



Enhancing Multidimensional Communicative Competence among Thai Lower Secondary EFL Students through Task-Based Grammar Instruction

Maythaporn Tangkanchanayuenyong^a, Virasuda Sribayak^{b,*}

^a maythaporn.n@gmail.com, Language Institute, Thammasat University, Thailand

^b virasuda.s@litu.tu.ac.th, Language Institute, Thammasat University, Thailand

* Corresponding author, virasuda.s@litu.tu.ac.th

APA Citation:

Maythaporn, T., & Sribayak, V. (2026). Enhancing multidimensional communicative competence among Thai lower secondary EFL students through task-based grammar instruction. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 19(2), 156-181.
<https://doi.org/10.70730/KVFS2893>

Received
06/12/2025

Received in
revised form
19/05/2026

Accepted
18/06/2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of task-based grammar instruction on the multidimensional communicative competence of lower-secondary students in Bangkok, Thailand. Employing a mixed-methods, one-group pretest-posttest design, 30 students participated in twelve task-based grammar lessons developed within a conceptual framework. Communicative competence—encompassing linguistic, strategic, formulaic, sociocultural, interactional, and discourse components—was assessed through a constructed communicative competence scale before and after the intervention. Students’ perceptions were explored via semi-structured focus group interviews, while teacher insights were gained through twelve reflective journals. The findings indicated that task-based grammar instruction significantly enhanced students’ overall multidimensional communicative competence, with a notable improvement in interactional competence. The effect size, as measured by Cohen’s *d* for

	paired samples, was 0.34, indicating a small to moderate effect. Qualitative data supported gains in five multiple dimensions, except sociocultural competence. Students expressed positive perceptions, valuing real-life communicative contexts and authentic grammar use. Teacher reflections highlighted the importance of detailed lesson planning, effective materials, and well-designed tasks. The study offers practical insights for implementing task-based grammar instruction to promote communicative competence among lower-secondary EFL learners. Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, language pedagogy, communicative competence, English Language Teaching (ELT), mixed-methods research
--	--

Introduction

The Thai Ministry of Education has reformed the English curriculum to include communicative and 21st-century skills. Nevertheless, many schools still prioritize memorization and examination over the practical use of the language (Ministry of Education, Thailand, 2021). Previous research indicates that Thai students struggle to use English in real-life communication, despite their knowledge of grammatical rules (Mala & Jikkham, 2016). Thus, it is necessary to reconsider the role of grammar instruction and how it should be taught in the EFL context to equip students with the skills they need for real-life communication. Ur (2011) and Willis (1996) suggested future directions for grammar teaching within a task-based communicative approach.

A review of the existing literature indicates that task-based grammar instruction in the Thai context often exhibits limited integration of task-based and grammar instruction, especially in enhancing multiple dimensions of students' communicative competence, as outlined in Celce-Murcia's (2007) model of communicative competence. To provide a task-based grammar lesson, the TBLT framework by Willis (1996) has been used in previous studies on grammar instruction in the EFL context for high school learners (e.g., Yildiz & Senel, 2017) and for university learners (e.g., Thompson & Millington, 2012); however, these studies did not explore students' communicative competence. The TBLT framework by Willis (1996) has also been used to enhance students' communicative competence in the EFL context, such as by Waluyo (2019). Nevertheless, these studies did not integrate grammar instruction into the task-based framework, resulting in limited insight into how this integration could influence the development of communicative competence.

Although previous studies (e.g., Thompson & Millington, 2012; Waluyo, 2019; Willis, 1996; Yildiz & Senel, 2017) have shown the potential advantages of TBLT, the integration of task-based grammar instruction to improve both linguistic accuracy and the multiple dimensions of communicative competence has not been thoroughly examined. Furthermore, there is a lack of studies exploring students' perceptions of task-based grammar instruction and teachers' reflections on its implementation, especially within the Thai educational context.

To address these gaps in the literature, three research questions were formulated as follows:

1. What effect does task-based grammar instruction have on students' communicative competence?
2. What are the students' perceptions of task-based grammar instruction in helping them enhance their communicative competence?
3. What insights does the teacher gain from reflecting on the implementation of task-based grammar instruction aimed at enhancing students' communicative competence?

Literature Review

Task-Based Grammar Instruction

Fotos and Ellis (1991) suggested that grammar tasks promoted discussion of grammar and helped EFL learners increase their knowledge of a difficult L2 rule. Grammar tasks must be designed to raise the learner's consciousness about the grammatical properties of the L2 and to incorporate a multi-way information gap. Grammar tasks can be practiced in teacher-directed lessons or in pair/group work to increase opportunities for negotiating meaning. According to Ur (2018), it is necessary to balance explicit grammar teaching with opportunities for meaningful language use. To illustrate, explicit instruction is paired with meaningful use, and grammar activities should be embedded within tasks that require authentic communication rather than isolated from communicative contexts. This point of view aligns with the core basis of task-based language teaching (TBLT) and other scholars (Ellis et al., 2022; Larsen-Freeman, 2020).

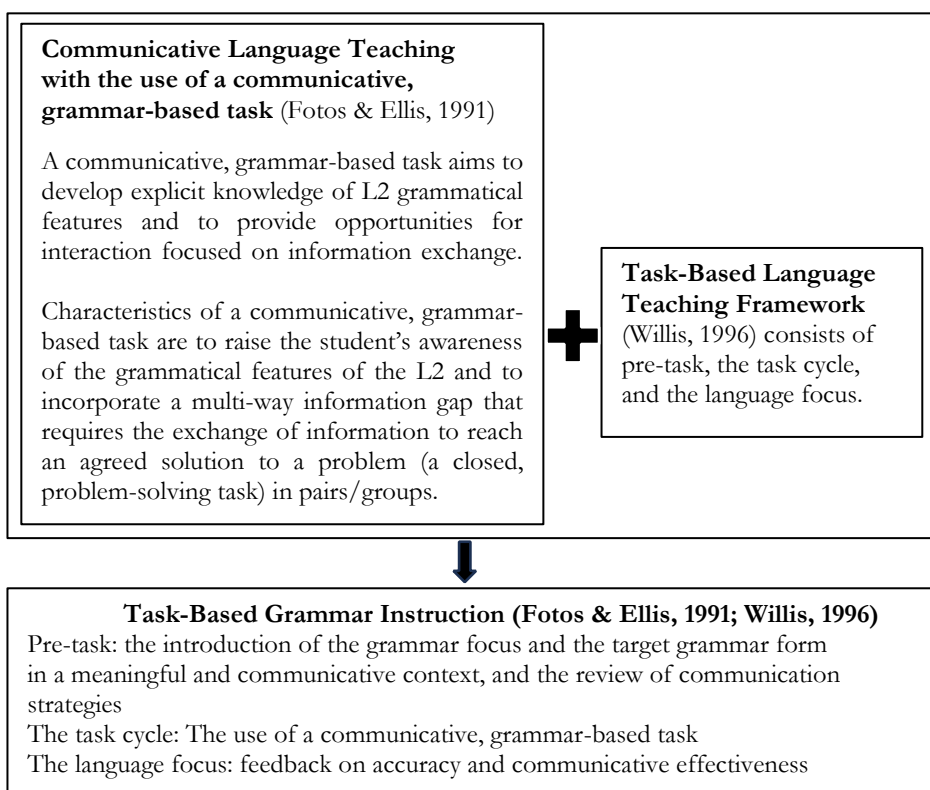
Task-based grammar instruction can enhance the multidimensional components of communicative competence outlined by Celce-Murcia (2007) since TBLT provides students with exposure to grammatical forms and vocabulary through meaningful communication (Ellis, 2003). Tasks often elicit the use of strategies (Nakatani, 2010). Students practice fixed expressions and formulaic language, as tasks often involve greetings, requests, and routines (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012). Engaging in pair and group

tasks can help students improve the skills needed to manage interactions smoothly (Hall, 2011). Tasks are situated in culturally relevant scenarios that require students to consider their language use and adapt it to social norms, roles, and expectations, preparing them to communicate appropriately in different sociocultural contexts (Celce-Murcia, 2007). Task-based instruction fosters students' ability to organize and connect ideas as they attempt to accomplish tasks such as discussion, storytelling, or problem-solving, thereby improving discourse competence (Willis & Willis, 2007).

The present study proposes a conceptual framework for task-based grammar instruction by integrating Communicative Language Teaching with communicative, grammar-based tasks (Fotos & Ellis, 1991) and the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework (Willis, 1996). This conceptual framework aims to provide grammar instruction that enhances the multidimensional communicative competence of lower-secondary EFL students in a Fundamental English 3 course, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

The Conceptual Framework for Task-Based Grammar Instruction (Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Willis, 1996)



Communicative Competence

Different models have been constructed to assess students' communicative competence (e.g., Celce-Murcia, 2007; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). Communicative competence is recognized as a multidimensional construct. Savignon (1997) emphasized that communicative competence is shaped by political and ideological forces, particularly the concept of "choice," which influences classroom practices and the negotiation of meaning and power. Although this study does not explicitly analyze the political dimension of communicative competence, this decision was made to maintain a focused scope on the linguistic and pedagogical aspects relevant to the research objectives. Nevertheless, the study recognizes that communicative competence is influenced by social and political factors and is not a value-free concept, and that ideas about power, identity, and individual choice are naturally part of how communicative competence is understood and applied in the classroom.

Based on a comparison of different models of communicative competence, the revised model proposed by Marianne Celce-Murcia (2007) was selected to assess students' communicative competence because it provides detailed descriptions of each component of communicative competence and expands upon the earlier model by Marianne Celce-Murcia et al. (1995). These revisions include the addition of formulaic competence, three additional learning strategies within strategic competence, and interactional competence.

Previous Studies on Task-Based Grammar Instruction in Enhancing Communicative Competence

Yildiz and Senel (2017) examined the impact of 'TBLT' on students' understanding of grammar during grammar instruction. This investigation involved 32 eighth-grade students over a period of 2.5 months. The findings suggested that 'TBLT' significantly enhanced students' grammar knowledge in the experimental group and produced meaningful outcomes compared to traditional language-teaching methods.

Somawati et al. (2018) conducted a study to explore the extent to which 'TBLT' is effective in enhancing learners' communicative competence. A total of 62 students from the Tourism department, across two classes, participated in the study. The treatment consisted of 10 lessons from an English for Tourism module designed with a 'TBLT' approach. The findings indicated that 'TBLT' was beneficial for enhancing learners' communicative competence, particularly regarding fluency and one aspect of accuracy, namely complexity.

A study conducted by Waluyo (2019) used theme-based role-plays to foster EFL learners' communicative competence within a task-based framework. The study investigated the progress of 782 students in their theme-based role-play activities over a 12-week academic term and assessed the impact on their performance in the final speaking examination. The results supported the hypothesis that students' performance in theme-based role-play improves their communicative competence.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study used a one-group pre-test/post-test experimental mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), employing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Quantitative data were collected through pretests and posttests of an English-speaking test, while qualitative data were gathered from the English-speaking test, semi-structured interviews, and the teacher's reflective journals, which were used to provide in-depth explanations to support the quantitative findings.

Participants

The study involved 30 eighth-grade students in a Fundamental English 3 course during the first semester of the academic year 2025 at a demonstration school in Bangkok, Thailand. The students were selected using the convenience sampling technique. The researcher was assigned to teach 30 students during the semester. The students were heterogeneous in terms of their academic achievement and level of English proficiency (A1-A2) based on the CEFR in the Basic Education curriculum.

Data Collection and Research Instruments

Data collection was conducted over 16 weeks during the first semester of the academic year 2025. Three research instruments and one instructional instrument were validated by three experts and then used in the study as follows:

Pretest and Posttest adapted from the A2 key speaking test (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2024) and the Constructed Scale for Assessing Communicative Competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007)

The pretest and posttest—validated by the three experts using the IOC form—were conducted before and after the implementation of task-based grammar instruction. The pretest and posttest were piloted on a group of students with characteristics similar to those of the participants to assess its effectiveness. Both are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

The Elements of the Pretest and Posttest

Parts	Length (mins)	Interaction	Task Types	Objectives
Part 1 Interview	3 - 4	Interlocutor Candidate	The interlocutor asks questions to each candidate in turn.	To allow a student to answer simple questions about themselves and provide personal information. This part focuses on interactional and social language.
Part 2 Collaborative Task There are two phases in this part.	5-6		Discussion task with visual stimulus	To allow students to discuss in pairs based on visual prompts provided by the interlocutor. This part focuses on interactive communication, expressing opinions, and maintaining a conversation.
Phase 1: Students discuss the pictures for 3-4 minutes.		Candidate ↕ Candidate		
Phase 2: The interlocutor asks follow-up questions related to the topic discussed.		Interlocutor ↓ Candidate		

The constructed scale for assessing communicative competence based on the model of communicative competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007) was

used to assess students' communicative competence in the pretest and posttest. There were twenty-two items in total. The total score is twenty-two points from the total subdimensions of each communicative competence as follows: Linguistic Competence (3), Strategic Competence (5), Formulaic Competence (4), Sociocultural Competence (3), Interactional Competence (3), Discourse Competence (4). The researcher and the interrater rated each item 'FOUND (1)' or 'NOT FOUND (0)' and took some notes to assess students' communicative competence. The constructed scale was validated by the three experts and then piloted with characteristics similar to those of the participants to assess its effectiveness.

Reflective Journals

A teacher's reflective journal was used to investigate what the teacher learned from implementing task-based grammar instruction to improve students' communicative competence. The reflection questions were reviewed by the experts to assess content validity and revised accordingly. Thus, six reflective questions were formulated to provide vivid and useful insights into how task-based grammar instruction works in practice, how it improves communicative competence, the components of communicative competence, the challenges it faces, potential solutions, and suggestions for future lessons.

Semi-Structured Focus Group Interviews

A semi-structured focus group interview was used to investigate students' perceptions of task-based grammar instruction in helping them improve their communicative competence. The interview questions were reviewed by the experts and revised based on their suggestions. To gain in-depth, useful information from participants with varying communicative competence, three focus group interviews were conducted. Each focus group consisted of six participants sharing a characteristic regarding their improvement in communicative competence, as determined by comparing their pre-test and post-test results: large improvement, slight improvement, or no improvement. Therefore, eighteen participants were purposively selected for the interviews. Six interview questions were designed to investigate students' perceptions of task-based grammar instruction in helping them improve their communicative competence.

Lesson Plans for Task-Based Grammar Instruction

Twelve lesson plans for task-based grammar instruction were developed based on the conceptual framework (Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Willis, 1996) and implemented for 12 weeks. Lesson plans were validated by the experts and adjusted based on their comments and suggestions.

Data Analysis

For quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics were used to reveal the students' communicative competence, and a paired-samples t-test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of students' multidimensional communicative competence before and after the implementation of task-based grammar instruction.

In terms of qualitative analysis, descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data from "the note part" on the constructed scale to describe the communicative competence of students. Thematic analysis was used to reveal students' perceptions of task-based grammar instruction and the teacher's reflections on its implementation.

Findings

Effects of Task-Based Grammar Instruction on Students' Multidimensional Communicative Competence

The results of the students' multidimensional communicative competence were gained from the pre-test and the post-test scores on an English-speaking test. The scores were calculated using a paired-samples t-test. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Paired-Samples T-Test of the Mean Scores of Pretest and Posttest

Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-value	P-value
Pre-test	13.60	2.61	-	-
Post-test	14.63	3.01	2.75	0.01*

* $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 2, the mean scores of the pretest and the posttest were 13.60 and 14.63, respectively. The average gain score was positive (+1.03). The significance value was 0.01, which was lower than the

predetermined level of confidence at 0.05. Thus, there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of multidimensional communicative competence before and after the implementation of task-based grammar instruction. The results revealed that task-based grammar instruction improved the students' multidimensional communicative competence.

Based on the pre-test and post-test results, the maximum scores obtained were 18 for the pretest and 19 for the posttest. The minimum scores were 7 for the pretest and 6 for the posttest. To determine improvements in students' multidimensional communicative competence, the criteria were based on the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, with the highest score gain being +6 and the lowest score gain being -4. Six students showed a large improvement, with their post-test scores increasing by 3 points or more. Among these six students, one increased by 6 points, two increased by 4 points, and three increased by 3 points. Thirteen students showed a slight improvement, with their post-test scores increasing by 1-2 points. Six of them increased by 2 points, and seven of them increased by 1 point. Eleven students showed no improvement, with their post-test scores being equal to their pre-test scores and decreasing by 1 point or more. Among these students, the post-test scores of six students were equal to their pre-test scores. One student decreased by one point. Three students decreased by 2 points, and one student decreased by 4 points.

Regarding the multiple dimensions of communicative competence, 'interactional competence' showed a statistically significant improvement. There was improvement in its subdimensions, including 'conversational competence' and 'non-verbal/paralinguistic competence,' with the average gain score of +0.20, while 'actional competence' had no gain score. Thus, students improved their conversational competence and non-verbal/paralinguistic competence.

There was an improvement in three subdimensions of 'discourse competence', which are the use of 'the deixis system,' 'temporal continuity/shift,' and the performance of 'oral narrative of spoken genre,' with the average gain scores at +0.17, +0.10, and +0.03, respectively, while there was no improvement in the use of 'a cohesive device.' Therefore, students used more of 'the deixis system,' 'temporal continuity/shift,' and they performed the 'oral narrative of the spoken genre' better.

Regarding 'strategic competence,' there was an improvement in its two subdimensions, including the use of 'stalling strategies' and 'self-monitoring strategies,' with average gain scores of +0.30 and +0.14, respectively. In contrast, the three subdimensions, which include the use of 'social strategies,' 'interacting strategies,' and 'achievement strategies,' decreased, with average scores of -0.04, -0.07, and -0.17, respectively. Thus,

the students used more stalling and self-monitoring strategies in communication to help them communicate more effectively but tended to use fewer social, interactional, and achievement strategies.

There was an improvement in two subdimensions of 'linguistic competence,' which are 'the ability to use the morphological inflections' and 'the ability to construct grammatically correct and meaningful sentences using basic sentence patterns and types,' with average gain scores of +0.07 and +0.03, respectively. While students improved these abilities, there was no improvement in 'the ability to use the lexical resources.'

In terms of 'formulaic competence,' there was an improvement in one subdimension, which is 'the use of routines,' with the average gain score of +0.10. Thus, the students used more of 'routines' when communicating. However, there was no improvement in the three subdimensions, which are the use of 'collocations,' 'idioms,' and 'lexical frames.'

Regarding 'sociocultural competence,' there was no improvement in its two subdimensions, including the awareness of 'social contextual factors' and 'stylistic appropriateness factors.' The average score for its subdimension, the awareness of 'cultural factors,' decreased slightly by 0.03. The results showed that the students tend to have less awareness of cultural factors.

The quantitative findings will be further explained through qualitative results to provide a more comprehensive illustration of the improvement in students' communicative competence.

Interactional Competence

Six students improved their 'conversational competence' (S20, S6, S8, S26, S2, S15). In the posttest, the students engaged more in the conversation, asking their partners questions, collaborating, and backchanneling rather than waiting for their partners to ask them questions, as found in the pretest. The improvement is illustrated in the following excerpts from the post-test conversation:

Do you like this hobby?
But I like it because I like to.... I like to study a new thing and
I like music. I like running, yeah.
(S6: large improvement)

Improvement in 'non-verbal/paralinguistic competence' was evident in six students (S26, S24, S19, S27, S14, S17). These students used or demonstrated non-verbal turn-taking signals, backchannel behaviors, gestures, eye contact, and haptic behavior, as shown in the excerpts from the post-test conversation:

After school, I have to study. [gesture: counting number, 1]

This birthday, I would buy some toys for her birthday.

[gesture: pointing at her partner] (S24: large improvement)

Discourse Competence

Improvement in the use of ‘the deixis system’ was evident in the posttest. Six students (S29, S6, S25, S26, S5, S30) used the deixis system in discourse. The following excerpts serve as an example:

I’m okay, but I’m feeling like I’m going to be sick because last night I didn’t sleep well. I’m thirteen years old this year.

(S29: large improvement)

Improvement in the use of ‘temporal continuity/shift’ was revealed in the posttest. Four students (S24, S25, S23, S10) used ‘temporal continuity/shift,’ as illustrated in the excerpt from post-test conversation below:

It depends on the person. If it is my friend, I prefer to spend time with them. But if I don’t really know them, I prefer to stay alone. (S10: no improvement)

Three students (S24, S25, S30) improved their oral narrative performance in the spoken genre. However, no improvement was seen among students in the no-improvement group. Improvement was evident in the excerpts from pre-test and post-test conversations:

(pretest) playing sports and playing games.

(posttest) I think playing sports and maybe playing games. And some would like to play music, sing a song. I like listening to music. (S25: large improvement)

Strategic Competence

Improvement in the use of ‘stalling strategies’ was shown in the posttest. Nine students (S20, S25, S29, S11, S26, S27, S1, S15, S21) used stalling strategies, such as fillers, hesitation devices, gambits, and self-repetition in the posttest.

The students across all three improvement groups used ‘fillers and hesitation devices,’ such as ‘um’ and ‘ah.’

‘Gambits,’ which were ‘I think’ and ‘I’m not sure,’ were used by one student (S25) from the large improvement group and one student (S26) from the slight improvement group. Gambits were not observed among students in the no-improvement group.

I'm not sure, but I think Ratchayotin.

(S26: slight improvement)

'Self-repetition' was also used by one student (S29) from the large improvement group and two students (S21, S26) from the slight improvement group. Self-repetition was not observed among students in the no-improvement group. The use of 'self-repetition' in the excerpt from the post-test conversation is illustrated below:

I love science because it's...it's interesting.

(S21: slight improvement)

Improvement in the use of 'self-monitoring strategies' was found in the posttest. Nine students (S20, S6, S24, S29, S16, S3, S23, S11, S19) used self-monitoring strategies in communication. Nevertheless, no improvement was evident among the students in the no-improvement group.

Five out of six students (S20, S6, S24, S29, S16) in the large improvement group improved the use of 'self-monitoring strategies,' while the other student (S25) did not illustrate the use of self-monitoring strategies in the posttest. The use of 'self-monitoring strategies' is shown below:

I like to be... I like to go shopping with my mom.

How about watching a book...reading a book?

(S29: large improvement)

Four students (S3, S23, S11, S19) in the slight improvement group improved the use of 'self-monitoring strategies.' Three of them (S3, S23, S11) used self-initiated repair and self-rephrasing, while the other student (S19) used other-initiated repair and self-rephrasing, as illustrated in the excerpts below:

Yeah, I like to... I really want to try to play the guitar, but it's a bit hard and needs a lot of practice.

(S23: slight improvement)

Do you like to play soccer? (S19: slight improvement)

Uh? (S20)

Do you like to play football? (S19: slight improvement)

Yes. (S20)

From the conversation, the student (S20) expressed confusion and a lack of understanding and asked for clarification. This caused the student (S19) to reformulate his utterance to make the other student (S20) understand by changing the word 'soccer' to 'football,' which was likely to be a more familiar word for the student (S20).

Although the use of ‘self-monitoring strategies’ did not improve among students in the no-improvement group, one student (S15) monitored their partner during the conversation, as illustrated below:

Do you like playing games? Why or why not?

(S5: no improvement)

Do you like playing football? (S16)

[in Thai] Answer the question first, I asked whether you like it or not. (S15: no improvement)

I like playing games. (S16)

Linguistic Competence

Improvement in students’ ability to use morphological inflections was evident in the posttest, as two students (S2 and S12) from the slight improvement group demonstrated more accurate verb inflections. These verb inflections appeared not only in the past tense but also in the simple present tense, as illustrated below:

I was so bored.

What she likes and how much money to pay.

No, I don’t like to play sports.

(S2: slight improvement)

Improvement in students’ ability to construct grammatically correct and meaningful sentences using basic sentence patterns and types was evident in the posttest. Two students (S12 and S14) in the slight improvement group produced more grammatically accurate and meaningful sentences in the posttest, whereas they had produced only one sentence in the pretest:

(pre-test) Ummm, seven am.

Study and talk with a friend.

Play a game, draw.

(post-test) Because I love to spend time with my friends.

I love both, too. Because I prefer to be alone. Because I love privacy.

(S12: slight improvement)

Formulaic Competence

Improvement in ‘the use of routines’ was shown by two students (S20, S28). The student (S20) in the large improvement group showed various uses of routines to give a ‘formulaic response’ and ‘personal information’ and to express ‘preferences’ and ‘reasons,’ as shown below:

I'm good.
I'm thirteen years old.
I live in Bangkok.
I like to be with other people because it's so fun.
(S20: large improvement)

On the other hand, the student (S28) in the slight improvement group only showed the use of routines to express 'likes and dislikes,' as shown below:

I love music. I like sports. I like art. I don't like reading.
I don't like playing games. (S28: slight improvement)

Thus, the student (S20) from the large improvement group showed more varied use of routines than the student (S28) in the slight improvement group.

To further explore 'formulaic competence,' the results revealed that every student demonstrated 'the use of collocations' in the posttest. Common collocations used across all three groups of improvement were 'playing games,' 'listening to music,' and 'spending time with friends.'

Sociocultural Competence

The decrease in 'the awareness of cultural factors' resulted from the empirical findings that the student (S17) in the no-improvement group did not demonstrate cultural factors and sociocultural norms typical of English-speaking classrooms, such as making eye contact, participating actively, and displaying open body language.

Students' Perceptions of Task-Based Grammar Instruction

To investigate the students' perceptions of task-based grammar instruction, three semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted, and the transcriptions were analyzed using thematic analysis. Five themes emerged across the different improvement groups.

Benefits of Task-Based Grammar Instruction

Students across all improvement groups, particularly those with large and slight improvement, often emphasized the value of using grammar in real-life communicative contexts, noting opportunities to practice speaking and observe how grammar is used in authentic conversations. An excerpt from the conversation is shown below:

When the teacher provides examples of grammar usage, students can see how these target grammatical forms are used in actual sentences and real conversations. I believe that if students are only taught the meaning of a word and are left to learn its usage on their own, they will not be able to use it fluently or as naturally as native speakers do in everyday situations, since native speakers do not always speak exactly as presented in textbooks. In my opinion, this teaching approach is more practical and effective, as it helps students internalize language concepts and apply them in spontaneous speech. (S25: large improvement)

Students from all groups reported that task-based grammar instruction expanded their vocabulary and grammatical awareness, which they perceived as fundamental to communication.

Many students, particularly in the slight improvement group, highlighted that interactive lessons made learning more enjoyable and less monotonous.

Challenges in Task-Based Grammar Instruction

Across all groups, students reported difficulties understanding different accents in the video clips used to introduce target grammatical features in communicative contexts during the pre-task phase, and they also had difficulties pronouncing new vocabulary learned in the lessons.

Some students expressed concern about their peers' lack of confidence in speaking English.

Some students struggled to form sentences, connect ideas when narrating stories or experiences, and retrieve the right vocabulary in real time.

Another challenge is the need to mentally translate from Thai to English before speaking. This process slowed students' responses and often led to pauses.

Effects on Communicative Competence

Most students reported an increased ability to use correct grammar in communication.

I am able to use correct grammar in my communication, and I can convey messages clearly without causing misunderstandings. (S29: large improvement)

Some students acknowledged the usefulness of communication strategies, such as using fillers and non-linguistic means.

Using communication strategies such as gestures helps me communicate effectively without speaking a lot.
Communication strategies are useful for those who do not have strong grammatical knowledge. (S21: no improvement)

Most students were aware of social, stylistic appropriateness, and cultural factors. They used basic expressions but rarely idiomatic phrases.

It also depends on the situation; when the teacher is listening, we tend to follow social norms. (S27: slight improvement)

I rarely use idioms in communication because I think there are only a few people who know the meaning of idioms.
(S27: slight improvement)

Students demonstrated the ability to maintain and develop conversations, though some struggled with coherence and maintaining the topic.

As I recall from the class, when I noticed that my friend could not answer my questions, I shifted the topic to facilitate smoother communication. (S25: large improvement)

When I have to narrate stories or experiences, I don't know how to connect sentences. (S11: slight improvement)

The Role of Feedback

Some students recognized the important role of teacher feedback in their communicative competence, as it provided corrections and clarifications of their understanding of target grammatical features and the effectiveness of their communication.

Suggestions for Improvement

The students made five suggestions across all groups, as follows: 'incorporating games and interactive activities (e.g., Kahoot, Blooket, Bingo),' 'using more engaging media (e.g., songs, movies),' 'providing more vocabulary support and translations,' 'rotating partners/groups to increase diversity and challenge,' and 'enhancing visual materials (more attractive themed-based teaching slides).

Teacher's Reflections

To investigate what the teacher learned from implementing task-based grammar instruction, 12 reflective journals were analyzed using thematic analysis. Seven themes emerged across the twelve lesson reflections.

Importance of Lesson Plan Preparation and Task Design

A detailed lesson plan and well-prepared teaching materials lead to the successful implementation of task-based grammar instruction. A carefully designed task is required to elicit all the multiple dimensions of communicative competence.

Development of Students' Communicative Competence

Students consistently demonstrated all multiple dimensions of communicative competence in the twelve lessons. An extract from one of the twelve journals is as follows:

Linguistic Competence: Students used 'adjectives' when describing places such as "I like quiet places because it makes me feel comfortable, like mountains," and "I'm looking for a quiet and luxurious vacation."

Strategic Competence: Communication strategies were used, such as self-initiated repair and gambits: "It's comfy... comfortable". And "Nah... isn't it too crowded?"

Formulaic Competence: Students used 'formulaic chunks' such as "I'm not really into New Zealand." "How about Japan?" "I don't mind." "That's a great idea." and "I think so."

Sociocultural Competence: Students expressed their messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context. Students politely refused their friends: "Singapore is similar to Thailand and quite hot. How about Japan?" "No, it's so expensive. Let's go somewhere else.", and "But I want to go somewhere adventurous. How about going to the mountain?"

Interactional competence: Students engaged in interaction effectively according to the social and contextual aspects of communication. The use of gestures, eye contact, turn-taking, and topic shifting was demonstrated during the task.

Discourse competence: Students used conjunctions in discourse: "I want to see the northern lights, which are considered exotic in Thailand, and the atmosphere is very relaxing." "I like India because people are friendly and I love Indian civilization." "I like quiet places because it makes me feel comfortable, like mountains. (Reflective Journal 6)

Student Engagement and Interaction

The reflections showed that pair and small-group tasks tended to enhance students' participation and balance interaction compared to large-group tasks, since some students dominated in the latter. Engaging tasks promoted confidence, motivation, and a willingness to speak. However, some students remained reluctant to interact in English, often providing short or simple responses.

Challenges in the Integration of Grammar and Communicative Competence

Certain grammatical features, such as modals of prohibition and obligation and the past perfect tense, were challenging for students to use in the communicative, grammar-based tasks. There were also challenges with similarities among certain grammatical features, such as the past simple, past continuous, and past perfect tenses. Students expressed confusion about their differences and how to use them, which affected their language accuracy and appropriateness.

The Role of Authentic Materials and Contextualization

Authentic materials, such as videos, audio, and real-life situations, help students observe grammar in context and increase their engagement. Students respond positively to real-world themes and scenarios, which promotes meaningful communication and language transfer.

Challenges of Task-Based Grammar Instruction

Time management within each task was a recurring issue: some pairs finished quickly, while others took longer.

Continuous professional development and updating instructional approaches are needed for teachers to provide effective task-based grammar instruction.

Some students still did not elaborate or ask follow-up questions, which hindered the depth of interaction.

Suggestions for Future Practice

The reflections provide suggestions for future practice. Firstly, communication strategies should be explicitly taught alongside grammatical features to equip students with what they need for communication. Secondly, tasks should be varied, relevant, and appropriately challenging, providing

opportunities for students to narrate, explain, and negotiate. Thirdly, pre-task modeling and exposure to target grammatical features support students' learning. Lastly, pair tasks are often more effective for balanced interaction and elicit more of each student's communicative competence.

Discussions and Implications

Research Question 1: What effect does task-based grammar instruction have on students' communicative competence?

Analysis of students' pre-test and post-test scores indicated a statistically significant improvement in multidimensional communicative competence from the implementation of task-based grammar instruction. The most significant gains were observed in 'interactional competence,' indicating that engaging students in authentic, task-based activities particularly enhanced their ability to manage real-life communication scenarios. Improvements were also found in 'discourse competence,' 'strategic competence,' 'linguistic competence,' and 'formulaic competence,' although these did not reach statistical significance. This may be due to the specific design of the tasks or the relatively short implementation duration, which may not have provided sufficient opportunities for students to develop these components of communicative competence. Future studies could explore how modifications to task design or a longer intervention duration might yield greater improvements across these components. In contrast, a decrease in 'sociocultural competence' was observed. This finding may indicate that the tasks used did not sufficiently address sociocultural and pragmatic elements of communication. In addition, the variation in improvement across components may be attributed to individual differences among learners or to the complexity of developing these aspects within the study's time frame. In view of this, future instructional designs should incorporate cultural and pragmatic elements into task-based grammar instruction to address cultural norms, values, and context-specific language use, and should also tailor pedagogical strategies to accommodate learners' diverse needs and enhance less responsive components of communicative competence.

Qualitative data from student interviews and the teacher's reflective journals support these quantitative results, with many students reporting greater confidence and an increased ability to interact using English. Nevertheless, a few students had difficulty adapting to culturally specific communicative situations, reflecting the quantitative decrease in sociocultural competence. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Somawati et al., 2018; Huang, 2016), which also found that TBLT is effective in

enhancing communicative competence. Particularly in the Asian context, this study aligns with Nghia and Quang's (2021) critical review of studies, indicating that task-based grammar instruction can significantly improve communicative competence. Nevertheless, it is vital for future research to investigate how task-based approaches can be developed to improve all dimensions of communicative competence, particularly sociocultural competence.

Research Question 2: What are the students' perceptions of task-based grammar instruction in helping them enhance their communicative competence?

Data from the three semi-structured focus group interviews were analyzed to answer this question. The findings revealed that students had positive perceptions of task-based grammar instruction. The results of the study align with those of Thompson and Millington (2012) and Marlina (2014), revealing the effectiveness of task-based instruction in improving students' grammar mastery and in the application of grammar in speaking. The results are also consistent with Yildiz and Senel (2017), who found that task-based instruction improved students' motivation by enhancing their interest in the language, enjoyment of learning, student engagement, and learning autonomy. The study's findings revealed the challenges students encounter, particularly in listening, pronunciation, and language production. The results of the study are consistent with those of Mala and Jikkham (2016), which suggest that persistent, unsatisfactory situations exist, as some students had difficulty communicating in real-life English situations.

Students' suggestions for future task-based grammar instruction indicate a need to emphasize greater engagement, support, and variety in instructional design. The results of the study are consistent with those of Waluyo (2019), highlighting teacher support as an important factor in the effectiveness of task-based language teaching in fostering communicative competence. Furthermore, it is essential to encourage a variety of communication styles to promote students' learning (Willis, 1996). Future research could address these challenges by implementing task-based grammar instruction that promotes greater student engagement, increased teacher support, and a wider range of instructional designs.

Research Question 3: What insights does the teacher gain from reflecting on the implementation of task-based grammar instruction aimed at enhancing students' communicative competence?"

The findings indicate the importance of detailed lesson planning and careful task design for the successful implementation of task-based grammar instruction. The results are consistent with Willis and Willis (2007), who argue that tasks play an important role in task-based lessons and that it is essential to design task-like activities that involve authentic language use.

The results revealed that task-based grammar instruction elicited each of the multiple dimensions of communicative competence, consistent with Celce-Murcia's (2007) model of communicative competence. Thus, the results indicate the holistic development of communicative competence, which aligns with Thomas and Reinders (2010), who assert that TBLT adopts a broad view of language development in which different skills are integrated and required for the completion of various learning activities.

The reflections show that pair and small-group tasks can enhance student participation, confidence, and willingness to speak, whereas larger-group tasks can limit some students' engagement. The findings are consistent with those of Yildiz and Senel (2017), who found that students gained confidence in using the target language to accomplish the task. The analysis of the reflections also indicates ongoing challenges in integrating complex or closely related grammatical features into communicative tasks. Thus, explicit contrastive instruction and scaffolded practice are required to help students use the target grammatical features accurately and appropriately. This is supported by Skehan (1996a), who contends that 'a focus on form' can facilitate language learning. Based on the reflections, the use of authentic materials played an important role in student engagement and contextualized language learning. The findings are consistent with Celce-Murcia (2007), suggesting that well-contextualized and meaningful materials and authentic tasks are essential for task-based grammar instruction.

The analysis highlights the value of ongoing reflective practice and professional development. The findings align with Bolton (2010), implying that a reflective journal helps teachers become aware of their current practice by providing opportunities to reflect, analyze, and improve their teaching practice. Future research could further examine the transferability of these lessons across contexts and investigate how ongoing teacher reflection influences long-term instructional effectiveness and students' multidimensional communicative competence.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study achieved its purposes, there were some limitations during the research process. Subsequently, recommendations for further research are proposed as follows:

This study employed a one-group pretest and posttest experimental mixed-methods design; a comparison between a control group and an experimental group could not be made. Thus, a pretest-posttest control group design is recommended for future research, using random sampling and random assignment.

The present study used a relatively small sample size of 30 students, selected through convenience sampling. As a result, the sample may not be representative of the larger student population, and the findings may not be generalizable to other groups. Thus, a larger sample size and random sampling are recommended.

This research was conducted for sixteen weeks with twelve task-based grammar lessons; a longer period and an extended process may be required for students to improve all six components of communicative competence. Future research could extend the data-collection period and conduct more task-based grammar lessons to examine whether students can improve all six components of communicative competence.

Conclusion

This study found that task-based grammar instruction significantly enhanced students' multidimensional communicative competence, and that students had positive perceptions of it, recognizing its benefits. The teacher's reflections highlighted the importance of detailed lesson planning and careful task design for successful task-based grammar instruction. The improvement in multiple dimensions of students' communicative competence as evidenced in the reflective journals emphasizes the value of an ongoing reflective practice for improving task-based grammar instruction and promoting professional development.

About the Authors

Maythaporn Tangkanchanayuenyong: An English teacher at Prasarnmit Demonstration School (Secondary), Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the Language Institute of Thammasat University, majoring in English Language Teaching. Her research interests

include TBLT, assessment of communicative competence, and innovations in language pedagogy.

Virasuda Sribayak: An assistant professor at the Language Institute of Thammasat University. Her research interests are teacher training, instructional media, action research for English teachers, and teaching methodology.

References

- Boers, F., & Lindstromberg, S. (2012). Experimental and intervention studies on formulaic sequences in a second language. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 32, 83–110.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190512000050>
- Bolton, G. (2010). *Reflective practice: Writing and professional development* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Cambridge University Press & Assessment. (2024). *A2 Key speaking test*. <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/qualifications/key/>
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2007). Rethinking the role of communicative competence in language teaching. In E. A. Soler & M. S. Jordà (Eds.), *Intercultural language use and language learning* (pp. 41–57). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5639-0_3
- Celce-Murcia, M., Dörnyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1995). Communicative competence: A pedagogically motivated model with content specifications. *Applied Linguistics*, 16(1), 5–35.
<https://doi.org/10.5070/L462005216>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R., Skehan, P., Li, S., Shintani, N., & Lambert, C. (Eds.). (2020). *Task-based language teaching: Theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fotos, S., & Ellis, R. (1991). Communicating about grammar: A task-based approach. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25(4), 605–628.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3587079>
- Hall, J. K. (2011). *Teaching and researching: Language and culture* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Huang, D. (2016). A study on the application of task-based language teaching method in a comprehensive English class in China. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 7(1), 118–127.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0701.13>

- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2020). *Teaching grammar*. Oxford University Press.
- Mala, D., & Jikkham, P. (2016, March 9). Prayut launches free app to help students with everyday English. *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/890604/prayut-launches-free-app-to-help-students-with-everyday-english>
- Marlina, N. (2014). *The implementation of task-based language teaching to improve students' grammar mastery* [Master's thesis, Sebelas Maret University].
- Ministry of Education, Thailand. (2021). *Education in Thailand 2019-2021*. Office of the Education Council. <https://backoffice.onec.go.th/uploads/Book/1926-file.pdf>
- Nakatani, Y. (2010). Identifying strategies that facilitate EFL learners' oral communication: A classroom study using multiple data collection procedures. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94(1), 116–136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00987.x>
- Nghia, V. N., & Quang, N. N. (2021). Task-based language teaching to enhance learner communicative competence in Vietnam: A matter of opinion? *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 4(8), 151–159. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2021.4.8.22>
- Savignon, S. J. (1997). *Communicative competence: Theory and classroom practice* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Skehan, P. (1996a). Second language acquisition research and task-based instruction. In J. Willis & D. Willis (Eds.), *Challenge and change in language teaching* (pp. 17–30). Heinemann.
- Somawati, N. P., Wahyu Astuti, N. W., Kanca, I. N., Widanta, I. M., & Ardika, I. W. (2018). Task-based language teaching: How is it implemented effectively? *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 953, 012075. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/953/1/012075>
- Thomas, M., & Reinders, H. (2010). *Task-based language learning and teaching with technology*. Continuum. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474212366>
- Thompson, C., & Millington, N. (2012). Task-based learning for communication and grammar use. *Language Education in Asia*, 3(2), 159–167.
- Ur, P. (2011). Grammar teaching: Research, theory, and practice. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* (Vol. 2, pp. 507–522). Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/Handbook-of-Research-in-Second-Language-Teaching-and-Learning-Volume-2/Hinkel/p/book/9780415998727>
- Ur, P. (2018). *Grammar practice activities* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

- Waluyo, B. (2019). Task-based language teaching and theme-based role-play: Developing EFL learners' communicative competence. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 16, 153–168.
<https://doi.org/10.56040/BDWA161A>
- Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Willis, J. (1996). A flexible framework for task-based learning. In D. Willis & J. Willis (Eds.), *Challenge and change in language teaching* (pp. 52–62). Heinemann.
- Yildiz, M., & Senel, M. (2017). Teaching grammar through task-based language teaching to young EFL learners. *The Reading Matrix*, 17(2), 196–209. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1154762>