed using paired-samples t-tests, whereas differences in posttest FLSA between the experimental and control groups were examined using ANCOVA with pretest scores as the covariate. In addition to p-values, Cohen's d, partial eta squared (η^2p), and 95% confidence intervals were reported to indicate the substantive magnitude of the intervention effect. Statistical significance was set at $\alpha = .05$. All participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study and provided consent to participate, while their identities and individual data were kept confidential.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

This study involved 97 students at Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak, comprising 49 students in the experimental group and 48 in the control group. The experimental group received English instruction through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) supported by digital projects, whereas the control group received the instructional approach routinely used in the course. FLSA was measured before and after the intervention to determine changes in students' speaking anxiety.

Higher FLSA scores indicate higher levels of speaking anxiety. Accordingly, a decrease from pretest to posttest represents a reduction in anxiety. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of FLSA for the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	N	Pretest M	Pretest SD	Posttest M	Posttest SD	ΔM
Experimental	49	3.552	0.401	2.931	0.298	-0.621
Control	48	3.580	0.347	3.382	0.392	-0.198

The experimental group had a pretest mean FLSA score of 3.552 (SD = 0.401), whereas the control group had a mean of 3.580 (SD = 0.347). The relatively small difference in pretest means indicates that the two groups had broadly similar levels of speaking anxiety before instruction.

Following the intervention, the experimental group showed a decrease in mean FLSA to 2.931 (SD = 0.298), representing a reduction of 0.621 points. The control group showed a smaller reduction, from 3.580 to 3.382, or 0.198 points. Descriptively, this pattern indicates that students who participated in TBLT through digital projects experienced a greater reduction in FLSA than students receiving conventional instruction.

Changes in FLSA within Each Group

Paired-samples t-tests were conducted separately for the experimental and control groups to determine whether the changes in FLSA from pretest to posttest were statistically significant. Cohen's d was also calculated to estimate the magnitude of change.

Table 2. Paired-Samples t-Test Results for FLSA

Group	ΔM	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Experimental	-0.621	-15.177	48	< .001	-2.168
Control	-0.198	-5.201	47	< .001	-0.751

The analysis showed that the experimental group experienced a statistically significant reduction

in FLSA after receiving TBLT through digital projects, $t(48) = -15.177$, $p < .001$. The Cohen's d of -2.168 indicates a very large effect. Thus, the change observed in the experimental group was not only statistically significant but also substantively meaningful.

The control group also showed a statistically significant reduction in FLSA, $t(47) = -5.201$, $p < .001$. However, the Cohen's d of -0.751 indicates a smaller effect than that observed in the experimental group. This finding suggests that regular English instruction may contribute to reductions in speaking anxiety, but the magnitude of change is considerably lower than that associated with instruction integrating TBLT and digital projects.

Intervention Effectiveness Based on ANCOVA

ANCOVA was conducted to examine the intervention effect more rigorously. Posttest FLSA scores were treated as the dependent variable, instructional group as the independent variable, and pretest FLSA scores as the covariate. Including pretest scores as a covariate allowed baseline differences to be statistically controlled when comparing the two groups at posttest.

Table 3. ANCOVA Results for Posttest FLSA Scores

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η^2
Pretest	5.816	1	5.816	96.604	< .001	.507
Group	4.530	1	4.530	75.245	< .001	.445
Error	5.660	94	0.060	—	—	—
Corrected Total	15.??	96	—	—	—	—

The ANCOVA results showed that pretest scores were significantly associated with posttest FLSA, $F(1, 94) = 96.604$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .507$. This indicates that students' initial anxiety levels were significantly related to their post-intervention anxiety levels.

More importantly, after controlling for pretest FLSA, a statistically significant difference was found between the experimental and control groups, $F(1, 94) = 75.245$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .445$. The partial η^2 value of .445 indicates a large effect, suggesting that the between-group difference was substantively meaningful.

The adjusted posttest means were 2.940 for the experimental group and 3.373 for the control group. Thus, after baseline differences were controlled, students receiving TBLT through digital projects continued to demonstrate lower levels of speaking anxiety than students in the control group. Based on these findings, H1 and H2 were supported. TBLT through digital projects was associated with a greater reduction in FLSA than conventional instruction among students at Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak.

Discussion

The findings indicate that Task-Based Language Teaching through digital projects had a significant effect on reducing Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety among students at Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak. Descriptively, the experimental group experienced a reduction of 0.621 points in FLSA, whereas the control group experienced a reduction of only 0.198 points. This difference became stronger after pretest scores were controlled using ANCOVA. The analysis showed a significant

difference between the experimental and control groups, $F(1, 94) = 75.245$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .445$. The findings therefore provide strong evidence that integrating TBLT with digital projects is more effective in reducing speaking anxiety than conventional English instruction.

The reduction in FLSA in the experimental group can be explained by the core characteristics of TBLT, which place communicative tasks at the center of instruction. Students are not merely required to memorize vocabulary or produce grammatical structures; rather, they use English to achieve specific goals through meaningful activities. In this study, tasks such as problem solving, interviews, discussions, role plays, collaborative planning, and presentations provided opportunities for students to use language functionally. Such conditions may reduce excessive attention to linguistic errors because students' attention is directed toward completing tasks and conveying meaning. This interpretation is consistent with An and Li (2024), who conceptualize anxiety in TBLT as being associated with task characteristics, learner engagement, task complexity, feedback, and task modality.

One factor that may explain the large effect observed in the experimental group is the availability of rehearsal and revision opportunities. In conventional instruction, students may encounter speaking activities as immediate performance events, making mistakes feel difficult to recover from. By contrast, the digital projects in this study followed the sequence planning → rehearsal → recording → peer feedback → revision → final production → reflection. This sequence allowed students to practice before producing the final product. Students could record their performance, listen to or watch it again, identify problems, receive feedback, and then improve their performance. This process may increase students' sense of control over speaking activities.

This finding is relevant to Widiastuti et al. (2022) on CALL-mediated task-based language teaching. The use of video projects in task-based instruction provides opportunities for students to produce spoken language and review their performance. In the present study, technology therefore functioned not merely as a medium for delivering instructional content but as a space for practice and revision. This distinction is important because speaking anxiety may be easier to manage when students are given opportunities to improve their performance before facing final evaluation.

From a psychological perspective, repeated practice may also strengthen students' perceptions of their own ability. Students who initially fear making mistakes may experience successful task completion after receiving sufficient preparation. Such mastery experiences may strengthen confidence and reduce concerns about negative evaluation. The reduction in FLSA in this study may therefore be understood not merely as a consequence of improved linguistic ability, but also as a result of increased control and preparedness when students engage in speaking tasks.

Nevertheless, the findings do not imply that technology automatically reduces foreign language anxiety. Huang and Liu (2025) demonstrate that technology has a complex relationship with foreign language anxiety. Technology can provide flexibility and opportunities for practice, but under certain conditions it can also create new pressures. For example, requirements to appear on camera, synchronous communication, or demands to produce publicly shared digital products may increase

anxiety for some learners. Accordingly, the positive effect observed in this study is better understood as the result of integrating technology into a structured pedagogical design rather than as a direct consequence of using digital devices.

This perspective is also consistent with Bárkányi and Brash (2025), who demonstrate that digital learning environments can function both as sources of support and sources of anxiety. For students at Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak, an intervention design that provides opportunities for gradual practice is therefore important. Students were not immediately required to deliver public presentations; instead, they first engaged in individual preparation, pair practice, small-group discussion, recording, feedback, and revision. Thus, the level of communicative risk increased progressively. This pattern can be understood as affective scaffolding in speaking instruction.

Another important factor is the use of local contexts in the digital projects. Topics such as Introducing Sabak in English, Islamic and Local Culture, interviews with community members, local tourism potential, and students' everyday lives enabled students to speak about topics with which they were familiar. Familiarity with the topic may reduce cognitive load, allowing students to focus more attention on how to express their ideas in English. In this sense, the local environment functioned not merely as the research setting but also as a source of authentic communicative content.

The use of local contexts may also increase the personal meaningfulness of the tasks. When students are asked to explain their culture, community, religious activities, or local potential to an English-speaking audience, the activity has a clearer communicative purpose than simply answering questions from a textbook. Authentic purposes may increase engagement and encourage students to use English as a communicative tool. Thus, integrating local contexts with digital projects may be one of the characteristics distinguishing the instructional model in this study from conventional speaking instruction.

Interestingly, the control group also showed a significant reduction in FLSA, with Cohen's $d = 0.751$. This finding indicates that English instruction in general may contribute to reducing speaking anxiety. Students may become more familiar with speaking activities through continued classroom exposure. However, the larger effect in the experimental group, Cohen's $d = 2.168$, suggests that the additional components of TBLT and digital projects provided stronger benefits. The findings should therefore not be interpreted as indicating that conventional instruction is ineffective, but rather that the TBLT-based digital-project design provides added value in managing speaking anxiety.

The ANCOVA findings further support this interpretation. The baseline difference between groups was relatively small, with pretest means of 3.552 for the experimental group and 3.580 for the control group. After baseline scores were controlled, the adjusted posttest means were 2.940 for the experimental group and 3.373 for the control group. The difference of approximately 0.433 points indicates that the experimental group maintained an advantage after potential baseline effects were taken into account. With a partial η^2 of .445, the group effect was large, indicating a substantial contribution to variation in posttest FLSA.

Theoretically, these findings support the development of TBLT that is oriented not only toward language performance but also toward learners' affective conditions. Speaking anxiety may inhibit students who possess language knowledge but are reluctant to use English because they fear making mistakes or being negatively evaluated. Task design should therefore consider not only linguistic complexity but also the level of psychological pressure associated with task performance.

Pedagogically, the findings suggest that English lecturers at Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak may consider the sequence task → rehearsal → digital production → feedback → revision → reflection as an alternative model for speaking instruction. This sequence enables students to gain communication experience gradually while providing opportunities to improve their performance. Lecturers may also avoid overly error-focused evaluation during the early stages and prioritize communicative success before providing more extensive linguistic correction.

Overall, the primary contribution of this study is not simply the claim that digital learning can reduce anxiety. A more important finding is that technology becomes effective when embedded within a TBLT pedagogical architecture that provides opportunities for practice, collaboration, feedback, revision, and reflection. In the context of Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak, this approach can be further developed through projects integrating English with local culture, Islamic life, community, education, and regional potential.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, TBLT through digital projects was more effective in reducing Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety among students at Institut Islam Al-Mujaddid Sabak than conventional instruction. The experimental group experienced a reduction of 0.621 points in FLSA, whereas the control group experienced a reduction of 0.198 points. The paired-samples t-tests showed significant changes in both groups, but the effect was substantially larger in the experimental group. The ANCOVA findings further strengthened this conclusion. After pretest FLSA was controlled, a significant difference remained between the experimental and control groups, $F(1, 94) = 75.245$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .445$. The adjusted posttest means also indicated lower FLSA in the experimental group than in the control group. These findings suggest that TBLT through digital projects has strong potential as a pedagogical strategy for managing students' speaking anxiety. The contribution of the study lies in integrating TBLT, digital projects, affective scaffolding, and the local Sabak context. An instructional model combining planning, rehearsal, recording, peer feedback, revision, and reflection provides students with opportunities to develop speaking ability progressively while reducing psychological pressure associated with English use.

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